

WRITINGS OF STEPHEN CHARNOCK

by Stephen Charnock

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Stephen Charnock, compiled for study and devotional reading.

44 Chapters

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A DISCOURSE OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

A DISCOURSE OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

Stephen Charnock

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?—2 Corinthians 13:5. THE apostle having blamed the Corinthians for some enormities among them, and knowing there were some that had not repented of them, comes now to a conclusion of his epistle, and assures them, that if he should come again to them, he would not spare them, but be sharp against them with his ecclesiastical censures. And as for such who had not been guilty of those crimes, yet had mean thoughts of the apostle, and would have some eminent proof of his apostleship, or of Christ speaking in him, 2 Corinthians 13:3, he refers himself to them, and makes them the judges of it, whether they had not found the mighty operation of Christ in him. For as though Christ's being crucified evidenced his being subject to the infirmities of man and the penalty of the law, yet his resurrection and his glory is an evidence of the power of God in him and with him; so though I be weak, yet you yourselves bear arguments in you of the power of God, working in the apostleship, which I have exercised among you, and therefore 'examine your own selves,' and try whether there be not a mighty change wrought in your souls, 'whether you are not in the faith,' and quite other men than you were. If you find not such effects, assure yourselves you are not yet in the state of true Christianity.

Some understand this of Christ being in them in regard of the miraculous gifts, the gifts of miracles, tongues, and healing; and understand by faith here, a faith of miracles, which was a special gift, and very resplendent in the primitive church. But that doth not seem to be the sense of it, for the possessing such gifts is not a sign of election, nor the want of them a presage of reprobation, or a testimony of insincerity. Miracles may be wrought by those that have not a justifying and saving faith. Judas had the same commission with the rest of the apostles, at Christ's first sending them out in the time of his life ; and we may well conjecture, that miracles were wrought by him, as well as by his colleagues, in that employment. Besides, it cannot be manifested that those gifts were bestowed upon every member of the primitive church, but only upon some called out by God for that purpose. And if by faith be understood here a faith of miracles, whereby they should try themselves whether Christ was in them, those that had not that gift conferred upon them had no evidence of their being in Christ; or at least, had not so illustrious an evidence as the others had, who outstripped the rest of their brethren in those miraculous powers. The gift of miracles was an evidence that Christ was in those instruments, in regard of his power, but true faith only is an evidence that Christ is in a man in regard of his grace.

Examine yourselves, Peirazete. Tempt yourselves. The word tempting is sometimes taken for trying, as when God is said to tempt Abraham in commanding him to sacrifice his son, to know or make known to him that he feared God, Genesis 22:1, Genesis 22:12.

Prove yourselves, Docimazete. Try yourselves as goldsmiths do metals; prove yourselves, that you may know experimentally what is in you. Docimh; is used for experience, Romans 5:5. The phrase speaks diligence in this work, the repetition intimates both diligence and frequency; what is not known in one act, may be known in repeated acts. Self-examination is a duty in all cases, the repetition speaks necessity ; it implies also men's natural backwardness to it.

Know you not your own selves. It implies the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of it, also the possibility and easiness, upon a due and diligent inquiry, to know whether Christ be in us or no.

How that Christ is in you. Whether the power of Christ hath not wrought in you to the transforming your soul.

Unless you be reprobates, 'Adokimoi,. The apostle doth not understand by the word reprobates, such as are eternally rejected by God, as reprobates are opposed to the elect. Those that had not Christ in them at that time might have him afterwards, the work of conversion being daily promoted in the church; but reprobates, i.e. counterfeit, adulterate, not yet purified and refined from your dross, or, unless you are unapproved or void of judgment, or unexperienced in the ways of Christ. And he puts mhj ti, a diminutive term, unless you be somewhat and in part sincere. Or it may go further, and the apostle might mean thus: if after the power of Christ, which hath appeared so gloriously among you, you find no strong operation in your own souls towards him, you have reason to suspect that you are not owned by him, that he may give you over to yourselves. The protestants confirm the doctrine of the possibility of assurance, and a man's knowledge of himself to be in a state of grace from this text, which doctrine the papists impugn. It is strange that some of the schoolmen, who assert that a man may by the strength of pure naturals love God above all things, yet deny that a man can know that he loves God above all. In the verse, observe, 1. The duty expressed: examine yourselves, prove yourselves.

2. The matter of it : whether you be in the faith.

3. The enforcement and motive : except you are reprobates.

Doct. Self-examination is a necessary duty, belonging to every one in the church, and requires much diligence in the performing of it.

Hence some observe, that when it is expressed that God created man in his own image,—Genesis 1:27, 'In the image of God created he him,'—the word is Elohim, which is a name of God belonging to his judicial acts, which imply trial and examination ; in the image of Elohim created he him, i.e. with a power of self-trial and self-judging. This self-examination is an exact and thorough search into a man's self, an exquisite consideration in what posture he stands to God. The word is the rule, a glass wherein we see God's will; and conscience is the examiner, that is, the glass wherein we see our lives and the motions of our hearts, and which, by the help of the word, doth dissect and open the soul to itself.

I shall not prosecute this doctrine fully, only lay down some conclusions.

1. It is a necessary duty, in regard of our comfort. What good doth it do a man to hear that a Christ is sent to redeem, that a ransom is paid, that sin is pardonable, hell avoidable, heaven attainable, upon the conditions of faith, and not know whether he hath so advantageous a grace in him, which

only entitles him to such glorious privileges? What comfort in Christ, in his meritorious passion, in his triumphant resurrection and ascension, in his prevalent intercession, unless we know that by faith we are united to him, and consequently have an interest in all the gracious fruits of his different states of humiliation and exaltation? If we can find this grace in our souls, what a joy unspeakable doth result from thence? Christ as a king will protect my soul, Christ as a priest hath expiated my sins, Christ as a prophet will remove my ignorance; my soul was in his mind upon the cross, my concerns are in his breast in heaven, my name is enrolled in the register of his subjects.

It is necessary,

(1.) Because there are common graces. As there is an outward and inward call, so there is an outward profession and an inward transformation. There are some virtues come from the hand of God as creator, and some immediately from the Spirit as a renewer; some common virtues for the preservation of human society, and some special graces for the fabric of an invisible church. There is an acceptance of the law for an outward practice, without an affection to the lawgiver, or an esteem of the spirituality of the law itself. There is a sanctification in opposition to Judaism, or Paganism, or some erroneous opinion; which is common to those that may apostatise, Hebrews 10:29. The apostle calls the church of Corinth saints: 1 Corinthians 1:2, 'called to be saints;' saints by vocation outwardly, not all saints by a new vocation inwardly.

(2.) Because there are counterfeit graces. There is much false coin in the world, washed pewter and gilded brass; there are sepulchres garnished outwardly, and full of rottenness and stench within; there are many that want not their artifices in religion as well as in common converse. Good things may be imitated when they are not rooted. We have heard of some limners that have represented Christ so to the life as to deceive artists as skilful as themselves. The apostle speaks of 'a dead faith,' James 2:26, which is like the carcase of a man without life, a faith that deserves no more the name of faith than the carcase doth the title of a man when the enlivening and principal part is fled. There is a 'repentance unto life,' Acts 11:18, which supposeth a dead repentance, such as Ahab's humiliation, like marble sweating tears in moist and rainy weather without any mollifying of the natural hardness, or Judas his sorrow, raised by the fire in his conscience, not like Peter's, by the spiritual influence of his Master. There is a 'lively hope,' 1 Peter 1:8, which supposeth a dead hope; there is a 'lively stone,' 1 Peter 3:5, which implies that there are lifeless stones, that are not inwardly fitted and prepared for the spiritual building. The building upon the rock and the sand might have the same beauty, form, and ornaments, but not the same foundation; one was stable and the other tottering. There is a 'repentance towards God,' Acts 20:21, when the dishonour of God afflicts us, which implies there is a repentance towards ourselves, when the danger of our own persons starts a pretended sorrow for sin. There is a faith that is sound and lasting, a faith that is temporary and perishing, a faith that starts up like a mushroom in a night, and withers at the next scorching temptation. There is a faith common with devils, and a faith proper to Christians; there is a faith of Christ and a faith in Christ.

(3.) Because every man is in a state of grace or nature. There is a state of grace, Born. Ephesians 2:1, a state of wrath, Ephesians 2:3. The world is made up of receivers of Christ or rejecters of him, true subjects to God or rebels against him. There are two families, the family of God and the family of the devil. The visible church was not without its distinction. The ark contains unclean as well as clean beasts. There is a Cain in Adam's family, a Ham in Noah's ark, an Ishmael in

Abraham's house, and a Judas in our Saviour's retinue; and at the last day the whole world will be distinguished into two only kinds, of sheep and goats. It is necessary therefore to inquire whose we are, whether we belong to the God of heaven or the god of this world; whether we have the renewed image of God, or still retain the old stamp of the devil.

2. It is a duty that requires diligence and care. That which is of infinite consequence in the state of your souls, ought not to be built upon sandy and slight foundations. It is called communing with a man's own heart, Psalms 4:4, not a slight glance and away; sweeping and looking with a candle, Luke 15:8, wherewith every cranny and chink is pried into; trying of the reins, which are parts of the body hidden with fat. There must be a careful removing of several things to come at them; a searching for some precious filings of gold in a heap of dust; an employing all the faculties of the soul in a diligent search: Psalms 77:6, 'My spirit made diligent search.' It is expressed by counting, Psalms 119:59, 'I thought on my ways, 'ytbv; he looked over the acts of his soul one by one. The heart is called the 'inward parts' or depths 'of the belly,' Proverbs 20:7. As the bowels are folded together in many coats and coverings, that they are not easily come to, so the heart of man is full of devices.

(1.) Diligence is requisite, because the work is difficult. It is no easy matter to be acquainted with ourselves. The soul is not well acquainted with its own features, and preserves not the species of itself. 'We behold our faces in a glass, and soon forget what manner of men we are,' James 1:23-24. As man is apt to know anything but himself, so it is more easy for him to know anything than himself, as the eye sees everything but itself. There must be diligence to discern the rational workings of our soul, to know whether we truly understand such a thing, or really and firmly will such a good. The judgment of man is corrupted, and misrepresents things like a cracked glass. We can more easily judge of a bodily than of a spiritual disease, because the understanding which should judge of the state of the soul is sickly and ill-affected itself. Our wills also being so changeable, sometimes set on one thing and sometimes flitting to another, the spiritual workings of them are not so readily discernible. This work is done by a reflex act; and reflex acts, in spirituals as well as naturals, are weakest and more languishing, whereas direct acts are more powerful and vigorous. Where grace is small and corruptions many, it must be hard to discern it, as it is for an eye to discern a small needle, especially if in the dust and rubbish. The roots of sin also lie deep, like Achan's wedge of gold in the earth, not easily to be found without good directions. Lust lies in secret corners; there is a deceitfulness of it, subtle evasions, and specious pretences: consideration is requisite to the discerning of them. External acts discover themselves, but the inward acts of the soul, which are the surest evidences, are not discernible without a diligent inspection. The natural inconstancy and levity of our spirits divert us, and the streams of our corruptions cloud and bemit us, and control our endeavours in self-examination, that we cannot sometimes any more fixedly behold the motions of grace than we can see the beams of the sun in a black and mourning sky.

(2.) Diligence is requisite, because man is naturally unwilling to this duty. He would live anywhere but with himself, think of anything but himself, delights most in those things which hinder him from a consideration of his own state. Men are more willing to have their minds rove through all the parts of nature than to busy themselves in self-reflection, would read any book or relation rather than the history of their own heart. We are nearest to ourselves physically, and furthest from our own selves morally. Men whose titles are cracked and unsure are loath to have them tried before

the judge, and come under the siftings of conscience. Ever since the fall we run counter to God; it is the property of the divine nature first to know himself, and then to know other things; but we are cross, would know any other thing but not ourselves, would read others, and not so much as spell ourselves. We naturally abhor any actions wherein we may be like God, though they are the most proper operations for our souls, and suitable to the nature of them, as reflex acts are. There being in us a contrariety to God and his law, to God and his gospel, there results from thence an unwillingness in us to bring our hearts under the examination of conscience, that power which acts by authority and deputation from God. And when grace doth egg us at any time to the performance of the duty, do not our hearts hang back, and our corruptions check us in it? Satan is no mean instrument in this: he is said to blind the world, that they might not know their state. He hath lost his likeness to God in his primitive happiness, and ever since envies man the recovery of that likeness which is possible to man and impossible to himself, and therefore diverts him from all glances towards it, and endeavours after it, the first step to which is self-reflection. This unwillingness ariseth,

[1.], From carnal self-love. It is natural to man to think well of himself, and suffer his affections to bemist or bridle his judgment. A biassed person cannot be a just judge. Every man is his own flatterer, and so conceals himself from himself. Very few that are uncomely in body, or deformed in mind, but think themselves as handsome and honest as others. David so loved himself that he saw nothing of his sin, but was fair in his own eyes till Nathan roused him up by telling him, 'Thou art the man.' Every man would be 'right in his own eyes,' Proverbs 16:2. Every blackamore fancies himself to have a comely colour. This self-love may so far bemist a good man, that he may not believe such an act to be a crime, such an excuse to be a fig leaf, such a mark to be unsound. And this self-love keeps men off from this work, for fear they should behold their own guilt, and their souls be stung with anguish. Men that are bankrupts are loath to cast up their accounts, lest it should appear to them that they are undone. Some are loath to see their ugly faces in a glass. Conscience, awakened by this duty, bites and stings, and men are loath to impair their own ease because they would escape the din of an accuser in their own bosoms; they turn fugitives from their own hearts, and would rather go to hell in a feather bed than to heaven in a fiery chariot. While man seeks nothing more than himself in a sinful way, he conceals himself and flies furthest from himself in a reflexive way.

[2.] From presumption and security. Some walk as securely as if there were no heaven, and it concerned them not; others walk as presumptuously as though they were heirs-apparent unto it, and yet have no title. Many will have a false persuasion of their faith and interest in Christ at the last day, Matthew 7:22, and cry, 'Lord, Lord!' and the foolish virgins will knock as confidently and expect entrance to the feast as well as the wise, will not believe but they have a title to heaven till Christ himself clap the door upon them, and manifest the contrary. Had they raked in their own souls and been plain dealers with themselves, they could not but have found themselves in a lost condition. Those that thus presume cannot endure to hear of the differences between hypocrisy and sincerity, how far a castaway may go in religion. This was the reason the pharisees were such enemies to Christ, because he raked in their consciences; they could never come near him, but he brought some indictment against them of hypocrisy. As Tertullian called heretics *lucifugæ scripturarum*, because they would not be cured of their errors, so are such men also afraid to bring their hearts to the test of the word, because they would not be cured of their false presumptions.

As Ahab hated Micaiah, so these their own consciences, because they expect to bear that from them which they think evil, and cannot have such a view of themselves in that glass as they desire to have.

(3.) Diligence is requisite, because man is hardly induced to continue in this work. That self-love which makes them unwilling to enter upon it, renders them unfit to make any progress in it. When we do begin it, how quickly do we faint in it! How soon are our first glances upon ourselves turned to a fixedness upon some slighter object! Every man's heart is like an unruly horse, that will be going out of the way if there be not a resolution to check it in its first starts, and bring things to a judicial trial. The heart itself is so light and fluttering, that it wants the stability of grace to fix it in the trial of grace.

(4.) Diligence is requisite,, because we are naturally apt to be deceived and to delude ourselves. Our natural blindness and dimness render us liable to mistake, and our deceitful heart may sing a requiem to us while we are fools. We have a subtle enemy that lies in wait for us, who can transform himself into an angel of light, and disguise his serpentine hissings to make them appear like the breathings of the Spirit. If Adam in innocence, who had an ability to discern his methods, was deluded by him, much more may we be deceived by him in a state of corruption, when our hearts naturally have his stamp, and are inclined to take his part and join with him in a self-deceit: 'The heart of man is deceitful,' Jeremiah 17:9. It is the great impostor and cheat of the world, the antichrist within us, the deceiver of our souls, as the great antichrist is called the deceiver of the nations. How apt are we to take upon trust what our heart first speaks! James and John could tell Christ that they were able to drink of his cup, and no question they meant as they spake, Matthew 20:22; but had it come to a trial, they would not have endured to sip of it; and the issue manifested it: they turned their backs upon him, as well as the other disciples. The Israelites, bad they tried themselves by their present resolution, Deuteronomy 5:27, 'All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee we will hear and do it,! might have subscribed themselves as pious as any in the world; they spake no other than they meant. But God had a further inspection into them than they had into themselves: Deuteronomy 5:9, 'Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always!' Natural conscience is often silenced by a pretence and a show, and a man is naturally apt to make his own corrupt judgment, sometimes also his passion, the standard of good and evil, and not only to frame grace according to his own affections, but a god also: Psalms 1:21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' The apostle intimates it in that signal mark of caution, when he presseth a truth to which natural conscience will subscribe, that 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God;' 1 Corinthians 5:9, 'Be not deceived,' saith he: even in these things men may deceive themselves with false hopes, much more in moral righteousness. Many boast themselves rich in spirituals when they are really poor; so did Laodicea think herself rich when God gave her another inventory of her estate, that she was 'poor and miserable, and blind and naked,' Revelation 3:17. There is too much resting in the world upon outward privileges, and often beggars conceit themselves princes because they dream of sceptres. How many extend their hopes as far as their wishes, and these as far as a fond fancy and imagination!

(5.) Diligence is necessary, because to be deceived in this is the most stinging consideration. To drop into hell when a man takes it for granted that he is in heaven, to dream of a crown on the head when the fetters are upon the feet, will double the anguish. It is better for a rich man to dream

that he is a beggar, for when he awakes his fears vanish, than for a beggar to dream that he is rich, for when his dream ends his sorrow begins. The higher the false conceit, the lower do men sink when they fall; the higher men's expectations of heaven are without ground, the more stinging is their loss of it. To have vain hopes, till God puts us into the scale and weighs us, will be a miserable disappointment. For a man to deceive himself aggravates this; as self-murder is accounted a greater sin than the murder of another, because it is against that charity to ourselves which is the copy and rule of charity to another.

(6.) Diligence is necessary, because many have miscarried for want of it. Thousands that have thought themselves in the suburbs of heaven, have been cast down to the depths of hell. If all should be saved that think they shall be saved, the strait way would be that which leads to hell; for what man is there almost that doth not confidently believe he shall be happy? How many dream they are going to paradise, and when they awake find themselves in the devil's arms!

II. The use.

1. If this be our duty, to examine ourselves, then the knowledge of our state is possible. If we are to examine ourselves, we may then know ourselves. Reflection and knowledge of self is a prerogative of a rational nature. We know that we have souls by the operations of them. We may know that we have grace by the effects of it, if we be diligent; as we may know by the beams of the sun that the sun is risen, if we shut not our eyes. Grace chiefly lies in the will, and it discovers itself in actions. The more raised any being is, the more active it is. The being of a God is known by the effects of his power in the world, and the being of faith is known by the operations of it in the heart and life. Though gold and that which is gilt be like in appearance, yet the true nature of each of them may be discerned by the touchstone. Hypocritical grace is like true grace, but it is not the same. Sincerity may be known. If we cast but a glance upon our hearts in any word or action, we may know whether we mean as we speak or do, or whether we have any by-ends in it. The discerning of habitual sincerity is not so easy as the knowledge of an integrity in a particular act; yet if we keep a due watch over the motions of our hearts and the actions of our lives as they come upon the stage, and consider what their ends are, it will not be so difficult to know ourselves. It is impossible a man's will should steal by him in all the actions it produceth, and a man be ignorant and insensible of it. The spirit and conscience of a man may know such things as are in it, both the habits it hath and particular motives to this or that act: 2 Corinthians 2:11, 'The spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man.' If men would be more inward in conversing with their own hearts, they might have an acquaintance with the concerns of their souls, as their sense hath with outward objects. There can be no sufficient reason given why the understanding should not as well know the acts of the soul and will, as the acts of the sense and the motions of the body. We know our particular passions and the exercises of them. There is no man that fears a danger, or loves an amiable object, but he knows his own acts about them, as well as the object of those acts. If a man have faith and love, why should he not be as able to know the acts of faith and love as to know the acts of his particular affections? This is easy, if we did live more with ourselves, and oftener exercise that prerogative of reflection which we have above beasts. It is difficult indeed in regard of our corruption; as the law is said to be weak, not in itself, it was able to answer the end for which God appointed it, and man by the endowments of his creation was able to observe it; but it became weak to make men happy, and man impotent to conform to it, through the flesh, Rom. viii. 3, by the entrance of corruption. It is the same corruption of man which renders this knowledge

of himself difficult. He lives too much abroad out of his own soul, and too little within, otherwise there is no doubt but he may know his own will, and the habitual inclination of it.

2. How foolish is the neglect of this duty! How many ramble about the world without acquainting themselves with their own hearts, or considering whether Christ be in them! What advantage can there be in the knowledge of other things, if we know not whether there be any operations of grace in our own souls! How few give themselves the opportunity of a serious retirement! How unreasonable is it to rest satisfied with underground hopes of heaven, to call ourselves citizens of Jerusalem above, and have no copy of our freedom to shew, nor any living witness in us to bear testimony for us! It is against nature to desire to be in any company rather than our own, to endeavour to know everything in the world rather than ourselves, which is the first object of knowledge. Should that reason which God hath given us, more excellent than the nature of beasts, be employed about examining everything but ourselves?

3. Use of exhortation.

It is our highest advantage to know what should become of our souls in eternity. Is it a small thing to be within the verge of the wrath of God? And is not the knowledge of this necessary, if we be in such a case that we may avoid it? Or is it a small thing to be an heir of heaven? Are justification, adoption, acceptation, small privileges ; faith, love, repentance, small graces? Is not the knowledge of them necessary, that we may have the comfort of them? May not some convenient space of time be every day spent in this? May I not say, as Christ to his disciples, 'Can you not watch one hour?' Can you not spare one hour for so great and necessary a work? Let us enter therefore into the bosom of our heart, and see whether we have a true faith, such as Abraham's; whether it be such a lively faith that hath freed our souls in part from the mud of our corruptions; whether it be a faith resting upon Christ for salvation, without giving indulgence to the least offence to him? Such a faith that purifies the heart, reforms the life, inflames the soul with a love to God, causing us to rejoice in him, and in any further degree of conformity to him? Whether it engenders in us a serious desire and a suitable endeavour to obey Christ? Such a faith that relies upon his promises without slighting his precepts?

III. I shall, lastly, give you some directions about this duty of self-examination.

1. Acquaint yourselves with those marks that are proper only to a true Christian. Overlook all those that are common with the hypocrite, such as outward profession, constant attendances, some affections in duties. Let us not judge ourselves by outward acts; a player is not a prince because he acts the part of a prince. But we must judge ourselves by what we are in our retirements, in our hearts. He only is a good man, and doth good, that doth it from a principle of goodness within, and not from fear of laws, or to gain a good opinion in the world. Grace is of that nature, that it cannot possibly have any by-end. As it is the immediate birth of God, so it doth immediately respect God in its actings. In the very nature of it, it aims at God, as to love him, believe in him. The great accusation the devil brings against Job was, that he served not God for nought, that his service was not sincere, that he acted a righteous part for his own ends, and to preserve his worldly prosperity, Job 1:9-10. But if our ends be right, and our actions in the course of them according to his rule, if our hearts in them respect God's law and his glory, how will the devil's arrows drop down, as shot against a brazen wall! The inward bent and the habitual delight and affection of our hearts, is chiefly to be eyed, whether they are in God or in other things. This was the apostle's way

of trial: Romans 7:22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man;' and what the incitements are to your profession and service, whether they are not bare affections, moveable passions, carnal interests, a good education, a working fancy, &c. Take those marks, which are inconsistent with hypocrisy, 'such as accompany salvation,' Hebrews 6:9, and necessarily infer a truth of grace. Begin at the lowest step of true and sincere grace, inquire not at first into the marks of an high and towering faith, of the eminent degrees of it. This would be to put a giant's suit upon an infant's back, and judge ourselves not men, because the garments fit us not. A small beam will manifest that the sun doth peep out of a cloud; but larger ones, and more spread, evidence that it hath got a full victory. Have a right notion of true grace, and though grace be little, yet you may know it; as if a man hath a true notion of a diamond, though never so small, he can truly say that is a diamond as well as if it were bigger. Though a gracious spirit may not have grace enough to satisfy its desires, yet it may find grace enough to settle its soul. There may be grace enough to give a man an interest in Christ, though there be not a full strength to answer all the obligations of the gospel. Let us examine, first, the truth of grace, and afterwards the height of grace. A little of the coarsest gold is more valuable than much of the finest brass. See how the habitual frame and inclination of the heart stands. A heart set upon heaven discovers the treasures of the heart to be there. See whether we have David's temper, to 'hate every false way,' or Paul's, to 'have a conscience void of offence towards God' in regard of his service, as well as towards man in regard of his converse; not to neglect anything towards God that conscience tells us is our duty to him. One sound and undeniable mark is better than a thousand disputable ones.

2. Let us make the word of God only our rule in trials. This is the only impartial friend we can stick to, and therefore it ought to be made our main counsellor. The word is the principle whereby grace is wrought, and it is the medium whereby grace is known. The word is that whereby we must judge of doctrine, 'to the law and to the testimony.' If an angel from heaven speaks any other thing than what God hath delivered, he is not to be heard. It is also the rule whereby we must judge of graces. If conscience speak anything for a man's comfort, that is not according to the word, it is to be silenced; if conscience presents us with anything as a grace, that will not hold water before God, it is to be rejected in that ease; bring it to the touch-stone to see if it, be current coin. As we are to try other men's spirits, so our own, by this rule; it is a part of man's sinful ambition to be his own judge, and so to make his own fancy his rule. The Scripture beam is like a sunbeam, it will discover the most inward, and the most minute, thing, Hebrews 4:12 ; it will reveal the deceitful contrivances and sophistry of the heart. This word must try us at last, it is to be the rule of the last judgment, to salvation or condemnation; let it be the rule of our self-judgments. It is safe for us to take that rule which God himself will take, and take in good part whatsoever the word saith; if it shew us our evil, let us change our course; if it speak good, let us be thankful to God, and give him the rent-charge and tribute due to him for it.

3. Take not the first dictates of conscience. 'He that trusts his own heart is a fool,' Proverbs 28:26, i. e. without a diligent inquisition, it is not wisdom to do so, 'but he that walks wisely shall be delivered;' he that makes a strict inquiry into it, shall be delivered from its snares and his own fears. It is a searching, examining, proving our hearts, that is required, not taking them at the first word. There may be gold at the top, and dross at the bottom. We are naturally quick of belief of those things we would have and desire; we should be jealous of these hearts which have so often deceived us, as we are of those who have often broken their word. Whatsoever it speaks, suspend

your belief of its sentence, till you have well examined the ground and reasons why it gives in such a report; if it tells you, you are in a good state, that you are penitents, believers, have a choice love to God, an eye fixing on the glory of God as your end, bring it to the test, examine why it saith so. We have here to do with the greatest impostor, and in other things we will not give credit to a cheater. Therefore our searching often in Scripture is joined with trying. We must not only search out our graces, but try whether they be of the right stamp, and have the mark of God upon them. Examination and proof must go together in this act, as they do in the text.

4. In all, implore the assistance of the Spirit of God. Natural conscience is not enough in this case, there must be the influence of the Spirit; it is God's interpreter that can only 'shew unto a man his righteousness,' Job 33:23. The sun must give light, before the glass can reflect the beams. Grace cannot be discerned, if the Spirit obscure and hide itself. In the night, the beautiful colours in a room are by the darkness, as it were, buried from the sight; but when the sun discharges its beams into the chamber, they are enlivened, and affect our sense. There may be graces in the soul which appear not, if the Spirit withdraws his light; but when he displays himself, they will appear in their true lustre. In all our trials of ourselves, let us beg of God to try us. When David had been ransacking his heart, he would not rest in his own endeavours, but begs of God to open his heart more fully to his knowledge, and bless him with a perfect discovery of it: Psalms 139:21-23, 'Do not I hate them which hate thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred.' I think, I conclude I do; but lest my conclusions may be wrong, do thou, O God, 'search me and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts,' i.e. make my heart and thoughts, and bent of them, visible and fully discernible to me.

5. Let us take heed that, while we examine our graces and find them, our hearts be not carried out to a resting upon them. We may draw some comfort from them, but must check the least inclination of founding our justification upon them. Graces are signs, not causes, of justification. Christ's righteousness only is our wedding-garment, our graces are but as the fringes of it. Liberty is a sign the malefactor is pardoned, but it is not the cause of his pardon, but the king's merciful grant God is a jealous God, and is likely there to withdraw his hand, where the glory of his works shall be attributed to anything below him, and his gifts made equal with his Son; and therefore as one saith, in our trials of ourselves we should do as men with a pair of compasses, fix one foot in the centre while they move the other about the circumference; so let our souls rest in Christ, and hold him with one hand, while with the other we turn over the leaves of our hearts, and be inquisitive after our evidences. Our justification is not by any inherent grace, but our justification is known to us by the grace we find in ourselves.

6. In case we find ourselves not in such a condition as we desire, let us exercise direct acts of faith. Let us not deject ourselves, and make so bad a conclusion as Peter did, and say to Christ, 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man;' but let us cast ourselves upon the truth and faithfulness of God in the promise of life in Christ. Lay hold on the promise of life, as if you had not laid hold of it before. When comfort is not fetched in by reflex acts, let faith be exercised in direct acts; when there is darkness and no light, 'trusting in the name of the Lord,' and 'staying upon God,' is the proper business of the soul, Isaiah 1:10; we should then drink of the waters of life, groan under our sin, and go to a Saviour; 'forget,' as Paul, 'the things that are behind, and press forward to the things which are before,' Php 3:13-14. We naturally would believe God upon his deed, and trust in him, because we find something wrought in our own souls; God therefore

sometimes hides a man's own graces from him, to draw out the soul in acts of faith, which indeed gives the most glory to God. God will be believed upon his word, and God turns it often to the great advantage of the soul, and puts it upon the exercise of faith, when he denies it the comfortable sight of faith. In this case we should make use of such Scriptures which may foment and nourish faith, and put us upon the casting out that filth and mud in our souls which we discerned. When we can find no grace to present Christ with, we should fetch grace from him. A city of refuge is for a malefactor, a physician for the sick, and a Christ for those that groan under the burden of sin; a Christ lifted up and dying, for those that are stung by the serpent. To conclude. Let us be frequent in this work. Let us not neglect a privilege God hath invested us with above other creatures below us. There is nothing can reflect upon itself, inquire into the nature of its own being, but man; and shall we only resemble the beasts, to see those things which are without us, and not turn our eyes inward, and see what workmanship of God there is in our souls, and what conformity there is between us and our Creator, between us and our Redeemer? Shall we put such an affront upon ourselves, as to banish the noblest part of our souls from its proper operation? A frequent examination of ourselves would ballast our life, keep faith and repentance fresh and vigorous. Let us take heed of a spiritual laziness, and saying, 'There is a lion in the way;' let us remember it is necessary. and though it be difficult, it is not so in itself, but by reason of our averseness to it. The difficulty may be cured by diligence; the necessity of it, and the advantages of it, should both inflame our desires to it, and increase our pains in it. Certainly there can be no more dreadful sign of no grace at all than a neglect of trial whether we have grace or no. If we examine not ourselves, prove not ourselves whether we be in the faith, we are reprobates, i. e. unsound, insincere, not in a state of true Christianity.

Author

Stephen Charnock was born in the year of 1628, in the Parish of St. Katherine Cree, London. His mental and moral endowments, his educational acquirements, his habitual seriousness, his sanctified imagination, and his vigorous faith, pre-eminently fitted him for discharging with ability and effect the duties of a herald of the Cross. His discourses, while excelling in solid divinity and argumentative power, were not by any means deficient in their practical bearing, being addressed not more to the understandings than to the hearts of his hearers.

While able to unravel with great acuteness and judgment the intricacies of a nice question in polemics, he could with no less dexterity and skill address himself to the business of the Christian life, or to the casuistry of religious experience. Perspicuous plainness, convincing cogency, great wisdom, fearless honesty, and affectionate earnestness, are the chief characteristics of his sermons. To this it must be added that his preaching was eminently evangelical. So deeply imbued with gospel truth were his discourses, that, like the Book of the Law of old, they might be said to be sprinkled with blood, even the blood of atonement. The Cross was at once the basis on which he rested his doctrinal statements, and the armory from which he drew his most forcible and pointed appeals to the conscience. His aim seems never once to have been to catch applause to himself by the enticing words of man's wisdom, by arraying his thoughts in the motley garb of an affected and gorgeous style, or by having recourse to the tricks of an inflated and meretricious oratory. His sole ambition appears to have been to "turn sinners from the error of their ways;" and for this end he wisely judged nothing to be so well adapted as "holding forth the words of eternal life" in their native simplicity and power, and in a spirit of sincere and ardent devotion. His object

was to move his hearers, not towards himself, but towards his Master.

He was taken home to be with Christ on July 27, 1680.

A DISCOURSE ON CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

A DISCOURSE ON CHRIST OUR PASSOVER For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,-- 1 Corinthians 5:7. THE words are a reason of the apostle's exhortation to the Corinthians to cast out the incestuous person, in regard of the contagion, which might be, by so ill an example, dispersed to others, as a leaven spreads in vapours through the whole lump: "Know you not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" ver. 6. And having used this similitude of leaven, he pursues it in allusion to the custom of the Jews before the celebration of the passover, according to the command, to have no leaven found in their houses at that time, upon the penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel; and with respect to the true design of that ceremonial injunction, exhorts the Corinthians to purge out the old leaven, namely, that person from their society, lust from their hearts, every member of the old Adam, that they might be a new lump answering their holy and heavenly calling. The reason of this exhortation is in the words, "For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," and by his death hath taken away the sin of the world. As the sacrifice of the paschal lamb represented the sacrifice of Christ, so the manner wherein the Israelites celebrated that solemnity with unleavened bread, represents the manner wherewith we ought to celebrate the death of the Redeemer of the world. As therefore our true passover, which is the Lord Jesus, hath been sacrificed for us, let us daily celebrate the memory of it in a manner worthy of so great a grace. As therefore the Jews abstained from all leaven in the time of the figure, let us not only abstain from, but purge out, all things contrary to God, because for this end Christ was sacrificed for us. As the passover was a type of Christ, so the unleavened bread was a type of christians, and of their innocence and purity of life. And that .because you are unleavened by law, you ought to be so: for that is said in Scripture sometimes to be in fact, which ought to be; as, the priest's lips preserve knowledge, that is, ought to preserve knowledge. "Purge out" is very emphatical, and means, Purge it out wholly, that nothing may be left in you, that you may be such as a new lump did figuratively signify. "Christ our passover." The institution of this solemn figure is particularly set down, Exodus 12:3-5, &c. It was appointed by God as a memorial both of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt, and their deliverance from it. After they had been about two hundred years in that country, God, mindful of his promise, sets upon their delivery, and since all the former miracles bad proved unsuccessful for the bending Pharaoh's heart to give the captives liberty to depart, God designs the slaying of the first-born of every Egyptian family, and thereby sending the greatest strength of the nation to another world.

Upon this occasion he orders the Israelites, by Moses, to slay the lamb the fourteenth day of the first month, (which answers to our March,) and to sprinkle the posts of their doors with the blood, and to feast upon the flesh of it in their several, families; and that night the angel comes, and mortally strikes every first-born, none escaping, but those who observed this command of God, and had sprinkled their door-posts with the blood of the slain lamb; every house besides, being made that night a house of mourning. It was an earnest of the Israelites' deliverance, and the Egyptians' calamity.

Observe 1. God's greatest mercies to his, church, are attended with the greatest plagues upon their enemies. The salvation of man is the destruction of sin and the devil: the passover was the salvation of Israel, and ruin of Egypt.

2. God provides for the security of his people, before he lays his wrathful hand upon their adversaries. He provided a Moses to conduct them, an ordinance to comfort and refresh them, before he shoots his arrows into the Egyptians' hearts. God settles this passover as a standing ordinance in the church; a feast throughout their generations, to be kept by an ordinance for ever, Exodus 12:14 so that it was not only, a memorial of a past and temporal deliverance, but the type of a future and spiritual one. As, all the sacrifices were types of what was to be performed in the fulness of time, in the person of the Messiah; so this was a great and signal type, and had its truth, reality, and efficacy, in the death of the Redeemer.

"Christ the passover," that is, the paschal lamb. The lamb was called the passover; the sign for the thing signified by it, 2 Chronicles 35:11. "And they killed the passover," that is, the lamb; for the passover was properly the angel's passing over Israel, when he was sent as an executioner of God's wrath upon the Egyptians, So Matthew 26:17. "Where shall we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" that is, the paschal lamb.

"Our passover:" our paschal lamb. He is called God's lamb, John 1:29. God's in regard of the author, ours in regard of the end; God's lamb in regard of designation, ours in regard of acceptance.

"Our passover." Not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles; that was restrained to the Israelitish nation, this extends in the offers of it to all, and belongs to all that are under the new administration of the covenant of grace.

"For us." Not only for our good, but in our stead, to free us from eternal death, to purchase for us eternal life: sacrifices were substituted in the place of the transgressor, and received the stroke of death which his sin had merited. The title of the paschal lamb is given here to Christ, not only in regard of his meekness and innocence, but in regard of his being a sacrifice, whence he is called the lamb slain, Revelation 5:12 the "lamb that redeems us by his blood," 1 Peter 1:19. Here we have, I. A description of Christ in the type, passover.

II. The end of his death.

Three doctrines may be observed from the words.

Doct. 1. CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER.

Doct. 2. CHRIST IS A SACRIFICE.

Doct. 3. CHRIST IS A SACRIFICE IN OUR STEAD.

Doct. 1. CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER. In allusion to this, he is so often called a lamb, as also in allusion to the lambs offered in the daily sacrifice; but especially in relation to the paschal lamb, which did more fully express, both the nature of his sufferings, and the design of his office: you do not therefore find him expressed in the New Testament by the name of any of those other animals, which were figures of him in the Jewish sacrifices, but only by this of a lamb, as being more

significant of the innocence of his person, the meekness of his nature, his sufficiency for his people, than any other.

I. The design of the passover was to set forth Christ. All the sacrifices, which were appointed by God as parts of worship, were designed to keep up the acknowledgment of the fall of man, his demerit by sin, and to support his faith in the promised Redeemer; for they being instituted, not before the fall, but probably immediately after the first promise of the Seed of the woman, did all refer to that seed promised, whose heel was to be bruised, as to the foundation of their institution; and being unable of themselves to purge the sin of a rational creature, and the spiritual substance of the soul, they must refer to that which was only able to do it: "Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will," Hebrews 10:9, the will of God manifested in the first draught and agreement in heaven, and shadowed in all the sacrifices under the law. When sacrifices of themselves were not, nor could be grateful to God, nor the blood of an animal 'give a due compensation to an offended God for the sin of man, then said Christ, "Lo, I come," as the person represented by those pictures, as the body signified by those shadows. All those institutions, not being designed for any virtue in themselves, but as notices of the intent of God, and the methods he designed for the taking away sin by the promised Seed; that it was to be by blood and death, that this was the agreement between God and the seed so promised; therefore they were, in all those doleful spectacles of blood and slaughter, to look through that veil to the calamities the promised Seed should endure for the taking away sin, and have a prospect of the heinousness of sin, and the sharpness of the sufferings of the Messiah, in the groans and stragglings of those dying creatures. So the design of this passover was ultimately to represent the Messiah to them, by whose blood they were to have a spiritual deliverance from sin and Satan, as, by the blood [of the Lamb, they had a deliverance from the sword of the destroying angel, and afterwards from Pharaoh and the Egyptian pressures. He is therefore called the Lamb of God, as being shadowed by the paschal lamb of the old testament. All things under the law were but shadows of things to come, Heb. x. 1. Christ is the real accomplishment of all; he is our mystical, spiritual, heavenly, perfect passover; therefore those words which are immediately spoken of the paschal lamb, and did immediately respect the passover, "neither shall you break a bone thereof," Exodus 12:4-5. and Numbers 9:12 are said to be fulfilled in Christ the antitype, as if they had been immediately pronounced of him, when they were spoken of the paschal lamb: "For those things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken," John 19:36. And, indeed, if we consider all the circumstances in the institution, they seem not worthy of the wisdom of God, nor are capable of having any reason rendered for them, if they be not referred to some other mystery: and what can that be, but the Redeemer of the world represented thereby? Why should so much care be in the choice and separation of a lamb? What virtue had the blood of a poor animal to secure the house, and the life of the first-born against the sword of a strong and invisible angel? Was the sprinkling of the blood upon the posts a necessary mark for the angel, as though he had not understanding enough to distinguish between the houses and children of the Israelites and Egyptians? Could not God have signified his pleasure to the angel without such a mark, and given him directions for the security of his people? How can we think God should appoint so many ceremonies in it, lay such a charge upon them for the strict observation of them, if he designed it not as a prop to their faith, a ground to expect a higher and spiritual deliverance by the blood of the Messiah, as well as a trial of their obedience, a memorial of their temporal deliverance, and a sign

for the direction of the angel in the execution of his commission.

II. The believers in that time regarded it as a type of the Messiah. "Through faith, he," that is, Moses, "kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them," Hebrews 11:28. It was an illustrious testimony of Moses' faith, to rely upon the promise and good-will of God, and keep the passover, when the blood of a lamb seemed so improbable a means of preserving the Israelites from the destroying angel's sword; yet certainly Moses' faith pierced further, and looked through this shell to the kernel, through this sign to the thing signified by it. Moses could not have esteemed the reproach of Christ, Hebrews 11:26 had he not known Christ; and we cannot suppose so illustrious a prophet, that had such an estimation of Christ as to value his reproaches, did terminate his faith upon the outward action and the bare type, but pierced further to the promised Seed, as well as Abel in his sacrifice. It is not likely that his faith stuck only in the effusion of the blood of an animal, and did not see the effusion of the blood of the Messiah, whose reproach he had been so willing to bear. It had been too low a faith for so great a man, not to regard the spiritual deliverance promised to be wrought by the bruising the heel of the Seed of the woman. Who can think Moses utterly ignorant of the design of that promise? And if not, who can think his faith should terminate in the outward sign, and that the apostle should give such encomiums to a faith of no higher an elevation, than that which respected the command of God in that present affair? Moses' faith had been great in former commands; why should the apostle skip over them, if he had not designed to show his faith in the Messiah figured in the passover? The apostle doth not speak of faith in God simply considered in that chapter, but of faith in the Mediator or high Priest, whom he had discoursed of throughout that book. How could the ancient believers eat the same spiritual food, and drink of the same spiritual rock, which was Christ, without faith in him, and respecting him as the object of faith in that rock and manna? 1 Corinthians 10:3-4. Some of the Jews acknowledge, that the Messiah is to come exactly on that day in which the passover was offered, when they fled out of Egypt. And to redeem Israel the 15th day of the month Nisan, which was the day wherein Christ by his death redeemed the world. They came out of Egypt the first month, when the moon was at the full, and in the same month, and the same appearance of the moon, did Christ procure our spiritual liberty by his death.

III. The paschal lamb was the fittest to represent Christ. It was a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice in the killing it and sprinkling the blood, a feast in their feeding upon it. It represents Christ as a victim satisfying God, as a feast refreshing us; he was offered to God for the expiation of our sins, he is offered to us for application to our souls. The apostle mentions one in the text, the other in the verse following, "therefore let us keep the feast." A lamb is both clothes and meat: Christ is clothing to us, by righteousness to cover our nakedness; and food to us, by his body and blood to satisfy our appetite: a sacrifice, and a feast, for us. The truth of this proposition will appear, 1. In the resemblance between the paschal lamb, and the Redeemer.

2. In the effects or consequents of it.

1. In the resemblance between the paschal lamb and the Redeemer.

(1.) A lamb is a meek creature. It hurts none, is hurt by all; it hangs not back, when it is led to the slaughter; it cries not when it is pierced; no greater emblem of patience to be found among irrational creatures. To this the prophet likens our Saviour, when he saith, "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,"

Isaiah 53:7. How strange was his humility in entering into such a life! how much more stupendous in submitting to such a death, as shameful as his life was miserable! For the Son of God to be counted the vilest of men; the Sovereign of angels, to be made lower than his creatures; the Lord of heaven, to become a worm of the earth; for a Creator to be spurned by his creatures--is an evidence of a meekness not to be paralleled. The soldiers that spat upon him, and mocked him, met not with a reproachful expression from him. He held his peace at their clamours, offered his back to their scourges, reviled them not when he lay under the greatest violences of their rage, was patient under his sufferings, while he was despised more than any man by the people. His calmness was more stupendous than their rage, and the angels could not but more inexpressibly wonder at the patience of the sufferer, than the unmercifulness of the executioners; he was more willing to die, than they were to put him to death; he suffered not by force, he courted the effusion of his blood, when he knew that the hour which his Father had appointed, and man needed, was approaching. Neither the infamy of the cross, nor the sharpness of the punishment, nor the present and foreseen ingratitude of his enemies, could deter him from desiring and effecting man's salvation. He went to it, not only as a duty, but an honour; and was content for a while to be the sport of devils, that he might be the spring of salvation to men. And when he was in the furnace of divine wrath, and deserted by his Father, he utters a sensible, but not a murmuring expostulation; he received our sins upon his shoulders, to confer his divine benefits upon our hearts; he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, he despised the shame, submitted to the cross, his own worldly reputation was of no value with him, so he might be a sacrifice for the redemption of forlorn man; and, in the whole scene, manifested a patience greater than their cruelty. From this paschal lamb typifying the Redeemer, the Jews might have learned not to expect a Messiah wading through the world in blood and slaughter, sheathing his sword in the bodies of his enemies, and flourishing with temporal victories and prosperity; but one, meek, humble, and lowly, suiting the temper of the lamb which represented him in the passover.

(2.) It was to be a lamb without blemish, Exodus 12:5. It was to be entire in all its parts, sound, without bruise or maim; and the reason why it was separated four days before the killing of it was, that they might have time to understand whether it had any spot or defect in it: so is the Lamb of God; he was holy in the production of his nature, as well as in the actions of his life; though he was of Adam's substance, he was not contained in Adam's seminal virtue; he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, therefore unblemished in his conception, unspotted in his birth. From the first moment of his conception, he was filled with all supernatural grace, according to the capacity of his humanity; his union with the divine nature, secured him against the sinful infirmities of our nature, and made all supernatural perfections due to him, whereby he might be fitted for all holy operations. As he was that holy thing in his birth, Luke 1:35 so he was righteous to the last moment of his life. The law of God was within his heart, signified by the tables of the law laid up in the ark, a type of his human nature, which possessed in a sovereign degree all the habits of the most accomplished righteousness that ever was in the world; to which Peter alludes, "a lamb without spot and blemish," 1 Peter 1:19 a divine idea of all virtue, who infinitely surpassed all the holiness of men or angels. The apostle multiplies expressions to declare it, and all little enough to express it: "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Hebrews 7:26. He was like us in our nature, but not in our blemishes; he had our flesh, but without the least stain of imperfection; he had the likeness of sinful flesh, but there was not any inherency of sin in him, or adherency of it to him, in the assumption of our nature, Hebrews 4:15 as the serpent upon the pole had the likeness,

but not the venom of the serpent. He was not. subjected to our sin, as he was to our natural infirmities; as he had the form of a servant, without the impurities of our slavery; and, in all the days of his flesh, was not found guilty of one fault to God or man.

It was necessary he should be so. Had he been obnoxious to sin, he had not been able to take away the sins of the world; no impure person could have made our peace with God, because he could not have made his own peace, nor have procured quietness in his own conscience; he could not have merited for himself, much less have wrought any righteousness for others.

(3.) The lamb was to be chosen, and set apart three days, and killed the fourth in the evening, Exodus 12:6. Or between the two evenings; as it is in the Hebrew. Our Saviour was separate from men, manifested himself in the work of his prophetic office three years and upwards, before he was offered up as a sacrifice in the fourth year, after he had been solemnly inaugurated in the exercise of his office. Their keeping the lamb in custody, and tying it at the feet of their beds, that being in view it might remind them of their servitude in Egypt, and deliverance from thence by the mighty hand of God, noted the humiliation of Christ before his death, which is called his prison, and therefore the beginning of his exaltation is called a taking him from prison and from judgment," Isaiah 53:8. As the lamb was set apart the tenth day, so some observe, that, in answer to the type, Christ did on the tenth day solemnly and in triumph enter into Jerusalem, and by the same gate through which lambs were led to sacrifice; and he was crucified that very day and time wherein the paschal lamb was to be slain, between the two evenings; that is, the declining of the sun from noon, which was the first evening, and the setting of it, which was the second; for it was about the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon, the usual time wherein they killed the passover, that Christ was offered up as> a complete "sacrifice to God," Matthew 27:46, Matthew 27:50. It was ordered by God to be killed in the evening, to signify the sacrifice of the Messiah in the evening of the world. He was crucified at the end of the second age of the world, the age of the law, and the beginning of the third age, that of the gospel, which is called in scripture the last times, Hebrews 1:2 and "the ends of the world," 1 Corinthians 10:11 which Peter alludes to, when he compares him to the paschal "lamb without blemish, manifested in these last times for you," 1 Peter 1:19-20. The death of Christ was in the first evening of the world. The sun is turned; the world shall not last so long after the coming of Christ, as it did before; the state of the world is far declined, and the consummation of all things is not far off, since more than sixteen hundred years are past, since the first evening began.

(4.) "The lamb was to be roasted with fire whole, not sodden," Exodus 12:8-9. To put them in mind of the hardship they endured in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and as a type of the scorching sufferings of the Redeemer, whose "strength was dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue cleaved to his jaws," Psalms 22:15 probably alluding to this roasting of the paschal lamb. He bore the wrath of that God who is a consuming fire, without any water, any mitigation or comfort in his torments. It may note also the gradual rising of the suffering of Christ. As his exaltation was not all at one time, but by degrees, so were his sufferings, by outward wounds, cutting reproaches, and inward agonies. The pains of the body were inexpressible in regard of the nervousness, and therefore sensibility, of those parts, his hands and feet, which were pierced upon the cross. The consideration of those millions of sins laid upon him, could not but be an inexpressible grief to the pure nature of Christ, had there been nothing of the wrath of God mixed with it. But this bodily death and grief was not all; the wrath of God dreadfully flamed out against his soul; there was the

principal seat of the sufferings of Christ, because the soul is the principal seat of that sin for which he suffered. What should have been inflicted upon us, was inflicted upon him: but we had not only merited the death of the body, but a death joined with the curse of God tormenting the soul. He tasted death, the death which the devil had the power of, that "death which men feared," Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 2:14-15 which is the weight of that eternal death due to sin. How sharp must that be, which had the bitterness of a thousand deaths, for those millions of sins which Christ bore in his body, every one of which had deserved an entire death from the hand of God! How grievous was that death, since he that was more courageous than all the martyrs, sweat drops of blood at the approach of the cross; and when he was upon it, uttered that terrible complaint, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me" words which never came out of the mouth of any of the martyrs in the strength of their torments; so that, the sufferings of Christ were of that weight, that a mere creature would have sunk under them, not only the holiest man, but the highest angel.

(5.) "Not a bone of the paschal lamb was broken," Exodus 12:46. Which, according to the opinion of some, signified that kind of death to which the breaking of the bones belonged, and that was crucifixion; it being the custom to break the bones of malefactors, that their punishment might be shortened. This was fulfilled in our Saviour, John 19:36. Death had not a full power over him, he was not broken to pieces by the greatness of his sufferings, but surmounted his enemies upon the cross, and was reserved entire for a resurrection.

There may be other resemblances noted. As the lamb was to be a male, which implies the perfection and strength of the sacrifice, not above a year old, the sufferings of Christ were in the prime of his age.

2. There is a resemblance in the effects or consequences of the passover.

(1.) The diverting the destroying angel by the sprinkling of the blood upon the posts, to be a mark to the angel, to spare the first-born of such houses, was the main end expressed in the institution, Exodus 12:12-13. Their preservation could not be merited by the blood of an animal. It had a higher cause, the blood of Christ, which was represented by it; to which purpose the observation of Chrysostom is remarkable. As the statues of kings, though they are inanimate things, yet are sanctuaries to preserve those that fly to them; not because they are statues, but because they represent the prince: so the blood of the Lamb preserved the families, not because it was blood, but because it represented the blood of the Messiah. This blood quenches that fire of wrath we had merited, turns away that vengeance which would else consume us. By virtue of this sacrifice, "we pass from death to life," John 5:24. When God shall judge the world, he will pass over those whom he sees sprinkled with the blood of his Well-beloved, and turn from them the edge of that consuming sword, which shall strike through the hearts of those that are without this blood of sprinkling. It is only under the warrant of this blood, that we can be safe. The Redeemer's blood shed for us, and sprinkled on us, preserves our souls to eternal life. As the destroying sword did not touch the Israelites, so condemning wrath shall not strike those that are under the protection of it; death shall have no power over them. The blood of the paschal lamb wrought a temporal deliverance, and this blood a spiritual and eternal one.

(2.) Upon this succeeded that liberty God had designed for them, Exodus 12:31. As it secured them from death, so it was the earnest of their deliverance, and broke the chains of their slavery. The death of Christ is the foundation of the full deliverance of his people, and the earnest of the

fruition of the purchased and promised inheritance. This was the conquest of Pharaoh, upon which soon after followed his destruction.

Pharaoh's heart was not bent till the celebration of this passover; that which succeeded upon it, laid him more flat than all the former plagues, whereby he had smarted. The promises concerning the Messiah, and the sacrifices which were types of him, terrified the devil, Pharaoh's antitype; but only the blood of Christ shed, conquers him, and pulls captives from his chains. The Israelites' slavery ended, when their sacrifices were finished; the efficacy of this Divine Passover delivers men from a spiritual captivity, under the yoke of sin, and the irons of Satan, instates them in the liberty of the children of God, whereby they become a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a free and peculiar people. This strikes off the shackles, works an escape from the pressures of spiritual enemies, changes a deplorable captivity into a glorious liberty, and reduces Satan to so impotent a condition, that all his strength, and all his stratagems, cannot render him master of that soul that is once freed from his chains. As after this passover, the Egyptian strength was so scattered, that they were as ready to force that people to their liberty, as before they were desirous to detain them their slaves, and were never able to reduce them to their former chains.

(3.) After this passover they do not only enjoy their liberty, but begin their march to Canaan, the promised and delightful land. They then turn their backs upon Egypt, and their faces towards Canaan; and, after a pilgrimage in the desert, they enter into the land flowing with milk and honey; so, by the merit of the sacrifice of Christ, the true Israelite turns his face from earth to heaven, from a world that lies in wickedness, to an inheritance of the saints in light, and travels towards Canaan, whither he shall be sure to enter after he hath finished his pilgrimage, to feed upon the milk and honey, the glory and happiness proper to that state. Then shall all the ends of this passover be fulfilled and completed "in the kingdom of God," Luke 22:16 and the soul remain for ever in a glorious state beyond the reach of its former tyrants, free from all fear of slavery, for ever rejoicing in the happy accomplishment of the promises of God. In short, as after the celebration of this passover in Egypt, all the promises of God to them began to take place, and pass into performance; so by the death of Christ, the true passover, all the promises were made yea and amen, in him, and began to be made good to every believer.

1. Of information. Is Christ called our passover? Then,

(1.) The study of the old testament is advantageous. The apostle here writes to the Corinthians, among whom were not only Hellenites, but Gentiles, who could not understand the nature and ends of the passover, without the knowledge of the old testament; by this they are implicitly directed to the study of it. The old testament verifies the new, and the new illustrates the old. The old shows the promises of God, and the new the performance; what was predicted in the old, is fulfilled in the new. By comparing both together, the wisdom of God in his conduct is cleared, and the truth of God in his word confirmed. The old testament delivers the types, the new interprets them: the old presents them like money in a bag; the new spreads them, and discovers the value of the coin; the Israelites in the old felt the weight of the ceremonies, believers in the new enjoy the riches of them.

(2.) Upon what a slender thread doth the doctrine of transubstantiation hang! Christ is here called the passover; was the paschal lamb therefore substantially the body of Christ? "Were those lambs that were slain in Egypt, or at any other time in the celebration of this ordinance, transubstantiated

into Christ? Yet Christ is as absolutely here called the passover, and in other places the lamb, as the bread in the sacrament is called his body, or the wine his blood. Christ is said to be the rock, of which the Israelites drank, 1 Corinthians 10:4. Was the rock or the water that flowed from it, transubstantiated into Christ? But in scripture the name proper to the thing represented, is given to that which represents it. The lamb is called the passover, because it is a memorial of the angel's passing over the Israelites' families, and not only called so at the first institution, but above fifteen hundred years after that miraculous mercy. So the bread and wine are called the body and blood of Christ, because they are memorials and signs of his body and blood. If the church of the Jews spake figuratively in the case of the passover, what difficulty is there, that Christ should call the memorials of his body and blood by the name of the things they signified?

(3.) It gives us a probable reason for the change of the sabbath from the seventh day to the first. That it is changed, is evident by apostolical example. It is probable that from the creation the year began in September, the autumnal equinox, the fruits being on the trees at the creation; but now God orders the beginning of the year from the time of this first passover, and the consequences following upon it, their deliverance from Egypt, which was in March the vernal equinox: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you," Exodus 12:2. Had the year began from March at the beginning, it had not been so proper to command them to begin it from that month, which they had always observed before as the beginning of the year. The Israelites had been as it were buried in Egypt, and this being the month of their resurrection, should be the first month of the year. This change of the beginning of the year, gives us a probable reason of the change of the sabbath. If the beginning of the year were changed upon the account of the type, a day might well be changed upon the account of the antitype. If this in the figure were counted greater than creation, that the month of the world's creation must give place to it, the substance of this figure appearing, might well be the cause of the change of a day, and the seventh day of the creation give place to the first day of the perfection of redemption.

(4.) The ancient Jews were under a covenant of grace. Christ was the end, the spirit, the life of their sacrifices. The passover, rock, sacrifices, manna, were the swaddling-bands wherein he was wrapt. They ate of the same spiritual meat, drank of the same spiritual drink: the rock which followed them, cherished them, and watered them, was Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:3-4. Christ to come was set forth to them as an object of faith. Christ was the rock, the passover sacramentally. Their sacraments and ours were the same in effect, though diverse in signs. Hence their sacraments are attributed to us, circumcision and the passover, spiritually; ours in the same manner to them, baptism and the Lord's supper, 1 Corinthians 10:2-3. They indeed had Christ, as it were, in his infancy; we in his ripe and full age. They had him under the obscure veils of lambs, bullocks, goats; we have him in his person. They had the sun under a cloud, we the sun at noon-day in his glory.

2.Comfort. In the security Christ procures. The destroying angel was not to enter into any sprinkled house; no passage was afforded to him. The wrath of God, or the malice of the devil, can have no power over them that are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. In the efficacy. The blood of the lamb was but a sign of that deliverance of the Israelites, but could not purge their defiled consciences; but the blood of our Lamb hath merited our salvation, can cleanse our consciences from dead and condemning works, to serve the living God, and rejoice in him, who without this sprinkling will be to

us a consuming fire. As the passover was killed, that it might be their food as well as their security; so was Christ crucified, that he might be our atonement and our nourishment, our shield and our food, to make us partakers of his benefits by a spiritual application, and a close incorporation of us with himself. This comfort is the greater, by how much the tyrant we are delivered from, is more dreadful than Pharaoh, whose design is not only, like his, to afflict our bodies, but to plunge our souls and bodies into the same hell with himself. It is from the wrath of God, our Passover hath delivered us: and what is the anger of Pharaoh to the fury of an offended Deity, kindled against us by our multiplied transgressions? It is true, deliverance is yet but begun; it is not yet perfect; miseries, and spiritual contests, are to be expected. Pharaoh will pursue, but shall not overtake; the sea shall ruin the Egyptians, but secure the Israelites; death shall not swallow up those who are sprinkled with this holy blood. Consider also, if God were so punctual to his word in sa light an instance as the blood of the lamb, he will be as stedfast to it in so great an instance as the blood of his Son beheld cleaving to the soul.

3.Exhortation.

(1.) Thankfully remember this passover. A redemption from divine wrath, a spiritual life and liberty, the fruits and purchase of this Lamb, are incomparably beyond the temporal deliverance conferred upon the Jews. The giving thanks was a duty annexed to the eating of the paschal lamb, wherein they blessed God for the mercy showed to their fathers in bringing them out of Egypt. How infinitely more precious is the blood of the Son of God than the blood of a silly animal! How highly doth the benefit of the one surmount the immediate fruit of the other! And is it not fit our praises should surpass those of the Jews for the old passover? Remember it with bitterness. The Israelites ate the passover with bitter herbs; shall we be without it, when we consider the cause of our slavery, and the means of our deliverance? A bitterness of soul will make the taste of the benefit of Christ more delicious.

(2.) Inquire whether He be our passover. He is a passover, but is he a lamb eaten by us, owned by us? He is ours by the gift of God, but is he ours by the acceptance of our souls? It is the most useful, most necessary inquiry we can make. All the comfort of possessions in the world consists in the word mine, ours, and the use as ours; all the comfort of spiritual mercy consists in property, possession, and fruition. If he be our lamb, we must be like him, we must learn of him. As he is the cause of our expiation, he must be the copy of our imitation, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest unto your souls," Matthew 11:29. No rest without a sense of sin, and humiliation for it. This Lamb is ours, in the liberty, life, glory, and rest he hath purchased, when we are like him, when we learn of him.

(3.) Have faith in the blood of Christ. The killing the lamb, signified the death of Christ; the sprinkling the blood, signified the application of it by faith. It was not the blood contained in the veins of the lamb, or shed upon the ground, that was the mark of deliverance, but sprinkled upon the posts; nor is it the blood of Christ circulating in his body, or shed upon the cross, which solely delivers us, but as applied by faith to the heart. That was sprinkled upon every house which desired safety, and this upon every soul that desires happiness. Satan will have an undoubted right over all that are without the token of this blood, as the destroying angel had over every house that was not sprinkled with the blood of the passover. This was the sanctuary of the Israelites, the want of it, the death of the Egyptian first-born; from the prince to the peasant; from him that sat

upon the throne, to him that was in the dungeon, Exodus 12:29. Without this blood of sprinkling, neither prince nor beggar can possibly escape; the one's grandeur cannot privilege, nor the other's misery procure pity. The blood was to be taken and put upon the posts; this condition was requisite. To have a part in the great passover of our Lord, the condition is to sprinkle our hearts by faith with his blood, 1 Peter 1:2. Had an Israelite's family neglected this, it had felt the edge of the angel's sword; the lamb had not availed him, not by a defect of the sacrifice, but by their own negligence or contempt of the condition. Or had they used any other mark, they had not diverted the stroke; no work, no blood, but the blood and sufferings of the Redeemer, can take away the sin of the world; without it, every man in the world lies in the sin of his nature under the wrath of God. If any thing else in the world had a virtue for it, it could not prevail, unless God would accept it, because he did not appoint it. This only is designed to be our passover; where else can we find any remedy against the stings of our consciences, any ease under the weight of our sins, any consolation against divine wrath?

(4.) Let us leave the service of sin. The Israelites after this passover did no more work at the brick-kilns of Egypt; they ceased to be Pharaoh's slaves, and began to be the Lord's freemen. God intended no more to turn them to their former labour; he would have them eat their passover with their loins girt in the habit of travellers. We must be in a readiness to leave the confines of Egypt, all commerce with, and service of sin and Satan, and have our faces set towards Canaan, our steps directed to observe his commands for our rule, to attain his promises for our comfort, and go forward rejoicing in his goodness, celebrating his name, offering our souls and bodies to him, which is a reasonable service to Christ our passover.

Doct. 2. CHRIST IS A SACRIFICE. The word too properly signifies to kill as a sacrifice. Some dispute whether the paschal lamb was a sacrifice, because in a sacrifice something was offered to God either in whole or in part, but the paschal lamb was not offered to God, but eaten by the people; it was killed, to the end that the blood should be sprinkled upon the posts of the doors, and therefore it is rather a sacrament than a sacrifice. Again, the Jews did not sacrifice out of the temple, and therefore in their captivities they did not sacrifice, but both then and now they celebrate the passover. Others again think it a sacrifice, because the sprinkling of the blood upon the posts, was in a manner an offering it to God to turn away his wrath, ("Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of passover be left until the morning," Exodus 34:25.) and a means of reconciliation to him, "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the Lord," Deuteronomy 16:2. But whether properly a sacrifice or not, yet it was significant of the propitiating blood of Christ, the future grand sacrifice, by virtue of which we have our deliverance. The apostle might here allude to the passover and other sacrifices, all which did prefigure the spiritual redemption by the Messiah. A sacrifice is defined to be, a religious oblation of something consecrated and dedicated to God by the ministry of a priest according to God's institution, to be offered for a testimony of the worship of God and an external symbol.

I shall lay down some propositions for the illustrating this doctrine.

I. Sacrifices were instituted as types of Christ.

1 They were instituted by God. No satisfactory reason can be rendered of the custom of sacrificing derived from the first age of the world, practised by all nations, till the appearance of the gospel abolished it in those places where it shone. It could not be a dictate of the law of nature inscribed

in all men's hearts, for then they would have been of force still. Christianity doth not extinguish any beam of natural light, but adds a clearness to it; it abolishes only what was corrupt, or only ceremonial. Though natural light could not invent them, yet it made them entertainable by all, while they were stung with the conscience of sin, and expectations of vengeance. Men might know that they were unlike to what they were in their creation; they found their light darkened, their beauty defaced, and might suppose that a God of infinite goodness did not send them forth in such a shape out of his mint; this deformity must come upon them for some provocation, and by the means of their own sin. They also found the marks of God's anger upon them, saw and felt his thundering judgments in the world, they had a notion of the vindictive justice of God, they had frequent manifestations of it upon themselves and others. This the apostle affirms generally of the heathens, "They knew the judgment of God, that they which commit such things, are worthy of death;" Romans 1:23 they had a sentiment of God and revenging justice in their consciences, that it did not become the holiness and righteousness of the divine nature, to let their rebellions remain unpunished. The apostle speaks not there of any supernatural revelation, but the natural manifestation by the creatures, whereby his justice was discovered, as well as his eternal power and Godhead. Upon this account sacrifices were practised among them, as seeming to them congruous means for the expiation of sin, and to put a stop to the wrath of God, either feared by them, or already kindled among them. For by this action they confessed their desert of death for their crimes, acknowledged God's sovereignty and right over all they had, and owned his mercy in accepting in their stead the life of an irrational animal. For when men are sensible of the anger of God, the next thought in order, is how to escape it. When men see a magistrate suffer murders and violences in a nation to go unpunished, they generally have a horror of it, and expect some judgment of God, till an expiation be made by the death of the offender. And could they reasonably think God to be void of that virtue of justice, which is commendable over all the world by the light of nature, when those perfections of human nature, left in the midst of corruption, are but as little sparks to those which are infinite in God. They were at first instituted by God; though we have not the institution of them in express words, yet we have the practice in Abel, Genesis 4:4 afterwards in Noah, "Noah offered burnt offerings on the altar," Genesis 7:20. And since the apostle speaks of "Abel's offering a sacrifice in. faith," Hebrews 11:4 it must be God's command; for no act of worship of a human invention can please God. The demand might be made, Who hath required those things at your hands? It had not been formally good, unless offered in faith; nor had it been a fit ground or medium of faith, without a divine stamp upon it. If the foundation were not divine, the act could not be acceptable.

2.No other reason can be rendered of the institution of them, but as typical of the great sacrifice of the Redeemer. The scripture gives us the only account of this; all nations in the world without the scripture are in the dark, as to the design of those sacrifices, though they practised them conformably to the sentiments of their consciences. The institution of them from the beginning of the world cannot reasonably be concluded to be for any other end, than to prefigure some sufficient sacrifice, able to appease the wrath of God, and pacify the consciences of men, and to instruct men in what was to be brought upon the stage in time, in the exhibition of the person of the Redeemer. In the state of innocence we find no mention of them, nor could they have had any place, had man continued in his created rectitude and integrity. The covenant of works, which then was the rule and ground of man's standing, required not faith in a Redeemer, and therefore implied no such act as sacrificing. Man then had no relation to God but as a creature; and,

persisting in obedience, could not by the righteous law of God be subject to death, and therefore no other subjected to death for him; for to have any one to die for us, implies that we had merited death ourselves. It cannot enter into the reason of man to imagine what use they could be for in that state. Death was not due to the righteousness of man's nature, but to his corruption. Adam stood upon his own foundation, and was the foundation of all his posterity, and no person was substituted in his room. What could sacrifices then represent? Whereof could they be typical? Could they be for the confession of sin? There was none to confess. Could they be to represent a death deserved? There was no crime committed whereby to merit it? Could it be to typify Christ to come? there was no revelation of him till after the fall, Genesis 3:15. And supposing, as some do, that Christ should have been incarnate, had man persisted in his first integrity; yet none suppose Christ should have been crucified in that nature, without the entrance of sin. What end could be supposed of shedding his blood? For satisfaction of justice? Justice was not provoked. For example? Man perfect in all virtue needed none; besides, he was not capable of the exercise of suffering virtues, who was not capable of suffering in that state. They were appointed therefore after the fall, as representations of this sacrifice, so necessary for the expiation of sin. And some conclude, with probability, that they were put in practice immediately after the making the promise of the seed of the woman, though there be no express scripture for it, from Genesis 3:21. "God made them coats of skins:" which probably were the skins of slain beasts, very likely consumed by fire from heaven; as the Jews say Abel's sacrifice was, which was a token of God's acceptance of it. This was probably done for the confirmation of the truth of the promise, the clearer representing the design of it to them, by substituting another in the room of the offender, and comforting them thereby, since "without shedding of blood is no remission," Hebrews 9:22. And of those sacrifices the skins were appointed to be the garments of the first man and woman, to put them in mind of their apostasy, and the way of their recovery, and the righteousness of another, wherein they were to stand before God. But howsoever it be, we cannot suppose Abel to be the first that offered sacrifice, and that one hundred and twenty-nine years should run without the offering of any. It is likely Abel was slain in that year, because Seth was born in the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam's age, Genesis 5:3. Indeed sacrifices, as they looked backward, could be no other than a transcript of the agreement between the Father and the Son, of the one's paying, and the other's accepting the price of blood for the redemption of man: and as they looked forward, a type of the real performance of the sufferings on the one part, and the acceptance of them on the other part, when the fulness of time should come, wherein they were actually to be undergone. This tradition of sacrifices was handed down to all nations of the world, but the knowledge of the end of them was lost. Yet in an exercise of reason they might rise to a consideration, that this low blood could not be a compensation for sin, as not being proportioned to the dignity of him with whom they had to do. But as to the true end of them, the representation of a higher sacrifice, they were not able to discern it by all the reason in the world, after they had lost the revelation of it. By the way: this adds a credit to the scripture, since it gives us an account of the reason of that which was practised by all nations, which they could not without revelation render any tolerable reason for. The scripture makes it plain. God would have a representation of that which the Redeemer was to offer in the fulness of time for the abolition of sin. As men always need a satisfaction of the justice of God, so God would have it, that in all their worship there should be a mark of this necessity, and some presage that one day there should be a sacrifice eternally efficacious, the reality of which was represented by this figure.

3. Christ did really answer to these types. They were all Christ in a cloud, the substance did answer to the shadows, and he was used in such a manner as the figures of him were. Christ was a victim put in the place of the sinner, to appease the anger of God; and as sins were laid upon the head of the sacrifice, so God put "upon him the iniquities of us all," Isaiah 53:6. In regard of this typicalness of the legal administration, Christ is often called a lamb, and the "Lamb of God," John 1:29 and a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, not only in the decree, but in the type of him, the first sacrifice mentioned in the scripture, which was a firstling of the flock, Genesis 4:2, Genesis 4:4. Abel being a keeper of sheep. To those figures of him he seems to refer in his last speech upon his cross, John 19:30. "It is finished." The whole design of the daily and extraordinary sacrifices was completed, the demerit of sin and severity of divine justice were manifested, and the truth of God, as well as his love, made glorious therein; upon which followed the rending of the veil, and the setting heaven open for the entrance of all that believed in him, to approach to God upon the account of this sacrifice.

II. The sacrifices thus instituted, were of them selves insufficient, and could not expiate sin; they must therefore receive their accomplishment in some other. Being but shadows by their institution, they could make nothing perfect, (Hebrews 10:1-11 where, and in the following verses, the apostle lays the glory of the legal sacrifices in the dust,) nor really atone, though they typically did: they did but evidence the guilt of sin and misery of men, whence the law is called a minister of death.

1. It was not consistent with the honour of God to be contented with the blood of a beast for an expiation of sin. How could there be in it a discovery of the severity of his justice, the purity of his holiness, or the grandeur of his grace? How would he have been known in his infinite hatred of sin, if he had accepted the blood of an abject animal as an atonement for the sin of a spiritual soul. Was it becoming the majesty of God, who had denounced a curse in the law upon the transgressors of it, and published it with so terrible a solemnity as thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, which made it pass under the title of a "fiery law," Deuteronomy 33:2 in regard of the severe menaces against the transgressor, to make so light of it, to accept of the mangling a few beasts, in the place of the offender against it? Should he appear on Mount Sinai with ten thousand of his angels in the giving of it, to let all the threatenings of it vanish into smoke? Was it likely all those curses should be poured out upon a few irrational and innocent creatures, who had never broken that law? Can it be imagined, that after so terrible a proclamation, he should acquiesce in so light a compensation, as the death of a poor beast? No man can reasonably have such despicable thoughts of the majesty, justice, and holiness of God, or the vileness of sin and greatness of its provocation, as to imagine that the one could be contented, or the other expiated, by the blood of a lamb or bullock. Our own consciences will tell us, that if God will have a sacrifice, it must be proportioned to the majesty of him whom we have offended, and the greatness of the crime we have committed.

2. They have no proportion to the sin of man. The sin of a rational creature is too foul to be expiated by the blood of an irrational creature; nor could the blood of a human body, though the first-born, the strength and delight of man, Micah 6:7 much less of a beast, bear any proportion to the sin of the soul: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin," Hebrews 10:4. The butchery of so poor a creature, cannot be any compensation for that which is a disparagement of the Creator of the world. What alliance was there between the nature of a beast,

and that of a man? An inferior nature can never atone for the sin of a nature superior to it. There is indeed in the groans of those dying creatures some demonstration of God's wrath, but no bringing in an everlasting righteousness, nor any vindication of the honour of the law.

3. The reiteration of them shows their insufficiency. Had the wrath of God been appeased by them, why should the fire burn perpetually upon the altar? Why should it be fed perpetually with the carcasses of beasts? As often as they were offered, a conscience of sin was excited in the presenter of them, iniquity was called to remembrance, Hebrews 10:2-3. The whole scene of that administration loudly published, that the wrath against sin was not appeased, the guilt of the soul not wiped off. If a man had presented a sacrifice for his sin one day, and fallen into the same, or another, before night, he must have repeated his sacrifice for a new expiation; had there been ability in them to perform so great a thing, there had not been a repetition. They were rather a commemoration of sin, and confession of it, than expiations of any; rather accusers, than atoners.

4. God had often spoken slightly of them. He resembles them to the cutting off a dog's neck, when done with an unholy heart, Isaiah 66:3. While the temple stood, he struck their fingers off from hanging upon them, Isaiah 1:11-13. indeed he would not reprove them for their offerings, Psalms 1:1-6, Psalms 8:1-9 but he would not have them place their justification in them. He professeth he had no delight in them. If all sacrifices of the law were not of such value, as love to him, and fear of him, they could not expiate; and if that which was more excellent than those, were too weak to effect it, an utter inability must remain in the other. He doth frequently predict the abolition of them, and hath destroyed the temple to which he had affixed them, which remains in desolation without a sacrifice to this day. Besides, he never provided a typical remedy for all sins in them; some transgressors were to be cut off without a sacrifice for them, according to the judicial law, the rule of the government of that people; upon which account David argues, that God did not delight in them : "Thou desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt-offerings," Psalms 51:16 because he had provided no sacrifices for those sins David at that time was guilty of; whereupon he desires, Psalms 51:18 that God would do good to Sion in his good pleasure; bring forth that Redeemer out of Sion which he had promised, whose sacrifice being a sacrifice of righteousness, should be infinitely delightful to him. Since therefore it is unbecoming the majesty of God to be satisfied with the blood of a calf or goat, since it bears no proportion to the sin of man, since he never intended those institutions to be perpetual, since the threatenings of the law must, if God be a God of truth, have their accomplishment either in the person offending, or in some undertaker for him, capable of bearing them in his stead; there must be some other sacrifice suited to the majesty of God, able to make an expiation proportionable to the sin of man, a sacrifice able to remove the guilt, and pacify the conscience; a rest for God, and a security for the creature. The natural order of things requires, and the whole design of those legal institutions declares, that as he that keeps the law, should have a reward from the goodness of God; so he that breaks it, should endure a punishment from the justice of God; and every man being a breaker of the law, must either sink under the menaces of it, or present a sufficient sacrifice to God to avert his wrath, a precious blood that may quench the flames of his anger, that God may say to the sinner, I have found, and accepted a ransom for thee. And what is said of this, may be said of all our duties and performances, the staves upon which men naturally lean for acceptation of their persons. They can no more be acceptable in themselves to God, or remedies, for man, than the legal sacrifices, which had no merit in themselves, but represented that which was grateful to God, and meritorious

for the creature; and whatsoever virtue and efficacy they had, was not of themselves, but from that which they shadowed.

III. Such a sacrifice therefore is necessary for a sinful creature. No creature can be such a sacrifice; as the apostle argues, "If righteousness be by the law, then was Christ dead in vain," Galatians 2:21. Upon the same account, it maybe concluded, if expiation could be made by a creature for himself, in vain did God send his Son to be a propitiation for sin. Had man himself been sufficient for it, God's sending his Son had rather appeared an act of cruelty to Christ, than of mercy to us. Who could think God should expose the delight of his soul to our infirmities, and a shameful death, if a sufficient sacrifice could have been found elsewhere? Besides, the wrath of God being so terrible, that the human nature of Christ trembled at it, how is any creature ever able to bear the horror of it, and stand as a sacrifice under the weighty strokes of that justice?

1. What is a sacrifice for sin, must be pure and sinless. God will not accept a defiled offering. He that provokes him by his own offence, is not capable of appeasing him for his own or other's. The least blemish in a typical lamb rendered it unfit for the altar. God is infinitely pure, who is offended; the law is exactly holy, which is contemned; a compensation cannot be made to a holy God, and a righteous law, by the criminal, without enduring an infinite penalty, which, since it cannot be infinite, it must be perpetual. As he would be always suffering, so he would be always sinning, and wrath can never be appeased by that which provokes it, at the same time it endeavours to pacify it. What is sinful can never be capable of pleasing an infinite holiness. If a man had but one sin, and thought to expiate that by any thing he could do, he would still need another sacrifice to expiate the sin of the former, and so would be always satisfying and always sinning, since there is "no man that doth good and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20) in the doing of it: he could not possibly find any thing in himself, or in any corrupted creature, where he might rest his foot with any content and security. Where any sin is, though but one, there can be no merit. Whatsoever is done after all our strength is gone, is done by the grace of God; in that case God deserves service of us, but we deserve no acceptation from him. Since therefore we are not able, since our fall, of doing one good work, we are not able to offer one acceptable sacrifice; how can man then satisfy for himself, any more than a man that owes a shilling, pays that, by borrowing two; whereby he is so far from paying his debt, that he increaseth it?

2. An infinite sacrifice is necessary for a sin in some respects infinite; for every sin intrencheth upon the honour of an infinite God. An infinite sacrifice is due for an infinite offence. God is infinite in his glory, which is impaired; infinite in his sovereignty, which is degraded; the sacrifice must be of as great a dignity as the offence was of malignity. It must be fully proportioned to the sin of man, and the majesty of God. What man, nay, what creature is capable of. such a proportion? The condition of his nature is too low, and the limits of his dignity too strait, to correspond with such an effect. "The drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance," are of too vile a nature to be a satisfactory sacrifice to God: all men are no more, Isaiah 40:15-17 say, "worse than nothing, and vanity," and therefore all men in the world put together would be so far from redeeming themselves by a sufficient sacrifice, that as themselves, so their sacrifice, would be worse than nothing and vanity, and would be overwhelmed under the punishment due to their offence. Finite bears no proportion to infinite, therefore a finite sacrifice carries no equivalent compensation in it for an infinite wrong. So that neither length of time, nor strength of nature, can ever make a recompense for that offence, which increaseth in proportion, according to the dignity of the person against whom it is

committed. If every hair of our head were a soul, and every soul a sacrifice, all would be too poor an amends for that glorious God wronged by us, though it had been but by one act of rebellion; for man cannot do any act of that value in the nature of satisfaction, as one act of sin is injurious in the nature of wrong. Upon the same account of finiteness, no angel could be a proportionable sacrifice to the justice of God, for the sin of man. For though the excellency of the angelical far transcends the nature of man, yet it cannot equal the dignity of God. They are creatures, and an inconceivable distance is perpetually between creatures and the Creator. Therefore saith Job, "He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly," Job 4:18. All the excellency of the angelical nature is despicable, compared with God: and if God did not secure them, they would fall; if God did not preserve light in them, they would be darkness as well as we. If they could not, because they are creatures, man could not, because he was a sinful creature. "Thousands of rivers of oil, and thousands of rams," would have borne far less proportion to the Creator of them, or to sins against him, Micah 6:6-7.

3.Necessary, in regard of the justice of God: which is an immutable and infinite perfection of the divine essence. As God is so infinitely holy, as it is impossible he should not but hate the least sin, so he is infinite in his justice, and cannot let any sin go unpunished; since he hath declared by his law, that "cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them," Galatians 3:10 and that it was irrevocably past, that "in the day man ate" of the forbidden fruit, he should "die the death," Genesis 2:17. As the perfection of his nature requires, that he should have for sin an implacable aversion; so the same perfection requires, that justice be not appeased without punishment. Since God therefore would have a sacrifice for sin, to have one disproportioned to his infinite dignity and justice, had been the same as to have none at all. An infinite sacrifice cannot be offered, but by an infinite person: it is necessary therefore that one of the persons of the Trinity should be this sacrifice; and it was most congruous to the wisdom of God, upon several accounts, that it should be the second. This sacrifice is necessary at least in point of becomingness, as God is the author of all things, and placed them in a rectitude from which they departed by their own folly, and sullied that glory they were created to manifest; it became him to bring things into order again by such a method, as should manifest his hatred of that disorder sin had introduced into the world, and how strict a guardian he would be of the eternal order of things, and of those sacred laws whereby he governs the world: "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering," Hebrews 2:10. As God had made all things for his glory, so it was fit that his Son, becoming the head of the world, should be put in such a posture, as to show forth the glory of God in the most illustrious manner. Now in the sufferings of Christ, the justice of God flames more bright than it could in any creature, and shows itself inflexible against sin; the treasures of his grace are wider opened, than could be in any other act; and his wisdom sparkles more gloriously in bringing men to glory by punishment: and since he made all things, and that for himself, it became him, after the apostasy of man, and the defacing the creation, to restore things in such a way as might conduce most to his own glory, and the happiness of the creature.

IV.Christ only was fit to be this sacrifice. Whatsoever any creature could have done, had been a debt of duty, and that could not have made a compensation for a debt of rebellion; whatsoever a mere creature could do, was by the gift of God, and therefore could not merit any thing at the hand

of God; whatsoever is meritorious, must be our own, as well as that which is not due. Besides, from any other hand God would have received less than the offence merited; at the best it would have been but a feigned and partial satisfaction, which had not been congruous to the wisdom and justice of God, since he determined it necessary to have a sacrifice. But Christ in his divine nature "was equal with God," Php 2:6 and therefore in his person was answerable to the dignity of the person offended; and as he was in the form of a servant, and innocent, he offered that which was not due from himself, and upon his own account, to God; for though as a creature he was bound to the obedience of the precepts of the law, yet as an innocent creature he was not obliged to the penalties of the law, suffering was in no wise due upon his own account. And he was without blemish; had he been a criminal, he could not have been a remedy. He had also an alliance with both parties, he could treat with God, as partaking of his glory, and be a sacrifice for man, as partaking of the infirmities of his nature; he had a body to bear the stroke due to a victim, and a divine nature to sustain him under it; he had a human nature to offer as a sacrifice, and a divine nature to render it valuable and infinitely meritorious; being God and man, he wanted not a fitness to accomplish so great an undertaking. If he had not been man, he could not have been a sacrifice; and if he had not been God, he could not have been a remedy.

It was necessary, in regard of his office of priesthood, that he should be a sacrifice. He was constituted as a priest for ever by an oath, Psalm Exodus 4. Now he could not be a priest without a sacrifice; a priest and a sacrifice are relatives, Hebrews 5:1. "Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. It is therefore of necessity, that this man have something to offer". As he was a prophet, he was to have a doctrine to teach; as a king, he was to have subjects to govern; as a priest, he was to have a sacrifice to offer: as he was a prophet, he was to deliver something from God to men; as he was a priest, he was to present something for man to God: as a prophet, he was to teach men obedience to God; as a priest, he was to make God propitious to men: that which he was to offer must be expiatory, that is the proper notion of a sacrifice; the other offerings are termed gifts. If he had offered the blood of bulls and goats, we had been in the same case we were in before; the insufficiency of them had not been removed by the dignity of the offerer; they could never in their own nature be proportioned to the dignity of the wronged Sovereign, or be adequate to the punishment the criminal had deserved. The impossibility of their taking away sin is positively asserted, Hebrews 10:4. The transcendent excellency of the priest could never alter the disproportion between the justice of God provoked by sin, and the death of the miserable beast for it; though the person offering had been greater, the thing offered had been the same; besides, the offending nature had not suffered, but a nature inferior to it. They must have been always offered, the repetition of them must have been continued; and had that been a proper employment for the Son of God, to have been always imbruing his hands in the blood of animals? But a sacrifice must be offered by him, (if he did not offer one, he was no priest,) and none but himself was a sacrifice worthy to be offered by so great a priest. He offered but once, and it was himself he offered, Hebrews 7:27. And this was so spotless, Hebrews 9:14 and of such a "sweet-smelling savour," Ephesians 5:2 that it need not again be repeated, Hebrews 9:28. His unblemished soul was made an "offering for sin," Isaiah 53:10. For, being a priest of another kind than the legal priests, he must have a sacrifice of another kind.

VI. Jesus Christ was then a sacrifice in his human nature. To this end a body was prepared for him, to be substituted in the place of those sacrifices wherein God had no pleasure: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me," Hebrews 10:5. Cited out of Psalms 40:6. "Mine ears hast thou opened," as some think figuratively, the ear being taken for the whole body, because obedience is learned by the ear, the instrument of hearing the will of another. The will of God was, that he should be an offering in this body: "By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Christ once for all," Hebrews 10:10. And his soul was an "offering for sin," Isaiah 53:10. The first promise evidenced, that though the seed of the woman should tear up the empire of the devil, which by the law he had over sinners, yet it should be by the suffering something from him, by having his heel bruised. There was an obedience to the law to be performed, without which he had not been capable of being a sacrifice; the penalty of the law to be endured, without which he could not be an actual sacrifice. Neither of those could be but in the human nature: obedience to the law is not consistent with the sovereignty of God; according to his divine nature he was under no law: suffering was impossible to the Deity, it is the property of God to be immutable and impassible. His human nature therefore was the sacrifice; for as he was made of a woman, whereby he took our nature, as he was made under the law, whereby he subjected himself to our obedience, he "redeemed us from under the law," from our condemnation; Galatians 4:5. He that was to break the serpent's head, that is, to dissolve the power, which, as an executioner, he had from an offended God, was to be the seed of the woman. And this he effected by his death and bloody sacrifice, appeasing the wrath of God, and thereby destroying the power of the jailor, which he obtained by the entrance of sin and the curse of the law: "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Hebrews 2:14. This sacrifice was both of soul and body, as the threatening was, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die the death;" that is, be subject to the death and condemnation both of soul and body. As the reward of goodness respects the entire man composed of soul and body, so doth the punishment of sin, which hath corrupted one as well as the other. The sacrifice, therefore, to be offered for the appeasing that wrath, and removing that curse, was to consist both of soul and body.

VII. That whereby this sacrifice was sanctified, was the divine nature. Every sacrifice was sanctified by the altar, Matthew 23:19. There must be something to add an infinite value to the sufferings of his humanity, which could be nothing but the divine nature, and union with it. Nothing but that which is infinite, can confer an infinite value on that which is finite. The infiniteness of dignity resides in the divine nature and essence, and the infiniteness of dignity is as incommunicable as the infiniteness of essence. For it hath its root and foundation in the infiniteness of being, and the one is but the reflection of the other. It is impossible to add a dignity without limits, but one must attribute an essence without bounds, as it is impossible that any thing can possess the lustre and enlivening virtue of the sun, but the sun itself. The human nature suffered, and the divine nature sanctified the humanity, and by reason of this admirable union, and the reflection of the divinity upon the humanity, what was done to the human nature upon the cross, is ascribed to the whole person. They "crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Corinthians 2:8. And God purchased the church "with his own blood," Acts 20:28. It was this made his sufferings acceptable to God, whose justice was to be satisfied; and efficacious for man, whose happiness and commerce with God were to be restored, and his indigences to be supplied. Thus some interpret Hebrews 9:14. "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself to God," understanding by eternal Spirit his Deity; not that he suffered in his divine nature, but by virtue of that presented himself to his Father a most

acceptable sacrifice. So that he had a human nature to serve for a sacrifice, and an eternal spirit, or divine nature, wherein he subsisted, from whence that sacrifice derived an infinite dignity; as gold which hath a lustre of itself, hath a greater when the sun shines full upon it. We may see here how Christ was a priest, sacrifice, altar, in several respects; a priest in his person, a sacrifice in his humanity, the altar in his divinity. He was the offerer and the sacrifice; both are expressed, "He offered up himself," Ephesians 5:2. Active as a priest, passive as a victim: as one, offering; as the other, offered. Upon this account of his blood being offered by his person, he is called God in the act of oblation of his blood for the redemption of the church, "which he," referring to God, "hath purchased with his blood," Acts 20:28. The Jews and soldiers were not the priests, as some affirm. They were the instruments of slaying him, but not with the intention of a sacrifice. They were instruments in it, but could not force him to it. His death was intended by them; his death was a sacrifice intended by himself; his laying down his life was of himself, John 10:18 which is not meant barely of his death, but of his death as respecting his sheep, John 10:15 and indeed, unless it had been voluntary, it had not been savoury.

VIII. Upon the sacrifice of Christ, all his other sacerdotal acts depend, and from thence they receive their validity for us. It is fit therefore we should well understand and often consider this sacrifice, which is the foundation of all our peace and comfort in reference to God. This was the chief thing God eyed in the first declaration of him, Genesis 3:15 in the serpent's bruising his heel; nothing but this spoken of. His resurrection was first represented in the safety of Isaac after he was designed to death, and other things not till after that successively; God making the light to dawn upon them by degrees.

1. This was the ground of his ascension and entrance into heaven as a Priest. The high priest was not to enter within the vail without blood: what was in the type, was to be answered in the antitype. An expiatory sacrifice was necessary to precede his ascension to heaven; the sacrifice must be offered upon the earth, as the legal sacrifices were without; heaven was no place for slaughter, and with this blood he was to enter: heaven's gates had been shut against him without it. Death was the penalty threatened, if the legal high-priest ventured to step into the holy of holies without blood. The apostle argues from this, "into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people," Hebrews 9:7, Hebrews 9:25. According to this type, Christ by his own blood entered once into the holy place; how and in what order? after he had obtained redemption for us, Hebrews 9:12 which is ascribed to his death, Hebrews 9:15. His entrance into heaven, and what he doth for us there, is laid upon the account of his death as a sacrifice upon the earth; by virtue of which he went to heaven to present it to God, and apply it to us. And besides, all his royalty and power, whereby we have security and protection from him, depends upon this; for it is because of that obedience to blood and death which he rendered to God, that he hath given him a name above every name, and advanced him to a sovereign power: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," Php 2:8-9 "wherefore," referring to his death, Php 2:8.

2. This is the foundation of his intercession. There are two functions of Christ's priesthood, oblation and intercession; they are both joined together, but one as precedent to the other. The legal high priest, when he had first cut the throat of the sacrifice without, upon the day of the anniversary sacrifice, was not esteemed by that act to have completed his propitiation till he had entered into the sanctuary, and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice with his ringer; so the propitiation made by

our Redeemer, was not fully complete, till he entered into heaven to exercise his intercession. Yet the oblation precedes the intercession, and the intercession could not be without the oblation. It was with the blood of the victim, and no other blood, he was to enter. Without the oblation he would have had nothing to present in his intercession. They are placed in this order by the apostle, 1 John 2:1-2. He is first a sacrifice for propitiation, then an advocate for intercession. What he doth as an advocate, is grounded upon what he did as a sacrifice; and were it not so, the apostle's arguing would not be valid, who placeth our salvation by the life of Christ, upon our reconciliation by the death of Christ, Romans 5:10. Indeed, he could not have been admitted according to the type, as an advocate, but as being the high priest, and a high priest he could not have been without a sacrifice.

3. This is the foundation of all the grace any have. The conveyance of all the gracious love of God is through this channel. In redemption by his blood, the riches of the grace of God abounded, and that with the marks of the highest wisdom, Ephesians 1:7-8. All had lain buried from the view of man, and the fruition of men, without this sacrifice. This did commend his love, as well as satisfy his justice. His wrath had not been appeased, nor his grace drawn out to us, without it; nor could the Redeemer lay any claim to any grace and mercy, for those for whom he came, unless he had suffered for them, as well as taken flesh for them. His "offering himself," Isaiah 53:10-12 precedes his having a seed. The being and beauty of his seed depend upon the efficacy of his meritorious sacrifice. The offering his soul goes before the pardon of our sin; the payment of the ransom, before the sprinkling it on us; the sealing the covenant, before the making good the covenant; his sufferings, before his triumph; and the streams of his blood, before the treasures of his grace. Upon the account of this sacrifice we enjoy the presence of God, protection against the enemies of our salvation, and receive the blessings necessary for our souls. By all this it appears, that Christ is a sacrifice. This was his intent in coming. His death as a sacrifice was his intention in the assumption of our flesh; the prophecies predicted it, the types represented it; this he pursued, for this he thirsted. The accomplishment of this fiery baptism was the matter of his longing, his thoughts were never off from it, his will shrunk not from it: when his human will shewed some reluctance, it quickly returned to its fixedness; nothing could deter him, nothing could divert him. When he undertook to be mediator, he undertook to be a sacrifice, as a thing necessarily annexed to that office for the honour of God's justice, and the preservation of the rights of his sacred law. Upon which account, when the apostle speaks of this Mediator, he adds with the same breath, "who gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Timothy 2:5-6. After the title of Mediator follows the "blood of sprinkling," Hebrews 12:24. A Mediator he was by means of "his death," Hebrews 9:15. It is with good reason, therefore, that in our creed there is so quick a passage from the nativity of Christ to his passion, without any mention of the acts of his life, because he was incarnate that he might be crucified. The essence of a sacrifice consisted, (1.) In the slaying or destroying it. (2.) In the offering it to God. Both were done in Christ. (1.) In the slaying or destroying it. The shedding of the blood, the seat of the spirits, which are the instruments of action, was necessary to an expiatory sacrifice. The scape goat indeed is called a sacrifice, Leviticus 16:5 which was not slain in the temple, nor burnt, but sent into the wilderness; and, as the Jews tell us, destroyed by being thrown down a rock, to which purpose men were appointed; who were to give notice of it by some signals from hill to hill, at a convenient distance; before which notice, the congregation at Jerusalem did not dissolve. But the other expiatory sacrifices were devoured by fire; fire being the highest representation in the world, of the justice of God. The sufferings of Christ extended to soul and

body. He was scorched by the "wrath of God," Psalms 22. His soul was poured out to death, Isaiah 53:12 alluding to the blood of the sacrifices poured out; and his human nature dissolved by the separation of the soul and body.

(2.) In the offering it to God. Oblation to God was a main part of a sacrifice, so "Christ offered himself to God," Ephesians 5:2. To God as essentially considered, whereby the whole right of government and dominion was acknowledged belonging to God. Had the death of Christ been only for example, it had not been offered to God, who was not capable of any example to be set him. It being therefore offered to him, manifests it to be a sacrifice.

Doct. 3. CHRIST WAS SACRIFICED FOR US. The original word, when joined with suffering for another, always signifies in another's stead and place; it is so used, "For a good man some would even dare to die," Romans 5:7 that is, instead of a good man, to free him from the death he was designed to, not only for his sake; so, "He was made a curse for us," Galatians 3:13 that is, in our stead, suffering the curse due to us for our sins. He is called the Lamb of God, in regard of God's designation of him; our lamb, our passover, in regard of his substitution in our place: as he died to appease the wrath of God, his death referred to the justice of God; as that justice flamed out against us, his death referred to us; he was a screen between the heat of wrath, and the sufferings of the creature: a Mediator respecting God, for his satisfaction and glory; respecting us, for our reparation and grace. This will be cleared if we consider,

I. That Christ could not be a sacrifice for himself. The Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself, Daniel 9:26 : he needed no sacrifice for himself as the other high priests did; they were sinners, he was harmless; they being encompassed with infirmities, needed, or ought to offer sacrifices for themselves, Hebrews 5:2-3. He was "a Lamb without blemish, who knew no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth," 1 Peter 1:19 nor did he ever do any thing displeasing to his Father, John 8:29. He needed no glory to be purchased for him, for he was from eternity happy in the same essence with the Father, being "God blessed for ever over all," Romans 9:5 having the command over all, and wanting nothing to a perfect blessedness. The sacrifices which were types of him, could not be for themselves; they were not capable of sinning, as wanting a rational nature, and therefore a sinful nature. A beast was not capable of sin, because not capable of a law, and therefore its blood was not due for any sin of its own. Christ had no sin, none actual, "no guile was found in his mouth," 1 Peter 2:22; nor original, that was stopped by his extraordinary conception by the Holy Ghost, which rendered him immaculate.

II. Sacrifices implied this. They had a relation to the offerer, and were substituted in his place. The substitution of the sacrifice in the place of the offenders, was always supposed by the heathen; hence did the offering of human victims arise, their opinion being, that they could not present to God a nobler creature in their stead, than one of their own nature. The notion of all sacrifices was, that they were in the place of a sinner, to appease the offending deity, and exempt the guilty person from punishment. And the actions about the Jewish sacrifices manifested this; the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the beast, signifying by that ceremony its consecration to God, and owning the translation of his guilt upon that creature, and putting it "in his place, to undergo the punishment deserved by his sin," Leviticus 4:24, Leviticus 4:29. And in this action of laying on hands, both hands, and with all their strength, as the Jews tell us, confession of sin was made by the presenter of the sacrifice, which signified also the disburdening of his guilt upon the head of

the victim. By those actions was manifested a transferring of sin from the offender to the sacrifice, and of the death due to the criminal in like manner. Besides, the pouring out of the blood, wherein the soul of the beast was supposed to be, was destined for the expiation of the sin of the soul of the offerer, Leviticus 17:11, Leviticus 17:14 : not that the blood is properly the soul, but because the vital spirits, which are the instruments of action, and conveying the virtue of the soul to particular members, are seated in the blood.

III. The whole economy of Christ is expressed in the whole scripture to have a relation to us. All things preparatory to his sufferings were for us: some were first given to him, before "he was given for them," John 17:9; he took flesh for us, "unto us a child is born," Isaiah 9:6; for he has a fulness of grace in his human nature, John 1:16; for our sakes he dedicated himself, that we might be sanctified, John 17:19; for us he gave himself, Galatians 2:20; in the very moment of his sufferings, our iniquities were laid upon him, that health by his stripes might be derived to us. Christ was a common person for us, as the "scapegoat was common to the whole congregation," Leviticus 16:21 representing all of them; Christ was a common person for us, as Adam was, to whom, in this respect, he is compared: "Who is," that is, Adam, "the figure of him that was to come," Romans 5:14. The apostle compares one Adam and one Christ; he illustrates the condition and the actions of the one, by the condition and actions of the other; what happened to us by Adam, and what happened to us by Christ. This typicalness of Adam cannot be in any other regard than as he was a common person, representing all that were in his loins by natural generation. In this regard Christ is called the second man: "The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven," 1 Corinthians 15:47. Not that he was the second man born in the world, for many ages were run before his incarnation, but the second common root in the world. As when Adam, being the first root of mankind in a natural way, fell, the curse came upon him and all his posterity, and the standing punishments pronounced against him did reach, and were meant of all his posterity, Genesis 3:19; not only of Adam personal, but of Adam as a representative, and so of all those who were not yet born into the world. As we sinned in Adam as a common root of natural generation, so we were all sacrificed in Christ as a common head of all that are in him by a spiritual union: the one merited death and damnation for all that descend from him; the other life and salvation for all that believe in him.

IV. Our sins were imputed to him as to a sacrifice. Christ the just is put in the place of the unjust, to suffer for them, 1 Peter 3:18. Christ is said to bear sin, as a sacrifice bears sin, Isaiah 53:10, Isaiah 53:12. His soul was made an offering for it. But sin was so laid upon the victims, as that it was imputed to them in a judicial account, according to the ceremonial law, and typically expiated by them. Christ had not taken away our sins as mediator, had he not borne the punishment of them; as a surety, "He was made sin for us," 2 Corinthians 5:21 and he bare our sins, which is evident by the kind of death he suffered, not only sharp and shameful, but accursed, having a sense of God's wrath linked to it.

1. It cannot be understood of the infection of sin. The filth of our nature was not transmitted to him. Though he was made sin, yet he was not made a sinner by any infusion or transplantation of sin into his nature. It was impossible his holiness could be defiled with our filth.

2. But that our sin was the meritorious cause of his punishment. All those phrases, that "Christ died for our sins," 1 Corinthians 15:3 and was "delivered to death for our offences," Romans 4:25

clearly import sin to be the meritorious cause of the punishment Christ endured: sin cannot be said to be the cause of punishment, but by way of merit. If Christ had not been just, he had not been capable of suffering for us; had we not been unjust, we had not merited any suffering for ourselves, much less for another. Our unrighteousness put us under a necessity of a sacrifice, and his righteousness made him fit to be one. What was the cause of the desert of suffering for ourselves, was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of the Redeemer after he put himself in our place. The sin of the offerer merited the death of the sacrifice presented in his stead.

3. Our sins were charged upon him in regard of their guilt. Our sins are so imputed to him, as that they are "not imputed to us," 2 Corinthians 5:19 and not imputed to us, because "he was made a curse for us," Galatians 3:13. He bore our sins, as to the punishment, is granted. If he were an offering for them, they must in a judicial way be charged upon him. If by being made sin, be understood a sacrifice for sin, (which indeed is the true intent of the word sometimes in scripture,) sin was then legally transferred on the antitype, as it was on the types in the Jewish service by the ceremony of laying on of hands, and confessing of sin, after which the thing so dedicated became accursed, and, though it was in itself innocent, yet was juridically and substitutive nocent. In the same manner was Christ accounted; as on the contrary, believers are personally guilty, but by virtue of the satisfaction of this sacrifice imputed to them, they are judicially counted innocent. Christ, who never sinned, is put in such a state as if he had; and we who have always sinned, are put into such a state by him, as if we never had. As we are made righteous in him, so he was made sin for us. Now, as justifying righteousness is not inherent in us, but imputed to us; so our condemning sin was not inherent in Christ, but imputed to him. There would else be no consistency in the antithesis, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," 2 Corinthians 5:21. He knew no sin, yet he became sin. It seems to carry it further than only the bearing the punishment of sin He was judicially charged in our stead with the guilt of sin. Our iniquities were laid upon him, Isaiah 53:6. He had spoken, Isaiah 53:5 of his bearing the chastisement of our peace, the punishment of our sin, and then seems to declare the ground of that, which consisted in God's imputation of sin to him in laying upon him the iniquities of us all. What iniquities? Our goings astray, our turnings every one to his own way. He made him to be that sin which he knew not, but he knew the punishment of sin, the knowledge of that was the end of his coming: he came to lay down his life a ransom for many. He knew not sin by an experimental inherency, but he knew it by judicial imputation. He knew it not in regard of the spots, but he knew it in regard of the guilt following upon the judgment of God. He was righteous in his person, but not judicially, or juridically pronounced righteous as our Surety, till after his sacrifice, when he was "taken from prison and from judgment," Isaiah 53:8. Till he had paid the debt, he was accounted as a debtor to God.

(1.) The apostle distinguishes his second coming from his first by this, "He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Hebrews 9:28. It is not meant of the filth of sin, for so he appeared at first without sin; but without the guilt of sin which he had at his first coming derived, or taken upon himself to satisfy for, and remove from the sinner. He shall appear without sin to be imputed, without punishment to be inflicted. At the time of his first coming he appeared with sin, with sin charged upon him, as our Surety arrested for our criminal debts; he pawned his life for the lives which we had forfeited, and suffered the penalty due by law, that we might have a deliverance free by grace. In his first coming he represented our persons as an undertaker for us, our sins were

therefore laid upon him; in his second coming he represents God, as a Vicegerent, and so no sin can be charged upon him.

(2.) He cannot well be supposed to suffer for our sins, if our sins in regard of their guilt be not supposed to be charged upon him. How could he die, if he were not a reputed sinner? Had he not first had a relation to our sin, he could not in justice have undergone our punishment. He must in the order of justice be supposed a sinner really, or by imputation; really he was not, by imputation then he was. How can we conceive he should be made a curse for us, if that which made us accursed, had not been first charged upon him? It is as much against divine justice to inflict punishment where there is no sin, as it is to spare an offender who hath committed a crime, or to "clear the guilty which by no means God will do," Exodus 34:7. The consideration of a crime precedes the sentence, either upon an offender or his surety. We cannot conceive how divine justice should inflict the punishment, had it not first considered him under guilt. Though the first designation of the Redeemer to a suretiship or sacrifice for us; was an act of God's sovereignty; yet the inflicting punishment after that designation and our Saviour's acceptance of it, was an act of God's justice, and so declared to be, "to declare his righteousness, that he might be just," Romans 3:26 that he might declare his justice in justification, his justice to his law. Can this highest declaration of justice be founded upon an unjust act? Had that been justice or injustice to Christ, to lay his wrath upon the Son of his love, one whose person was always dear to him, always pleased him, had he not stood as a sinner juridically in our stead, and suffered that sin, which was the ruin of mankind, to be cast, with all the weight of it, upon his innocent shoulders? After, by his own act, he had engaged for our debt, God in justice might demand of him every farthing, which without that undertaking, and putting himself in our stead, could not be done: which submission of his, and compliance with it, is expressed twice, by his not opening his mouth, Isaiah 53:7 and no wrong is done to a voluntary undertaker. Add this too. It is from his standing in our stead as guilty, that the benefit of his death doth redound to us. His death had had no relation to us, had not our sin been juridically adjudged to be his; nor can we challenge an acquittance at the hands of God for our debts, if they were not our debts that he paid on the cross. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," Isaiah 53:5. The laying hands on the head of the sin-offering, was necessary to make it a sacrifice for the offender; without which ceremony it might have been a slain, but not a sacrificed beast. The transferring our iniquities upon him, must in some way precede his being bruised for them, which could not be any other way than by imputation, whereby he was constituted by God a debtor in our stead, to bear the punishment of our sin; he being made sin for us, our sin was in a sort made his; he was made sin without sin; he knew the guilt, without knowing the filth; he felt the punishment, without being touched with the pollution. Since death was the wages of sin, and passed as a penalty for a violated law, Romans 6:23. it could not righteously be inflicted on him, had not sin first been imputed to him. In his own person he was in the arms of his Father's love; as he represented our sinful persons, he felt the strokes of his Father's wrath.

V. The sufferings of this sacrifice are imputed unto us. He took our sins upon himself, as if he had sinned, and gave us the benefit of his sufferings, as if we had actually suffered and satisfied; he "offered one sacrifice for sin for ever," Hebrews 10:12 that is, to take away sin, if you compare it with Hebrews 10:11 to remove the wrath due to us by reason of iniquity, was the end he aimed at. As our sins were imputed to him for punishment, so his sufferings are imputed to us for

acceptation: "Who hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood," Ephesians 1:6-7. Christ had the relation of an undertaker for us, and we the relation of debtors to God; our debts then being charged upon him, his payment must be imputed to us; the surety and the principal are legally regarded as one person, so are the representative and the persons represented by him. As Adam and all mankind were as one person, and as all Israel were called Jacob from the common root of them, so Christ and believers are as one person, and what he did, is as if a believer himself did it, as the suffering of the sacrifice was accepted in lieu of the life of the sinner. By the stripes of our sacrifice, "we are healed," Isaiah 53:5 an exchange is made, stripes to him, health to us; he was made a curse, that we might be freed "from the curse," Galatians 3:13. The first thing rising upon faith from the sufferings of Christ, is a non-imputation of sin, "not imputing their trespasses unto them;" 2 Corinthians 5:19 they are not imputed to a believer, because borne by the undertaker for him. The main end of his death as a sacrifice, was to communicate a righteousness to us: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Galatians 2:21 if this were the main or only thing that would make the death of Christ a mere vanity, then the great and main end of his death, was to procure a complete righteousness for us, a righteousness whereby he was to be glorified, a righteousness whereby we might be justified; his sufferings procured it, his resurrection ensured it, Romans 4:25. All the world stands guilty before God, cannot present God with a righteousness of their own, commensurate to the law; not one act any man can do can bear proportion to it; all strength to do any thing suitable to it was lost in Adam. Since no righteousness of our own can justify, it must be the righteousness of the Son of God, which must be imputed to us in the same manner our sins were imputed to him; as it is accepted by God for us, so it is accounted by God to us: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. Sin was in us, but charged upon Christ; righteousness is in Christ, and imputed to us; therefore the apostle adds him, to signify, that it is not our own righteousness, but another's, not inherent in us, but imputed to us. The redounding of these sufferings to us, ariseth,

1.From the dignity of the person undertaking to be a sacrifice for us, and the union of our nature with his. He assumed our nature, that he might be a common person, and stand in our stead; he had not been a fit representative of us, without it. But the main consideration is, "the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily," Colossians 2:9 and his being the man, God's fellow, Zechariah 13:7 whereby what he did and suffered in our stead, became, according to the value of the person performing it, infinitely meritorious for those for whom he suffered, being infinitely more than all the obedience of men and angels, and more meritorious of happiness than sin could be of misery. As infinite sin deserves an infinite punishment, because it receives its aggravation from the dignity of the person against whom it is committed; so the sufferings of Christ, though finite in regard of his human nature, received an infinite value from the infiniteness of his person, equivalent to the debts of all that come to him. Sin is finite in regard to the subject, infinite in regard to the great God against whom it is; the sufferings of Christ are infinite in regard of the subject, and infinitely please the Governor of the world, unto whom the offering is made, and therefore are of more force to convey a righteousness and beauty to the creature, than sin is to convey guilt and filth; though "sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Romans 5:20.

2.From union with this infinite person by faith. All believers have a communion with him in his death: "If one died for all, then were all dead," 2 Corinthians 5:14. All were accounted as dying and

bearing the wrath of God, by God's reckoning that death to them. As the sin of Adam is imputed to all his natural posterity, as being one with him in his loins, so are the sufferings of Christ imputed to all his spiritual seed, Romans 5:18 as being one with him in a real union. Hence we are said to be "crucified with Christ," Romans 6:6 and "risen with him," Ephesians 2:6 as in the person representing us; as if the same wrath endured by Christ had been endured by us, and the same acquittance given to Christ, had been given to us by God together with him; for all his meritorious passions were endured by him in the name of his elect, and for their use, and are fully belonging, in the fruit and benefit of them, to every believer. What Christ as a mediator did personally do, redounds in the benefit of it to Christ mystical, and is reckoned to every member of his body; we are made, we, and every one of us that believe, are made the righteousness of God in him. Well, then, Christ bearing our iniquities, is the cause of our justification: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities," Isaiah 53:11. If our sin had not been imputed to him, his righteousness could not be accounted to us; the commutation is clear, he first bears our iniquities, that we might partake of his righteousness.

Use.--If Christ be a sacrifice,

1. We may see the miserable blindness of the Jews in expecting the Messiah as a temporal conqueror. The Jews wait for such a one to this day. Though the promises represent spiritual deliverances under temporal grandeurs, not to raise carnal hopes, but spiritual apprehensions; yet are there not multitudes of places which speak of sufferings, misery, death? Is not his heel to be bruised, his garments to be parted, a restoration to be made by him of what he took not away? Are not the sacrifices of the law to be perfected, his soul to be made an offering for sin, wounds made for transgression, his hands and his feet to be pierced? It was not by the slaying the bodies of men, that he was to make reconciliation for the iniquities of men, Daniel 9:24. How can he be a conqueror of kingdoms, who is to be cut off, and the city, where he was, to be destroyed as with a flood, and the desolations of it to be determined? Daniel 9:26 penally cut off, as the word signifies, Leviticus 17:4 as one was cut off that had no sacrifice allowed for him. The right apprehensions of the promises concerning the Messiah in the old testament, what he was to be, what he was to do, cannot let you be ignorant of him in the new. How do those poor people overturn at once the whole design of that divine law they seem to reverence in the highest degree! What blindness will seize upon the hearts of men, even under the oracles of God, if the Spirit of God doth not vouchsafe to enlighten them?

2. If Christ be a sacrifice, it shows the necessity of a satisfaction to the justice of God, and a higher satisfaction than men could perform. Blood must satisfy justice, and no blood but that of the Son of God could be a sufficient and valuable propitiation. If mere mercy could or would have pardoned, it might have done it with or without the blood of the poor creatures mangled under the law. But, alas! neither the blood of those, nor the blood of a rational creature, could take away sin. Less than death, justice could not demand; death was settled by the immediate order of God, as the penalty of the law. The law then after transgression could not be vindicated in its honour without death. A God of infinite goodness delights not in the shedding the blood of his creatures, nor can we suppose him to be pleased with the effusion of the blood of animals. The institution of the legal sacrifices could not be exemplary to man. What virtue could the pangs of a dying beast represent to him? No other ends can be imagined but an acknowledgment of guilt, the desert of sin, the debt of death, the necessity of a higher satisfaction, and the raising them up to a faith in the promise of

God, that another valuable sacrifice should be put in the room of the sinner, to take away that sin, which the blood of beasts, and the eternal groans of men, were not able to remove.

3. Christ, as sacrificed, is the true and immediate object of faith. We are revolted from God, and are made incapable of performing the terms of the first covenant. The precepts of the law are too holy for our corrupt nature, the penalties of the law too grievous to be borne by our feeble nature; a remedy must be looked after. When the venom of sin begins to work in the conscience, and the thunder of the law alarms it to judgment, and the punishment due to sin is presented in the horrors of it, the question immediately is, whether there be any remedy, and where; how forgiveness of sin is to be attained. The only remedy is proposed in Christ, and Christ as a sacrifice. It is not Christ risen, or ascended, or exalted; not Christ only as the Son of God, or the head of angels; not Christ as the Creator of the world, or by whom all things consist; but Christ as answering the terms of the first covenant, as disarming justice, and this he did as a sacrifice. By this he bore the curse, by this he broke down the partition-wall, by this he joined apostate man, and an offended God. This is what true faith pitcheth on, daily revolves, and daily applies to. This is the first object of the soul, Christ made sin, Christ bearing the punishment, Christ substituted in the room of the offender. His resurrection and ascension come in afterward to ascertain the comfort. But as his being a sacrifice, is the foundation of his being an Advocate, a Prince, a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins; so it is the foundation of peace in ourselves. This is that which pacifies God, and only what pacifies God, can pacify conscience. This death as a sacrifice purchased our comfort, because it purchased the Comforter. Christ begged not the Spirit before he died, John xvi. 7. he assures them he could not come, unless himself went; and he could not have gone with any success to heaven, if he had not shed his blood; justice would have stopped his entrance: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory Luke 24:26. Suffering was to precede his glory. Besides, our comfort lies in his being an Advocate. But how is he an Advocate? With his blood in his hands. It is by his blood he speaks in heaven, and by his blood faith speaks to God. He paid the debt in his suffering, and pleads the payment in his glory. The payment went before the plea in order of nature, and our eyeing the payment precedes our eyeing the plea in order of faith. Both respect God as the Ruler. Christ without his garments rolled in blood, could not be answerable to God, nor acceptable to a sinner. Faith is therefore called "faith in his blood," Romans 3:25. As faith is the instrument of justification, so it must eye the cause of our justification, and under that notion wherein it is the cause. And that is Christ as groaning and offering up himself to God a ransom, a righteousness for many. The curse upon Adam is the lash wherewith an angry conscience scourgeth a sinner. The freedom from this curse is only found in the vengeance God exacted of the Redeemer for the sins of all that return to him by repentance. Both the death and resurrection of Christ concur to the same end, namely, our justification, Romans 14:9 but in different manners; his death as the meritorious cause, his resurrection as declarative of the sufficiency of his death to that end, that as the Son of God and surety of men, he had performed whatsoever he undertook in his being a sacrifice. But the first act of relying faith is about him as a bloody victim. As often as the Israelites were stung by the fiery serpents, they were to look up for health to the serpent lifted up, a type and emblem of the death of Christ. Upon every sin of a believer, the sacrifice is pleaded in heaven by the Priest, and ought in the remembrance of it to be renewed in the repeated acts of our faith.

4. It is no true opinion that Christ died only for an example. Wounded he was for the transgressions in Isaiah's time, when his example could reach only those that came after him; but the credit of his sufferings upon his promise to undergo them, might, and did reach the first ages of the world. The expressions in Isaiah liii. found his death higher than a bare pattern, or a testimony to the truth. The notion of expiation of sin, was always implied in the notion of a sacrifice, even among the heathens. When they parted with the dearest first-born of their bodies to Moloch, it was not for an example, but "for the sin of the soul," Micah 6:7. As Christ was the Son of God sent, he was a testimony of the love of God; as he was a sacrifice, he was our ransom from the curse of the law.

5. Comfort to every true believer. He was sacrificed for us: God counted him a sinner for our sakes, that he might count us righteous for his sake.

(1.) As Christ hath been sacrificed for them, so he has been accepted for them. He is no more to be made sin, iniquity no more to be charged upon him, his next appearance shall be without the imputation of sin, for the conferring salvation, Hebrews 9:28, with all the bonds of a believer's sins cancelled. He is pronounced God's righteous servant, and from this declaration of his righteousness, and the true and believing knowledge of it; doth our justification arise, Isaiah 53:11. Had it not been a perfect sacrifice, it could never have wrought such complete effects, and "for ever have perfected those that are sanctified," Hebrews 10:14. He is gone with the smoke of his sacrifice to heaven, and was well entertained, which is a signification of the completeness and perfection of his righteousness for man, John 16:10. The pure and piercing eye of divine Justice could not be perceive a spot in him. Had any blemish been, it could not have escaped an infinite knowledge. Nor could the justice of God, in turning over all the registers of the debts owing from the creatures, perceive one but might be cancelled upon the value of this payment, if the creature did not negligently or wilfully refuse his own delivery, and prefer his debts and captivity before it. It was a sacrifice offered according to God's heart, with which his soul was infinitely well pleased. The person of the Son of God made every gaping wound, every panting groan, and doleful agony, grateful to God, and profitable for us. The Godhead united to the manhood, put an inexpressible value upon every pang. Not that every pang, or the least drop of blood, was sufficient for our redemption; the law required death, and death must be suffered: but all those passions preceding his death, were meritorious in conjunction with his death.

(2.) This sacrifice unites all the attributes of God together for a believer's interest. The floodgates of mercy are opened, and the fire of justice confined in its flames: the flames of the one centre in Christ, that the streams of the other might flow down to us; rivers of mercy quench not the flames of justice, nor the flames of justice suck up the rivers of mercy. As the sacrificing Christ is a vengeance against sin, it is an act of justice; as it is a means of remission of the sins of those for whom he was sacrificed, it is an act of mercy to the creature. Both Justice and Mercy join hands to help the fallen creature up. God is just in being merciful, and merciful in being just; so that we well may cry aloud with the psalmist, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous," Psalms 116:5. Justice struck the sacrifice, that the streams of mercy might have a fuller scope. Compassion helped justice to a satisfaction more honourable than could have been had from creatures; and justice helped mercy to a fuller and more illustrious exercise of itself, than ever it could have had without it. Justice is now a second to mercy; of an antagonist it is become an advocate. God must be unjust, if he be not merciful to a believer. Since our High Priest hath been faithful to God, God will not be unfaithful to him, or those for whom he offered up himself. Happy must he be, that hath

mercy supplicating, and justice itself pleading for him.

(3.) This sacrifice is of eternal virtue. The virtue of the sacrifice is parallel to the office of his priesthood: a priest and a sacrifice are relatives. The immutable oath then that constituted him a priest for ever, settles for ever the value and virtue of the sacrifice; for without a sacrifice he could not be a priest; his office would expire, if the virtue of his sacrifice did; they eternally lived together in conjunction. It is the "blood of the everlasting covenant," Hebrews 13:20. It is an everlasting covenant, because an everlasting blood whereby it was settled. The ground of its prevalence is, that it was not the sacrifice of a mere man, but of God, Hebrews 9:14.

(4.) The effects of this sacrifice therefore are perfect, glorious, and eternal. It is our deliverance from wrath, the scorings of hell, and terrors of punishment. The purity of this sacrifice expiates the impurities of our services. No sin so great, but the value of this sacrifice, believed in, can answer it. The highest sin is the transgression of the law, and this is the satisfaction of the whole penalty of the law. Sin is an offence against God, and this sacrifice is the highest pleasure to him. None of our sins can be so great as all those that met upon the back of this innocent Lamb. It is enough to cross every book of accounts; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, and Christ that died," Romans 8:33-34. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, because he hath as a sacrifice for sin condemned sin in the flesh," Romans 8:1, Romans 8:3. Not, no desert of condemnation; that there is: not, no condemnation, because of something done by themselves; no, but because of something done by Christ, who hath obliterated the bloody roll of sin and curses by his blood. God will not refuse it to any that believingly plead it; he will not be unjust to the true value of it, nor to his own ordination. If it be unrighteous in God to "forget the labour of a believer's love," Heb. vi. 10; it will be so to forget the obedience of his Son, and the person interested in it. God was not so ready to bruise him for us, but he will be as ready to apply the plaister of his blood to us.

How great, then, is the happiness of a believer on the account of this sacrifice! Whatsoever is lost by the sin of the first Adam, is gained by the sacrifice of the second; with what boldness may we enter into the holiest with this blood of Jesus in our hands and hearts! Hebrews 10:19.

6. We must then lay hold on this sacrifice. The people were to be "sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice," Exodus 24:8 so must we with the blood of our Lamb. Thus only can it save us, 1 Peter 1:2. Thus is our Saviour described by this part of his office, "He shall sprinkle many nations," Isaiah 52:15. Our guilt cannot look upon a consuming fire without a propitiatory sacrifice; our services are blemished, so that they will rather provoke his justice, than merit his mercy; we must have something to put a stop to a just fury, expiate an infinite guilt, and perfume our unsavoury services. Here it is in Christ, but there must be faith in us. Faith is as necessary by the ordination of God in a way of instrumentality, as the grace of God in a way of efficiency, and the blood of Christ in a way of meritoriousness of our justification. All must concur: the will of God the offended Governor, the will of the sacrificing Mediator, and the will of the offender. This will must be a real will, an active operative will, not a faint will. We must have a faith to justify our persons, and we must have an active sincerity to justify the reality of our faith. Christ was real in his sacrifice; God was real in the acceptance of it; we must be real in believing it. Rocks and mountains cannot secure them that neglect so great a sacrifice, that regard this atoning blood as an unholy thing. It is as dreadful for men to have this sacrifice smoking against them, and this blood calling for

vengeance on them, as it is comfortable to have it pleaded for them, and sprinkled on them. Why will any then despise and neglect a necessary sovereign remedy ready at hand? Is it excusable, that when we should have brought the sacrifice ourselves, or ourselves have been the sacrifice, we should slight him who hath voluntarily been a sacrifice for us, and cherish a hell merited by our sin, rather than accept of a righteousness purchased at no less rate than the blood of God? This sacrifice is full of all necessary virtue to save us; but the blood of it must be sprinkled upon our souls by faith. Without this we shall remain in our sins, under the wrath of God, and sword of vengeance.

7. We must be enemies to sin, since Christ was a sacrifice for it. Unless sin die in us, we cannot have an evidence that this sacrifice was slain for us. He that hath an interest in Christ's blood, must be planted "into the likeness of his death," Romans 6:5. We are highly unjust, if we will not sacrifice a beloved sin for him, who sacrificed a precious life of more value than heaven and earth for us. We should empty ourselves of our filth, since he emptied himself of his glory. The very expression, "sacrificed for us," carries a force and a spirit in it to animate us to this. We must be friends to the duties God enjoins us. It is disingenuity to put him off with a shred of our souls, or a grain of service, who became a holocaust for us. Scanty services are fit only for a scanty sacrifice. As God shows in this sacrifice his compassions to the sinner, so he declares the certainty and terror of his penalties upon the obstinate rebel. If the Son of God, undertaking to be a sacrifice, was not preserved from death upon the account of his filiation ;f men cannot expect but to sink under it upon the account of their rebellion. Well then, let us not look upon the least sin without horror, since it is a crime not to be expiated by any lower price than an infinite blood. It should cause us to mourn also for sin. It was our unrighteousness made Christ's back and his soul to suffer; he had never felt the wrath of his Father, if we had not broken the law of his Father. When the death of Christ, our sacrifice, comes into our thoughts, the remembrance of our sins should bear it company. We should never consider that Christ died, but we should join also with sorrow at the consideration of that for which he died.

A DISCOURSE ON THE ACCEPTABLENESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

A DISCOURSE ON THE ACCEPTABLENESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour, Ephesians 5:2. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST WAS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, AND EFFICACIOUS FOR MEN.

There was a complete satisfaction made to God, the supreme Judge offended, pleasing to him, and effectual to free the guilty party from the obligation to the deserved punishment. Christ was white, in regard of his innocence; ruddy, in regard of his bloody passion: both put together, made him the "chiefest among ten thousand," Song of Solomon 5:10. The efficacy of this sacrifice in many fruits of it, is fully expressed, "The transgression was finished, an end put to sin," Daniel 9:24 the apostasy of Adam was checked, the idolatry of the Gentiles overthrown, the atonement of sin made, which could not be by the legal sacrifices; a righteousness pleasing to God, and therefore everlasting, introduced; all the predictions of him fulfilled, whereupon he is anointed, that is, fully settled in all his offices, and declared by that anointing to be a complete sacrifice, and the Prince of our salvation. The last words our Saviour spake upon the cross, gave us an assurance of this. He saw and knew the work completely performed, and then gave up the ghost: "When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost," John 19:30. All the prophecies of what I was to do, are accomplished; I have nothing else now to do, to render my undertaking complete, but the bowing down my head, and sending out my last breath to my Father. All the sacrifices of the law, the daily and anniversary sacrifices, were shadows and images of him, and fulfilled in their main design in and by him. It could not be otherwise than acceptable; since there was no omission of any thing required of him, no commission of any thing forbidden to him. The whole law, both the mediatorial law, and the law of nature, were within his heart; the whole law was answered by his life. He paid an obedience, not by measure, as he had received the Spirit not by measure, to prepare him to be a victim for our redemption. It was acceptable to God for us; so must the apostle be understood. It was a sweet savour to God for those persons, and those ends, for which he gave himself. As it was a sacrifice intended and offered to God for us, so it was accepted as a sweet smelling savour by God for those persons and ends. In handling this doctrine, I shall, I.Premise two things for the explication of it.

II.Prove it.

III.Apply it.

I.I shall premise two things for the explication of it.

1.God was not absolutely bound to accept it for us. Though this sacrifice was infinitely valuable in itself; and had it been without a divine order, might have been counted a testimony of affection to the honour of God, and the good of the creature: yet God might have refused any acceptance of it for us; he might have rejected every sacrifice, but that of the offender. If we consider it simply in itself, without any previous order, without any covenant struck between the Father and the Son

concerning it, he was not obliged to have any respect to the apostate creature, upon the account of it. But after a covenant struck between them, wherein it was agreed that Christ should lay down his soul as a ransom, and offer himself an unblemished sacrifice for the sons of men, and that he should see the travail of his soul, and by his righteousness justify many, after he had borne their iniquities in his own body on the tree, Isaiah 53:10-11. God could not but accept it, unless he could have found a spot in the offering, and charged him with a non-performance of any article covenanted between them. If it were according to the tenor of the covenant of redemption, it could not be refused by God, being consequent to his decree and promise. But if we consider it in itself, God was not bound to accept it for us, though he might have had a high esteem of it: for, according to the tenor of his law, he might have demanded a compensation from the person of the sinner, and laid the punishment upon the person upon whom he found the guilt, and exacted the life of the sinner as a sacrifice for the sin. The acceptableness of this sacrifice was from itself, in regard of the dignity of the person, the infiniteness of the sacrifice; but the actual acceptation of it for us, was from the covenant and agreement between them. When a man offers to give a thousand pounds for that which is not worth a thousand pence, the sum is not only a valuable, but an overvaluable consideration for that which is desired; but the acceptation of this sum from the other, depends upon the will of the person whose property it is. The death of Christ was a sacrifice of a valuable consideration for the sin of the world, and sufficient to expiate the greatest crimes both for number and weight: but the receiving of it upon such an account, depended upon the will of the Lawgiver, whose authority was violated in the breach of the law, and who, as the only Judge, had passed sentence on the offending creatures, and had "concluded all under sin," Romans 11:32 and sentenced the whole world," under condemnation," Romans 3:19. It must be accepted by him, it had not else been of itself valid for us. In regard, therefore, of the value of this sacrifice, all the beneficial fruits of it streaming upon the creature, are in scripture ascribed to the death of Christ: but in regard of God's acceptation of it for us, they are ascribed to the grace of God; to the grace of God, as appointing and accepting; to the death of Christ, as procuring and purchasing. The grace of God gave a virtue to the mediation of Christ, in regard of its application to us; but the death of Christ had a value in itself, whether it had been accepted for us or not, or ordered by God to be applied to us. And as God respects the agreement in the promise he makes to us, so Christ doth not enter any pleas in respect of the intrinsic worth of his blood, but makes this agreement the foundation of them: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John 17:4. The prevalency of it for us depended upon God's order. Indeed, had he not finished the work, he could not have challenged the reward promised: there was to be merit on his part, before a reward on God's. Yet the sufferings on his part may be conceived without any reward on God's part, if considered separate from this agreement and divine transaction between them. We must not understand this, as though, if God had not been obliged to dignify Christ for his sufferings, by the promise he had made him, he would not have rewarded those sufferings out of mere goodness; for since God in his own nature is infinitely good, he cannot but love holiness and affection to him, and testify his approbation of it by some retribution.

2. As the acceptation of it depended upon the will of the Lawgiver and Ruler, so the acceptableness of it depended upon the will of the Redeemer. The apostle therefore saith, "He gave himself for us;" the sweetness of it depended upon the will of the donor, in concurrence with the will of God. The more of will there is in any act of a creature's obedience, the more savoury it is to the divine majesty, to whom it is paid: his love both to God and us made his sacrifice a sweet

smelling savour. The merit of his death depended not upon his mere dying, or upon the penal part in that death; but upon his willing obedience in it, in conjunction with the dignity of his person: without this, he might have breathed out his soul without being a victim. Had not Christ's will been full and firm in it, that his sufferings should be for us, they could not justly have been accepted for us, or applied to us; it could not have been a payment of our debt, and the application of him to us had been an alienating the goods of another against the will of the proprietor. This sweet savour exhaled from his voluntariness; he was not dragged to his sufferings, but suffered more willingly than we had greedily sinned against God. We had conscience checking us in sinning, but Christ had no conscience checking him in suffering; it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. As God's order makes his sacrifice capable of being satisfactory, so the free willingness of Christ makes it capable of being accepted for us, and applied to us. Involuntary services are rather passions than actions; in them we rather suffer a service than perform it. There was obedience in every preparatory act of Christ, obedience in the last act, in the suffering death; and it was his obedience in suffering, not simply the suffering itself, made it meritorious of his mediatorial glory for us, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," Php 2:8-9 namely, because of his "obedience to the death of the cross." His joy in performing, was the incentive of God's joy in valuing, accepting, and rewarding it; God eyed his obedience in the crown he gave him; and it was in the consideration of his obedience in suffering, that he advanced him to that excellent dignity.

II. That this sacrifice is acceptable to God and efficacious for us, will appear in several propositions.

1. God took pleasure in the designment and expectation of it.

(1.) His eternal delights were in him, not only as his Son, but as a Redeemer. God's delight in Christ, and Christ's rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting in the sons of men, are coupled together, Proverbs 8:30-31 as if God delighted in him, because he delighted in the redemption of man. Hence God is introduced speaking with a kind of joy of this ransom, "Then is he gracious to him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom," Job 33:24 that is, I have accepted a ransom, and have a price in my hand; as, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance," Hosea 12:8 that is, I have got wealth enough; so I have here price sufficient, loose the chains of the prisoner. This finding is the same on God's part with acceptance, as finding on Christ's part is the same with obtaining, "Having obtained eternal redemption," Hebrews 9:12 having found. It is the speech of God: who else but the Ruler of the world, and the Judge of all flesh, hath power to order the delivery of the captive? It is the exultation of his mercy at the appearance of a sufficient sacrifice for the forlorn sinner, whose soul was drawing near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. It is the triumph of mercy at the thoughts of it.

(2.) What was the ground of his promises to him, but his pleasure in him for this undertaking? What else can be the meaning of those words, which the apostle cites to prove the Deity of Christ, "And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son," Hebrews 1:5 that God would be always to him a Father, accepting his obedience, and he should always be a Son, offering upon the cross, or pleading upon the throne his sacrifice and sufferings; a father to him as Mediator, to countenance, encourage, accept him, and all his undertakings? This is a promise made to Christ; what need of any promises to Christ, considered only as the Son of God, equal with the Father? It is a promise to Christ as the seed of David; (the place the apostle cites it from, is 2 Samuel 7:14) and if to him as the seed of David, it is made to him as Mediator, promising a kingdom to him upon

his suffering, and an eternal acceptation of him as an obedient son; the ground whereof was his purging our sins by himself, Hebrews 1:3 all the promises of God to Christ, respect not Christ absolutely considered as the Son of God, but in the relation of mediator, sacrifice, ransom for man, for they are all branches issuing upon that first promise to man in paradise, of the Seed of the woman, whose heel was to be bruised. God promiseth to be a Father to Christ, in the same sense that Christ owns him to be his God, and his Father after his resurrection, John 20:17 which respects God's relation to him as Mediator; for as he is considered absolutely as the Son of God, God could not so properly be said to be his God. The term implies a covenant between them, in pursuance of which, Christ was to be God's servant, and in acceptance of this, God was the God of Christ, and promises to be his Father, manifesting his fatherly and gracious acceptance of his services, as a father doth the obedience of a son; and therefore Christ pleads the righteousness of God for the obtaining the accomplishment of his grace in those that believe in him, as well as the love which God bore to him as Mediator: "O righteous Father," &c. John 17:25-26. Grace was the fountain of the promise, but justice is obliged for the performance.

(3.) Hence it was that he declared his acceptation of him at his entrance into his office, which was at his baptism: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matthew 3:17 not respecting only his eternal filiation, but the work he was entering into the exercise of, and the preparations to his being a sacrifice: with this work, wherein his Son was to glorify him, was he well pleased; his interposition as a victim for the salvation of many brethren, was grateful to God. The Hebrew word in Isaiah 42:1 whence this place is cited, is often used to express God's pleasure in, and acceptance of, sacrifices offered to him "according to his will," as Job 33:26, Malachi 1:8 and here it refers to the whole work of Christ, as the whole work of redemption is called the good pleasure of God, Ephesians 1:5. He confirms here, by his own testimony, what he had declared before by the angels in their hymn: "Good will towards men," Luke 2:14. So certain was God that this sacrifice would answer all his ends, that he testifies himself well pleased with him, before the full performance of his work.

(4.) Hence it was that God delighted to bruise him, and in the thoughts of it. He foresaw what pleasure he should take in this, as I may say, aromatic sacrifice, after it was bruised and pounded, Isaiah 53:10. Not that God did delight in the act of bruising, considered separately from the ends for which he bruised him, since all acts of justice are his strange works, but with an eye to the issue of it, which was, the glory of his divine perfections, the recovery of lost man, the restoration of the health and soundness of the creation; as the physician delights not in the sharpness of the medicine he administers to the patient, or a surgeon in lancing the body, but as it conduceth to the health of the patient.

(5.) Hence it was that he took pleasure in the representations of it before it was actually offered. Hence the very first service after the promise was probably a sacrifice, as hath been said before, and the chief part of worship in the only church God had in the world for many ages, consisted in sacrifices, the representations of this grand victim in the end of the world. In all those things, which could not upon their own account satisfy God, as not being suited to his justice and wisdom, and not able to expiate the sin of a rational creature, he smelt a sweet savour, as they were images of this sacrifice, whence the greatest and most pleasant fragrantcy should be exhaled, Genesis 8:20.

All this pleasure of God testified before the oblation, was from the certainty of its accomplishment. God knew he "laid help upon one that was mighty," Psa. lxxxix. 19. mighty to please him, and pleasure us. God could not have beforehand rejoiced in that which should have come short of his expectation; it is inconsistent with the Deity to have such a disappointment; the least failure in the sacrifice would have frustrated his contrivance, and rendered it loathsome to God as the sin of Adam for which he suffered: but it was impossible for God to be disappointed; and impossible for the Redeemer, being God as well as man, to fail in the performance of his part, and thereby God come short of his satisfaction, and the sinner of his security.

2. God had a restoration of his rest, which had been disturbed by the entrance of sin, and therefore this sacrifice was highly acceptable to God. He was God's "servant, in whom his soul delighted," or had a rest, Isaiah 42:1. Excluding all other things from contributing to the rest or delight of God. God rested in the works of creation as they were shadows of his wisdom, power, and greatness; especially as they were effluxes of his goodness, and answered his glorious ends; for the ground of his resting was a review of the goodness of them according to his own mind and idea. He saw himself and his attributes glittering in the creatures. But the rest of God was disturbed by the invasion sin made upon his rights in the world; and no sooner had he made the world, and was "refreshed," Exodus 31:17 but disorder and 'confusion, by means of sin, spread itself over that frame; whereupon he cursed the earth, which he had newly made; gave sentence against man, and though it was tempered with the mercy of a gracious promise, yet he left him under some outward penal evils all his days, because of his revolt, and had no rest but in that Seed of the woman, whose heel was to be bruised by the serpent, that the serpent's head might be shattered and bruised by him; and thereby an end put to that disorder which had entered by the serpent's breath. And therefore all the joy God hath in his church, the best part of his creation, is from this rest or acquiescence in his love, or the object of his love: "He will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing'," Zephaniah 3:17. Hence it is, that the temple, the type of Christ, is called, in regard of those shadows of him, namely, sacrifices daily performed in it, "the house of his glory," Isaiah 55:7 "a glorious high throne," Jeremiah 17:12 "the place of his rest," Isaiah 66:1. Could gold and silver, polished stones, and artificial structures be the rest and throne of God? As little as the blood of bulls and goats, could affect him of themselves with a fragrant smell. His sole acquiescence was in the temple of the body of Christ made fit to be a sacrifice, and represented by those types. Such a rest he had in him as a sacrifice, that upon that very account he gave all things into his hands: and as by eternal generation he had communicated to him the perfections of his nature; so, as he was a mediatorial sacrifice, he gave him authority to execute judgment, gave him a kingdom as large as his own, and seemed to vail his own authority, to increase his, and as it were stands behind the curtain, while this our Mordecai, that saved us from death, manages all the concerns of his empire, and all to this end, that "men might honour the Son as they honoured the Father," John 5:22-23. Such a perfect acquiescence hath God in him, that he will entertain nothing to the prejudice of the honour of Christ in his work. He will not have the best works and sacrifices of men, partners and competitors with him; he will for ever discard all those that have not the same thoughts of him, the same satisfaction and glorious rest in him, according to their measures, as himself hath. No other sacrifice shall be of value with him for the atonement of sin; not a drachm of mercy, not so much as to the quantity of the cooling virtue of a drop of water, can reasonably be expected by those who refresh not themselves with that sacrifice wherein God found so delightful a rest. Such a rest hath God in this sacrifice, that it shall be the matter of the praises of the saints

to all eternity in heaven.

3. The highest perfections of God's nature had a peculiar glory from this sacrifice. All his perfections, not discovered before to the sons of men, are glorified punctually, according to his intentions and resolves for their discovery. Not a tittle of his nature which was to be made known to the sons of men, but is unveiled in this sacrifice, to their view, in a greater glory than the creatures were able to exhibit him. The "knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face," or appearance, "of Jesus Christ," 2 Corinthians 4:6 that is, all the perfections of his nature are delineated in this saving sacrifice. In which respect some think that, of the "fulness of the Godhead's dwelling in him bodily," Colossians 2:9 is to be taken, not only that the Deity dwelt in the human nature, but the full discovery of the perfections of the Godhead was in the appearance of Christ in his body, as prepared for a sacrifice, as in a map and scheme, as clear as could possibly be represented to the view of men. It is in the purchase of our redemption by his blood, that he appears to be the "image of the invisible God," as well as the "firstborn" or head of "every creature," Colossians 1:14-15 the image of those perfections of the Godhead, which otherwise had been utterly invisible to man; the image, not of his will, as the Socinians say, but of his nature. Hence is the glory of the Lord, as well as the salvation of his people, the name and title of Christ, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," Isaiah 40:5, Luke 2:32. His holiness was glorified in the discovery of the hellish filthiness of sin; his justice in the grievous punishment of it; his mercy to his creatures, in the giving the dearest thing he had, a ransom for them. In him he appeared gracious as well as righteous, transcendently merciful in the exercise of the highest justice, both shone clearly in the head of this sacrifice, being tempered for the glory of God, and the good of the creature; the seat of Justice is turned into a throne of grace, puts on the quality of an advocate instead of that of an accuser, uttering absolutions instead of condemnations. Since Justice is propitiated by the death of Christ, it steps in as an agent in the justification of a believer, Romans 3:25-26. Justice, the main attribute to be dreaded by man, was so glorified and pleased by this sacrifice, that this alone would oblige him to the remission of sin, if mercy should not have any suit for itself.

4. Compare this sacrifice with the evil for which he was sacrificed, and which had invaded the rights of God, and the sweet savour of it will appear, as also the efficacy of it.

(I.) This sacrifice was as honourable for God, as our sins had been a dishonour to him. As much glory accrued to him by it, as injury was offered him by our sin. Our sin was the sin of a creature, and the sacrifice was the act of that person by whom God made the world. The sin was the act of his creature-image, the sacrifice was the act of the "express image of his person," Hebrews 1:2-3. Sin was committed by man, and expiated by him who was God. It was not only a rational sacrifice for the sin of a rational creature, but a divine. The sin was an infinite offence in regard of the person against whom it was committed; the price was of an infinite value in regard of the person by whom it was paid; the dignity of the person makes a compensation for the malice of the crime; an infinite person was not more wronged by the transgression, than he is righted by the dignity of the person who made the compensation for it. It is every way proportioned to the infinite guilt of the crimes for which it is offered, and the infinite justice of God which was offended thereby. God had a price of a full value, he was fully repaired in his honour, and we delivered from our chains. In some respect the attributes of God were not so much dishonoured by the sin of Adam, as they were glorified by the death of Christ; Christ glorified by his sacrifice those perfections which were

not then discovered nor discoverable to Adam in his innocence, as patience and grace; as well as those which were particularly offended by the revolt of man. This sacrifice fully repairs the honour of God, which nothing else could do. The reason why the damned lie for ever under the weight of his wrath in hell, is, because by all their suffering they cannot restore that honour to God, which they have robbed him of by their iniquities.

(2.) There was therefore a greater pleasure arose to God from this sacrifice, than noisomeness from our sin. The dignity of the person suffering was equal to the dignity of the person injured, and infinitely exceeding the quality of the person offending. The sin of a creature could never be so filthy, as the blood of the Son of God was holy; and the noisomeness of the first could not equal the sweetness of the latter. The stench of sin was not only balanced and tempered, but overpowered by the sweetness of this sacrifice. Divine justice was not more incensed against the crime, than divine holiness was delighted with the offering. Sin was the sin of the human nature, the sacrifice was of the human nature in union with the divine, and offered up by an "eternal Spirit," Hebrews 9:14. The apostle in that text alludes to Genesis 8:21. God smelt so sweet a savour from Noah's sacrifice, the type of this, that he resolves never more to curse the ground, or send a deluge upon the new world, though he knew it would prove as bad as the old; for in the same breath, wherein God's resolution is discovered to us, his sense of the evil of men's imaginations from their youth is declared also. The fragrant odour of the one, was above the noisome scent of the other. Though our consciences are purged from dead works, which do morally pollute us, as the touch of a dead body did ceremonially pollute the Israelite, yet they are but partially purged here to serve the living God. There is not a service we offer, but hath something mixed with it contrary to the holiness of God; yet the evil fumes that steam up with our sacrifices of duty, are overpowered by the rich perfume of the sacrifice of the Son of God: that when for the foulness of our imperfections we deserve a repulse, yet for the sweetness of his sacrifice we find an acceptance; so much did the merit of his blood overcome the ill scent of our iniquities in the nostrils of God, that he cancels our bonds, which were due to him, and makes new ones of himself to Christ; he frees the creature from the deserved punishment, and obligeth himself to give eternal life to every one that believes in him thus sacrificed, howsoever noisome his sins wherewith he had affronted Heaven before.

(3.) Therefore it is efficacious for man, because so pleasing and sweet to God. Sin did not so much hurt to the transgressor, as this sacrifice procures good to the believer. Sin took away spiritual life, Christ by his sacrifice procures a restoration of it in a fuller communication than before, John 10:10 a richer and more overflowing fountain than before, more abundantly than Adam in innocency, who had it mutable in his own hands, we immutable in the hands of our Head, who is our life; more abundantly than the patriarchs of the old testament, who had it in hope, and we in the full exhibition. A spiritual life more firm than Adam's, ending in an eternal life more durable. Therefore the grace of Christ surmounts the effects of Adam's sin. The apostle discourseth of the abundance of grace above the abundance of sin, Romans 5:15-17. As Adam's sin barred paradise against him and his posterity, the blood of Christ, as oil to the lock, makes heaven's gates open easily for the re-admission of every believer.

5. His resurrection after his bloody sacrifice, is a clear evidence of the sweetness of its savour with God, and its sufficiency for us. He was not totally swallowed up by divine justice, but surmounted all the strokes of it, and lifted up his head above the waves that surrounded him. The fetters of

death had not been unlocked, if his sacrifice had not been satisfactory. The justice of God might as well have discharged him without any sacrifice at all, as discharged him upon an insufficient one. The freedom therefore of the prisoner from his chains, is an evidence of the full satisfaction of the debt, and the completeness of the sacrifice, since it is by that God, whose name hath that letter in it, "By no means to clear the guilty," Exodus 34:7 that the writ of execution was taken off: "He was taken from prison and from judgment," Isaiah 53:8. By whom? By him who only had authority to release him, who became a God of peace by his sacrifice, before he showed himself a God of power in his resurrection, Hebrews 13:20. He was appeased as an offended Lawgiver, before he gave a judicial discharge as the supreme Governor, unloosed the chains of death, sent an angel as his officer to unlock the prison doors, the grave, and set him at full liberty, no more to be arrested. There could be in this case no forcible breaking of prison, he being in the hands of the Almighty God, who had as much power to keep him in the chains of death, had his sacrifice been blemished, as he had to free him, when his sacrifice was spotless. Justice therefore is fully satisfied, since the "pains of death are unloosed," Acts 2:24-25, &c. for it was not possible he should be holden of them, because the truth of God was engaged that his "holy One should not see corruption." This raising him was a justification of him; for when he was taken from prison, he was taken from judgment also, that no suits could be brought against him, or any new actions laid upon him, and he was "declared to be the Son of God," Romans 1:4 and if we take in Romans 1:3, that seed of David also, which was prophesied of; and he was declared to be so with power, not only by the power that raised him, but by the power of the government of the world, wherein he was instated upon his resurrection. For this act of God was a testimony that he had ordained him, and ordained him also "to judge the world," Acts 17:31. By this he was acquitted by God, as having done all that he did according to the articles between them. And in that act all his members have an original and fundamental discharge to be sued out in due time in particular upon their faith. It is in this discharge he triumphs, as it was his justification before men and angels: "He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?" Isaiah 1:8. This is the foundation of the apostle's triumphant challenge: "O death, where is thy sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:55-56. Where is sin, that ushered death into the world, and by it stung man to the heart? It is conquered by the resurrection of Christ, which is a clear evidence of the sweetness of this sacrifice to God, and its efficacy for us. Our faith is not in vain, which it had been, according to the apostle, "if he had not risen," 1 Corinthians 15:17 as he died, namely, in the quality of our Surety and Head. Had not the sacrifice been without exception, the devil had been the victor, and Christ his triumph. He would have acquired a stronger power over men by the least blemish, as he first gained it by Adam's sin. Had he not been justified himself, he could never have justified us, nor could the mercies of David have been sure and perpetual without it, Acts xiii. 34. So mightily pleased was God with this sacrifice, that he employed his glorious power to raise him; Justice had no plea to continue him in prison, nor the devil any power to hinder the breaking of his fetters. His sacrifice was his act to propitiate God, his resurrection was God's act to comfort us.

6. The ascension and full exaltation of Christ after his bloody sacrifice, is a full evidence of this doctrine. Since the promises made to Christ are accomplished, which were conditional upon the making his soul an offering for sin, it manifests he is an unexceptionable sacrifice. He had a kingdom promised him, and doth now rule in the majesty of God, Micah 5:4. Had there been the least blemish upon him, he could not have claimed the performance of any one promise, nor had justice been bound to make any good to him. Grace to man made the first promise to Christ in

favour of justice, and justice would have hindered the performance of any promise, had it been able to find any exception. This sacrifice of his, in "pouring out his soul to death," is the foundation of all his advancement, Isaiah 53:11-12. This being the condition on his part, could not but be followed, upon the fulfilling it, with a performance of the promises on God's part. Now Christ went first to heaven in his soul immediately after his oblation to present his sacrifice to God, and receive his judgment about the validity of it; for that day, the day of his sufferings, he was to be in paradise; "after death the judgment." This was agreeable to the type of him. in the anniversary sacrifice upon the day of expiation, when the high priest was to go with the blood into the holy place immediately after the shedding of it, and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat; for after the blood was clotted, it was incapable of being sprinkled. Christ immediately after his death appears in heaven, to receive the acceptation of his Father. This was in his soul, his body then lying in the grave, which the scripture calls not an ascension till his soul and body were re- united, and both went up to heaven together. By this first entrance into heaven, Christ obtained eternal redemption for us. Had not this judgment passed from God, of the prevalency of his sacrifice, God had never sent an angel to unlock the grave, nor a cloud as a chariot to carry him up to heaven. This supposeth his sacrifice on earth to be already ratified in heaven. By this ascension he was again declared, as well as by his resurrection, to be without sin, without any need of repeating his sacrifice, Hebrews 9:28. His triumphant entrance into heaven assures us, that his sacrifice was admitted into the bosom of God with infinite delight and pleasure. He could not have had a glory, had he not punctually observed his order. Triumph doth not precede, but follow a victory. His. going to the Father was a full conviction of the righteousness of his person, and his punctual discharge of his office; and the chief topic whereby the Spirit should argue men into a compliance with him, John 16:9-10 is, because he is gone to the Father. Heaven had been no place for a blemished and imperfect offering. The angels had not been commanded to be his adorers, but rather with their flaming swords have chased him out of heaven; he could as little have continued there with a spot, as Adam in paradise after his transgression. No gift could have been poured out upon the sons of men. The Holy Spirit could never have been the purchase of an unaccepted sacrifice. He could not have been invested with a power to exercise any office in heaven, if he had not executed what he had undertaken upon earth; he could not have lived to apply his sacrifice to us, if he had not been accepted in his offering himself a sacrifice for us. But, since he sits at the right hand of God, it is an infallible token of God's absolute rest in him, and his own rest from any further labour; it is an argument of special favour and dearness. God hath given him all power in heaven and earth, ordered all the angels to worship him, and not only to give him a simple adoration, but to be at his command, his ministers and attendants in his kingdom; he subjected his whole court to him and his service; he bestowed upon him all the honour that was possible to be given him as Mediator, out of the complacency he had in him as a sacrifice. It was upon the account that "he purged our sins" by himself, that he "sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high," and had all that dignity conferred upon him which is afterwards named, Hebrews 1:3. The whole prophecy of it is called "a song of loves," Psalms 45:1. So highly pleasing it is to God, that he will not cease shooting his arrows, till he hath put every enemy under his feet, that doth not agree with him in his pleasure and delight in Christ, Psalms 110:1. As therefore he is entered into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and has maintained the plea of his sacrifice for so many hundred years since he first entered his suit, it is a proof that the pleading his death, and the sight of his sacrificed body, is not wearisome and distasteful to God. It is not like a carcase that he desires to be buried out of his

sight. He joyfully hears the voice of his blood sounding in his ears to this moment. Well therefore might the apostle upon this account make so great a challenge to all: "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Romans 8:33-34. Christ by his death, appeased the wrath of God; by his resurrection, he was acquitted by the justice of God; by his ascension, he took possession of his regal throne; by his sitting at the right-hand of God, he prevalently pleads his sacrifice for the ends for which it was offered, and by his Spirit applies his blood to them that believe in him.

7. The admirable virtue of this sacrifice, evidenceth the sweetness of it in the account of God. It had a virtue antecedent to the oblation of it, and after the oblation it hath a perpetual virtue.

(1.) It had a virtue antecedent to the oblation of it. God upon the foresight of this sacrifice to be made in due time, did dispense his pardon to those that rested upon this future sacrifice, and did not stay till the satisfaction should be made for the injury committed, but imparted it to men, that hoped in the merit of the sacrifice before the oblation of it, and released the captive upon the single bond of Christ, before the actual payment of the ransom. Upon his promise to be a sacrifice, believers under the old testament were saved by the merit of it, as well as those under the new. Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and was justified by faith in him. When he appeared, his design was to "put away sin," Hebrews 9:25-26 what sin? not only sins committed while he was in the flesh, or sins committed after his ascension, but sins before, even those transgressions which the legal sacrifices from the time of their first institution were unable to expiate; such sins, which the high priest entering into the holy place every year with the blood of animals, was not able to wipe off, and to "make that perfect which the law could not," Hebrews 7:19 and redeem from the "transgression under the first testament," Hebrews 9:15. As a head appointed by God, he saved men before his coming, as Adam the first head ruined men before their birth. It is not more efficacious now, nor will be to eternity, than it was before; for he is the same in point of virtue yesterday, in the ages past, as he is to-day, at present, and will be in ages "to come," Heb. xiii. 8. Whoever were accepted by God in their persons and services, were accepted upon the account of the first-born or head of every creature; as in him all the elect were chosen, so in him they were all accepted, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:6. Faith was from the first ages of the world; the proper object of faith is God in the Redeemer, and he was not considered by the patriarchs, but in that quality, in all their sacrifices, since he had changed the government after the fall, from God as Creator, to God as Redeemer; and therefore as all his acts of government respected the Redeemer and the redemption, so all the services of men were to respect the Redeemer promised. What God did to them, was in the name of Christ, the angel of his covenant; and what they offered to God, was with an eye to the promised Seed, which is the same thing with our doing all things in the name of Christ, the circumstance of time only being altered; what was future then being changed into time past now. The ground of this was the agreement between God and Christ for the performance of this oblation. When bonds are agreed on, and time given for the payment of the debt, the prisoner hath his liberty till that revolution of time. Now, not only the thing to be done, but the time when it was to be done, was settled between them, called therefore a due time, or a stated opportunity, Romans 5:6 and the fulness of time; and till that time there was to be a relaxation or pretermission, a not charging the debt upon them, which is the word used by the apostle: "For the remission of sins that are past," Romans 3:25. Had not this sacrifice had a virtue

antecedent to the oblation of it, Christ himself, in the days of his flesh, could not well have uttered those words so often, "Thy faith hath saved thee," before he had bowed his head upon the cross. The removal of sin, the bar to communion with God, upon the credit of a future sacrifice, is an undeniable evidence how sweet the expectation of it was to God; and therefore sweet must the actual immolation of it needs be.

(2.) After the oblation it hath a perpetual virtue. If the virtue of it, before it was offered, reached to the first ages of the world, as far as Adam and Abel, it will continue in as excellent a force to the last believer, that shall close up the number of the elect at the end of the world. If the blood of Abel is so efficacious as to procure a perpetual vengeance upon Cain, shall not the blood of that person, by whom God created the world, be more efficacious to procure a perpetual blessing from the grace of God, to which he is more inclined than to acts of vengeance? Though this sacrifice was but once offered, yet it works, in regard of its virtue, perpetually as a moral cause. As, the act of sin ceasing, the guilt and power of sin remains binding over to punishment, so, though the act of Christ's offering himself ceased, yet the virtue of it is durable. The blood of this redeeming victim, is intimated to be an incorruptible blood: "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1:18-19 precious because incorruptible; the opposition testifies it, though it be not the same expression; precious blood is opposed to corruptible things. As his body, so likewise his blood, and the efficacy of his sacrifice, was not to see corruption; his blood is like the rod of Aaron, always flourishing in the holy of holies before the mercyseat.

Aaron's rod flourished after Aaron's death, the sacrifice of Christ is always fresh rising before the throne of God, producing the fruits it merited, and the grace we want. This blood is called "a new and living way," as if it were just now shed, or had been sprinkled upon us as soon as it streamed out of his body. Since he is a Priest for ever, the virtue of his death abides for ever; he could not be a Priest for ever without an everlasting sacrifice, for priest and sacrifice are relatives. If he be a priest for ever, he is a sacrifice for ever; the same moment that the virtue of the latter ceaseth, the honour of the former would shrink away: but that is "unchangeable," Hebrews 7:24. His kingdom cannot be shaken; his sacrifice therefore, which was the foundation of his kingdom, cannot be wasted; he must cease sitting upon his throne, fall from being the Father's darling at his right hand, if the virtue of his merit, and the efficacy of his blood, should cease producing the true fruits of it among his people. Though the oblation was but once, yet the presentation is perpetual; he pleads upon his throne what he offered upon the cross. If it were a wasted thing, it were not worthy of the plea of so great a person as the Redeemer, nor worthy to be pleaded before so great a person as the Judge of all the world. He is, in regard of the continued virtue, not said to have been, but to be, our propitiation: "He is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 2:2 he is, not has been, he is now sitting in heaven: he was a propitiation on earth in his offering, he is a propitiation in heaven in the presentation of that offering. While his plea is heard, his death is accepted, for his plea is only the voice of his blood, and the fumes of his sacrifice. If the gospel must be preached to the end of the world, the virtue of his sacrifice, upon which the efficacy of the gospel depends, shall endure as long as the world endures. This perpetual virtue was typified by the ashes of the red heifer burnt without the camp, which were reserved for purifying from legal uncleanness, Numb. xix. 9. As the power of the devil shall never be able to pull him out of his throne, so the power of sin shall never be so prevalent as to weaken the virtue of his blood; as long as he remains in a state of life, his

blood will have its efficacy, because it is the blood of "the everlasting covenant," Hebrews 13:20. "What greater evidence can there be of the gratefulness of it to God, than its virtue reaching to the most distant ages of the world, and running through all the revolutions of time? 8. It is so acceptable to God, that it is a sufficient sacrifice for all, if all would accept of it, and by a fixed faith plead it. It is sufficient for the salvation of all sinners, and the expiation of all sins. The wrath of God was so fully appeased by it, his justice so fully satisfied, that there is no bar to a re-admission into his favour, and the enjoyment of the privileges purchased by it, but man's unbelief. The blood of Christ is a stream, whereof all men may drink; an ocean, wherein all men may bathe. It wants not value to remove our sins, if we want not faith to embrace and plead it. As no sickness was strong enough against the battery of his powerful word when he was in the world; so no guilt is strong enough against the power of his blood, if the terms upon which it is offered by God, be accepted by us. It is absolutely sufficient in itself, so that if every son of Adam, from Adam himself to the last man that shall issue from him by natural descent, should by faith sue out the benefit of it, it would be conferred upon them. God hath no need to stretch his wisdom, to contrive another price, nor Christ any need to re-assume the form of a servant, to act the part of a bloody sacrifice any more. If any perished by the biting of the fiery serpent, it was not for want of a remedy in God's institution, but from wilfulness in themselves. The antitype answers to the type, and wants no more a sufficiency to procure a spiritual good, than that to effect the cure of the body. He is therefore called "the Saviour of the world," 1 John 4:14. And when the apostle upon the citation of that in the prophet, that "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;" concludes, that there is "no difference between Jew and Gentile," but that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved," Romans 10:11, Romans 10:13 by the same reason it may be concluded, that there is no difference between this and that man, if they believe: what is promised to one believer, as a believer, is promised to all the world upon the same condition. And when the apostle saith, Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved;" he speaks to every man that shall hear that sentence. If any man believe, this sacrifice is sufficient for his salvation; as Adam's disobedience was sufficient to ruin all his posterity descending from him by natural generation; so is this sacrifice sufficient to save all that are in Christ by a spiritual implantation. The apostle's comparison would not else be valid: "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. And if all men in the world were united to him by faith, there could not be any more required of Christ for their salvation than what he hath already acted; for it is a sacrifice of infinite value, and infinite knows no limits. Since it was sufficient to satisfy an infinite justice, it is sufficient to save an inexpressible number; and the virtue of it in saving one, argues a virtue in it to save all upon the same condition. Who will question the ability of an almighty power to raise all men from death to life, that hath raised one man from death to life by the speaking of a word? If men therefore perish, it is not for want of value, or virtue, or acceptableness in this sacrifice, but for want of answering the terms upon which the enjoyment of the benefits of it is proposed. If a man will shut his eyes against the light of the sun, it argues an obstinacy in the person, not any defect in the sun itself.

9. The effects of this sacrifice show the acceptableness of it to God. As the effect of Adam's disobedience demonstrates the blackness and strength of his sin, so the fruit of this sacrifice evidenceth the efficacy of it. Had it not been sweet to God, we had still been in our sins. He was to perfect his people, which had been impossible, had he not been perfect himself in his sufferings; if

he hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified," then that sacrifice whereby he did perfect them is fully complete, Hebrews 10:14.

(1.) Remission of sin. Our lives by our rebellion were a debt to the violated law; when we transgressed the precept, we incurred the penalty: this debt is discharged to believers by Christ's offering his soul in our stead, a sacrifice for sin, a rescue for our souls. "He took away sin as the Lamb of God," John i. 29. As a sacrificed lamb, for the analogy relates not to a lamb as a creature, but a lamb as a sacrifice. He took away the sin of the world, the guilt of sin, the curse of God, whatsoever belongs to the eternal wages of sin, lie transferred upon himself. There is a perpetual virtue in its nature : "He took;" as when we say a drug purges, we signify not only the act, but the natural quality of it. The apostle concludes the efficacy of this oblation from God's remembering sin no more: "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more; now where remission of those is, there is no more offering for sin," Hebrews 10:16-18. The completeness of the fruit discovers the judgment of God, for the completeness of the merit upon which it is founded. He himself therefore after his resurrection gives his apostle commission to publish this as the fruit of his death, to let men know, that the way to heaven in the removal of the bar, was secured by the blood of Jesus, John 20:22-23, Luke 24:47. All the sacrifices wherein here was a daily remembrance of sin, were abrogated as useless after this offering, which surmounted the efficacy of all the legal ones put together. They expiated ceremonial uncleanness, and the pollution of the body; this, moral iniquities and the filth of the soul, Hebrews 9:13-14 the apostle instanceth in the most solemn offering, that of the red heifer, supposed to be of a more durable efficacy than the daily offerings, since the ashes of it were reserved for a "purification for sin," Numbers 19:9. But this, much more the rest, were exceeded by this offering that purged the conscience from those dead works, that bound the soul over to eternal death. And indeed the ceremonial act of the high-priest in sprinkling the blood of the heifer directly "before the tabernacle," Numbers 19:4, intimated that the efficacy of it was to be derived from the flesh and blood of Christ typified by that structure. By this we gain a plenary indulgence, so as to have "no more conscience of sin," Hebrews 10:2. Not that there is no more sin in believers, or no more sense of sin, but no more accusations and charges of sin before God, or despairing servile thoughts for sin in their own consciences. For in his blood "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins," Ephesians 1:7. Upon which account a challenge is made by the apostle to all the believer's adversaries, to bring an effectual charge against them, Romans 8:33-34. It frees us not from one or two sins, but vast numbers of them: "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John 1:7. So that all the powers of hell can never lay the load upon them again; for this saves to the uttermost, covers their iniquities, and blots them out as a thick cloud. "Death is swallowed up in victory," the destruction and condemnation by sin: "O death, where is thy sting?" that is, Where is sin? that is, the sting of death, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55. And indeed so acceptable to God was the first undertaking of our Saviour, that God promised him this as the fruit of his suffering, that his labour should not be in vain, that he should see his seed, that by his knowledge he should justify many, when he "bore their iniquities," Isaiah 53:11. And therefore when the apostle saith, the old man is crucified with Christ, he understands that the destruction of the body of death, and the remission of all the extravagancies of it, is purchased by Christ at the hands of God, Romans 6:6. And all the sense we have of remission, from any ordinance, especially by that of the supper, is not from the ordinance itself, or the remembrance of this sacrifice; but from the perpetual and prevailing efficacy of it with God to this day. The removal of so great a weight from the soul, which we were unable to bear, so great a curse which we were

unable to suffer, shows the high acceptableness of it with God.

(2.) The confirmation of the covenant. After sin had stepped into the world, and invaded the rights of God, the first covenant became utterly unprofitable for the relief of man. God makes a new one, which was not signified to be valid to any without sacrifice. It is not unlikely that the first declaration of it to Adam, in the promise of the Seed, was accompanied with the sacrifices of beasts; both to show to him a token of that punishment he had merited at the hands of justice; and in what a bloody way his recovery was to be accomplished. The repetition of it to Abraham was confirmed by sacrifices, Genesis 15:17-18. And the solemn covenant between God and the Israelites was confirmed by sacrifices, and the blood of them called by Moses, "the blood of the covenant," Exodus 24:5-8 that is, a type of that blood which shall be shed for the confirmation of that blessed covenant whereby the soul shall be purified from sin. And by the institution of God this seems to be essential to a covenant with God: "My saints, that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," Psalms 1:5. And this custom was used by the heathens in their leagues and solemn contracts between nations, and in covenants between their gods and them, which descended to them probably by tradition from the first parents, though they had lost the true intent of that tradition. All this respected the confirmation of the covenant of grace (succeeding in the room of that violated covenant of works) by the blood of the promised Seed, whereby man was to be repaired, and the devil defeated. Hence is God so mightily affected with the engagement of Christ to be our surety, that he presently established the covenant of being their God, and making them his people: "Who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach to me, saith the Lord? Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," Jeremiah 30:21-22. That is the immediate issue of this engagement. To this purpose was he given to be a witness of the everlasting covenant," Isa. Leviticus 3, 4. And to this his sacrifice had an immediate respect, whence the blood that merits, the striking off the chains of the prisoners, and taking away the bars, is called the "blood of the covenant," Zechariah 9:11. And Christ, in the institution of the supper, Luke 22:20 calls it the "new testament in his blood," that is, the true blood shed for the ratification of the covenant, which was only typified by the blood of all former sacrifices. And "for the remission of sins;" this only is mentioned, though other benefits besides this flowed from the covenant, because as sin was the foundation of all evil, so pardon of sin is the fountain of all good. Had other blessings been merited without this, a bar had been put to our enjoyment of them, by the want of this. Upon this first link all other blessings in the chain of happiness depend. All the promises of God, which are branches of this federal engagement, are yea and amen in Christ, of an infallible certainty. He himself is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness," Revelation 3:4. And to this purpose is the sacrament of the supper appointed, being the perpetual representation of this sacrifice, wherein God shows himself resolved to stand firm in the covenant, which was confirmed by the blood of the cross, and make good to a believer all the branches of it. This manifests it to be highly acceptable to God, since the covenant made just after the unprofitableness of the old, is upon the account of this sacrifice ratified by God (as the sure mercies of David) in all the parts of it, to all the indigencies and highest satisfaction of every believer.

(3.) Restoration of peace, and intercourse with God. Man was upon the terms of enmity with God, hating him, and being hated by him. God hates men, not as creatures, but as sinners. Man hates God, not as God, but as Sovereign and Judge. Man turned off God from being his Lord; God turned off man from being his favourite. Therefore Christ, in respect of this sacrifice, is called our

propitiation, 1 John 2:2 and Romans 3:25 alluding both to the sacrifices and the place of the sprinkling the blood. As "He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him," Isaiah 53:5. And though he was reconciling us all his life, yet it is principally ascribed to his sacrifice in his death, Colossians 1:21-22. All that Christ did in his life, had not been available for us, had he not added the top-stone in the shedding his blood: and therefore in the Creed there is a transition and leap from his birth to his death, all intermediate actions of his life being omitted, because that was the great work whereby it was finished. Access to God was barred up, till the way was opened by the blessed "Son of God," Hebrews 10:19-20. So much is God pleased with it, that his majesty condescends to the lowest step, to solicit his apostate creatures; and miserable man is admitted to importune God, not only with hopes, but assurance of his favour, and a happy success upon the account of this expiatory sacrifice. God hath laid aside the rigours of his justice, to beseech us with the bowels of his mercy; and tore down the partition-wall that hindered his deplorable creature from an access to him, and hereby given us a full evidence what an inestimable fragrantcy ascended from this sacrifice before him, since he did not only blot our sins out of the records of his justice, but restored us to his forfeited favour, and conferred upon us the privilege of children, and conversed with man as an object of his love, who before had rendered himself the mark of his wrath.

(4.) The mission of the Spirit. God first sent Christ to be an acceptable sacrifice to him, and, to testify his high valuation of it, sent the Spirit in his name, or upon his account, to be an abiding Comforter to us. Had not the sin which first drove the Spirit out of the world, been expiated according to the mind and will of God, he had not revisited the world, but left it in its original darkness. His first mission, and all his consequent operations, are the fruits of this sacrifice. Though he was sent by the Father, yet sent "in the name of the Son," John 14:26 as a fruit of God's acceptance of him. His name had been of no prevalence for so great a gift, had not his death been first of a grateful savour with the Father. Had he not gone away, the Comforter could not have come to us, John 16:7 which refers not only to his ascension, but to his passion; and had he gone, and his death been disapproved of, the Spirit had staid in heaven. Nor would the Spirit have been employed to bring things to our remembrance, which were not worth our remembrance to our comfort, if they had not been first worthy of his Father's acceptance. He was "not to speak of himself," John 16:13 that is, he was not to publish a new doctrine, but impress what Christ as a Prophet had taught, and what Christ as a Priest had acted. He would not have been sent to act upon a weak foundation, and to propagate that which had not exactly answered the will and design of God. He was to glorify Christ, John 16:14 that is, to declare the efficacy of his death. Christ had not been a fit subject to be glorified in the world, had he not, in the administration of his office, glorified God, and been glorious in his eyes. And since he is an abiding Spirit, his perpetual inhabitation manifests the perpetual favour of this sacrifice; for, since the first acceptance of it was the cause of his coming, the perpetual fragrantcy of it must be the ground of his abiding. He could no more abide, if there were an interruption of its sweetness, than he could first have come, had there been a defect of sweetness in it. This sacrifice did not only procure the coming of the Spirit, but his coming, with the most glorious things in the possession of God: "All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and show it unto you," John 16:15. All things that the Father hath: the greatness of the Comforter, the fulness of the treasure, and his perpetual abiding with these rich gifts, are full evidences how much God is pleased with this offering. As God could not testify his good will to man in a higher manner than sending his Son to be a sacrifice for

him, so he could not in a higher manner testify his delight in that sacrifice, than to send so great a person as the Holy Ghost to be a solicitor to men to accept of it, and a Comforter to those who believe in it, the third person in the blessed Trinity, to preserve the honour of the oblation of the second. God would never have been at the expense of so great a gift to keep up the credit of a person and sacrifice wherein he had no pleasure.

(5.) The acceptance of our persons and services. His delight in this sacrifice is the ground of the the acceptance of every person accepted by him: it is in the Beloved that every one is accepted, Ephesians 1:6. Not beloved simply as his Son, the second person in the glorious Trinity, but beloved as a sacrifice; for he was beloved as he was a medium for the praise of the glory of the grace of God, which was not as he was a Son by eternal generation, but as he assumed our nature by his incarnation, and offered it to God by his passion. The Trinity had been blessed, if man had not been created; and had been blessed, if revolted man had not been redeemed, and not a spark of grace shot out upon the world. Therefore in the following verse, this, as well as the other parts of redemption, is ascribed to his blood. Had not Christ been first accepted as an oblation of infinite value, neither the persons nor services of men, abounding with guilt and filth, could have been worthy of the notice and entertainment of God. Our acceptance is the fruit of the acceptance of the offering Christ made of himself. The pleasure God takes in his obedience to death, makes believers as his members, and their services as sprinkled with his blood, delightful to God; upon which account, the last time, wherein this victim was to be offered, is called "the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God," Isaiah lxi. 2. an acceptable time, when it was the day of vengeance upon sin in the suffering of the sinner's Surety.

(6.) The joys and peace of conscience. By his bonds he procured our liberty, by his condemnation our absolution, and tasted of the vengeance of God, to fill us with the delights of the Spirit. As God had a rest in his acceptance of it, so he gives us a joy and peace in our believing it, which is the acceptance on our parts, answering to the acceptance on God's part, Romans 15:13. This is accompanied with a repose to the conscience, a silencing our fears, and a filling with "a joy unspeakable, and full of glory." These gifts God doth most plentifully distribute, when we are deepest in sufferings for the acknowledgment and approbation of this sacrifice; it is then Stephens shall see the heavens opened, and behold Christy at the right hand of God, have a sense how; highly God values that in heaven, which wicked men reproach, and believers suffer for on earth, Acts 7:55 then it is that a "Spirit of glory and of God rests upon them," 1 Peter 4:14. God eats not his morsels alone; he impresseth a joy in the hearts of his people, when they are either publicly witnessing to this blood, or privately acting faith in it, or celebrating the memorials of it: when we eat our spiritual meat with singleness of heart," God doth accompany it with "gladness," Acts 2:46. Every beam of paradise, darting into the heart at such seasons, is a token of its sweet savour with God, and an assurance of God's valuing us, for valuing that which is so much the object of his delight. Man only stands in a posture for such spiritual viands, when he is in the exercise of an estimation of Christ in imitation of that esteem God hath of him; this is the best savour to God, next to that of the oblation of his Son.

(7.) Bestowing of the glory of heaven upon this account. The restoring men to that eternal salvation they had lost, is a certain proof of the strength of this sacrifice. As soon as Christ was "made perfect by suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him," Hebrews 5:9. Nothing can be a higher demonstration to the sense of the creature, of God's

esteem of this victim, than his admission of poor creatures to reside with him, for ever to behold and enjoy his glory. By this we have liberty to enter into the holy place, not only a license or bare permission, but a right of purchase, whence it is called a "purchased possession," Ephesians 1:14 a right of donation as a fruit of his delight in Christ, "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," Romans 6:23. Justice, that barred heaven, is satisfied; and God consented to a preparation of mansions in paradise, instead of dungeons in hell, that his enemies might become the heirs of his kingdom. So agreeable to God is the odour of this sacrifice, that God is not only content to free us from the hell we had merited, but he would also open for us the heaven we had forfeited, that we might be partakers of the glory and kingdom of his Son; not only deliver us, but perfect us; not only cross our debts that entitled us to prison, but impute a righteousness to entitle us to glory; stop the mouth of hell, and open the gates of heaven. Hence we are said to be "raised together with Christ," namely, by the glory of the Father, as he was, to "sit in heavenly places with Christ," by the donation of the Father, as he did, Ephesians 2:5-6 the meaning of which is, that by those acts of raising up and exalting to glory his sacrificed Son, he hath sealed to every believer the perfection of regeneration in a possession of glory for ever. The satisfaction God hath in the value of this offering, cannot give forth itself in fuller expressions, than in our salvation by the virtue of it, every thing formidable and burdensome being removed, every thing great and glorious bestowed, justice with all its vengeance appeased, the law with all its retinue of curses silenced, sin with all its demerits expiated, the covenant with all its benefits ratified, peace with all its blessings restored, the Spirit with all its treasures bestowed; our services purified from their filth, our consciences pacified from their fears, whatsoever is grievous abrogated, the veil of the temple, with all the heavy weight of ceremonies, rent in twain; hell quenched, and heaven prepared and furnished for all who imitate God in his valuation of this sacrifice.

Quest. What was it that rendered this sacrifice acceptable to God, and efficacious for us?

Ans. 1. The dignity of his person. That which is inferior, cannot be the rest and satisfaction of a superior nature; nothing but infinite therefore can be the rest and satisfaction of an infinite Being. The holiness and goodness of any, or of all creatures, could not render a sacrifice worthy of the acceptance of God. The holiness of a creature was not infinite to answer the infinite evil of sin, and suit the infinite holiness of God, any more than the weakness of a creature could have rendered him strong enough to endure the strokes of an infinite justice. Since the heavens are not pure in the sight of God, and the angels, if compared with him, are not free from vanity, Job 15:15, Job 4:18 it is necessary that he in whom God doth rest, should excel, not only the dignity and perfections of angels, but the condition of any finite being. If the holy angels cannot be the rest of God, because of their natural mutability abstracted from the establishing grace of God, much less can man, who is filthy, and drinks iniquity like water; for whatsoever dignity might be considered in his person to commend the sacrifice, might be considered also in his crime, to aggravate the guilt. But the dignity of this person was solely to be regarded in the offering, because he had no crime to be magnified by the consideration of it, being offered, not for any sin of his own, but for the sins of others. This sacrifice was of infinite value, and therefore worthy of the acceptance of an infinite nature; his person was of as great a dignity as the Father's, to whom he was offered. Though there be a distinction of order between the three Persons, yet not of dignity; he had no peer but God, for he was "equal with him," had equalities of perfections with God, was every way equal to the party offended, so that he is called God's fellow, one of the same nature with him; a man as stricken by

the sword, yet his fellow as considered in his divine nature, Zechariah 13:7 meant of Christ, part of the verse being applied by Christ to himself, Matthew 26:31 his fellow, though man, yet not as man: in whom the "fulness of the Godhead dwelt," Colos. ii. 9. not typically as in the sanctuary and most holy place, nor mystically as in believers, but personally, as his flesh was the proper flesh of the second person. Hence that name which is peculiar to the essence of God is ascribed to him: "He shall be called the Lord, our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6. Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, he, that righteous Branch whom Jehovah should raise up, Jeremiah 23:5 shall be called Jehovah; he that is raised up is Jehovah, as well as he that raised him; the glorious name of God would not have been ascribed to a simple man. He was in the form of God, before he took upon him the form of a servant, and laid not aside the form of God, when he made himself of no reputation, and in that disreputed state became obedient to the death of the cross; upon this account, his sacrifice is more worthy of acceptance than the sacrifice of all creatures. As the mediation of a prince is far more noble than that of a peasant, and the head of a king of greater value than that of a subject; the person of one David was more worth than ten thousand of the common Israelites, 2 Samuel 18:3. And as the person of Christ, so the sufferings of that person, are of more worth than the souls of all men, and their bodies cast into the scale. The dignity of Christ thus appearing, let us see how his sufferings are dignified by the greatness of his person.

(1.) His sufferings were partly finite, partly infinite. They were finite, in regard of the time of duration; finite, in regard of the immediate subject wherein he suffered, his human nature; which being a creature, could no more become infinite, than it could become omnipotent, omniscient, or eternal. But in regard of the person who suffered, the sufferings were infinite; the Deity being in conjunction with the humanity. That which is finite in regard of time, and in regard of the subject, may be infinite in regard of the object. As the sin of a short minute, and the sin of a finite creature, in regard both of the time when it is committed, and the person guilty of it, is finite; but in regard of the object, God, whose glory is eclipsed, it is an infinite evil. As the greatness of an offence is to be measured by the greatness of the person whose honour is invaded: as the striking a king is capital, when the striking an ordinary man falls under a small pecuniary fine; so the value of a satisfaction is to be measured by the excellency of the person satisfying. As therefore an infinite sin deserves an infinite punishment, because it is committed against an infinite God; so the sacrifice of Christ deserves an infinite acceptance, because it is offered by an infinite person. The subject sacrificed, makes the sacrifice infinitely grateful; as well as the person offended, renders the injury infinitely heinous. This was not the sacrifice of a man, or an angel; but of the head of the creation, "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3. By which, his sufferings were advanced into infinity, and the merit of them an infinite odour before God. There could not have been so much honour rendered to God by the obedience of a mere creature, as there was injury offered him by the transgression of the sinner. Though our sins were not infinite in number, because no number can increase so vastly as to be actually infinite, since it is composed of units added to one another; yet had they been far less, they had needed an infinite virtue in the sacrifice, by reason of the infiniteness of their guilt, because the majesty of God and his perfections are infinite, which are dishonoured by sin. Such a sacrifice this is, which hath an infinite virtue of expiating.

(2.) This infiniteness ariseth from the near and strait union of the divine with the human nature. It was not the simple offering a sacrifice by the Son of God, which was so acceptable. Had the Son

of God offered any thing else, though the offerer had been infinite, yet the offering had been finite, because not allied to, and in conjunction with, the person offering. It was infinitely valuable, not because himself was the offerer, but because himself was the offering, offering that which was in conjunction with his deity. "Purged by himself," Hebrews 1:3. Offered himself up through the eternal Spirit," Hebrews 9:14. By the personal union, the dignity was conferred upon the sufferings of his human nature. If you will say, a sacrifice had been infinite, only because it was offered by an infinite person; you may as well call the meanest worm in the world infinite, because it was made by an infinite God, and in an infinite manner of operation. The dignity therefore ariseth, from the unity of the same infinite person, in whom the two natures were united; so all the actions of Christ, as Mediator, received their value from his person. And by reason of the unity of his person, that which was the act of one nature, is attributed to the other: as when it is said, "the Son of man came down from heaven," John 3:13 that is, that person who was man, though his human nature had not been in heaven : and when his blood is called, "the blood of the Son of God," 1 John 1:7 and "the blood of God;" it was not the blood of the Godhead, but of that person who was God.

(3) In regard of this near conjunction, the godhead of Christ did influence every mediatorial action. (I do not take in all the actions of the human nature, that had no respect to his mediation, any more than as they did refer to the sustentation of his human nature, as his eating, drinking, sleeping, &c.) This value was as inseparable from his sufferings, as the divine nature was inseparable from the human. In all that he did, he was the Son of God; as much upon the cross, as before his descent from heaven; in the lowest pitch of his humiliation, as well as in his highest state of exaltation; the Son of God as much, when at his death he said, "It is finished," as after his resurrection, when he said, "All power is given to me." The man against whom the sword did awake, was "God's fellow," when he felt the piercing edge of it, Zechariah 13:7. Indeed, he laid aside the manifestation of his glory, but could not lay aside his glory; for then he might lay aside his eternity, omnipotency, his deity, and cease from being God, which is utterly impossible. He was always the same, and, as his years, so neither did his glory fail, Hebrews 1:12. In all his sufferings he retained the relation and reality of the Son of God, the union of his natures remained firm in all his passions, and therefore the efficacy of the deity mingled itself with every groan in his agony, every pang and cry upon the cross, as well as with the blood which was shed: and as his blood was the "blood of God," Acts 20:28 so his groans were the' groans of God, his pangs were the pangs of God, and were therefore subjectively infinite in value; yet did not every groan and pang procure our redemption by itself, upon the account of the infiniteness of its value in being the groans of God, because they without death did not answer the tenor of the law, nor was the curse of the law, which he was designed to endure, accomplished in any act of suffering, without shedding of blood, and that to death: "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission," Hebrews 9:22 for as there was a necessity of the conjunction of the divine nature with the human, to make his sufferings infinite; so there was a necessity of a full conformity to the threatening of the law, and his Father's order, to make them efficacious for the honour of God, and. redemption of the creature. The sum is this: As what the divine nature acted, was wrought instrumentally by the human; so what the human nature acted or suffered, was made efficacious, and dignified, by the divine.

(4.) In this respect God, his deity, may be accounted as it were his suffering, or as if he suffered. It was not necessary his deity should suffer to make the sacrifice infinite, and indeed it was

impossible. The divine nature is as impassible as it is immutable; yet in regard of the strait union of the two natures, his mediatorial actions and sufferings, being the actions and sufferings of the person, may be counted as the sufferings of the deity itself in a moral way, and by legal estimation. As sin is called Deicidum, not that it is so, or can be so physically, but in a moral way, in men's doing that which puts on the nature of destroying God, were it in the power of the sinner, or possible in itself; or as sin in scripture is called a wearying of God, when omnipotency cannot be tired, and if God were tired, he were not omnipotent: but they carry themselves so towards God, as would weary the most patient man in the world; and it is esteemed by God a wearying of him. As Christ was not guilty of sin but in a juridical manner, by reason of his voluntary subjection to punishment in the stead of the sinner; so neither could the divine nature suffer but by way of estimation, as the person of the Son of God did voluntarily assume the human nature wherein he was to suffer. As Christ hung upon the cross as if he were guilty, so the divine nature in conjunction with it might be esteemed to suffer, as if it were passible; the Deity did suffer in an eclipse of its glory, and vailing the manifestation of it. Hence, as he had a body, his blood was the blood of a man, yet because it was the blood of his person, it was the "blood of the Son of God," 1 John 1:7 and the "blood of God," Acts 20:28. The immediate subject suffering was the human nature, but the person suffering was "the Lord of glory," 1 Corinthians 2:8. In that state and condition he offered up himself, which the apostle signifies: "He offered up himself through the eternal Spirit," Hebrews 9:14. "Through" imports not only that the divine nature of Christ did offer the sacrifice, but it seems to have the same sense as the same word: "The father of them that believe, though they be not circumcised," Romans 4:12. The father of them that believe through uncircumcision, that is, in an uncircumcised state, or "who by the letter and circumcision do transgress the law," Romans 2:27 not that circumcision was the cause of the one's faith, or uncircumcision the cause of the other's sin; but that the one believed, and the other transgressed, in those several states. So Christ here, when he offered himself, was not in the condition of a mere man, but had a divine and eternal nature in the offering himself up unto God. It is from this state and condition of his in his suffering, that the apostle draws an argument for the value of his suffering above those of the legal sacrifices, and their excellence to purge the conscience, and puts the emphasis of a "how much more?" The very foundation of our redemption by his blood, is his being the image of the invisible God: "In whom we have redemption through his blood; who is the image of the invisible God," Colossians 1:14-15.

(5.) Hence it follows, that the sufferings of this person, because of his dignity, were equivalent to an endless duration of punishment; because the infiniteness of the person did more than recompense the shortness of the duration of his punishment. As the dignity of his person did outweigh the persons of all the angels, and all men in the world, had they been without spot; so the time of his sufferings, though the moments of enduring them had been fewer, in regard of his greatness was equivalent to the eternity of the sufferings of all creatures; because it was more that God should suffer one minute, than that all creatures in heaven and earth should endure torments to an endless eternity.

(6.) Hence it follows, that in regard of the dignity of his person, he was not only equivalent, but superior to all those for whom he was a sacrifice; and to all, for which he was a sacrifice. The sacrifice was as noble as the sin was vile, and offered by a hand more honourable than the persons, by whom the crime was committed, could be unworthy. The dignity of the person was

greater than the meanness of the offender could be base. The sin could not be more infinitely evil than the person satisfying was infinitely excellent. What an infinite object suffered by the offence, was made up by an infinite subject expiating the crime. The dignity of his person is the reason why his righteousness hath a sufficiency in it for all "unto justification of life," .Romans 5:19-20. He is superior to all that were to be redeemed by him out of every kindred, and tongue, people, and nation, because he is God blessed for ever. The oblation is greater than the offence, and the offerer than the transgressor What wrath so infinite, that the blood of an infinite God cannot calm? What death so sharp and strong, that the life of God cannot remove? It should be no less a cordial to us, than it is a savour to God, to think that our sacrifice is as infinite as the wrath we had merited, and more infinite than the sin whereby we had deserved it. Our sin was objectively infinite, as committed against God; our sacrifice was objectively infinite, as offered to God, proportionable to the honour he would have repaired; and subjectively infinite, in regard of the sacrifice offered for the reparation of it. God regarded him as the man his fellow, when he struck him; we should regard him in the same relation, when" we plead him. To conclude: since this victim was equal with God, equal with him in essence, equal with him in nature and perfections, he could not be displeased with the sacrifice, unless he had been displeased with himself, and his own nature.

Ans. 2. As the dignity of the person, so the purity of the sacrifice, renders it fragrant to God, and efficacious for us. His freedom from taint, and conjunction with the fulness of the Deity, are linked together in demonstrating the efficacy of it to purge our consciences from dead works: "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot," Hebrews 9:14. He was as free from blemish, as full of an eternal Spirit. The spotlessness of his human nature was necessary to his being a sacrifice, and the union of the divine nature was necessary to his being a valuable one. As the legal lambs were to be without blemish, so was Christ a "Lamb without spot," 1 Peter 1:19. He had no sin naturally imputed, (juridically indeed he had,) no sin personally inherent: he had no sin naturally imputed, because he was not in the loins of him who introduced sin into the world, and derived it to his posterity. His extraordinary conception by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin was a bar against original sin; whence, by way of emphasis, he is called "that holy thing," Luke 1:35. He was infinitely holy as he was God, habitually holy as he was man. Every faculty of his soul, every member of his body, was elevated to the highest degree of holiness. His human nature was holy by the union of the divine, holy by the effusion of the Spirit, whose office it is to sanctify. Though, by reason of the divine nature united, it was impossible but that his human nature should be holy, (the person of the Son of God would never have assumed a tainted nature,) yet the holiness of his human nature did flow from the stores of the Spirit, it being not the office of the second, but of the third person, to sanctify. But the human nature in conjunction with the divine, could not but be pure. Had that been tainted while in union with the divine, making but one person, the taint might have been called the sin of God, as well as the blood of his body be called the blood of God: a thing therefore not to be imagined possible; he was holy in every action. As he was man, he was bound to all sorts of obedience; for, having taken the nature, he was subject to all the duties incumbent on that nature; and he did run through every economy, he observed the law of nature, conformed to the ceremonial part of the Mosaic institutions, submitted to the baptism of John, a middle state of the church, and therein '« fulfilled all righteousness," Matthew 3:15 the righteousness of the positive laws of God in every state. He was holy in all his offices, harmless as a priest, faithful as a prophet; holy in his life, holy in his death; no guile was found in his mouth, no

inordination of murmuring in his heart. Had there been any spot, which is impossible, his sacrifice could not have been for our sins, it must have been for his own; if his own debt could have been paid by it, ours could not: his spot had been infinitely greater than ours can be; it had been objectively infinite as ours, and subjectively infinite, which is more than ours. The rights of God had been more invaded, instead of being repaired, the guilt would have been as great in the sinner, as the satisfaction could have been in the sufferer, a subjective infiniteness in the sin, as well as a subjective infiniteness in the sacrifice. But there was not, there could not, be any of this; Satan could not charge him with any, but confessed him holy, Mark 1:24. The all, discerning eye of God could see nothing contrary to his honour, but justified him as holy, Hebrews 7:26. Impurity had been contrary to the dignity of his person: God could as well be unholy, as the person of Christ unholy. His holiness therefore was infinite, though the holiness of his human nature was not of itself infinite, no more than his sufferings were of themselves, and in regard of the human nature, the subject suffering, infinite; yet the holiness of his human nature derived an infiniteness from his person, as well as his sufferings derived from it an infinite value; so that there was an infinite holiness in this sacrifice offered to an infinitely holy God. It had no stain to be purged by the addition of another bloody offering. It answered the design of God, terminated the rest and delight of God. Such a holiness must needs then be highly acceptable to God, who loves and is delighted with righteousness in his creature, much more with that of his only Son, the unstained and infinitely pure sacrifice for us.

Ans. 3. The graces exercised in this sacrifice, rendered it fragrant in the account of God.

(1.) His obedience. The acceptableness of it to God did not arise simply from his dying, but his obedience in his death, "became obedient unto death," Php 2:8 and not only from an obedience to the law of nature, and the precepts of God as a creature, but his obedience to the law of redeeming love as a Mediator, and his delight in it, Psalms 40:8. As the disobedience of man shook the rest of God, so the obedience of the Son of God settled the rest of the Deity. Obedience ran through the whole web of his life, he submitted to a body fitted for those dreadful strokes of wrath we should have endured; a body made under the law, Galatians 4:4. He delighted in the thoughts of performing the will of God in our flesh; he came not to do his own will; whatsoever his Father ordered him, that he spake, that he did, that he suffered, he laid down his body when the hour was come appointed by his Father; it was not a simple but an affectionate obedience: "I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," John 14:31 where principally his obedience to the mediatorial law is intended; as also, "obedient to the death of the cross," Php 2:8 which the law did not oblige him to: the moral law bound over the sinner to death, but the mediatorial law bound over Christ to death in our stead. The obedience to the moral law, or law of nature, as it concerned the state of angels, was performed by him without any defect; in this the obedience of Christ was greater than theirs, in regard of the infinite dignity of his person above all the angels in heaven, yet the rule of their obedience was of the same nature: but in the obedience of the mediatorial law, the Redeemer stood single; as he trod the wine-press alone, so in the whole mediatorial work none were in conjunction with him, none had any likeness or resemblance to him. This was above the obedience of all creatures, not only in regard that it was the obedience of him who was God, but an obedience wherein he could not be imitated by any creature already created, or that could be created, it being a work above the strength of any created being. It was obedience under the highest provocations to resume his glory, and come down from the cross,

and declare at that moment the iniquity of those reproaches they cast upon him. Obedience in the highest pitch of his sufferings, obedience in heaven, practising that compassionate obedience upon the throne, which he "learned by his sufferings" on the cross, Hebrews 5:8 acting according to his Father's orders, presenting his obedience on the cross, as meritorious for his members he left in the world. If the obedience of Abraham a sinful creature, in his willingness to; offer up his son Isaac a sinful creature also, was so pleasing to God, that thereupon he makes him glorious promises; how much more grateful is the obedience of him who was God, and offered not up a son, but himself, a pure, not a spotted sacrifice If obedience be better than sacrifice, then' sacrifice is insignificant without obedience; the offering himself a sacrifice according to the will of God for our sanctification, was the most significant part of his obedience, Hebrews 10:7, Hebrews 10:10. In this he did exactly answer the mediatorial law as his rule, and God found the will of Christ in the performance, fully conformable to his own will in the precept, more obedient to the will of God in his offering, than Adam was disobedient to the will of God in his sinning. Such a height and perpetuity of obedience under all the circumstances of temptations, the smugglings of the flesh, which could not but desire the removal of penal evil, under the fear of wrath also, the sense of agonies, and reproaches of men, whereby he testified, that he preferred the glory of his Father above the safety of his own nature, obedience to his command above the contentment of his flesh, and was swayed by the form of a servant to submit, against the suggestions of his nature as a man, to desire the passing it away; all this, I say, rendered his sacrifice highly acceptable.

(2.) His humility. His humility is joined with his obedience, as the cause of his exaltation, which was the evidence of its fragrantcy, Php 2:8. God loves to be imitated in his condescensions to his creature. The condescension of Christ equal with God, to the taking upon him the form of a servant, setting himself in the stead of the sinner, the eclipsing his own glory, shrouding it under the disguise of our flesh, submitting to a harder piece of service and a deeper humiliation, than any creature in heaven or earth was capable of; to descend from heaven to earth, expose himself to the fury of men and devils without murmuring; to bow his head to the stroke, not of an honourable, but an infamous death, endure the wrath of a Father he loved, come down to the lowest step before he did re-assume the glory which was due to him, was an inexpressible and inimitable act of humility. Lower than this he could not humble himself. Since humility renders men so pleasing to God, that he heaps upon them the greatest testimonies of his favour, and richly dispenseth to them the gifts of his grace, James 4:6 it must render the Son in those sufferings most acceptable to his Father; and draw from him the greatest distribution of Jus favour, because it was the greatest act of humility, as well as obedience, that could possibly be performed.

(3.) His faith. This resolution of trust he brought with him, and this resolution he kept: "I will put my trust in him," Hebrews 2:13 cited out of Psalms 18:2, He had not a spark of infidelity, or any grain of distrust in the goodness of God. He suffered for a time the torments of hell, without the despair of the inhabitants of hell; he had a working of faith under the sense of his Father's greatest displeasure, and confided in his love while he felt the outward and inward force' of his frowns. The sharpness of the scourge, and the smart of his wounds, beat not off his soul from a fast adherence to him. He had a faith of the acceptableness of his death for his elect, and gave evidence of his confidence in the promise for a happy and glorious success, in acting like a king, while he was hanging as a malefactor on the cross, in distributing his largesses to the poor thief, assuring him, that that day he should be with him in paradise. He let not his confidence in his Father flinch; he

confided in him for the bestowing that royal power upon him, which he signified by this promise of paradise to this criminal upon the cross: and both his obedience to God in not turning away his back, and his trust in God for his assistance, are put together as the ground of his justification, Isaiah 50:6-8. The height of his faith was to be discovered in opposition to the unbelief of Adam; his humility, in opposition to the pride of Adam; his obedience in doing all according to God's order, in opposition to the disobedience of Adam. By his active and passive obedience, he glorified the holiness and justice of God; by his humility, the sovereignty and power of God; by his trust, the faithfulness and veracity of God: all which must needs render his sacrifice as a sweet-smelling savour, and efficacious for us.

Ans. 4. In regard of the full compensation made to God by this sacrifice, and the equivalence of it to all the demands of God. His obedience was fully answerable to the law, his active answered the preceptive part, and his passive the penalty; as he fulfilled the righteousness of the law in his life, so he underwent the threatenings of the law in his death; he obeyed the commands in our stead, and sustained the curse. He bore the sorrows we should bear: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isaiah 53:4 spiritual as well as bodily. He took our nature, soul and body, to suffer in that nature what was due to our souls and bodies. Our whole nature had sinned, and our whole nature must suffer; Christ took our nature, that he might suffer what was due to our nature. He suffered in his soul, which is the greatest part of our nature, as well as in his body, which is but the case and sheath of the soul. It is against the order of justice, for the principal to sin, and the accessory only to be punished. The punishment threatened against the first Adam, was the death of the soul, as well as of the body; the punishment borne by the second Adam was of the same nature; not a spiritual death, a separation from God by sin, that he was not capable of, but a moral death, a separation from God by desertion. , When he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he was forsaken of God in regard of the sensible comforts of his presence, though not in regard of the invisible sustentations of his soul. The union of the two natures was not dissolved, but the comfort of the Father's presence was eclipsed; Though he did not suffer eternity of torments, yet he suffered what was due to us^ for eternity of punishment is not primarily threatened in the law, but secondarily inferred. Death was threatened, but because man cannot satisfy by death, therefore he lies under that death for ever. He is kept in prison, because he cannot pay the debt which was due, nor repair the honour of the law which was violated. Justice would always be striking, and never contented. If the honour of the law could have been vindicated, and the justice of God satisfied, by the temporary groans of a creature, not only the goodness of God, but the justice of God would release him; but because the justice of God could never have been satisfied, the person of the sinner must always have been a sufferer. Christ therefore suffering a cursed death, suffered what we should have suffered; death was threatened to us, and death was inflicted on him; the eternity of death was accidental. As Christ obeyed the whole law, yet not every accidental relation of the law, as it respected men in particular states, and particular callings and relations; as the duty of a parent to a child, of a husband to a wife; not for want of a principle of obedience in him, but for want of those particular relations to which those particular acts of obedience were annexed ; so Christ suffered every part of the curse, but not the sins consequent upon that curse by reason of the corruption of man, nor the accidental continuance of the curse, which the impotence of man to satisfy, rendered him obnoxious to, but the strength of Christ exempted him from. He endured all that the law imposed upon sinners; whether in regard of loss by desertion, or in regard of sense by malediction; hence he is said to be

made a curse, Galatians 3:13 to be made sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21. And if so, he bore the punishment due to us, since the law threatened no more than a curse, and Christ bore the curse according to the threatening of the law; he suffered that which the law demanded of us, and was made such a curse as the law required. He suffered the torments of hell without the iniquities of hell, which were not possible to be committed by an infinitely holy person, he suffered those agonies which were of the nature of the torments of hell, and that desertion of God which is the sting of hell. Nothing was omitted that was demanded by divine holiness for keeping the commands, or by Divine justice for violating the commands. As we were creatures, we owed God a debt of duty; as we were revolted creatures, we owed God a debt of punishment. Since our fall, sin hath made us incapable to answer the holiness of God in the performance of our duty, and our nature as creatures renders us too weak to satisfy the justice of God by enduring the penalty exacted by the law. Christ hath done both, and in answering the whole demand of the law, as to both debts, delights the holiness of God, satisfies the justice of God, and by both repairs the creature. If the creature could have satisfied justice for what was past, yet it still lay under a debt of duty for the time to come. If it had fallen short of this, it must have reassumed its suffering. What a deplorable condition had this "been, to have come out of suffering one hour, and to return to it the next! But our Redeemer performs an obedience that reacheth to the utmost of the creature's duty, and endures a penalty that reaches to the utmost of the creature's demerits. A recompense was made by the obedience of Christ for the disobedience of Adam, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one. shall many be made righteous," Romans 5:19 for what had the law to enjoin which he did not perform, or what had the law to inflict which he did not endure? Had he not done and suffered what the law required, how could he be called the end or perfection "of the Law for righteousness," Romans 10:4. Had he not suffered what was due to sin, he could not have "made an end of it;" and had he not done what the law commanded, he could not have brought in an "everlasting righteousness," Daniel 9:24. He is both a valuable price and sacrifice commensurate to the demerit of our crimes; he suffered whatsoever was requisite to discharge our debts, and could not have offered his soul instead of ours, if he had not borne in his soul what we were to bear in ours; in regard therefore of the full compensation made to God, it must needs be fragrant to God, and efficacious for us.

Ans. 5. In regard of the glory Christ by his sacrifice brought to God. The glory of God was that which he aimed at, and that which he perfected. It was the will of God which he came to do; but the design of God's will is to glorify himself, and declare his own name in all his acts. The glory of all the attributes of God appeared "in the face," or manifestation, "of Christ," 2 Corinthians 4:6. They all centered in him, and shone forth from him in all their brightness, and in a full combination set off one another's lustre; not only in his incarnation, but also, and that chiefly, in his sacrifice. Mercy could not be glorified, unless justice had been satisfied, and justice had not been evident, if the tokens of divine wrath had not been upon him; grace had not sailed to us, but in the streams of his blood, "without blood there is no remission;" justice had not been so fully known in the eternal groans of a world of creatures, nor could sin have appeared so odious to the holiness of God by eternal scars upon devils and men, as by the deluge of blood from the heart of this sacrifice. Wisdom in the contrivance, had not been evident without the execution. The glory of the divine perfections had lain hid in the cabinet of the divine nature, without the discovery of their full beams; and though they were active in the designing it, yet they had not been declared to men or angels, without the bringing Christ to the altar. By the stroke upon his soul, all the glories of God'

flashed out to the view of the creature. When' Judas went out from his company to prepare the way for his oblation, "Now," saith he, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John 13:31. The honour of God, and the glory of the Son, depended upon this point, and in this last act threw off" all their vails: the Father was glorified in appointing him, and the Son was glorified in submitting to be a sacrifice; the truth of God was glorified in bringing things to a period; and the obedience of his Son was glorified in his perseverance to the last act; his grace was elevated to the highest note in the songs of angels; an unsearchable depth of manifold wisdom was unfolded, a depth of wisdom more impossible to be comprehended in our minds, than the whole globe of heaven and earth in our hands; such a wisdom of God in the cross, which the angels never beheld in his face upon his throne; wisdom to cure a desperate disease by the death of the physician, to turn the greatest evil to the greatest glory, to bring forth mercy by the shedding of blood. The ultimate design of this victim, was the honour of God in our redemption: "Christ sought not his own glory, but the glory of his Father," John 8:50 in the salvation of men. That must needs be fragrant to God, that accomplished the triumph of all his attributes.

III. Use.

1. If this sacrifice be acceptable to God, it is then a perfect oblation. If it had not been perfect in itself, it could not have been accepted by an infinite justice, a justice inexorable without it. An incomplete offering, could have given but an imperfect satisfaction, and that had been as good as no satisfaction at all. God would never have approved it; an all-seeing wisdom could not be deceived, a severe justice could not have acquiesced in it, a pure holiness could not have smelt a sweet savour from it. God as a Judge delivered him to be a sacrifice, God as a Judge accepted him after he was offered; this sacrifice therefore answered the ends of God, both satisfied his justice, and glorified his holiness; how could God else judicially glorify him, if he had not been fully glorified by him? If he had performed an imperfect obedience, he would at the best have had but a half exaltation, or rather none; but since he hath been accepted with the highest pleasure, and hath a glory in the highest pitch, he hath performed an obedience to the utmost point, and touched the goal designed him. Though there was grace in God's appointing it, yet there was no grace given out to make it acceptable. God did not supply by his acceptance any defect in the sacrifice; there was a meritorious worthiness on Christ's part, before there was an acceptance on God's part; it was not perfect by acceptance, but it was accepted because of its perfection. Infinite purity accepts nothing but what is perfect in itself, or hath a relation to that which is perfect and agreeable to its nature. He doth indeed accept the imperfect obedience of believers, but not for itself, but for this sacrifice, to which by faith it hath a relation. Had it not had a gratefulness in itself, God could have scented nothing in it; he could not have smelt a savour where none was; it would have been as little pleasing to him, as the burnt-offerings under the law. This could not but be perfect in the account of God, since there was the humanity in conjunction with the divinity to be the sacrifice, and the divinity in conjunction with the humanity to be the altar for the sanctification of it; and the sequel shows, that the offering hath been as valuable as the offence was provoking, since in consideration of it, justice forgets the injuries done to the Deity, and treats believers as heirs of heaven, instead of rebels; it is the inference the apostle draws from the priesthood of Christ, Hebrews 8:12 and what is the fruit of his priesthood, is the fruit likewise of his sacrifice. The righteousness of Christ is also perfect, since the all- searching eye^ of God sees nothing in it to give him any cause of distaste; it is perfect because everlasting, Daniel 9:24. All the righteousness

of the holy angels in heaven, had there been numberless millions of them, had not been so pleasing to God as this.

2. All popish doctrines of satisfactions, and all resting upon our own righteousness and inherent graces, are to be abandoned. There is a natural popery in the minds of men; fallen man is desirous to stand upon his own foundation, and is as little content with God's judgment of things, as his first parent was in paradise. We are studious of making God compensations, applauding ourselves in our own inventions and satisfactions of our own minting, unwilling to acquiesce in his wisdom.

(1.) This is a high presumption. If Christ were a perfect sacrifice in the esteem of God, it is a boldness and blasphemy in us not to think him so: if it be perfect, what need of any thing from us to piece it out? If it were not sufficient, God was much mistaken to accept it; if it were not perfect, Christ had a want of strength and holiness to be a sacrifice, and God a want of wisdom to discern the defects of it; he was then deceived, to count that sweet which needed something else to sweeten it. Such additions are an injury to Christ; it is to make him but half a sacrifice, since he hath "offered himself to God without spot," Hebrews 9:14. Can we pretend to any other, without charging him with weakness and deficiency? Is not his divinity enough to make his offering complete, without any supply from our corrupt humanity? Can we acknowledge that perfect, which we think needs something from us to strengthen it? It must be then a false assertion of the apostle, when he saith, that, "by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Hebrews 10:14. To make Christ in part a Saviour, is to make him in part no Saviour, and to ascribe salvation to something else as well as to him. All such satisfactions entrench upon the honour of Christ's sacrifice, and pull the crown from his head to set it upon our own; or, at best, ascribe that in part to ourselves, which is wholly due to him; by how much the more sufficient it is for us without any addition, so much the more glory redounds to the sacrifice. He needs no more of additions to sweeten his offering, than he needed of cordials to strengthen and support him in the time of his sufferings: they are rather gall and vinegar offered him upon his throne, as the Jews did in the time of his oblation upon the cross. It is a high presumption in us not to be content to rest in that, which is the rest and pleasure of God.

(2.) It is a folly. It is as if a man should set up candles to increase the light of the sun, and eke out its beams. Can the righteousness of a man add any perfection to the blood of a God? or perfect a work which could not be done by the Deity? If God stood not in need of any thing from us to perfect his work of creation, how can man be so foolish to imagine, that Christ stands 'in need of any thing from us to perfect his work of redemption? If that sacrifice wants something to render it efficacious, it must be a sacrifice of the same kind; nothing that is of an inferior nature can add an intrinsic value to that which is superior. What can man offer to God, that can be in any sort equivalent to this sacrifice already accepted? All that we can offer to God is but as a few blasted ears of corn, such as Pharaoh saw in a dream, which can add nothing to the value of it. If there had been any failure in him, the defects of a Redeemer could not be repaired by the offerings of the captives; and if there be no failure, all additions, all other inventions of atonement are superfluous. How foolish will it be, to rest in that which God never pronounced or owned to be a sweet-smelling savour to him? If all our "righteousness" be as a "filthy rag," Isaiah 64:6 the offering it up to God is a noisome stench, not a pleasure. The best of our works and graces derive a sweetness and value from the virtue of this sacrifice, without contributing any thing to the savour of

it. It is a folly to leave a sure for an uncertain road. All other rests have no divine stamp and signature upon them. God never found any savour in any other offering. The Spirit of God never gave any so noble a character as this, of a sweet-smelling savour, but as they had a relation to this as the antitype of them. This one victim sends forth more grateful odours to God, and is more efficacious for the concerns of our souls, than the joint intercessions of saints and angels. Let us therefore be diligent in our duties, aim at the perfection of an inherent righteousness, but never place our confidence in them, or equal them to the sacrifice God hath so affectionately accepted. Did God ever set up his rest in the services of a creature? Can this be savoury to an infinite purity? Whatsoever is done without faith, is but the offering of an enemy, whatsoever fair colours it may be outwardly adorned with. The scripture sets an impossibility upon the head of all these: "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Hebrews 11:6 to gain or keep his favour. Whatsoever is done without faith, though, of the highest elevation, is but a creature, and therefore not the object of trust. And whatever significancy believing works have, is from the tincture they receive from the blood of this sacrifice, wherein faith dips them, as being faith in the blood of Christ.

Though Adam, while he continued in his created rectitude, might have entered his righteousness as a plea; yet because' it was mutable, it had been no fit object of trust for him. But since our revolt, all pleas of a fleshly corrupted righteousness are overruled in the court of heaven, and our pleas must run in another name; all other things have ceased to be savoury to God, since they were tainted by sin. Let men "make lies their refuge," and hide themselves under falsehood, the false coverings of their own righteousness, and think to shelter themselves from the "overflowing scourge," Isaiah 28:15-17. It will be a miserable self-deceit, "the hail will sweep away such a refuge," and the "waters will overflow such a hiding-place." All other hiding- places, but the smoke of this sacrifice, are too weak to preserve us from the overflowing waters of divine vengeance.

3. It is a desperate thing to refuse this sacrifice, which is so sweet to God.

(1.) It is a great sin. As faith in Christ redounds to the honour of God, as being an approbation of his mercy, justice, and wisdom, in the acceptance of this sacrifice; so unbelief redounds to the contempt of God, as slighting all the pleasure, the wisdom, the justice and holiness of God took in it, as though he were delighted with a sleeveless and unworthy matter. It is to trample upon that which is God's delight, accounting that which is sweet to the Deity, loathsome to us, refusing to be guided by God's judgment of this offering, setting up our own wisdom, not only equal with, but above the wisdom of God; a regarding that which God is infinitely pleased with, as a frivolous thing, as though God had pleased himself with a trifle, or smelt sweetness in a weed. God's acceptation of it owns a fragrantcy in it; man's refusal calls it gall and vinegar, a rotten service. God's language is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matthew 3:17. This is my odoriferous sacrifice with which I am infinitely delighted. The language of an unbeliever's heart is, This is an offering in which I can find no pleasure. The heart of God, and the heart of an unbeliever, the wisdom of God, and the judgment of an unbeliever, stand in direct opposition. How inexcusable a pride is it, to think that not worth our receiving, which God hath entertained with the highest affection! to count that unsavoury, which God hath accepted as the sweetest present that can be given him in heaven or earth! Unbelief cannot be excused without accusing God of weakness and folly. It is a sin against his precept, as he commands us to believe; a sin against his pattern, as he directs us by his own act to an acceptance of him. Other sins are against his sovereignty in the violations of his law. This is against his wisdom in his gracious acceptation of a

propitiating sacrifice for us. We disown him as our Lord, and as our pattern.

(2.) It will end in great misery. God will not suffer that which is sweet to him, to be slighted by man, without the recompense of a just indignation. The vagabond nation of the Jews bears to this day the sad tokens of God's vengeance upon them, for the unworthy refusal of so great a victim. "Because of unbelief they are broken off" from the root, Romans 11:20 and are deprived of all the sweetness which God and believers taste in it. Nothing in the world was ever the object of God's delight but this; nothing in the world can ever be pleasant to him without this. To neglect it, is to neglect that which is the only thing God will accept, and so fall under the condemnation of law and gospel too. It is to reject God as a satisfied Judge, in the flowings of his mercy; to fall under God as a provoked Judge, in the thunders of his wrath. If we will not comply with divine justice in an estimation of it, we must fall under his fury for our contempt. If this offering be not cordially and upon God's terms accepted by us, we must be a sacrifice ourselves; Justice must have a sacrifice for every sinner, from himself or another. God in honour will not pardon sin without one, in greater honour he cannot but punish sin upon the refusal of this. Oh how "fearful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God!" a living unpacified God, a living and reproached God, a living God who hath been counted a ridiculous fool by a wilful sinner, in his accounting the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing. God will not have his wisdom justled against by the folly of his creature. "No other sacrifice remains for sin." No other mark of distinction was appointed by God for the securing the first-born of the Israelites from the stroke intended for the Egyptian heirs, but the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the posts of the doors: had any fed upon the lamb and neglected the sprinkling, he had felt the sharp sword of the destroying angel. The lamb had been of no efficacy to him, not for any defect in that, but negligence or contempt in the offender. The sacrifice of Christ hath an infinite virtue to save. But it is no remedy to them that will not sprinkle their souls by faith with the blood of it: without this, we shall remain in our unatoned sins, and have the sword of vengeance doubly whetted against us.

4. It administers matter of comfort to the believer. It is some comfort to all, that they are in a fair way of being happy. The justice of God was the bar to God and man's meeting together. It was morally impossible, in regard of God's truth and holiness, for man to be restored without a vindication of that law which had been broken; but now the honour of the law is restored by this sacrifice; God hath owned it, the bar is removed, and where God hath found a sweetness, man may find salvation, if he be not his own enemy, and wilfully cast away his own mercy. "He gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Timothy 2:5-6 a ransom in our stead, or a counter-ransom, in opposition to the sin of Adam, the fountain of our bondage; for all upon gospel-conditions. As he gave himself for all, so he was accepted for all upon the same conditions; for he was accepted as he gave himself. It is a comfort to a diseased hospital, that a physician is chosen and accepted by the governors, who is able to cure every disease: it is no less a comfort to a guilty soul, that there is a sacrifice sufficient to expiate every sin. But there is a ground of sensible comfort to those who believe. If when Christ walked upon the waters, and was labouring in the floods of affliction in the days of his humiliation, he bid his disciples not to fear; how much more may we expel fear from our believing hearts, since he is sat down upon his throne, and the whole merit of his sacrifice graciously accepted? Let us represent to ourselves this crucified, but now crowned victim, lying in the bosom of his Father, represent to ourselves the Father full of delights, rejoicing in the views of this sacrificed body, drawing a perpetual stream of pleasure and sweet smells from the fumes of this sacrifice rising up

continually before him. May not this calm our fears, since it smooths the frowns of divine justice? Did the people shout when the ark returned, and shall our hearts be full of fears, when our sacrifice is returned to heaven, and hath found a gracious reception from that justice we had so highly provoked? A disconsolate carriage in a holy believer implies, that God had rejected it as mean and weak, rather than received it as perfect and glorious. A heavy walking is a disparagement to the greatness of the sacrifice, and the wisdom and judgment of God the acceptor of it. If we should eat our bread with a merry heart, because God hath accepted our works, Ecclesiastes 9:7 much more since God hath accepted our victim, by whose merits our duties and works smell sweet, that before smelt rank by nature. We should therefore draw as much sweetness from this sacrifice for our souls, according to our measures, as God did from it for his own content and satisfaction. It appeased God's fury against us, and should banish our jealousies of God.

(1.) If once acceptable to God, then it is for ever acceptable. If once sweet, it is always sweet. God cannot be deceived in his estimations, nor change his value of it, nor can the sacrifice ever become noisome. The strength of the divine nature, that rendered it at first grateful, preserves its savour for ever. He died to offer it, and lives to preserve the virtue of it, Romans 5:10. The fragrancy conferred upon it by the Deity in conjunction with the humanity, is as durable as the Deity itself: "He sat down on the right hand of God," Hebrews 10:11 after he had offered himself a sacrifice, to exercise the office of a Priest. God would have the Priest and sacrifice for ever in his sight. His priesthood is for ever, his sacrifice therefore is for ever sweet. Without a sacrifice he could not be a Priest. As his priesthood hath a perpetual vigour, so his sacrifice hath a perpetual freshness, and inexhaustible virtue. For the exercise of his office depends upon the continuance of the offering. The blood of this sacrifice is not compared to a pond, or water in a vessel, though of the largest capacity, but to a living and ever-running fountain, "a fountain set open for the house of David," Zechariah 13:1. Repentance was hid from the eyes of Christ in offering it for a ransom from the power of the grave, and a redemption from death, Hosea 13:14 and no less is repentance hid from the eyes of God in accepting it. The covenant sealed by it is everlasting, and derives its duration from this blood of the victim, Hebrews 13:20 the virtue of it endures as long as the covenant, since if that failed, the covenant would expire, the superstructure not being able to stand, if the foundation be rotten. And from hence an everlasting righteousness is derived, that our persons, odious by Adam, may be beautiful by Christ. At the same time that he made reconciliation for iniquity, he brought in everlasting righteousness, Daniel 9:24 at the same time therefore that God accepted that reconciliation, he accepted that everlasting righteousness for security and justification. He hath not pacified God for a few days or years, but for ever, Hebrews 10:14. If it were so sweet in the expectation, as to be the ground of the justification of those that hoped for it, it is much more sweet since the oblation, and of a stronger efficacy. He is the Captain of the salvation of all the sons that are brought to glory, and that believe. Himself was "made perfect through sufferings," Hebrews 2:10. The "twenty-four elders" confessed themselves "redeemed by this blood," Revelation 5:8-9. The patriarchs that died before him, as well as the apostles who expired after him. He was a lamb, a sacrifice "slain from the foundation of the world," Revelation 13:8. Not in regard of decree, (that were a jejune sense of the place, as it would be to say, a man were dead from the foundation of the world, because it was appointed for him once to die,) but in regard of efficacy and a mystical sprinkling of his blood upon those that lived at the beginning, as well as those that shall live at the end of the world. If it had a savour with God for

those that lived before him, it hath much more a savour for those that have lived since his actual offering and acceptation.

(2.) From this ariseth pardon of sin. He was a sweet savour as he offered himself, and in the ends for which he offered himself. He was a sacrifice for sin. For so those words in Romans 8:3. which we translate "and for sin," must be understood, and read thus: "And by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." If offered for sin, and accepted as an offering for sin, the consequence of this must be remission. Through the blood of that Beloved, whom he accepted, we have "redemption, even the forgiveness of sin," Ephesians 1:6-7 not of one, or two, or a few sins, but all; he was made sin indefinitely, all kind of sin in the extent, as much made sin as he was made accused; as he bore all the curse, so he satisfied for all sin, the greatest as well as the least; so that the blood of this sacrifice "cleanseth from all sin," 1 John 1:7 where gospel dispositions are found; from all that from which the law of Moses could not justify: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39. What was impossible to be done by the sacrifices of the law, is completely done by the offering of the Redeemer. The strength of this is directly opposite to the weakness of the other; that could not really justify from any, and this is able to justify from all. As it was not over-valued by God, so it cannot be over-balanced by sin; since the judgment of God hath passed upon it with an approbation, the monstrousness of guilt is not too great for an expiation.

Whatsoever our sins are, yet they have their limits; but God's infinite pleasure in the sacrifice speaks the merit of it infinite, and the efficacy of it eternal. All sins were at once laid upon the head of this offering, Isaiah 53:7. He suffered but once, and therefore at that one time all sins by one act were laid upon his shoulders, "he bore them his own self," 1 Peter 2:24 and God accepted him his own self, and accepted him as he bore them, and glorified him because he purged them, Heb. i. 3. So that though he did but once offer himself, and that for all sins in the bulk, he was received with a welcome, as if he had offered in particular for every sin; and therefore there is no more need of an offering, but a recourse to that one price. To think it is not able to expiate all sin, is to undervalue the judgment God hath given of his Son, to charge him with a mistake, and to imagine, that there is more in sin to ruin, than in this sacrifice to repair.

(3.) Hence then there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ. The apostle lays down this conclusion, and confirms it by the reason of his being a sacrifice, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:3. They who are presented by Christ, quickened by the virtue of this sacrifice, cannot fall under the stroke of divine justice. If it was offered for those that should believe, it was accepted for such as should believe, it being accepted for the same persons and the same ends for which it was offered, and therefore those persons fundamentally accepted in the acceptation of it, and the ends for which it was offered, granted, and concluded on in the act of acceptance. The apostle upon this score breathes out a challenge to all to bring a condemning charge against him; the justice of God, the curse of the law, the charges of conscience, and the accusations of devils may be all answered by this: "It is Christ that died, it is God that justifies," Romans 8:33-34; It is Christ that is offered, and God that accepts. Justice cannot condemn; for though his sacrifice was sweet and pleasant to all the perfections of the divine nature, yet justice was the peculiar object of it. God as a Judge delivered him, God as a Judge accepted him: justice required it, and justice is disarmed by it; justice only was to be contented; mercy required no blood; wisdom stepped in to decide the controversy, and make an agreement. If the condemning attribute be satisfied, there is no

condemnation to be expected. ' If it be sweet to justice, justice cannot retain its former frowns; justice cannot be pleased with that, and displeased with those for whom it was offered and accepted, and by whom it is received. It is part of our happiness, that we come not only to God as gracious, but God as a Judge: "To God the Judge of all," Hebrews 12:23. As Christ was made sin for us, so are we made righteous by him. He was made sin to undergo a condemnation, that we might be made righteous, and be above a condemnation. It is more efficacious to divert the sword of divine justice from the believing offender, than the blood of the paschal lamb was to turn the edge of the angel's sword from the house of an Israelite. The blood of Christ sprinkled, cannot be of less force than the blood of a silly lamb, since the efficacy of it was not as it was the blood of a lamb, but the blood of a type, deriving its virtue, not from the subject whence the blood was drawn, but from the person signified, and the sacrifice prefigured, by it. Well then, his condemnation hath procured our absolution, and God's acceptance of him hath ensured our liberty; the sweet savour of the sacrifice hath overcome the stench of our sins. Though God forsook him for a time, he hath now accepted him, that he may not abandon us for ever; neither the wrath of God, nor the malediction of the law, is to be feared. God, by this one act, hath stopped the course of his vengeance, and laid aside the thunders of Sinai. The flames we had deserved are quenched by the blood flowing from the wounds of this victim; the smoke of our sacrifice shadows us, and, in God's acceptance of him, every believer finds his infallible absolution.

(4.) Here is a sufficient ground for peace of conscience. This only can give a repose to our spirits, turn our fears into hopes, and our sorrows into -songs. If it were a sweet savour to God, whose infinite knowledge was acquainted with the least mite, as well as the greatest mountain in the number of our sins, and whose holiness found an infinite loathsomeness in our iniquities; if it thus contented God, it may settle the agitations of our spirits; and because it stilled fury in God, it may silence troubles in us; if it gave God a delight, who in the knowledge of our sins, loathing of them, and condemning for them, is "greater than our hearts," 1 John 3:20 it is a ground of peace to us, who come infinitely short of God in knowing our charge, infinitely short of his holiness in loathing our guilt, and infinitely short of his justice in condemning ourselves. That which hath been a sweet savour to pacify God, wants not a savour to appease our consciences. Our great inquiry is in troubles of spirit, how shall we appear before God? The answer from this doctrine is, In the smoke of this sacrifice; the impurities of our natures, the sin of our souls, and the mixture in our services are purified by this. The sweetness of this sacrifice hath sweetened the terrors of the Lord, and rendered man a welcome suppliant to that God, before whom he durst not formerly appear.

(5.) Here is a full ground of expectation of all necessary blessings. God accepted it as it was offered; it was offered, not only as a propitiating, but a purchasing sacrifice, and the acceptance of it was in the same quality wherein it was offered, Acts xx. 28. His blood was a purchasing blood; he purchased a people for heaven, and purchased heaven for his people; he did not only silence justice with its wrath, but merited heaven with its riches, and shed his blood as a price for the pleasures of paradise. God judged this sacrifice, not only enough to free man from misery, but instate him in happiness; not only to deliver our souls from the pit, but to enlighten us with the light of the living. It was valued by him as a full compensation for the wrongs he had sustained, and a full merit for the blessings we wanted. When he found this ransom, his voice was not only; "Deliver him from going down into the pit," but I will "make his flesh fresher than a child's;" a strength and vigour of grace shall be restored in him, as the radical moisture in a child: "He shall return to the

days of his youth, he shall pray to; God, and God will be favourable to him, and he shall see his face with joy," Job 33:24-26. The Israelites addressed themselves to the propitiatory (The Mercy seat), not only for the pardon of their sins, but the conferring of other blessings; this is the blood of the covenant, and therefore procures for us the blessings of the covenant. The blessings we want, are often in the gospel ascribed to the merit of this sacrifice, and not simply to the grace of God. The grace of God appointed the sacrifice, but the blessings we receive, were merited by it; our victim was so pleasing to God, and the obedience in it so full of an infinite love to him, that he gained by it the affections of God, and a grant of whatsoever was most precious, to be bestowed upon those for whom he offered himself, that thereby the pleasure he took in it might be fully evidenced.

5. Let us lay hold of it, and plead this sacrifice.

(1.) Let natural men imitate God in an acceptance of this sacrifice. No man perisheth for want of God's pleasure in it, but for want of his own acceptance of it upon the gospel conditions. No bitten Israelite perished for want of a brazen serpent, but for want of a look to it. Cast not an aspersion upon God by undervaluing that which he doth so highly prize; be guided by his infallible judgment, rather than by the errors of your own; think not of it coldly, as if you were indifferent whether you had a share in it or not, since God received it not with an indifferent, but an unconceivable affection. Let that which is sweet to God, be so to us; that which is savoury to that infinite Spirit, cannot justly be unsavoury to our contracted souls. God found no sweetness in the blood of goats, or smoke of incense, Psalms 1:1-6 but only in this sacrifice; nor should any of us rest in the transitory pleasures of this life, and sing a requiem to our souls from perishing enjoyments, but from the blood of the Lamb that endures for ever. There is no likelihood for a creature to find rest in that wherein God finds none; we are not sure of our lives, but we are sure we are guilty; and shall any of us be unconcerned about a powerful sacrifice? Let a self-abhorrence possess our souls, without which we can have no esteem of this offering. As God's loathing of sin made him value this for expiation, so our sense of sin will make us value this for our atonement. Let no man think that unworthy of him, which God thinks not unworthy of himself; he commanded the angels to adore him, for it, either when he brought him into the world to be a sacrifice, or brought him into the world above, after he had by his blood "purged our sins," Hebrews 1:8. God would have men and angels concur with him in the magnificent acceptance of our Saviour.

(2.) Let those that believe, continually apply and plead it. This is so sweet to God, that there is no need of a new sacrifice, but there is need of a daily application; there was no need of a new serpent to be erected upon every sting, but there was need of a new looking up to the serpent upon every wound. We can be no more without this one day to comfort our souls, than we can be without bread to nourish our bodies; the remembrance of it must come up with the remembrance of every sin in our consciences. In this only shall we find mercy for our iniquities, and comfort for our sorrows. What was sweet to God in the acceptance, will be sweet to him in the pleas of it; it hath not lost its savour, nor hath God changed his judgment. Christ is in the fragrancy of his sacrifice with God, as well as in his divinity, the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We contract a daily guilt, and we stand in need of a daily application to this. God will not make us perfect in this life, to keep up the continual credit of this sacrifice, that we may live by faith, and have every day sensible thoughts of the power of this oblation. Let all our pleas with God be founded in his acceptance of this; it is always to be pleaded by us, as it is always eyed by the

Father. No pardon is granted but upon the account of it; in every pardoning act, God looks first with pleasure upon this victim, and dips his pen in the blood of it, to blot out the iniquity. No blessing is poured upon us, on which the merit of this sacrifice is not stamped; and no petition must be presented by us, but in the virtue of it.

A DISCOURSE ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

A DISCOURSE ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.-- 1 Corinthians 2:2. THE church of Corinth, to which the apostle directs this epistle, was a church as flourishing in gifts as any; yet as much crumbled into divisions, as eminent in knowledge. A year and six months the apostle had been conversant among them, planting and watering, with expectation of a plentiful harvest; but no sooner had he turned his back, but the devil steps in, and sows his tares. It was a church still, but divided; it had the evangelical doctrine, but too much choked with schismatical weeds.

1. Observe, the best churches are like the moon, not without their spots. The purest times had their imperfections; a pure state is not allowed to this, but reserved for another, world.

2. Church antiquity is a very unsafe rule. Other churches at some distance from the apostles were as subject to error as this. Pride and ambition were less like to keep out of them than out of Christ's family. Had the history of this church's practices and tenets, without this corrective epistle of the apostle been transmitted to after-ages, .they would have been used as a pattern : not the church, but scripture authority, is to be followed; fathers must not be preferred before apostles; church practices are no patterns, but as they are parallel to the grand and unerring rule. The apostle, laying to heart the contentions among the Corinthians, draws up the whole doctrine he had before preached unto them, into a short epitome, but first declares the manner of his first carriage among them: "He came not to them with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God," 1 Corinthians 2:1. To come with man's wisdom,

1.Would detract from the strength and excellency of the word, which, as the sun, shines best with its own beams. The Spirit's eloquence is most piercing and demonstrative, and quickly convinceth a man by its own evidence. Carnal wisdom charms the ear, but this strikes the heart.

2.It detracts from the glory of God, who is more honoured by the simplicity of the gospel, than luxuriations of wit. It was his honour, by the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, to nonplus the wisdom of the world; and the glory of his wisdom as well as strength, to confound, by impotent and weak men, the power of Satan, which so long had possessed the hearts of the Corinthians.

3.It would be an argument of hypocrisy to use any other arguments than divine. Men in this would but seek themselves, not God's glory. It would be pride to think that their fancies could be more prevalent than evangelical reason; and therefore the apostle would do nothing but endeavour to set out Christ in his own colours, as he hung upon the cross, that their souls might be captivated to the obedience of a crucified Lord.

"I determined." I judged it most convenient for me, most profitable for you. It was a resolution taken up deliberately. It was not for want of the knowledge of those principles which are cried up in the world for true wisdom. I understand them as well as others; but what things I counted gain before, I now count loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and think it not worth the while and pains to make much inquiry about them.

"To know nothing," to believe nothing, to approve of nothing, to make known nothing.

1. Not your traditions, which have for themselves the plea of a venerable antiquity, and have been handed to you from your ancestors. What I chiefly determine to know is as ancient as the oldest of those mysteries you so much admire, even the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

2. Not your philosophical wisdom, so much admired by you and the rest of the world. I come not to teach you a doctrine from Athens, but from Jerusalem; and not so much from Jerusalem, as from heaven. I come to declare Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

3. Not your poets, wherein the chief mysteries of your religion are couched. I come to teach him to you, whom your sibyls and their prophetic writings pointed at long ago.

4. Nor your mysterious oracles, which had so long deluded the world; but I come to declare Him by whose death they were silenced.

"But Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Christ, --in the Deity and glory of his person; but also as crucified-- in the ignominy of his passion, and the advantages of his office. This is the sum of the gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his lips and pen. It is observed, that he hath the word "Jesus" five hundred times in his epistles.

Others understand it thus: I will know nothing but Jesus Christ, though he were crucified; I will boast of him, whom others despise.¹

"Among you,"--you Corinthians, though learned, though rich, I would not know any thing else among you than Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the treasures of God.

Observe, 1. All human wisdom must be denied, when it comes in competition with the doctrine of Christ.

2. Christ and his death is the choicest subject for the wisest ear.

3. As all Christ, so especially his death, is the object of faith.

4. As all of Christ, so more especially his death in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the main subject of a christian's study and knowledge.

Doctrine, For the last, As ALL OF CHRIST, SO MORE ESPECIALLY HIS DEATH IN ALL THE MYSTERIES OF IT, OUGHT TO BE THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S STUDY AND KNOWLEDGE. This is the honour of the gospel, and therefore the preaching of the gospel is called the preaching of the cross, 1 Corinthians 1:18. which should be considered by us, I. In the first spring.

II. In the person suffering.

III. In the fruits of it.

I. In the first spring. His death was ordered by God.

Peter, as the president of the apostles, delivers it as the sense of the whole college of apostles then present. He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Acts

2:23. It was decreed and enacted in heaven, resolved before time, though done in the fulness of time. Therefore Christ is called "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world:" determinately, in the counsel and decree of God; promissorially, in the promise and word of God passed to Adam after the fall; typically, in sacrifices which were settled immediately upon that promise of redemption; efficaciously, in regard of the merit of it, applied by God to believers, before the actual suffering. He was made sin, not by us, not only by himself and his own will, but by God's ordination; "He hath made him to be sin for 'is," 2 Corinthians 5:21 by a divine statute, that is, he was ordained to be put into the state and condition of a sinner in our stead; not into the practical and experimental state of sin, but the penal state of a sinner, to be a sacrifice for it, not to be polluted with it.

Indeed, had not God appointed it, it had not been meritorious; for the merit was not absolute for us, but according to the covenant and condition: it was capable of meriting, because of the worth and dignity of the person, but not actually meritorious for us, but upon the covenant transacted between the Father and the Son; that it should be performed by him for us, and accepted by the Father for us, and applied by the Spirit to us. And as it was appointed by God, it was,

1. An act of his sovereignty. Suppose God might have pardoned sin, and recovered man by his own absolute prerogative, had not his word been passed, that, in case of man's transgression, he should die the death. As a word created the earth, and cast it into such a beautiful frame and order, so by one word he might have restored man, and set him upon his former stock, and have for ever kept him from falling again, as he did the standing angels from ever sinning. Yet God chooseth this way, and is pleased with no other contrivance but this, and in a way of sovereignty he culls out his Son to be a sacrifice; and the Son putting himself into the state of a Surety and Redeemer, is said to have a command given him on the part of God as a Sovereign, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," John 14:31 and received by him as a subject, John 10:19 and as God owns him as his servant, Isaiah 42:1. So he took upon him "the form of a servant," Php 2:7. that is, the badge and livery of a servant; and the whole business he came upon, from his first breath to his last gasp, is called the will of God; and at the upshot he pleads his own obedience, in "finishing the work given him to do," as the ground of his expectations, and the glory promised him, John xvii. 4.

2. An act of the choicest love. God at the creation beheld man, a goodly frame of his own rearing, adorned with his own image, beautified with his graces, embellished with holiness and righteousness, and furnished with a power to stand; and afterwards beheld him ungratefully rebelling against his Sovereign, invading his rights, and contemning his goodness, forfeiting his own privileges, courting his ruin, and sinking into misery. So blinded is his mind, as not to be able to find out a way for his own recovery; so perverse is his will, that instead of craving pardon of his Judge, he flies from him, and when his flight would not advantage him, he stands upon his own defence, and extenuates his crime; thus adding one provocation to another, as if he had an ambition to harden the heart of God against him, and render himself irrecoverably miserable. God so overlooks these, as in immense love and grace to settle a way for man's recovery, without giving any dissatisfaction to his justice, so strongly engaged for the punishment of the offence. And rather than this notorious rebel, and prodigious apostate, should perish according to his desert, he would transfer the punishment (which he could not remit without a violation of his truth, and an injury to his righteousness) upon a person equal to himself, most beloved by him, his delight from

eternity, and infinitely dearer to him than any thing in heaven or earth. Herein was the emphasis of divine love to us, that "He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin," 1 John 4:10. It was love that he would restore man after the fall; there was no more necessity of doing this than of creating the world, As it added nothing to the happiness of God, so the want of it had detracted nothing from it. There was no more absolute necessity of setting up man again after his breaking, than of a new repair of the world after the destructive deluge. But that he might wind up his love to the highest pitch, he would not only restore man, but rather than let him lie in his deserved misery, would punish his own Son, to secure man from it. It was purely his grace which was the cause that his Son "tasteth death for every man," Hebrews 2:9.

3. An act of justice. As his love to us proposed it, and Christ, out of his affection to the honour of the Father and our welfare, accepted it, and was willing to undertake for us, and interpose between us and divine wrath, to stand in our stead and bear our sins, so it was then an act of justice to inflict; for God, being the Governor of the world', the great Lawgiver, righteously exacting obedience from his rational creature, upon the transgression of his law becomes a Judge, and his justice as a Ruler demands the punishment due for the transgression to be inflicted upon the offender. To preserve the rights of justice, and to give a contenting answer to the cry of mercy; to wipe off, as I may say, the tears of one, and smooth the frowns of the other, "God lays our iniquity upon Christ," Isa. liii. 6. Christ takes the punishment upon himself, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and becomes responsible for our transgressions. And though he never sinned nor stood indebted to God in his own person, yet, becoming our Surety, and being made under the law, putting himself in subjection to the law, and standing in our stead, he put himself also under the obligations of it to punishment. And thus the weight of the whole punishment, due to man, was laid upon Christ by God as a just Judge. That which he could not have from the debtors, he might have from the Surety, who had put himself under that obligation of payment, and so was bound to undergo all those curses the law might have inflicted upon us; and pursuant to this obligation God imputed our iniquities to him, and punished them in him. II. Consider the person suffering.

1. In regard of his dignity. The Son of God became man, the Lord of glory emptied himself. It was the Lord of angels that took upon him the nature of a servant; the Lord of life shed his blood. It was the Son of God who stooped down infinitely below himself into our nature, to be a sacrifice for our redemption; he that was greater than heaven, became meaner than a worm.

2. The willingness of his suffering. He being equal with the Father, could not be commanded to undertake this. He willingly consented, and willingly accomplished it. He was not driven, as the legal sacrifices were, to the altar. His enemies were not so desirous to make him a sufferer, as he himself was straitened till he was a sufferer, Luke 12:50. The cup was as willingly drunk by him, as it was tempered by God; and his enemies did not so maliciously put him to shame, as he joyfully endured it, Hebrews 12:2. The desire that the cup might pass from him, was the struggle of his human nature, not an unwillingness in his person, or a repenting of his undertaking this office. It was a natural motion, evidencing the truth of his humanity, and the greatness of what he was to suffer.

3. The greatness of his suffering. His death had all the ingredients of bitterness in it. It was a grievous punishment, because the holiness of God would not have been so manifested in a light one.

(1.) Ignominious. It was a death for slaves and malefactors; for slaves, whose condition rendered them most despicable, and for malefactors whose actions had rendered them most abominable. The Lord of heaven endured the punishment of a slave, and was numbered among transgressors. It is called "shame," Hebrews 12:2. Each suffering was sharpened with shame; he was buffeted, spit upon, wounded in his good name, accounted an impostor, the most odious terms of blasphemer, Beelzebub's agent, &c. were put upon the Son of God.

(2.) Cruel and sharp: lingering, not sudden; from his scourging by Pilate to his death was six hours, all that while in much torture; he suffered from Heaven, earth, hell, in his body, in his soul.

(3.) Accursed. As under God's blessing, all blessings are included, so under the notion of a curse, all punishment is contained, "he was made a curse for us." Galatians 3:13. There must be something more dreadful than a bare outward pain, or bodily punishment; Christ wanted not courage to support that, as well as the most valiant martyr; he bore the beginnings of it till he saw a black cloud between his Father and himself. This made him cry out, "My God, my God," &c. The agonies of Christ were more than the sufferings of all the martyrs, and all men in the world, since God laid upon him the sins of the whole world.

III. Consider the fruits of this death, which will render it worth our study.

1. The appeasing the wrath of God for us. God was willing to be appeased, (hence the sending of Christ is every where in Scripture ascribed to the love and grace of God;) but his justice was not actually appeased till the death of Christ. As a merciful God, he pitied us; but as a holy God, he could not but hate our transgression; as a God of truth, he could not but fulfil his own threatening; as a God of justice, he must avenge himself for the offence against him. He gave Christ as a God of mercy, and required satisfaction as a God of justice. "He set him forth as a propitiation, that he might be just," Romans 3:25-26. His mercy rendered him placable, but his righteousness hindered the actual forgiveness. He had a kindness for man, but could not have a kindness for his sin; he had mercy for his creature to free him, but no mercy for his transgression to let that go unpunished. That justice whereby he can no more absolve the guilty, than condemn the innocent, was an obstacle to the full issues of his mercy. But when an offering for sin was made by an infinite person, and our near kinsman, who had a right of redemption; there was no plea in justice against it, since the sacrifice was complete; no plea in divine veracity, since the penalty was suffered; no plea in divine holiness, since that was infinitely manifested; no bar to mercy's coming, smiling upon the world. The wrath of God was appeased upon the death of the Redeemer, and this reconciliation is actually applied upon the acceptance of the believer. If God had not been placable, he had never accepted a substitute; and if he had not been appeased, he had never raised this substitute after his passion, nor ever held out his hand of grace to invite us to be reconciled to him. There is nothing now remains to be done, but our consenting to those terms upon which he offers us the actual enjoyment of it. This crucified Redeemer only was able to effect this work. He was an infinite person, consisting of a divine and human nature: the union of the one gave value to the suffering of the other. The word of God was past in his threatening; his justice would demand its right of his veracity; a sacrifice there must be, to repair the honour of God by bearing the penalty of the law, which could not be done by the strength and holiness of any creature. All the created force in the earth, and the strongest force of the angelical nature, were too feeble for so great a task. Justice must have satisfaction; the sinner could not give it without

suffering eternal punishment. He then puts himself into our place, to free us from the arrest of justice, and bear those strokes, which, by virtue of the law, wrath had prepared for us. The dignity of his person puts a value upon his punishment, and renders it acceptable for us, it being a death superior in virtue to the death of worlds; it was a death which justice required, and at the sight of it justice was so calmed, that the sharp revenging sword drops out of its hand. God hath smelt in it so sweet a savour, that hath fully pleased him. He can now pardon the sins of believers with the glory of his righteousness as well as of his grace. He can legally justify a repenting sinner. God hath been served in the passion of the Redeemer, his justice and holiness were glorified, and the law accomplished, the honour of God is preserved, and the author of the law righted, the justice of God sweetened. By this propitiation for sin, God is rendered propitious to guilty man, and stretches out his arms of love, instead of brandishing his sword of vengeance. The ancient believers lived in the expectation of this, but they beheld not the consummation of it; they thirsted for it, but were not satisfied with it, till the fulness of time. It solely depended upon the passion of Christ; it is by the cross that God is reconciled, and all enmity slain, Ephesians 2:14. He was then wounded for our iniquities, and being cast into the furnace of divine wrath, quenched the flames; as Jonah the type, being cast into the raging sea, quelled the storm. He bore our sins by bearing the wrath due to them, and satisfied justice by suffering its strokes. It could not stand with that justice to punish him, if he were not placed in our stead to be the mark and butt of that justice for us and our sins. Doth not then a crucified Christ deserve to be known and studied by every one of us, who hath done that upon the cross, which the holy law, sacrifices divinely instituted, the blessed angels, the purity and strength of universal nature, had never been able to effect? He hath expiated our sins, and by his blood hath secured us from the sword of divine vengeance, if we refuse not the atonement he hath made.

2. Silencing the law. Christ crucified, by satisfying the justice of God, brake the thunders of the law, and dissolved the frame of all its anathemas: Being made a curse for us, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, Galatians 3:13 that is, from the sentence of the Law-giver, denounced in his law against the transgressors of it; so that now "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 because they are "dead to the law by the body of Christ," Romans 7:4. By the body of Christ as slain and raised again; for this hand-writing of ordinances, which was contrary to us, is taken out of the way by God, being nailed to his cross, Colossians 2:14. He hath abolished the obligation of the moral law, as to any condemning power, it being the custom to cancel bonds anciently by piercing the writing with a nail. The ceremonial law was abolished in every regard, since the substance of it was come, and that which it tended to was accomplished; and so one understands, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly," Colossians 2:15 of the ceremonies of the law, called principalities and powers in regard of the divine authority whereby they were instituted. These he spoiled, as the word signifies, unclothing or unstripping, he unveiled them, and showed them to be misty figures that were accomplished in his own person. The flower falls when the fruit comes to appear; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, grace to obey the precepts, and truth to take away the types. But it is also meant of the condemning power of the moral law, which was nullified by the death of Christ, who, upon his cross sealing another covenant, repealed the former. The settling a new covenant implies the dissolution of the old. That was nailed to his cross which was contrary to us, a law that was a charge against us, and by virtue whereof we are sued; and this was the law as sentencing us to death, which was pierced and torn by those nails, that did discover that debt, and denounce the

sentence, which cannot be meant so properly of the ceremonial, as the moral law. The ceremonial law of sacrifices was the gospel in shadows, and appointed for the relief of men, and as a ground whereon to exercise their faith till the appearance of the substance, and therefore cannot be said to be contrary to us, but an amicable discovery, that we were to have that relief in another, which we wanted in ourselves, and that we were to be freed from the sentence of death by some grand sacrifice represented by those sacrifices of animals. Besides, the apostle writes this as a cordial, issuing out of the blood of Christ to the Gentile Colossians, who never were under the obligation of the ceremonial law, that being appropriated to the Jews. The apostle brings it to back his assertion, that their trespasses were forgiven. The argument had been of no use to the Gentiles, who sinned not against the ceremonial law, but the moral law; and if one only had been cancelled, and not the other, the Jews themselves, whose offences were most against the moral law, had had little or no comfort in having the fewest of their sins forgiven. Our Saviour died by the power and force of the moral law; that brought him to the cross, for the fulfilling it in its penalty, as well as he had done in his life by his obedience: and he receiving the full execution of its sentence upon himself on the cross, as a substitute in our place, nullified that sentence as to any force upon those who believe in him. The plea against it is, that it hath already been executed, though not upon our persons, yet upon our Surety; so that being nailed to his cross, the virtue of his cross must cease, before the killing power of the law can revive. This crucified Christ, who disarmed the law of its thunders, defaced the obligation of it as a covenant, and, as it were, ground the stones, upon which it was written, to powder, is worth our exact knowledge, and studious inquiry.

3. Upon this must follow the removal of guilt. If God the Judge of the world be appeased and satisfied, and the law, upon which our accusation is grounded, and which is the testimony of our debt, be cancelled, the removal of our guilt must necessarily follow. And this forgiveness of sin is the chief and principal part of our redemption, and ascribed to his blood as the procuring cause, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." Ephesians 1:7. He bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, there necessarily follows a discharge of every believer from them. The payment made by the Surety, is a discharge of the principal debtor from the pursuit of the creditor. As he took away the curse from us by being made a curse, so he took away sin from us by being made sin for us. The taking away the sins of the world was the great end of his coming. There had been no need of his assuming our nature, and exposing himself to such miseries for our relief, had we been only in a simple misery, for then we might have been rescued by his strength; but, being in a sinful misery, we could not be relieved but by his sacrifice to remove our guilt, as well as by his strength to draw us out of our gulf.. Our sin was a bar upon the treasures of divine blessings; this must be removed before those could be opened for us, and could not righteously be removed by bare power, but by a full payment and satisfaction of the debt. It is a violent oppression to free a creditor from the hands of a debtor by force, it is righteous only when it is by legal payment. Well then, "Christ was made sin for us," 2 Corinthians 5:21 and that in his death upon the cross; to what end? that sin might remain in its guilt upon us? No, for him to be made sin, and that by God, without respect to the taking away of sin, had been inconsistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God. The justice of God would not permit him to take our debt of another, and yet to charge it upon ourselves. "He was therefore made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in or by him." He was made sin, that we might be counted without sin by the imputation of the righteousness of the Mediator to us, as 'if it were our own; that as he represented our persons, and bore our penalty, we might likewise receive the advantages of

his righteousness for the acquittal of our debts, the sin of our nature, and the sin of our persons, the removal of the guilt contracted by Adam, and imputed to us, and the guilt contracted by ourselves. For it is of "many offences unto justification," Romans 5:16. He was the true person figured by the scape-goat that took away our sins, and carried them into a land of forgetfulness, where none dwells to take notice of them, and censure us to death for the crimes. Is not then this crucified Christ worth the knowing, who took such heavy burdens upon his own shoulders, that they might not oppress ours; and suffered as a victim in the place of our guilty persons, to obtain an eternal redemption for us, Hebrews 9:14. He that gives so great a ransom for us, as that of his life and precious blood, rather than we should remain in our chains, deserves the choicest place in our understanding as well as affections. Were it a bare deliverance, it would challenge this: but he is said not only to deliver us, which speaks power, but to redeem us, which speaks price, and a buying what was past into the possession of another; a payment of that which we were never able to pay. 4. Another fruit is, the conquest of Satan. The empire the devil exercised over man, did not arise from any dignity in his person, or any right he had to him in himself, but it was first founded on sin, and granted to him by the justice of God, and was not the power of a prince, but of an executioner. Had not sin first opened the door, his venom could not have infected us, nor his power have hurt us. He could never have been our accuser without some matter of charge from us: nor ever have been our executioner, had we not fallen under the hands of divine justice. His power is erected upon our crimes, whereby he becomes the minister of divine vengeance. But a crucified Christ hath bruised the head of this old serpent, and wounded the prince of this world ! he hath displaced him from his power, snatched from him the ground of his indictments, by cancelling the law upon which his accusations are founded; and despoiled him of his office, by satisfying divine justice, which conferred an authority upon him of executing divine vengeance; "the accuser of the brethren is cast out," Rev. xii. 10. and "destroyed him that had the power of death," and that through his own death, Hebrews 2:14-15. That the devil had not a total power over Adam, after the fall, proceeded from the intervention of this Surety, and the absolute credit of his future victory over him. Yet that promise, that the serpent's head should be bruised, did not, through the weakness of their faith, and the long delay of performance, preserve them from the fear of death; notwithstanding that, they were all their life-time subject to bondage; for since the devil's empire was reared upon the ruins of men by sin, he could continually object to them that their sins were not expiated, that death remained as a punishment of sin; but the cross of Christ hath disarmed him of this weapon; his grand plea, whereby he kept men in a servile fear, is completely answered. In bruising our Saviour's heel by the death on the cross, he felt a fatal blow on his head, his conqueror got above him out of his reach, without any hope left in him to touch his heel again. The devil's right was legally taken from him by Christ's death on the cross; the foundation of his authority, namely sin, was taken away. He was destroyed, (that is the apostle's expression,) not in his person, but in his authority; he was irrecoverably expelled from his dominion which he had by his false oracles usurped over the world, John 12:31 and it is by this crucified Christ, that we are more than conquerors over him. And should we not know this crucified Christ, who hath weakened the venom of the serpent, broke the force of the tempter, vanquished him on the cross by the merit of his blood, and conquers him in us by the efficacy of his Spirit.

5. Sanctification is another fruit of the cross of Christ. To be delivered from the guilt of sin, that bound us over to punishment, had been a great favour; but it would not have been a perfect favour, without being delivered from the venom of sin that had infected our nature. Though God

willed man good by a love of good will, yet he could not delight in him with a love of complacency, if the contagion and filth of sin had deformed and sullied our souls as much as before; if our guilt were only removed, we had been freed from punishment, but without restoring the divine image, we had not been fit for any converse with God. It was necessary that our souls should be washed, and our faculties put into a state to serve in some measure the glory of God, and the end of our creation. God would have seemed to deny his own holiness, if he had regarded only the reverence of his justice, by appointing a sacrifice for atonement, and not consulted the honour of the other, by renewing his image in the nature of man. But this is purchased by the death of Christ; "He came by water and blood," 1 John 5:6 by blood to expiate our sins, and by water to purify our souls, answerable to the Jewish state wherein it was typified, where there were sacrifices for guilt, and washings for filth. These two things come to us by the death of Christ, the remitting our crime, and the removing of our spot. He gave himself, that he might save us, Ephesians 5:25. Titus 2:14 when he came to purchase the blessings we had forfeited, he would not omit this, which was one of the chief. By him the conscience is purged from dead works, from sin which brought death, and being worse than a pollution by a dead body, hindered us from access to God, as that did from an entrance into the temple. He hath broken our chains, as well as blotted out our crimes; healed our natures, as well as procured our pardon; purchased our regeneration, as well as remission. It is by his cross that the old man, which had incorporated himself with our souls, is crucified, Romans 6:6. By this he gained the power of sending a saving spirit, which had not entered into our souls, had not Christ's blood flowed out of his veins. The effusion of this blood, was the cause of the effusion of the Spirit; it was shed upon us through Christ alone. He hath, by suffering for sin on the cross, rendered it a detestable thing, and shewed how dreadful that is, that could not receive its fatal wound, without a wound first in the heart of the Son of God. This is the most powerful motive to quicken us to a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness, and his life the most illustrious pattern; but all this had been of little efficacy to us, had not the water of the Spirit flowed out from the rock, when it was struck, to cleanse the filthiness of our souls. This is given, upon the account of his death, to believers, to purify their hearts from the mud of the world, and to form them to a new life for the honour of God; and it is not denied to those who will ask, and seek, and knock, Luke 11:13. Had Christ only purchased remission without sanctification, it had not been for the honour of God's holiness, nor would our condition have been elevated; heaven had been no place for defilements or slaves. It was necessary the filth of sin should be removed, the dominion of sin be abolished, that we might as holy persons approach to God, and as free men converse with God. Is 'not a crucified Christ then worth the knowing, who hath not only destroyed Satan our enemy without us, but can destroy sin our enemy within us? As he hath snatched us from punishment by expiating our sins, so he can bring us to communion with God, by razing evil habits out of our hearts: without this latter, we are not capable of enjoying a complete benefit by the former.

6. Opening heaven for us. What is this life but a wallowing in a sink, a converse in the dregs of the creation, in an earth polluted by the sin of man, wherein we every day behold fresh affronts of God, and find motions in us dishonourable to ourselves? But Christ by his death hath provided a better place than this, yea, a place more glorious than Adam's Paradise, which was deigned for our habitation by the first creation. A place, not only built by the word of God, but cemented and prepared by the blood of Christ. By the law against sin, we were to have our bodies reduced to dust, and our souls lie under the sentence of the wrath of God. But our crucified Saviour hath purchased the redemption of our body, to be evidenced by a resurrection, Romans 8:23 and a

standing security of our souls in a place of bliss, to which believers shall have a real ascent, and in which they shall have a local residence, which is called the purchased possession. As Adam brought in the empire of death, so Christ hath brought in the empire of life, Romans 5:17 shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. He hath not purchased for us a paradisiacal life, or restored us to the mutable state wherein Adam was created; he hath not linked us for ever to the the earth, and the use of the creatures for our support; he hath purchased for us an eternal life, and prepared for us eternal mansions; not only to have the company of men, or the society of the blessed angels, but to be blessed with the vision of God, to reside in the same place, where his glorified person is adored by the happy spirits, to live with him, Romans 6:8 a life, wherein our understandings shall be freed from mists, and our wills from spots, and our affections from disorder. We lost a paradise by sin, and have gained a heaven by the cross. And should not this crucified Christ be studied, who hath settled the regions above for our reception, and procured an entrance into that place, which justice, by reason of our sin, had else made for ever inaccessible to us.

I might mention more; as, the establishment of the covenant, access to God, perseverance, and the conquest of the world.

Use.--1. Let us be thankful to God for a crucified Redeemer.

There is nothing in heaven or earth such an amazing wonder as this; nothing can vie with it for excellence- AH love and thankfulness is due to God, who hath given us his Son, not only to live, but to die for us a death so shameful, a death so accursed, a death so sharp, that we might be repossessed of the happiness we had lost. All love and thankfulness is due to Christ, who did not only pay a small sum for us as our surety, but bowed his soul to death, to raise us to life, was numbered among transgressors, that we might have a room among the blessed. Our crimes merited our sufferings, but his own mercy made him a sufferer for us; for us he sweat those drops of blood, for us he trod the wine-press alone, for us he assuaged the rigour of divine justice, for us, who were not only miserable, but offending creatures, and overwhelmed with more sins to be hated, than with misery to be pitied. He was crucified for us by his love, who deserved to die by his power, and laid the highest obligation upon us, who had laid the highest offences upon him. This death is the ground of all our good; whatever we have, is a fruit that grew upon the cross. Had he not suffered, we had been rejected for ever from the throne of God; salvation had never appeared, but by those groans and agonies. By this alone was God pleased, and our souls for ever made happy; without it, he had been for ever displeased with us, we had been odious and abominable in his sight, and could never have seen his face. Nothing is such an evidence of his love as his cross; the miracles he wrought, and the cures he performed in the time of his life, were nothing to the kindness of his death, wherein he was willing to be accounted worse than a murderer in his punishment, that he might thereby effect our deliverance. If he had given us the riches of this world and a greater, had he given us the honour of angels, and made us barons of heaven, without exposing himself to the cross to accomplish it, it had been a testimony of his affection, but destitute of so endearing an emphasis. The manner of procuring is more than a bare kindness in bestowing it; he testified his resolution, not only to give us glory, but to give it us whatsoever it should cost him, and would stick at nothing rather than we should want it. The angels in heaven in their glistening lustre, are the monuments of his liberality, but not of so supreme an affection as is engraven on the body of his cross.

2. Let us delight in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and be often in the thought and study of him. Study Christ, not only as living, but dying, not as breathing in our air, but suffering in our stead; know him as a victim, which is the way to know him as a conqueror. Christ crucified is the great object of faith. All the passages of his life, from his nativity to his death, are passed over in the creed without reciting, because, though they are things to be believed, yet the belief of them is not sufficient without the belief of the cross; in that alone was our redemption wrought. Had he only lived, he had not been a Saviour. If our faith stop in his life, and do not fasten upon his blood, it will not be a justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for his doctrine; his holiness, which fitted himself for his suffering, had been insufficient for us, without the addition of the cross. Without this, we had been under the demerit of our crimes, the venom of our natures, the slavery of our sins, and the tyranny of the devil; without this, we should for ever have had God for our enemy, and Satan for our executioner; without this, we had lain groaning under the punishment of our transgressions, and despaired of any smile from Heaven. It was this death, which as a sacrifice appeased God, and as a price redeemed us; nothing is so strong to encourage us; nothing so powerful to purify us; how can we be without thinking of it? The world we live in had fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist; not a blessing we enjoy, but may put us in mind of it: they were all forfeited by our sins, but merited by his precious blood. If we study it well, we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world; how much he would part with to restore a fallen creature. He showed an irresistible love to us, not to be overcome by a love to his own dear Son.

(1.) This will keep up life in our repentance. We cannot look upon Christ crucified for us, for our guilt, and consider that we had deserved all that he suffered, and that he suffered not by our entreaty, nor by any obligation from us, but merely from his own love, but the meditation of this must needs melt us into sorrow. Should we not bleed as often as we seriously thought of Christ's bleeding for us? You cannot see a malefactor led to execution for a notorious crime, but you have some detesting thoughts of the fact, as well as some motions of pity to the person. A strong meditation on Christ will excite compassion for his sufferings, but a detestation of our sins and selves as the cause of them. It is a look upon Christ pierced, that pierceth the soul, Zechariah 12:10. Would not this blood acquaint us, that the malignity of sin was so great, that it could not be blotted out by the blood of the whole creation? Would it not astonish us, that none had strength enough to match it, but one equal with God? Would not such an astonishment break out into penitent reflections? Would not the thoughts of this make us emulate the vail of the temple, and be ashamed that it should outstrip us in rending, while our hearts remain unbroken? Should we not be confounded, that a lifeless earth should shake in the time of his sufferings, while our reasonable souls stand immovable? Could any of the Israelites, that understood the nature and intent of sacrifices, be without some penitent motions while they saw the innocent victim slain for their sin, not for any fault of its own? and should we be unmelted, if we considered the cross, the punishment of our crimes, not any of his?

(2.) It would inspirit our faith, when we shall see his blood confirming an everlasting covenant, wherein God promises to be gracious. All the promises centered in the cross, received their life from his death, and are from thence reflected on us. Where can faith find a vigour, but in the royalties of mercy, displayed in the satisfaction of justice? where can it find a life, but in the views

of its proper object? When we behold a Christ crucified, how can we distrust God, that hath in that, as a plain tablet, written this language, "that he will spare nothing for us, since he hath not spared the best he had? What greater assurance can he give? where is there any thing in heaven or earth, that can be a greater pledge of his affection?

(3.) This will animate us in our approaches to God. Not only a bare coming, but a boldness and confidence in coming to God, was purchased by a crucified Christ, Hebrews 10:19. God was before averse from man, and man unwilling to approach to God. Now God invites, and man may come; man calls, and God answers. What can be more encouraging than to consider, that by his blood he hath made us kings and priests to God, Revelation 5:9-10 to offer up sacrifices with a royal spirit, since the curse which should have fallen upon our heads, has been borne by him? We should think of it every time we go to God in prayer; it was by this death the throne of God was opened. This will chase away that fear that disarms us of our vigour. It will compose our souls to offer up delightful petitions. It is in this only we see the face of God appeased towards us.

(4.) This will be a means to further us in a progress in holiness. An affection to sin, which cost the Redeemer of the world so dear, would be inconsistent with a sound knowledge and serious study of a crucified Saviour. We should see no charms in sin, which may not be overcome by that ravishing love, which bubbles up in every drop of the Redeemer's blood. Can we with lively thoughts of this, sin against so much tenderness, compassion, grace, and the other perfections of God, which sound so loud in our ears from the cross of Jesus? Shall we consider him hanging there to deliver us from hell, and yet retain any spirit to walk in the way which leads thereto? Shall we consider him upon the cross, unlocking the gates of heaven, and yet turn our backs upon that place he was so desirous to purchase for us, and give us the possession of? Shall we see him groaning in our place and stead, and dare to tell him, by our unworthy carriage, that we regard him not, and that he might have spared his pains? It must be a miserable soul, worse than brutish, that can walk on in ways of enmity, with a sense of a crucified Christ in his mind. Could we then affect that sin which appears so horrible in the doctrine of the cross? Can we take any pleasure in that which procured so much pain to our best Friend? Can we love that which hath brought a curse, better than him who bore the curse for us? For want of this study of Christ crucified we walk on in sin, as if he suffered to purchase a license for it, rather than the destruction of it. The due consideration of this death would incline our wills to new desires and resolutions. It would stifle that luxury, ambition, worldliness, which harass our souls. We should not dare to rush into any iniquity through the wounds of Christ. We should not, under a sense of his dying groans, cherish that for which he suffered. We should not do the works of darkness under the effusions of his blood, if we did, in a serious posture, set ourselves at the feet of his cross.

(5.) This will be the foundation of all comfort. What comfort can be wanting, when we can look upon Christ crucified as our Surety, and look upon ourselves as crucified in him, when we can consider our sins as punished in him, and ourselves accepted by virtue of his cross? It was not an angel which was crucified for us, but the Son of God; one of an equal dignity with the Father; one who shed blood enough to blot out the demerit of our crimes, were they more than could be numbered by all the angels of heaven, if all were made known to them. He was not crucified for a few, but for all sorts of offences. When we shall see judgments in the world, what comfort can we take without a knowledge and sense of a crucified Christ? What a horror is it for a condemned man to see the preparation of gibbets, halters, and executioners! But when he shall see a

propitiation made for him, the anger of the prince atoned, the law some other way satisfied, and his condemnation changed into remission; all his former terrors vanish, and a sweet and pleasing calm possesses him. With this knowledge and sense, we should not be much terrified at the approaches of death in our last gasps; when we consider itself gasping under the weight of the cross. The blood of Christ is as a balsam dropped upon the points of the arrows of death. That by removing the guilt of sin, pulled out the sting of death. When we tremble under a sense of our sins, the terrors of the Judge, and the curses of the law, let us look upon a crucified Christ," the remedy of all our miseries. His cross hath procured a crown, his passion hath expiated our transgression. His death hath disarmed the law, his blood hath washed a believer's soul. This death is the destruction' of our enemies, the spring of our happiness, the eternal testimony of divine love. We have good reason, as well as the apostle, to determine with ourselves, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and especially him crucified."

A DISCOURSE ON THE VOLUNTARINESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

A DISCOURSE ON THE VOLUNTARINESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour, Ephesians 5:2. THE exhortation in this verse to a mutual love, depends upon what the apostle had urged in the end of the former chapter, where he had endeavoured to persuade them to a kindness and tenderheartedness to one another, and backed it by the pattern God had set them in his pardoning grace; and in Ephesians 5:1, he extends that motive to all other duties, and draws a general maxim for their observance; that they ought to imitate God in all things imitable by a creature: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children," Ephesians 5:1. Consider the great example God hath set you, and as you have obligations to him, not only as your God, but your Father; so imitate him, not only as creatures, but as children, and express in your lives those admirable perfections, which he hath engraven on you by regeneration, and especially his patience and meekness in bearing, and his love and kindness in pardoning, those that injure you.

Observe: Those that lay claim to a relation to God, without imitation of him, are not children, but bastards.

They may be of his family by instruction, not by descent. There is no implantation in Christ, without an imitation both of the Creator and Redeemer.

He doth prosecute the exhortation in this verse: "Walk in love;" let the perpetual tenor of your lives be in love; and that by the example of Christ, as before he had done it by the example of God, which indeed Christ had in person urged to his disciples before his departure from them: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you," John 13:14-15 and amplifies this example of the love of Christ.

1. From the effect. His passion. 2. The manner of it. Voluntary ;" hath given." 3. The subject of it; "himself." 4. The end of it; "a sacrifice." 5. The event and fruit of it.

"A sweet-smelling savour." A fragrant odour, which by a metalepsis is put for the appeasing God, it having a wonderful force to appease the wrath of God, which was inflamed against us. The most generous example to imitate, is the person of our Saviour; the most efficacious motive to persuade to that imitation, is the sacrifice of our Saviour; the course of our lives ought to be in love, not only an act, a spurt, but a walk. "As Christ hath loved us:" and as of similitude, not of equality; we cannot equal the stature of Christ's affection, but we may draw in our life lineaments like to his. The latter words are the subject of this discourse: "Loved us." This is the first spring of all the actions of Christ towards us, and the passion of Christ for us; there could be no other motive, as it respected us. Our misery might excite his pity, but his affection produced his passion; he loved us, as God, in common with his Father; he loved us, as man, by a participation of our nature. In this love, there is his divine will as a priest, his human will as a sacrifice; he pitied us while we were insensibly hurried down by the devil to a gulf of perdition: love was the only impulse, love excited

him, love prepared him, love sent him, love offered him; the highest assurance of his love, was the loss of his life, the excellency of the fruit shows the goodness of the tree.

"Has given himself." He was given by God, yet he offered himself; there was a joint consent: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do," John 5:19. It is spoken after the manner of men, as sons learn of their fathers, and imitate them in their actions. Christ's giving himself, implies the Father's giving him.

"Himself." He was both the priest and the sacrifice; he offered not gold or silver, or a whole world, but himself, more precious than millions of worlds, composed only of angels and innumerable spirits, as excellent as the omnipotence of God could create.

"Himself." Not only his body of flesh, not only his soul a spirit, but himself, his whole person. His soul, his body, himself, the Son of God, and the Son of man; he loved us as he loved himself, above what he loved himself, shall I say? He exposed his life for us, his most holy person for us; the act of his murderers is not regarded as a sweetsmelling savour, but his own act of obedience. To whom did he thus give himself? "To God." To that God, to whom, by our base apostasy, we had rendered ourselves obnoxious, and had fallen under his deserved wrath. Our Saviour was God's before, as he was the Son of God, but he delivers himself to God, as a mediator, a victim to satisfy for our sins, and reconcile us to our injured Creator; he offered himself to God, as the judge and revenger of sin, the guardian of the law, the assertor of his truth in his threatening; he appeared before God as sitting upon a seat of justice, that he might open to us a throne of grace. To what end did he deliver himself? "An offering and a sacrifice." Not like an offering, or like a sacrifice, but an offering, a sacrifice; not to do us a small kindness, but to offer his life for us; he would die in our stead, that we might live by his death; not only an offering, but a sacrifice, an incense to be consumed into smoke, a sacrifice to be stuck and bled to death; all the offerings and sacrifices of the law were completed in Christ. All his life wherein he acted for the glory of God, was an offering; in his death, he bled and expired as a sacrifice; he underwent a death, not honourable, but ignominious, and not only ignominious among men, but joined with the legal curse of God. As he was the Son of God, he gave himself, having power to do it, John 10:18.

Unless he had been the Son of God, he could not have been a sufficient sacrifice for us.

"For a sweet, smelling savour." He gave himself with an intention to be accepted, and God received him with a choice acceptation. Sacrifices under the law were accounted by God as a sweet savour, Leviticus 1:9, Leviticus 3:16, Exodus 29:41. This expression is first mentioned at the time of the sacrifice of Noah, Genesis 8:21 so God is said to smell an offering, 1 Samuel 26:19. God accepted Noah's sacrifice, and took an occasion from thence of declaring his counsel to Noah, that he would not destroy the world, implying, that he would in time recover it by the promised Seed. A smell is here attributed to God. As good scents recreate and refresh the sense of a man, so did the sacrifice of Christ please and content God. Our sins had sent up an ill savour to heaven, had disturbed the rest of God. Christ expels our ill scent by the perfume of his blood, and restores a sweet savour in the heavenly places, "purifying the heavenly things himself," Hebrews 9:23. God being a pure Spirit, could not be taken with the smoke of the legal lambs, nor refreshed with the fumes of incense; but both God and believers under the old testament had a content in them, as they were shadows of this sweet sacrifice, which was intended for the appeasing God, and securing the offending creature. What the legal sacrifices could not perform,

as being earthy, mean, and too low for the acceptation of God, and delighted him no otherwise than as they referred to Christ, that this sweet sacrifice of the unblemished Lamb of God, possessed with a perfect love both to God's glory and man's safety, performed, and sent up such a fragrance to the nostrils of God, that he approved both of the priest and the sacrifice, infinitely above the best sacrificers and sacrifices under the law, and changed his countenance towards the filthy creature, that had raised such noisome streams in his presence. The things observable are many: 1. The love of Christ was the spring of his passion. 2. The person of Christ was consecrated for us, and given to us. But the only things I shall take notice of, are, 1. CHRIST WAS A VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE. 2. CHRIST WAS AN EFFICACIOUS SACRIFICE.

Doct. THE SACRIFICE AND SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST FOR US WERE FREE AND VOLUNTARY. His offering was a free-will offering. It is expressed in the same chapter: "He gave himself for the church," Ephesians 5:25. His voluntariness was typified by the paschal lamb, a lamb being the mildest of all creatures, resisting neither the shearers nor butchers, Isaiah 53:7. All his work is assigned to his love, Revelation 1:5-6. His love was antecedent to his shedding his blood, and our being washed in it. Love renders any work delightful. The Sun of righteousness hath not a less bridegroom spirit and cheerful disposition in running his humble race, than a sun in the heavens is expressed to have, by the psalmist, in running his natural race in the heavens, Psalms 19:5. He was not made poor by force, but became so, and laid aside his own riches for our sakes, 2 Corinthians 8:9. He became destitute of the advantages other men enjoy, that from his worldly poverty we might become rich in spiritual graces. He was not emptied of his glory by another, but made himself of no reputation: he took upon him the form of a servant, it was not imposed upon him by constraint: he was not debased by others, till he had humbled himself to the lowest degree of humility. He could have resisted them when they lifted him up upon the cross, but he would be obedient to the determination of his Father to the last gasp, Php 2:7-8. The hiding the majesty of God under the form of a servant, his descent not only to the earth, the lowest dregs of the world, the footstool of the Divinity, but to the most abject and forlorn condition in that earth. His taking the similitude of weak flesh, and running through all the degrees of reproaches and punishment, even to the grave itself, were voluntary acts, the workings of his love, that he might rescue us from a deserved hell, to advance us to an undeserved heaven, and make us partakers of that blessedness he had voluntarily quitted for our sakes. He willingly put himself into the condition of a servant, which is to be at the beck of another, and have no will but that of his master's. He submitted his reason and affections to God, to be employed in his work according to his will. He had an absolute power over his own body, John 10:18 yet he made a free offer of it, and subjected it to the penalty to be inflicted on him. One place more: "For their sakes I sanctify myself," John 17:19. It cannot be meant of his consecration to his office of priesthood, that depended upon the call of his Father; he was constituted a Priest, not by his own intrusion, but the Father's election, settled by an oath; the Father, and not himself, glorified him in this regard, Hebrews 5:4-5 : nor of his habitual and inward holiness, for so he was sanctified by the Spirit in his conception, and filled with all graces, Luke 1:35, John 3:34; but it is meant of his offering himself a sacrifice: his Father made him a Priest, the Spirit made his human nature fit to be a sacrifice; his own will made him an actual offering. In the handling this doctrine, I shall do these four things.

I. Lay down some propositions for explaining this.

II. The evidences of this voluntariness.

III.The necessity of it.

IV.The use.

I.Propositions for explaining it.

1.The Father's appointing him to be a sacrifice doth not impair his own willingness in undertaking. The Father is said to send him, and deliver him, John 3:34, Romans 8:32. Not that the Son was over-persuaded, or came only out of obedience, without any inclination of his own. The Father being the root and fountain of the Deity, all actions are originally ascribed to him, though common to all; so he is first in order of being, as he is first in order of working. The Father is said to deliver him, because the first motion of redemption is supposed to arise from the will and motion of the Father; yet the love of Christ was the spring of all mediatorial actions, and his taking our nature on him; and therefore he is no less said to give himself than the Father is said to give him to us, and for us. God is said to set him forth, Romans 3:25 yet he is said to come, Matthew 20:28. Not thrust out, or forced to come. God lays our sins upon him, yet Christ is said to bear them. His engagement was an act of choice, liberty, and affection. He could not be constrained by his Father to undertake it. His will was as free in consenting, as his Father was in proposing. The Spirit is said to be sent by the Father and the Son, to take of Christ's, and show it to us, to fit those for heaven that are given to Christ; yet his distributions are according to his own will, 1 Corinthians 12:11 dividing to every man according as he will. If you consider Christ as one God with the Father, there is but one and the same will in both: will belongs to essence, or nature; the essence of God being one, there are not in God divers "wills, though the Godhead be in divers persons, because the power of willing is the nature, not a personal propriety. The decree of redemption was joint in Father and Son. What Christ decreed as God, he executed as man. And what he willed from eternity, he began in time to will as man. Christ, as God, gave himself to death with the same will, and by the same action, as the Father gave him; but as man, he gave himself by a will inspired by the Father. Yet for our conception's sake, the scripture represents things so as if they were distinct wills, which yet we must not imagine, any more than because the scripture in condescension to our weakness represents God with eyes, and ears, and hands, we must conceive God to have a fleshly body like ours.

2.The necessity of his death impeacheth not the voluntariness of it. Many things are voluntary, which yet are necessary; there are voluntary necessities. God is necessarily, yet voluntarily holy; the devils are necessarily, yet voluntarily evil. It is not in their power to become good, yet they are carried to evil with a complete will. Man desires to be happy by a natural, and therefore necessary inclination, yet willingly and without constraint. This death was necessary by a determination of God; voluntary, by a cheerful submission of Christ. The election of the good angels rendered then' standing necessary, but the adherence of their wills to God made their standing also voluntary. Grace did not force them against their will, nor God's determination of Christ render him a sacrifice against his mind.

(1.) It was voluntary in the foundation. The decree was not necessary, but an act of divine liberty. Nothing can incline God to an act of grace, but his own most holy will. Christ being at liberty whether he would espouse our interest or not, his undertaking to manage it was a pure voluntary act, arising from his own will. He was not bound to become a creature, and take upon him the form of a servant, but his entering into that condition was an act of free choice and condescension. No

reason can possibly be supposed, why the Son of God, and Lord of the creation, should make himself lower than the angels for us, by any necessity of his own condition. There was, indeed, a necessity for us who could not be redeemed without him, but no necessity arising from the divine nature. If a creature ready to be famished be in a place where there is only one person of ability and sufficiency to relieve him, there is a necessity on the part of the poor creature to be relieved, and relieved by that person, since there is no other to help him, but there is no necessity on the part of the sufficient person to relieve him; the help he affords him will be a mere act of charity. This act of Christ is therefore called grace: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Corinthians 8:9 nothing could move him to become either a creature or a servant in a created state, but the yearnings of his own bowels towards fallen and miserable man.

(2.) It was necessary after this engagement. His engagement to make himself liable to punishment in our stead was free, but when he had entered into bonds to the Judge of heaven and earth, he was then in his power to be delivered up to death, according to that obligation which he subscribed and consented to; he was then legally, and by his own consent, bound to perform what he had undertaken, and could not justly detract. The promises of Christ are without repentance, as well as the gifts of God. After Christ had put himself into the state of a creature, and form of a servant, the homage due from a creature to God, and the work of a servant after his ear was bored, was necessary, and could not be refused by him. He had then broke his word passed to his Father in the covenant of redemption, had he absolutely declined it. "He ought to die as Christ;" Luke 24:46 that is, as clothed with our nature for such an end. He needed not to die, as he was the Son of God by eternal generation, and lay in the bosom of his Father; but it was necessary as he was made under the law, made Christ, that is, anointed to such a purpose. It was necessary also, in regard of the truth of God laid to pawn in several promises, prophecies, and legal representations; but still the fountain of all this was the free bubbling up of infinite affection to mankind. Yet this necessity was a necessity of immutability, not of constraint. The holy and unchangeable will which complied with the first proposal, remained in force till the final execution. The will of the eternal Spirit, whereby he offered himself to his Father, was immutable. It is a necessity arising from himself, and the perfection of his own nature; from his own holy will, not from any constraint. God cannot be constrained, liberty is so essential a property of the divine nature, that though it may determine itself, it cannot constrain itself. To be God is a term of infinite power, to be constrained is a term of impotency: these are contradictions in the Godhead. Besides, in his human nature he could not sin, he could not be overcome by the devil, he could find nothing in him as a foundation to stand upon, John 14:30. He could not do any thing against his Father. But to desert his suretyship had been contrary to that law to which he had subjected himself; the word of the oath, whereby he was constituted a priest, had been fruitless. It had been the utter ruin of all the gracious decrees of God, because all the elect were "chosen in him," Ephesians 1:4-5 the covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs had been null; the oath which he swore to them, broken, Luke 1:73 and the foundation of their faith falling, the whole superstructure had been dissolved, and they would have believed God in vain. All this necessity is no plea against his willingness. The obligation which the truth of God lays upon him, after he hath promised, doth not diminish his first kindness and grace in making the promise. As the necessity of his death did not extenuate the Jews' sin in butchering him, so neither doth it lessen Christ's willingness in laying down his life after he had voluntarily entered into our bonds.

(3.) Though his death was violent in regard of man, yet this doth not abate the voluntariness in regard of himself. Judas betrayed him, the Serjeants apprehended him, Pilate condemned him, and the soldiers crucified him: these were but instruments to execute "the counsel of God," Acts 4:28 yet he need not have been apprehended unless he would; he showed his power to escape, not only the united force of the Jewish nation, but of the whole world, by striking his apprehenders to the ground with the majesty of his looks. He that can rescue himself from the hands of men, and will not, may be said to die willingly, though he die violently.

They slew him as murderers, and made him a sacrifice to their revenge, not to God, "with wicked hands," Acts 2:23 and with wicked minds too. He was the sole offerer of himself, as it respected God, and advantaged us. Judas willingly delivered him, Pilate with an imperfect will condemned him, the Jews delightfully reproached him, but the intention of none of them was to make him a sacrifice of redemption. It was for "our sakes he sanctified himself," John 17:19 but it was not for our sakes the Jews butchered him. Judas delivered him for the silver, and Pilate condemned him to preserve his grandeur; but he delivered himself with an excessive affection for us. His murderers had no regard to the making him an expiation for the sin of the world; his oblation to God as a sacrifice, was an act purely of his own will at the very time of his death, not of his enemies' rage. In this capacity his death was solely the fruit of his love, and the hovering of his soul over the lost sons of Adam; it did not arise from a necessity of nature, but the will of his mercy to us; he gave himself, and gave himself out of love, Galatians 2:20. Enemies did not give him, nature did not give him. The inward transports and affections of his soul, the actings of his choicest graces, whereby his offering was rendered acceptable to God, his murderers were not the cause of; they had not force enough to crucify him, had not a joy been set before him, which made him "endure the cross," Hebrews 12:2 that is, the things wherein he rejoiced, as those things are called our hope, which are the object of our hope. The joy of Christ, which made him despise the shame and ignominy of the cross, was the glorious good he should procure by his suffering, the expiation of sin, reconciliation of God, the new creation of the world; for the producing and ripening such fruits did he hang upon the tree. This gave him contentment and pleasure in the midst of his indignities, and this was increased, not impaired by the fury of his enemies. Though his death, in regard of men, was violent, yet, as the death of a sacrifice, it was wholly voluntary.

(4.) When our Saviour seemed unwilling to it in the time of his agony, he was then highly willing. This was when he prayed earnestly that the cup might pass from him, and begins, "Father, save me from this hour," John 12:27. The smugglings of innocent nature do both times end not only in a gracious submission to the will of God, but in an ardent desire that the will and glory of God might have their full accomplishment. "But for this cause came I unto this hour, therefore, Father, glorify thy name," do thine own work, and finish every part of thy will in me, and what thou hast appointed me to undergo. The state Christ was in must needs admit of some shrinkings in his nature, encompassed with our infirmities; he saw the comfortable influences of God suspended, the indignation of God for our sins breaking out, the guilt of innumerable iniquities imputed to him, and the law with all its curses edged against him, and himself left to bear the weight of all this, and conflict with a wrath no creature ever bore before. The apprehensions of all these meeting in a clear understanding, could not but raise suitable passions of fear and trouble in his human nature. If he had not known the greatness of the punishment he was to endure for our redemption, he had undertaken to ransom us from he knew not what. If he had not feared it, he had not been a

sensible man; if he had not trembled at it, he had not been an innocent man. Suitable affections to God in his carriage towards us, are the necessary duties of a creature. God is the object of fear in his vindictive justice, which Christ then was to be subject to. It had not consisted with that reverence which Christ always showed to God, not to be sensible of the sharpness of those punishments which were then providing for him as a substituted criminal in our stead. Though the person of our Saviour was but one, yet he, having two natures, had two wills, a divine and a human, otherwise he were not God and man. If he had not a human soul, he were not a man; and if he had not a human will, he had not a human soul; as he truly took our nature, so he took the laws of it, whereby it cannot love pain, but shun whatsoever it apprehends hurtful to it. As death was an evil against nature, he desires to decline it; as it was to be an atonement for sin, and appeasing of wrath through the dignity of the sacrifice, he desires to undergo it; he regarded it as man, and so had some reluctance to it; he regarded it as a man designed for such an end, and therefore submitted to it. "But for this cause came I unto this hour." As it was a dissolution of nature, a fruit of God's displeasure against sin, and should for a time exclude his soul and body from the fruition of the divine favour and glory, though the personal union should not be dissolved, he startled at it; for the more Christ loved the sense of the divine love, which he enjoyed in his life, the more grievous would the apprehension of the want thereof be. But when he considered, that he was united to that nature, that he might suffer in it, and lay it down as a sacrifice to that Justice which brandished a naked sword against man, that without it the world could not be freed from that misery sin had hurled it into, he then put his neck under the cross. As a patient, who considering the potion offered as bitter, abhors it, but remembering the intention of the physician, and the beneficial qualities of the medicine, doth readily accept it: both the abhorrence and the acceptance are acts of the same will upon divers considerations; or rather the abhorrence is an act of nature regarding it as distasteful, the acceptance is an act of reason regarding it as wholesome. Now, was not the will of Christ as Mediator as victorious in the issue over the reluctance, as it had been in the capacity of a man desirous of the removal of the cup? The human will yields to the divine will, and conforms itself, not only in a quiet posture, to the resolves of God, but in an ardent desire that his will might be performed. There was more of obedience in "Thy will be done, not mine," and more of ardent affections in "Father, glorify thyself," than there was of reluctance in "Let this cup pass from me," or, "Save me from this hour." He disclaims the will of his human nature, to perform the will of his Father's mercy.

II. Wherein this voluntariness of Christ's death appears.

1. He willingly offered himself in the first counsel about redemption to stand in our stead. When our necks were upon the block, and the blow from justice was otherwise unavoidable, Christ steps in, diverts the blow from us to himself, and declares himself willing to suffer what we had merited, that we might escape upon that suffering. The Father proposed it, the Son consented to it: the will of God is antecedent to the consent of Christ, "I come to do thy will, O my God," Psalms 40:7 which will was the will of God for our sanctification through the "offering of the body of Christ," Hebrews 10:10. Though he knew every thorn in the way he was to pass, the greatness of the wrath he was to undergo, yet his heart leaped into the Father's arms with a full and ready consent at the first overture. The Father proposed it not with more affection than the Son entertained it with delight, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." He was loth to leave expressing it, "I come;" that is not all, "I delight to do thy will;" nor doth it rest there, "Thy law is within my heart:" it is so settled, that it

cannot be rooted out but with the utter dissolution of my heart. Thus in the volume, or the beginning of the book, it is written of him. In the book of Genesis, in the first promise, the second person in the Trinity, who is supposed to appear to our first parents after the fall, represents himself a suffering Saviour, and testifies his own consent to the suffering he was to undergo, as the seed of the woman by having his heel bruised by the serpent, and the victory he was to obtain by breaking the serpent's head. When the counsel was resolved upon, Christ is said to "delight in the habitable parts of the earth," Proverbs 8:31. His consent was passed before the world was; it was a delight to him, because of the glory of God's grace, to be made illustrious in the sacrifice of himself. It cannot be meant of the first creation, for that is supposed, and there could be no exulting delight in that, since the defilement of it by sin presently succeeded the laying on the top-stone. It is meant therefore of the restoration of the world, which was to be wrought by this wisdom of God. Some, to invalidate the deity of Christ, understand by wisdom in that book and chapter an intellectual habit, which is ridiculous. The antiquity of the wisdom here spoken of, is before the mountains were settled, and before there were any fountains abounding with water. The wisdom here described was present with God, when he made the world. It was entirely familiar with him, there was such a familiarity between God and wisdom, as between a father and a son, Proverbs 8:30. "I was by him as one brought up with him," and peculiarly the delight of God.

2. The whole course of his life manifests this willingness. His will stood right to this point of the compass all his life. He never had any defect in his understanding, nor did his memory of what was appointed for him ever fail him. In the time of his life he frequently mentioned the tragedy to be acted upon him, the manner of his death by lifting up on the cross, John 3:14. And he who was intimately acquainted with the prophets, knew every circumstance of his death predicted in them. Many enter the lists with difficulties out of ignorance, but the willingness of our Saviour cannot be ascribed either to ignorance or forgetfulness. He knew long before that Judas was to betray him, before such a design entered into the heart of Judas, John 6:64 yet cashiered him not from his family. He foretold the hour of his death; his desires were strong for it, he was straitened till he was baptized with that bloody baptism, Luke 12:50. He had little ease in his own bowels, as though it were a kind of death to him not to be a sacrifice; and when Peter would have dissuaded him from suffering, he useth him as smartly as he would have done the devil: "Get thee behind me, Satan," Matthew 16:23 implying that in that speech he was the same enemy, by giving him the same title. And the night before, he doth solemnly oblige himself to suffer by his deed, as well as he had before by his word; he makes his testament in the institution of the supper, and delivers his will into the hands of his disciples. His heart was bent to wade through it; he gave them his blood in the sacrament, to show how freely he would pour it forth the following day in a sacrifice; the free distribution of his body to them represented the free offering up his body for them.

3. At the time of his death, he manifested this voluntariness in his whole carriage. When the time drew near, he declined it not; he would enter Jerusalem with hosannas, as if, when he went to his death, he went to his triumph; and indeed it was so, for by that oblation of himself upon the cross, "he triumphed over principalities and powers," Colossians 2:15. He went into the garden, which was as it were the bringing himself to the door of the tabernacle to be offered to God. He had at the passover bid Judas execute quickly his traitorous intention, and now quickens the high priests' dull officers to apprehend him, when he told them twice, himself was the person they sought. He summoned not one angel to take arms for his rescue, though he could have commanded legions

to attend him; but as he had rebuked Peter before for dissuading him, he now rebukes him for defending him; moved thereto by an ardency of zeal to drink the cup: "Shall I not drink of the cup which my Father hath given me?" John 18:11. He would not court the protection of Herod by working a miracle to please his curiosity. As he would have no relents himself, so he would not endure them in others; and therefore dissuades the women from expressing their natural affection in a few tears, Luke 23:28. His soul was not wrung and torn from him, but he rendered his spirit into the hands of his Father, and cried with a loud voice before that last act; so that he died not by a defect of strength, but by an ardency of will. He was more delighted with his sufferings for us, than we can be with the greatest worldly pleasures and grandeur, and valued reproaches for us above the empire of the world. To conclude: his soul was not torn from him, but "he poured it out," Isaiah 53:12 even that which was dearest to him, as a man doth water, freely and willingly out of the vessel, "he poured out his soul unto death;" he ordered death to come and fetch it.

III. Why this voluntariness was necessary.

1. On the part of the person.

2. On the part of justice.

3. On the part of acceptation.

1. On the part of the sacrifice itself. He was above any obligation to that work he so freely undertook for us. When he made himself of no reputation, it was a work of his charity, not of necessity; and he was bound in no other bonds, but those of his own love. Nor could he be over-ruled to any thing against his own consent; for, being God "equal with the Father," Php 2:6 he was subject to no law, nor could be constrained to bend under the terms and penalties of it. Christ as the second person was not under a law any more than the Father; for he was "in the form of God," that is, had the same essence with God. Suppose he had been incarnate without entering into any bonds for us, though so far as he was man, he was bound actively to obey the precepts of the law, yet not bound to endure the penalties of the law, unless he had been a transgressor of the precept: he was to have obeyed it as a creature, but not suffer the curse, unless he had been a guilty creature. But he was not only made under the law, as an innocent creature, but "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Romans 8:3 as like as possible could be, sin only excepted; and therefore observed those ceremonial precepts which concerned creatures, as sinful; as circumcision, though he had no lust in his human nature to be cut off, and baptism, though he had no stain to be washed away. And indeed, as he was not, so he could not be a transgressor, being secured by his conception from any original taint, and by the hypostatical union from any actual spot: if he could possibly have been a transgressor, the salvation of the elect had been contingent. Being a creature, of the seed of the woman, he may be supposed to be under the condition of the covenant of nature; yet not violating that covenant, he could not justly die for himself.

2. Necessary on the part of justice. The satisfaction for sin was to be made by death, because man upon his revolt from God, was by the immutable law bound over to death. Man could not satisfy the law but by death, and so must have lain under the bonds of that death for ever, and no convenient way could be found for his rescue, unless some one, who was not obnoxious to that penalty by nature, should suffer in his stead that death which he owed. Now, had it not been an injustice to inflict a punishment upon a person purely innocent, and unwilling to render himself in

the place of the criminal? No man can be justly constrained to pay either a pecuniary or criminal debt for another without his own consent, either actual at the time of paying or suffering, or legal, when, by entering into the same bonds, he hath made himself legally one person with the debtor or offender. Had not Christ voluntarily undertaken it, justice had been wronged instead of being satisfied. It could upon no account have been just to punish one that had not been guilty upon his own score, or by substitution. The satisfaction of justice in one kind had been an injury to it in another. Well then; the will of Christ could not have saved us without his suffering, because, as the law had denounced death, justice was to be satisfied by death. Nor could the sufferings of Christ have saved us, without his will; for none can be an involuntary surety: had he not consented to have our sins imputed to him, the punishment of our sins could not have been inflicted on him. To take from any what is not due, and when they are unwilling to part with it, is rapine.

3.Necessary in regard of acceptation. Christ's consent was as necessary as God's order. Had Christ suffered for us without the consent of his Father, the Judge of the world, though his sufferings had been of infinite value, because of the dignity of his person, yet God had not been obliged to look upon us as concerned in him, nor count him to us, or for us; and had not Christ consented that they should be for us, they could not justly have been accepted for us, or applied to us. It had been an alienating the goods against the will of the donor. As God's order makes his sacrifice capable of being satisfactory, so the consent of Christ makes it capable of being accepted for us, and applied to us. The heathens would not offer a beast that came struggling to the altar; but God, under the law, regarded not the reluctance of the sacrifice, but the free-will of the offerer, which was necessary to make the sacrifice a sweet savour. How much more necessary is the voluntariness of that person who was to be both sacrifice and priest! Love belongs to the integrity of a sacrifice, a burnt body without charity is of no value, 1 Corinthians 13:3. The merit of his death depended not upon the act of dying, or the penal part in that death, but upon his willing obedience in it, in conjunction with the dignity of his person; and without this, his soul might have expired without being a sacrifice. As the disobedience of Adam rendered the world obnoxious to wrath, so by the voluntary oblation of Christ, justification is conferred upon believers, Romans 5:19. His love made his sacrifice a sweetsmelling savour. By the pouring out his soul is our redemption wrought, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death," Isaiah 53:12 or, He shall partake of the spoil with the strong', he shall take us as his own spoils, who were before the devil's prey, and restore to us that blessedness which the devil rifled us of. We are restored, and himself exalted, not merely because he died, but because he died willingly. In vain had we hoped for the benefit of a forced redemption. IV. Use.

1.The way of redemption by a sacrifice was necessary. Why should Christ so willingly undertake this task, be a man of sorrows, lay himself down into the grave, if the atonement of our sins could have been procured at an easier rate? He that made the world by a word, would have redeemed us by a word, if it had been consistent with his own honour. It is at least necessary for God's greater honour, and man's surer benefit. The application of it to us must be as necessary as the oblation of it for us. Think not a few tears, the heat-drops of a natural repentance, can expiate those sins for which Christ thought the best blood in his heart so necessary to be shed.

2.The death of Christ for us was most just on the part of God. What Christ did willingly submit to, God might justly charge upon him as a due debt. That man who will enter into bond to secure the debt to the creditor, or satisfy for the criminal to the governor, may justly be sued upon default of

payment by the one, and arrested for default of appearance by the other; what he promised may justly be demanded of him.

3. How wonderful was the love of Christ! To accept so willingly of such hard conditions for us, and die so ignominiously upon the cross we had deserved! He knew the burden of sin, he knew the terrors of hell, yet he did not shrink from the imputation of the one, or the sufferings of the other; it was not a willingness founded upon ignorance, but upon a clear-sighted affection. He was willing to be reproached, that we might be glorified; he would be like to us, that we might be conformed to him; and took our human nature, that we might in a sort partake of his divine. O wonderful love! to open his breast to receive into his own heart the sharp edge of that sword which was directed against us. Had not his feet been well shod with love, he would soon have turned back, and said his way was unpassable. A courtesy is enhanced by the greater ingenuity of the will in it; our Saviour had a double will in this matter, the will of the divine, and the will of his human nature, like two streams from distant parts meeting together in conjunction. Worse than devils are we, if we are not ravished with so great an affection, which made him leave the heaven of his Father's presence for a time, to pass through our hell in the dregs of the creation.

4. How willingly then should we part with our sins for Christ, and do our duty to him! O that we could in our measures part as willingly with our lusts, as he did with his blood! He parted with his blood when he needed not, and shall not we with our sins, when we ought to do so, for our own safety, as well as for his glory. Since Christ came to redeem us from the slavery of the devil, and strike off the chains of captivity, he that will remain in them, when Christ with so much pains and affection hath shed his blood to unloose them, prefers the devil and sin before a Saviour, and will find the affront to be aggravated by the Redeemer's voluntariness in suffering for his liberty. How willingly should we obey him, who so willingly obeyed God for us! Christ did not let his enemies snatch away his life, but laid it down; our duties should not be wrung from us, but gently distil from us. The more will in sin, the blacker; the more will in obedience, the sweeter. It is in this we should imitate our great pattern.

Having despatched the first doctrine about the voluntariness of Christ's death, from those words "hath given himself;" I proceed to speak of the acceptableness of it, from this latter clause of the verse. Allusion is made here to the perfume God commanded under the law, Exodus 30:34. The spices were to be pounded, and afterwards put into a censer, to be dissolved into a sweet fume, in the Levitical service: Christ was bruised by his humiliation, to be rendered a sweet perfume to God.

A DISCOURSE UPON THE FIFTH OF NOV

A DISCOURSE UPON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER

or

ON GOD AS A DELIVERER by

Stephen Charnock

1628-1680 The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Exodus 15:9-10 An anniversary commemoration of a memorable deliverance falling upon this day, hath caused a diversion of my thoughts, to look back not only upon a mercy never to be forgotten, but to look forward to that deliverance which is to come, parallel to this in the text. Israel was a type of the church, Pharaoh a type of the church's enemies in all ages, of the world, both of the spiritual enemy Satan, and of the temporal, his instruments.

The deliverance was a type of the deliverance that Christ wrought upon the cross by his blood; also of that Christ works upon his throne, the one from the reign of sin, the other from the empire of antichrist.

This was the exemplar of all the deliverances the church was to have. As the Assyrian should 'lift up a staff against Jerusalem, after the manner of Egypt,' so the Lord should lift his rod up for them 'upon the sea, after the manner of Egypt,' when 'the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing,' Isaiah 10:26-27, when the power of the enemies shall be destroyed by the strength of Christ. The Lord himself makes it his pattern in those victories he is to gain for his people. When he calls upon his arm to 'awake as in the ancient days,' when he 'cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over,' Isaiah 51:9-11, then 'the redeemed of the, Lord shall come with singing unto Sion,' the song of Moses, while they stand upon a sea of glass, a brittle, frail, and stormy world, Revelation 15:3. And our Redeemer makes this his pattern and rule when he comes to tread the wine-press in wrath, and make them drunk with his fury, that then he would 'remember the days of old, Moses and his people, when he divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name,' Isaiah 63:1-2, Isaiah 63:11, that his power may be as glorious in the latter as it was in the former, and all deliverances of the church from the beginning to the end be knit together to be an everlasting matter of praise to his name. This historical narration is to have a more universal accomplishment; the deliverance from Egypt is promised to be fulfilled a second time, and God would act the same part over again, as also their deliverance from Og king of Bashan, after the ascension of Christ: Ps. 6:22, "The Lord said, 'I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring, my people from the depths of the sea.'" This is after he ascended, ver. 18; when he came to 'wound the head of his enemies,' ver. 21. So Isaiah 11:15, 'The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind

shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams; and make men go over dry-shod.' Nilus with its seven streams was the glory of Egypt, and Rome with its seven hills is the glory of the papacy, Revelation 17:9. So Zechariah 10:10, 'I will bring them again out of the land of Egypt, and they shall pass through the sea with affliction, and the depths of the river shall dry up.' Pharaoh and his army cannot revive and stand up in their former ranks, but there shall be deliverances with resemblances to that, when the enemies shall be as arrogant and furious as Pharaoh, and the church as dejected and straitened as Israel.

The text is a part of Moses his song; a carmen [Hebrew word], a song after victory, a panegyric; the praise of God, attended with dancing, at the sight of the Egyptian wrecks, Exodus 15:20.

It was then real; the Israelites then sang it.

It is typical ; the conquerors of antichrist shall again triumph in the same manner, Revelation 15:8.

It was an earnest of future deliverance to the Israelites. When God appeared for them in their first exit, he would not fail in that work which should conduce so much to his glory; it was a pledge that his purchased people should pass over, and be planted in the mountain of his inheritance, Exodus 15:16-17. There is in the words, A description of the enemy. His defeat. The enemy is introduced laying his counsel, and vaunting his resolution, by an elegant climax, and, orderly proceeding: 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied,' &c. They laid the foundation deep in counsel, built their resolves high in power, and then applaud themselves in their insolence.

I will pursue. Had he no rejections upon his former successful attempts to keep the Israelites in slavery? Or could he with any reason hope to reduce them with his baffled strength to that yoke which had been broken by a powerful arm? Had he not reason freshly to remember his own inability to remove one of the plagues sent upon them, to promote Israel's rescue? Was that high arm which brought them out of Egypt broken, God's weapons blunted, his magazine of plaguing ammunition wasted, and his strength too feeble to preserve those he had by a strong hand redeemed? These things be obvious to Pharaoh's thoughts. Yet, I will still pursue. How heady and rash are the church's enemies! Infatuation is the usher to destruction. When you find the church's enemies lose their wits, you may quickly expect they will lose their strength and lives.

I will divide the spoil. He promiseth them this victory before the conflict, encourages his soldiers with hopes of the prey, which was the recovery of their jewels, which the Israelites had borrowed by God's order, and the Egyptians had lent them by a secret impression, and the flocks and herds of the poor Israelites to boot.

How great is the pride of the church's enemies! They strut without thinking of a superior. power to curb them, and promise themselves the accomplishment of their designs, without fearing the check of Providence. Thus did Sisera's mother triumph in a presumptuous hope before a victory, Judges 5:30, and sing Te Deum before a conquest. Ventosa et insolens natio, is the title Pliny gives the Egyptian nation.

My lust shall be satisfied upon them. [Hebrew phrase], my soul shall be satisfied. How revengefully do they express themselves! They apprehend themselves cheated of their jewels by the Israelites:

such an apprehension would increase rage and animosity.

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy, [Hebrew word], my hand shall disinherit them. I will reduce them like a company of fearful fugitives, by brandishing a drawn sword, that they shall quickly return to their former bondage, and become the perpetual inheritance of the Egyptians. How secure are the church's enemies! The sight of a glittering sword, and an edict for a return, they thought, would quell their spirits. It is true they had to deal with an unarmed people, unprovided for defence, whose late slavery had rendered them unfit for military exercises, an unequal match for a numerous and disciplined army. But what if they were? Had they not the same power to protect them in their march, which had brought them out of their bondage? This the enemies never reflected on. Pride and security are always twins.

In Exodus 15:10 you, have their defeat. The sea quenched the fire of their rage, and laid flat the towers of their proud confidence. God blows with his wind, the strong east wind, Exodus 14:21, a strength added to its natural fierceness, which made the meeting of the floods more swift and fierce. Some think thunders and lightnings burst out of the pillar of fire in the cloud, when 'God looked upon them,' Exodus 14:24.

They 'sank like lead,' suddenly, easily, irrecoverably; they were lashed before, now executed. Other plagues had a mixture of patience, this is a pure cup of the indignation of God.

The defeat is described, By the author: 'Thou didst blow.'

Instrument: 'Thy wind, the sea;' wind and the sea conspire together against the enemies, when God orders them.

Victory, or success of this order: 'The sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.'

General observations.

1. The greatest idolaters are the fiercest enemies against the church of God. It is the Egyptian is the enemy. No nation had more and more sordid idols. The Persians adored the sun, the greatest benefactor to the world, in the rank of inanimate creatures; other nations several stars, but none did so much abuse the reason of man as that accursed nation. Onions, garlic, cats, oxen, flies, and crocodiles; those dunghill creatures were their adored deities. And how much better adoration is the swaddling cloths [cloths] of our Saviour, or the straw which was in the manger, or the tail of the ass he rode upon, and so many splinters of the cross, which, if put together, would make a Colossus! For this, among the rest, may the church professing such worship be called spiritual Egypt.

2. The church's enemies are not for her correction, but her destruction: 'I will pursue; my hand shall destroy them.' They breathe out nothing but slaughters; 'My hand shall destroy them;' down with it, down with it even to the ground, and 'men are famous as they can lift up axes upon the thick trees,' Psalms 74:5.

3. How desperate are sometimes the straits of God's Israel in the eye of man! How low their spirits before deliverance! They here behold. a deep sea before them and a raging enemy behind them; bear a confused noise of women and children in the midst of them; feel the pantings of their own hearts, and perhaps see a consternation in the faces of their governors; they see themselves

disarmed of weapons, lying almost at the mercy of an oppressor with a well-furnished army; they repent of what God had done for them, and are more ambitious of slavery than liberty; quarrel with Moses, (and, as one of their historians saith, were about to stone him), Exodus 14:10-12. Without doubt they then thought him a liar, and it is likely had no more honorable thoughts at that time of God; for when they saw the happy success in the miraculous overthrow of the Egyptians, then 'they believed God and his servant Moses,' Exodus 14:31, as if they gave credit to neither of them before. They had a pillar of fire and a cloud, the chariot of God, a greater argument to establish them than the preparation of their enemies to terrify them. But what a faithless creature is man under the visible guard of heaven, and so far naturally from living by faith that he will hardly draw establishments from sense!

4. God orders the lusts of men for his own praise. He had forced Pharaoh to let the people go; he had stopped the streams of his fury; when he removes his hand and pulls up the dam, Pharaoh returns to his former temper with more violence, thereby giving occasion for God's glory in his own destruction. He serves himself of the desperate malice of his enemies, to make his wisdom and other attributes more triumphant.

5. The nearer the deliverance of the church is, the fiercer are God's judgments on the enemies of it, and the higher the enemies' rage. The former plagues were but small gashes in the Egyptian state; but when the time approached of the Israelites' perfect deliverance, then the firstborn in every house, the delight and strength of the parents, is cut off; and at the completing of it, the glory, power, and strength of Egypt buried in the sea. The fuller beams of mercy on the one are attended with more scorching darts of judgment on the other.

6. All creatures are absolutely under the sovereignty of God, and are acted by his power in all their services. 'Thy wind': all are subject to his conduct, and are the guardians of his people, and the conquerors of his enemies. How easy is it for the arm of Omnipotency to demolish the strongest preparations against his Israel, and with a blast reduce their power to nothing! The sea suffers violence to preserve his people, and the liquid element seems transformed into a wall of brass. God can make the meanest creatures ministers of his judgments, raise troops of flies to rout the Roman army, as it was in Trajan's siege of the Agarenes.

7. By the same means God saves his people, whereby he destroys his enemies: the one sank, the other passed thorough. That which makes one balance sink, makes the other rise the higher. The Red Sea was the guardian of Israel and the executioner of Egypt, the Israelites' gallery to Canaan and the Egyptians' grave. The cloud that led the Israelites through the Red Sea blinded the Egyptians; the waters that were fifteen cubits high above the mountains kept the ark from dashing against them, whereby Noah might be endangered, and drowned the enemies, though never so high according to human stature.

8. The strength and glory of a people is more wasted by opposing the interests of the church than in conflicts with any other enemy. Had the Egyptian arms been turned against any other enemy, they might have prospered, or at least retired with a more partial defeat, or saved their lives though under chains; but when they would prepare them against God's Israel, they meet with a total defeat where they expected victory, and find their graves where Israel found their bulwarks: the choicest of their youth, the flower of their nobility, the strongest of their chariots and horses, at one blow overthrown by God.

9. We may take notice of the folly of the church's enemies. Former plagues might have warned them of the power of God, they had but burned their own fingers by pinching her, yet they would set their force against almighty power, that so often had worsted them; it is as if men would pull down a steeple with a string.

But the observations I shall treat of are,

1. When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury and resolution, and the church in the greatest extremity and dejection, then is the fittest time for God to work her deliverance fully and perfectly. When the enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,' &c. then 'God blowed with his wind,' then 'they sank.'

2. God is the Author of all the deliverances of the church, whosoever are the instruments. 'Thou didst blow with thy wind; who its like unto the Lord among the gods?'

1. For the first, When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury, &c. Great resolutions against God meet with great disappointments. The church's straits are the enemies' hopes, but God's opportunity. When their fury is highest, God's love is nearest.

There are four seasons on the part of the enemy God takes hold of.

(1.) Flourishing prosperity. Here is Pharaoh in the head of a gallant army, the Israelites in a pound, at his mercy. The Egyptians' prosperity is a forerunner of their destruction, the adversity of the other of their salvation. Haman is in the top of his favour when the Jews are marked out for slaughter, and then himself is marked out for ruin. Prosperity, like rain, makes the weeds of pride and atheism to grow up, and the -n they are fit matter for God's sickle to cut down. When 'the clusters of the vine of the earth are ripe,' full of an outward glory and sweetness, then 'the angel thrusts in his sharp sickle,' Revelation 14:18. There is an [Hebrew word] set them. When 'the great city is clothed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious; stones,' Revelation 18:16, and come to the highest point of its glory and prosperity, then shall God thicken the clouds of his vengeance, and bring their riches to nought in one hour.

(2.) Swelling pride: 'I will pursue,' &c. Pride is provoking, because it is self-deifying, and sets up the creature as God's mate. God stands upon his honour, and loves to attack those that would equal themselves with him. Pride sunk the glory of the fallen angels into, misery, and so it will that of the serpent's seed. This is the immediate forerunner of destruction, Proverbs 16:18. Men have their hairy scalp, the prime of their strength, and pride of their hearts, when God wounds them, Psalms 68:21. Egypt was become Rahab, pride itself, as the word signifies, and so God called it by that name, Isaiah 51:9. When Egypt mounted to Rahab, to the top of pride,. then God cut it. When the dragon bristled, and erected his stately head to seize upon the prey, then God wounded him, put an end to Egypt's pride and the Israelites' fear. He loves to beat down the pride of the one, and raise up the lowliness of the other. When Herod will assume the title of a god, given him by that acclamations of the people, an angel shall immediately, make him a banquet for worms, Acts 11:22, Acts 11:28. When Sennacherib had prospered in his conquest of Judea, had taken many strong towns, closely beleaguered Jerusalem, thundered out blasphemies against God, and threatenings against his people, then comes an angel, makes an horrible slaughter in a night, sends him back to his own country, where, after the loss of his army, he lost his life by the hands of his own children. A greater pride cannot be expressed than what the apostle predicts of the man

of sin, and that hath been extant for some time in the world : 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 'Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,' in additions to the word, clipping the institutions of God, and adding new, and canonizing new mediators of intercession; who sits in the temple of God in a profession of Christianity, shewing himself that he is God, assuming the name of God and the title of God in being called most holy. And perhaps it will yet amount to a higher step than it hath yet done before he be consumed by the brightness of the Lord's coming, since all that yet lets and hinders is not taken out of the way. The higher the pride, the nearer the fall. When Goliath shall, defy the God of Israel, a stone from a sling, thrown by the hand of David, our great David the antitype, shall lay him vomiting out his soul and blasphemies on the earth. We are many times more beholding to the enemies' insolence than our own innocence: Deuteronomy 32:27, 'Were it not that God feared the wrath of, the enemy,' i.e. in their pride, lest 'their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and say, Our hand is high,' a sinful Israel should not have so many preservations. When they will 'ascend into heaven, and exalt their throne above the stars of God;' when they will ascend above the heights of the clouds, and be like the Most High; then shall they be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit," Isaiah 1:1-15. The highest towers are the fairest marks for thunder, and the readiest tinder for the lightning of heaven.. When Tyrus had set her heart as the heart of God, then would God defile her 'brightness, and make her die the death of them that are slain in the midst of the sea, Ezekiel 28:6-8.

(3.) Eager malice. Nothing would satisfy the Egyptians here but the blood of the Israelites. 'My hand shall, destroy them ;' they were under a cruel bondage, attended with anguish of spirit, before God began their rescue. The serpent's seed I have the same principles of craft and malice sown in their nature, that are resident in his; ever since the beginning, he endeavoured to shape men. into the same form and temper with himself ; their rage would raze out the very foundation of Israel, and not suffer the name to be had any more in remembrance,' Psalms 83:7 4. They love. to be drunk with the blood of the saints, and are no more satisfied with blood than the grave with carcases; they repair their arrows, and watch for an opportunity to discharge them, and never want poison but opportunity. This is God's time to deliver. When Pharaoh would pollute the land with the blood of the Hebrew males,. and ordain them to be dragged from the womb to the slaughter, then God raises up himself to attempt the rescue of Israel; yet he bears with his insolence, punisheth him, but not destroys him. But when he would be still stiff against a sense of the multitude of plagues, and a greater mercy of patience in them; when he would arm for the field against that God the smart of whose force he had felt, and resolves to destroy or bring back the Israelites upon the point of his sword, God would then bear no longer, but make the water his sepulchre. When Haman designs the ruin of the Jews, procures the king's commission, sends despatches to all the governors of the provinces, sets up a gibbet for Mordecai, and wants nothing but an opportunity to request the execution, he tumbles down to exchange his prince's favours for an exaltation. on the gallows, Esther 6:4, Esther 7:10. When the serpent increased his malicious cruelty, and cast out a flood against the church, God makes the earth, the carnal world, to give her assistance, and repel the force that Satan used against her: Revelation 12:5, Revelation 12:16, 'The earth helped the woman.' When I multitudes shall gather together in the valley of decision, 'then shall I the Lord roar out of Sion, and be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel,' Joel 3:14, Joel 3:16. And when spiritual Egypt shall make a war against Christ, who sits upon the white horse, and combine all their force for the destruction of his people, then shall the beast and the false prophet be taken and brought to their final ruin, and their force be broken in a lake of fire, as

that of Egypt was in a sea of water, Revelation 19:19, 20. The time of their greatest fierceness shall be the time of Christ's fury; he will strike them sorest when he finds them cruellest; their rage shall rouse up his revenge. When the men of Sodom, to which the antichristian state is likened, shall be resolutely bent to wickedness, they shall be struck with blindness, and that blindness succeeded by destructions; then will God set bounds to the outrageous waves, and snatch the prey out of the teeth of the lions.

(4.) Confident security. 'I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them.' God lets the enemy 'come in like a flood' and torrent, with a confidence to carry all before him, before he 'lifts up a standard against him,' Isaiah 59:19. Then shall the Spirit of the Lord stir up himself gloriously in the principles and actions of his people, and the Redeemer shall come to Sion. God will get his force against their confidence, and break their impetuosity by his own power. When the enemies of the church think they have entangled it in such a snare, reduced it to so low a condition as to be secure of her ruin with a blast and puff, then God will 'arise and set her in safety from them that puff at her,' Psalms 12:5. This will be the case of Babylon, when she shall say, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,' then 'shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine,' for then God will stir up his strength to judge her, Revelation 18:7. It is in the time of the antichristian polity, and mutual congratulations with the highest security for their happy success triumphing over the dead bodies of the witnesses, that they shall stand again upon their feet (the same persons, if politically dead, others witnessing the same doctrine, if they were corporeally dead), and damp all their mirth and triumph, and turn their security into fears; then shall glory be given to the God of heaven, and the ark of his testament be seen in his temple, and the power of the Lord be magnified, Revelation 11:10-11. When they shall all be gathered together to the battle of the great day of the Lord, the place is called Armageddon, Revelation 16:14, Revelation 16:16, &c., [Hebrew word] and [Hebrew word]. A cursed troop, an army under God's anathema when they have the greatest confidence. When Jerusalem shall be penned up by a siege, it shall be 'a cup of trembling in the hands of her enemies,' Zechariah 12:2. Fear shall seize upon them in the midst of their confidence. The sun was risen upon Sodom just before the devouring shower of fire and brimstone. With what derision would they have entertained any messenger, that should have assured them of such a shower in so clear a day! No doubt but the Egyptian horses went prancing into the sea, and their riders confident of catching their prey; when they saw the waters congealed, they had not the least suspicion but that the division of the sea as made in their favour, till the chariot wheels were taken off, and the waters ready to roll upon them, Exodus 14:23, Exodus 14:25.

2. As something on the part of the church's enemies forwards the deliverance, so there is some regard God hath to the church's straits: cum duplicantur lateres, venit Moses. It is God's usual method to let the church be in great distress before he commands deliverance. The distress of the church was great in the concern of this day, though it was not sensible, the deliverance being known near as soon as the danger.

The church is to be in the depths of the sea before she be fully delivered, Psalms 68:22. The Jews were to pass through the sea with affliction before the pride of Assyria should be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt; depart away; after that, he would strengthen them in the Lord, and they should walk up and down in his name, Zechariah 10:11-12. The sharpest pangs precede deliverance; it was so when Christ came in the flesh, it will be so at every new rising of Christ in his

Spirit. When things were at a low ebb; when the sun set in the greatest darkness of error, idolatry, and profaneness; when the Jews, the only spot of ground God had, was as a wilderness, almost barren of any grace; when the great predictions of the prophets were unminded, and less understood; when Urim and Thummim had ceased, and the spirit of prophecy was shut up : then Christ comes in the fulness of time to work an universal relief for mankind. When the day of vengeance is in the heart of the Redeemer, he shall look and find none to help, he shall wonder to find none to uphold; therefore his own arm shall bring salvation, Isaiah 63:5.

This has always been God's method. With his Son, the powers of darkness had their hour, and triumphed when they had laid him in the grave, before he was raised by the glory of his Father. The witnesses must be killed by the hand of their enemies, before they stand upon their feet, and ascend up into heaven, in the sight of their adversaries, Revelation 11:7. When the church shall walk in darkness, 'grope for the wall like the blind, mourn like doves, look for salvation, and it shall seem far off,' then will the Lord 'put on a helmet of salvation on his head, and the garments of vengeance for clothing, and be clad with zeal as a cloak,' Isaiah 59:9-11, Isaiah 59:17. The break of day is ushered in by a thicker darkness than that which clouded the night before. The sharpest persecution that ever the church had, was in the time of Diocletian, a little before Christianity was to rule his empire in the exaltation of Constantine. Abraham was in hardship, out of his country, when he received the promises of the Messiah; and Israel in the wilderness, when the oracles of God were delivered to them. Confusion of the church precedes always the communication of light.

The reasons of the doctrine are these.

1. This makes for God's glory. The creature cannot in this condition challenge any share in the honour of the deliverance, or pare off so much as a splinter of his glory. Had the Israelites been armed, and drawn into a strong battalion, and so defeated the Egyptian army, the victory would rather have been challenged by them than ascribed to God; but neither the strength of their multitude nor the wisdom of their guides were able to protect them. Counsel failed, and heads were feeble. Then did God get himself a name, when they were upon the point of a remediless ruin. It was manifest the name of the Lord got David the victory, since he encountered unarmed with Goliath, who could have crushed him like a fly had he been in his fingers.

The time of the church's depression is the time of God's exaltation. He waits for the extremity to lift up himself. When paleness is upon the face of his people, when the cedars of Lebanon hang their heads, when the church's beauty seems a lamentable deformity, and Sharon is like a wilderness, then will God arise, Isaiah 33:9-10. God never builds up Sion, but he ordains all things in a method for his appearance in the greatest glory: Psalms 102:16, 'When the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in his glory,' that is, when the church is destitute, Psalms 102:17.

- (1.) God exalts his power. His right hand then becomes 'glorious in power,' Exodus 15:6. He loves to appear in his dress as a Creator when there is no fitness in the subject to answer his end but what he bestows upon it. When Jerusalem becomes 'a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' it is an act of creating power: Isaiah 65:18, 'For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,' When the creature can give them not the least assistance, then will they be sensible of God's unbounded sufficiency, and their own necessary dependence. God never had too little help from his creature in a deliverance; he hath sometimes complained of too much, and disbanded some of the church's forces, as in the case of Gideon, Judges 7:1-25. As Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, so

doth God's power most visibly in the midst of distresses. A physician's skill is most conspicuous when the disease is most dangerous and most complicated, and nature at the lowest ebb. It is more glory to God to quench the fire in its fullest rage than to extinguish it in its first smoke and sparkles. God loves the fairest mark to shoot at, and will rather down with Goliath than with the ordinary Philistines, grapple with the great rather than with a light danger, that the Lord may appear to be 'a man of war,' Exodus 15:3. As God shews his mercy in his people's redemption, he will shew his strength in their conduct, Exodus 15:13. He that made this deliverance a standing monument of his power, entitles himself by it, Isaiah 43:16, 'Thus saith the Lord, which makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.'

(2.) His kindness to, and care of .his people. When the straits are remediless, and the counsels whereby the projects are laid not to be defeated by human skill; when God seems to have forgot, then in a seasonable deliverance he shows himself the careful watchman of Israel. When the ship is in a raging storm, and Christ asleep, he will leave his own ease to keep his word, and content his people. When the church thinks God hath forgotten his mercies, and they have forgotten their dependence; when the misery is so pressing that there is no faith of a deliverance left: then Christ comes, when faith is scarcely to be found upon the earth, Luke 18:8, to exalt his mercy in the depths of their misery, and work terrible. things they looked not for, Isaiah 64:8. The Israelites would not have understood God's care in their protection without this or the like strait. God had a new opportunity to shew his watchfulness over them, to turn the cloud, which went before them as their guide, behind them for their defence, Exodus 14:19. The scoffs of the enemy at the church's misery are God's motive to help her: 'I Will restore health to thee, because they called thee an outcast,' Jeremiah 30:17. It is in straits we see God's salvation, not man's: Exodus 14:13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.'

(3.) His justice. He lets the church be encompassed with miseries, and the enemies in a combination against her, that he may overthrow them at once. God makes a quicker dispatch with the Egyptians when they were united than when they had assaulted Israel with a smaller body. His righteousness gets glory at one blow, when he makes them to lie down together, Isaiah 43:17. His justice is unblemished in striking when their wickedness is visibly ripe; the equity of it must needs be subscribed, that when the enemy's malice is greatest, when they have no mixture of compassion, it is the clearest righteousness to crush them without any mixture of mercy. God brings things to that pass that he may honour both his justice and mercy in the highest; that the black horses and the white horses may march firm together, Zechariah 6:6; the black horses that brought death and judgment northward to Babylon, where the church was captive; the white horses that followed them, and brought deliverance to his people: the one to be instruments of his judgments, the other of his mercies. God loves to glorify those two attributes together, he did so in the redemption of mankind by the death of his Son, and he doth so in the deliverance of his church. There is a conformity of the church to Christ in her distress, that there may be a conformity of God's glory in temporal to his glory in eternal salvation. God singles out a full crop to be an harvest for both. A wicked man is said to be 'waited for' by the sword, Job 15:22. God attends the best season for revenge, when mercy to the one shall appear most glorious, and vengeance on his enemies most equitable, and all disputes against his proceedings be silenced.

2.. It makes to the church's advantage. God had a work to do upon mount Sion and on Jerusalem, before he would 'punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks,'

Isaiah 10:12. His end shall be attained in the correction of his church, before his glory shall be exalted in the destruction of her enemies. There are enemies in the hearts of his people to be conquered by his grace, before the enemies to her peace and prosperity shall be defeated by his power. He will let them be in the fire till, like gold, they may have a purer honour in a brighter lustre.

(1.) Humiliation is gained hereby. God would not presently raze out the Canaanites, lest the wild beasts should increase upon them, Deuteronomy 7:22. Too quick deliverances may be occasions to multiply the wild beasts of pride, security, and wantonness in the heart; humility would have but little footing. There is need of a sharp winter to destroy the vermin before we can expect a fruitful spring. Without humiliation, the church knows not how to receive nor how to improve any mercy. The enemies hasten their own ruin by increasing the measure of their sins, and Israel's deliverance by being instruments to humble their hearts. The sooner the plaster hath drawn out the corrupt matter, the sooner it is cast into the fire. God hereby prevents the growth of weeds in that ground he intends to enrich with new mercies.

(2.) A spirit of prayer is excited. Slight troubles make but drooping prayers; great straits make it gash out, as the more the bladder is squeezed the higher the water springs. We hear not of the Israelites crying to the Lord after their coming out of Egypt, till they had a sight of the formidable army: Exodus 14:10, 'They were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.' Prayer gains mercies, but scarce springs up free without sense of distress

We then have recourse to God's power, whereby he is able to relieve us, when we are sensible of our own weakness, whereby we are unable to relieve ourselves. Men will scarce seek to God, or trust him, while any creature, though but a reed, remains for their support; they are destitute before they pray, or believe God regards their prayers: Psalms 102:17, 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' Distress causes importunity, and God will do much for importunity's sake, Luke 11:8.

(3.) Discovery of sincerity. Hereby God discovers who are his people, and who are not; who are in the highest form of Christianity, and who are not in the school, or at least but in the lowest form. He separates the good corn from the useless chaff. No question but there were some among the Israelites that, in this extremity, acted faith upon the remembrance of the wonders God had wrought for them in Egypt before their departure. Certainly they did not all murmur against Moses. Were there no Calebs and Joshuas that followed God fully in a way of faith and submission? Their faith and courage had not been conspicuous without this extremity. Thunderings and lightnings, and terrible things in righteousness, are to prove us, whether the fear of God be before our faces that we sin not, Exodus 20:18, Exodus 20:20. God separates the dross. You never know a new building without pulling down, to separate the rubbish and rotten rafters from the sound materials. Abraham was put upon hard work, the imbruing his hands in the blood of his only son, to prove his integrity. When God sees his sincerity, he diverts the blow; not only delivers him from his grief, his son from his danger, but renews the promise of the Messiah to him as a reward. Deliverance then comes when God hath separated the corn from the stubble.

(4.) A standing encouragement for future faith. When the straits are greatest from whence God delivers us, there is a stronger foundation for a future trust. When the distress is inconsiderable, faith afterwards will be more feeble. A large experience heartens and strengthens faith in the

promise. When gloomy clouds are blown over, the brighter and thinner will not be much feared. When we see the sun melt the thickest over our heads, we shall not doubt its force to dissolve the lesser vapours which may afterwards assemble. When the ship hath escaped a raging storm, we shall not doubt it in a less. God often pits them in mind of their deliverance in the Red Sea, to strengthen their faith and dependence on him. It must needs be an establishment to faith, for deliverances from great straits are some kind of obligation on the honour of God. When the Israelites had provoked God by murmuring, and wished they had died in Egypt, and not in the wilderness, Moses intercedes, with this argument, The Egyptians shall hear of it, from whom God brought up Israel with a strong hand; and it would disparage God's power and tax him with an inability to bring his people into the land he intended. Then God grants their pardon, Numbers 14:13-15.

(5.) Engagement to future obedience. It is upon this account God prefaceth the law with his mercy in delivering them out of Egypt. The strongest vows are made in the greatest straits. Many obligations there are when the extremity forces us to cry. When we are in the jaws of death, God may have his terms of us; when we are at some distance, we will have our own. The lower a person is, the more readily will he bend to any condition; hope of deliverance will make him stoop. And when God snatches his people as firebrands out of the fire, they are more obliged to him from common ingenuity and must be more ashamed of breaking their vows than if their mercies were of a great alloy. If common patience leads to repentance, a rescue from an amazing danger is a stronger cord to draw us to repentance and obedience. And it is certain that when the church in sincerity makes vows to God, it will not be long before God puts her into a condition to pay them, and furnish her with incentives to a holy ingenuity.

(6.) The greater thankfulness. The more straitened, the greater thankfulness for enlargements As we hear not of the Israelites' prayers, after they came out of Egypt, till they were in the pound, so we read of none of their songs, though they had matter enough for them, in their first departure, till God had dashed in pieces the enemy, and, 'thrown the horse and the rider into the sea.' Then, and not till then, had they a deep sense, how 'glorious God was in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,' Exodus 15:11. Great mercies unveil God's face more to the view of his people. When Israel inherits great salvation then the Lord shall inherit the praise of Israel. When we have less mercies, we take little notice of the author. God hears the language of but one of our bones; but when he 'delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, and spoils him, then all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?'

(7.) To prevent future mischief to the church. The destruction of the greatest enemies is a disarming the less. God, by this destruction, struck a terror into those nations, upon whose confines Israel was to march into Canaan, who, without so remarkable a rebuke of providence, would have been desirous to finger some of their prey. Then 'trembling took hold of the mighty men of Moab. All the inhabitants of Canaan did melt away; fear and dread fell upon them by the greatness of the arm of God, that they should be as still as a stone, till they passed over the river,' Exodus 15:15-16. Their present deliverance was a passport for their future security in their journey; and no one was troubled them in the way but those upon whom God had a mind to show his power.

How doth God deliver when the season is thus?

1. Suddenly. They sank like lead in the mighty waters, which quickly reaches the bottom. Judgment comes like lightning. Death. and hell are said to 'ride upon horses,' Revelation 6:8. They are too swift for God's enemies, and will easily win the race of them. Destruction comes, 'as travail upon a woman with child,' 1 Thessalonians 5:3. How suddenly did God turn the Assyrian camp into an Aceldama [place of blood], overthrow a powerful army, and make their tents their tombs in the space of a night! He will dash them 'in pieces like a potter's vessel,' Psalms 2:9, all in bits at a stroke. He comes suddenly; he 'rides upon a cherub,' Psalms 18:10. But because the motion of an angel is not so intelligible, he adds another metaphor from the nimblest of sensible things; 'he flies upon the wings of the wind,' to assist his people in extremity. The enemy comes like a 'whirlwind,' ['They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me.' Habakkuk 3:14] and God comes forth as a 'whirlwind of fury' Jeremiah 30:23. The whirlwind of his judgments shall be as quick as the whirlwind of their malice; a continual Whirlwind, when the other is vanishing;.. it 'shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked,' when the other shall be as fruitless as a snowball against a wall of brass. The enemy beholds him not till he be upon him; for the 'clouds are as dust under his feet,' Nahum 1:8, and obscure his appearance, as the raising the dust doth the march, of a troop. He comes unawares upon them. in a cloud. The execution is sudden. They shall be 'cut down as grass,' Psalms 37:2, which this moment faceth the Sun, triumphing in its natural bravery, and the next moment is cut off from its root with one shave of a scythe. He quencheth them as tow [a wick] is quenched in water, Isaiah 43:17, as the snuff of a candle is quenched by being bruised by the fingers. He cuts them off as foam, the excrement of the water, Hosea 10:7, which bursts in pieces like a bubble, on the sudden. Vengeance comes upon Tyre and Sidon swiftly and speedily, Joel 3:4. Tyre comes of [Hebrew word] which signifies to afflict, to straiten. Sidon of [Hebrew word]; the word signifies to pursue. All persecutors are threatened in Tyre and Sidon with a swift destruction. God delays the time to try the faith and patience of his people, to make the expected deliverance more sweet and welcome, and mercy more singular. He may have some of the seed of Christ in the loins of some of his enemies. But when he doth draw his sword, he gives a sudden blow before the enemy fears it, or his people expect it. The Jews in Babylon, when the chains of their captivity were unloosed, were like those that dream, they could scarce believe they were freed when the enemy felt himself punished. In all other plagues, God sent Moses as an herald, with warning to Pharaoh; but in this God surprised him, and hurried him to destruction, without giving him any caution. Like 'chaff that the tempest carrieth away, and is seen no more,' Job 21:18 so shall the plagues of spiritual Egypt 'come in one day,' Revelation 18:8; yea, 'in one hour,' Revelation 18:17. And the church shall be like a lily, which, by the assistance of the dew, flourisheth in the morning, when over night it looked as if it were withered.

2. Magnificently. Sometimes in deliverance God puts the frame of nature in confusion. 'He melts the mountains, cleaves the valleys, as wax before the fire, and as waters poured down a steep place,' Micah 1:4, i.e. he wastes the strength and riches of his enemies when he comes to judge. When he appears in the generation of. the righteous, he shall appear in such glory, as to make the adversaries in great fear, and strike a terror into them, Psalms 14:5. God will perform it in a prodigious and unusual way. God might have taken off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots before they had entered the gap of the sea, and hindered them from approaching so near his beloved people; he might have afflicted their hands with the palsy, and rendered them incapable to manage their weapons; or might have sent a spirit of emulation among them, and made them sheathe their swords in one another's bowels. But though this had secured his people, it would not

have rendered his operation so illustrious, as the making that which was a means of his people's security to be his enemies' destruction, and the waters at once indulgent to the Israelites, and severe to the Egyptians. He magnifies his judgments and mercies by one and the same yoke, and drowns the enemies in the sea, whereby he delivers the Israelites. So be preserved Daniel in the midst of those lions which devoured his accusers. The more contrary things are to an eye of reason, the fitter subjects they are for the exaltation of God. As Christ, the head, so the church, the body, is raised out of the grave by the glory of God the Father, Romans 6:4. His right hand shall find his enemies, Psalms 45:8; his right hand shall teach him terrible things Psalms 45:4. Then shall he come with a shout, as one refreshed with wine, recruited with new spirits, and risen from sleep, Psalms 78:65. He calls upon all creatures to be assistant to Cyrus in the design of his people's deliverance, Isaiah 45:8. He will perfect it by a way of creation, ('I have created righteousness' to deliverance) with the manifestation of his, and he makes things serve against their natural order appointed by God. Thus, when God shall appear for the final overthrow of spiritual Egypt, he shall come with voices, thunders, and lightnings, an earthquake out of the temple, and appear as magnificently in the garb of a judge as he did on Sinai in that of a lawgiver, Revelation 16:19, and make the ten horns, which were the support of the beast, to be the instruments of her desolation, Revelation 17:16.

3. Severely. They sank to the bottom like lead in the mighty waters. God sends out the greatest judgments against those that deal sharply with his people, greater than against any other part of the world, Zechariah 6:6. The black horses, the instrument of the execution of his anger, were sent towards Babylon, where his people were in captivity; but the bay horses, of a mixed colour, noting a mixture of mercy and judgments, are sent towards other parts of the world, to walk, not to run, signifying the patience of God to those parts which had not yet oppressed his people. God deals not so smartly with those, as with them that are enemies to Israel. In such concerns he answers his people 'by terrible things in righteousness.' When he appears as a God of salvation to his people, he appears terrible to his righteousness to his enemies: Psalms 65:5, 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.' His judgments shall be as terrible as they are righteous. The executioners of his vengeance ride upon horses, to show their readiness to any warlike engagement; upon red horses, of a bloody colour to shew the severity of their commission against the enemies of God, Zechariah 1:8. He will pay all arrears together, that they shall be forced to say, God is true to the word of his threatening, as well as that of his promise; as the Amalekites, in Samuel's time, paid the scores of their ancestors in the time of the Israelites' travel through the wilderness: 1 Samuel 15:2, 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for them in the way when they came up from Egypt. So when God reckons with Babylon for all the blood of the saints and prophets, —Revelation 18:20, 'The blood of all the prophets and saints that were slain upon the earth, shall be found upon her skirts, and avenged on her,' —he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; all that she hath done shall come into his remembrance, Revelation 16:19. And how severe it shall be is expressed, Revelation 14:19-20; she shall be cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God, as grapes braised with the greatest strength, and crushed in pieces, both skin and stones. And to express it more sensibly to our understandings, he speaks of the flowing of the 'blood out of the wine-press into the horses' bridles,' by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs, two hundred miles; not that we should understand it literally, but the Spirit of God is so particular in describing the height of the deluge of blood to the bridles of the horses, the length of the flood to the space of two hundred

miles, to set before our apprehension the severity of the wrath that shall be poured out upon them. And as God never repented of his judgments upon Egypt, so never will he of those which are to come upon Babylon.

4. Universally, and therefore severely. 'The horse and the rider did God cast into the sea ;' the chariots, the host, and the chosen captains were drowned there, Exodus 15:1, Exodus 15:4. The waters covered the enemy, there was not one of them left, Psalms 60:11, Exodus 14:28. Not a messenger to carry back the news; their floating bodies 'and wrecks were the first that gave notice of the defeat to their remaining countrymen. God throws off all tenderness, his bowels are silent, he strikes like a wrathful enemy, lanceth [cuts] not like a tender chirurgeon [surgeon]; so shall it be with the partners of their sins, every man that worships the beast and his image, shall drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and whoever receiveth the mark of his name, Revelation 14:9-11. The sun, the political power that defends it, shall be darkened; the rivers, whereby their traffic and riches come into them, shall be dried up; all that have any dependence on them, recourse to them, stand in the defence of the power of Egypt, shall fall under the indignation of God.

5. Totally, irrecoverably. They sank as lead. God will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up a second time, Nahum 1:9-10. He overtakes them when they are drunk in the height of their pleasure, while they are making their confederacies against the church, while they are folden [folded] together like thorns, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dry. [Hebrew phrase]: Luke 18:7, 'He will avenge his own; he will avenge them speedily;' he will act so as if wrath were his only and proper work; he will do it to purpose, and perfectly. The Egyptian carcasses lay as trophies of the victory, Exod. 14:80. Their former plagues had something of patience; punishment was inflicted, but life preserved ; judgments sent, but, upon promise of reformation, quite removed. Now patience folds her hands, and stands spectator, while justice opens hers, and becomes a sole actor; mercy runs on the side of Israel, and wrath marcheth without any impediment against the Egyptians. As they like lead, so irrecoverably shall Babylon fall like a millstone in the depths of the sea, and shall be found no more at all; all her mirth and jollity shall for ever cease, Revelation 18:21-23. When things fall to the bottom of the sea, they are entombed there for ever; no skill can restore them to their former station ; when judgment turneth the key, and locks them in, there is no more opening the door.

6. And all this justly. Pharaoh had commanded that the Hebrew male children should be exposed to the mercy of the river, to find their death in the water as soon as they had breathed in the air, Exodus 1:22; and God makes them perish in that element to which they had adjudged the harmless infants. Now God pays the law-maker and his counsellors with the same coin, and makes the malefactors food for the inhabitants of the deep, who had before fed the crocodiles with the blood of the innocent. God shall reward Babylon as she hath rewarded his people, and double unto her the cup she hath filled for others, Revelation 18:6. Upon this account shall praise be given to God, that he hath given them blood to drink who have shed the blood of his saints and prophets, Revelation 16:6. 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus.' As she hath kindled fires to consume the witnesses of Christ, so God shall kindle a fire to consume her, Revelation 17:16 : 'She shall be utterly burnt with fire,' Rev. 18:8. Some think Rome will at length be consumed with fire from heaven. She is indeed spiritual Sodom, Revelation 11:8; and as she answers it in carnal and spiritual sins, she may partake of the same visible and spiritual judgments.

Whether the punishment, will be the same for kind I know, not, but certainly it will be such a kind of punishment whereby the judgments of God shall be read, both in proportion and kind of it, as a retaliation for her sins; and the Scripture speaks of fire coming down from God out of heaven upon the last enemies of the church that shall afflict the beloved city, alluding to the fire upon Sodom, and that which descended upon the persecutors of Elijah, Revelation 20:9.

7. Wisely. He cuts off the spirits of princes, as he took off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, Psalms 76:12, either by infatuating their counsels, or turning them as the rivers of waters into other channels. He stripped the Egyptians first of their wealth, and now spoils them of their strength; he kept a bridle upon the waters till the enemies were got into the midst of them, and then commands the sea to swallow them up in the depths of her bowels. When men lay their counsels deep, second them by an invincible strength, have almost brought them to their imagined period ready to bring forth, God disappoints their hopes, baffles their counsels, renders their projects frothy, raiseth a storm and blows the ship from its harbour, contrary to its intended course, and glorifies his wisdom by overthrowing their designs when they have brought them to a birth. He watches upon the evil, to divert it from the innocent object upon the malicious actor. As God watches for the fittest season to bring evil upon his people, Daniel 9:14, he will be as diligent to watch for the fittest opportunity to bring judgment on his enemies. God hath promised vengeance, but he hath reserved the knowledge of the 'due time' to himself, when he will make their foot to slide, Deuteronomy 32:35. Every mercy is then most seasonable. Usually God lets men bring the ball almost to the goal, and then kicks it from them, and them from it; and the wisdom of God hath been, and will be, glorious in the overthrow of the remaining enemies of the church, in making them which were horns to defend the beast to be carpenters to ruin him, Revelation 17:16.

Use 1. Of comfort. How dear is the church to God! When God was engaged in the Deliverance of his people, he sinks the strength of Egypt rather than one hair of the Israelites' heads should perish; they went safe over, while no man or horse of the enemies escaped. God gave Egypt for Israel's ransom, Isaiah 43:8; and the sea should have drowned the whole land, rather than the enemies have hurt his people. So did the contrivers of the powder plot come to destruction, when not one hair of a head was lost or one splinter of the place they intended was shaved off, by the prepared gunpowder site in heaven and laughs at the little petty designs of men, Psalms 2:4. God that is infinite to countermine them, infinitely powerful to defeat them, hath them in derision. Christ in glory mocks at the folly of earth-worms. The decree of God, which settles Christ a king, assures him a kingdom, and secures his people as it did his person, Psalms 2:7. God is 'a sun and shield,' Psalms 84:11 ; a shield to defend them, and a sun to extinguish the fire of the enemy's fury by shining upon it. God values no nation for the purity of his people. The Babylonians, a warlike nation, shall sink under the army of Cyrus, for the restoration of the captive Jews, Isaiah 43:4, 'I will give men for thee, and people for thy life.' He had, given Egypt for their ransom before, and Ethiopia and Seba in the time of Asa; and still, in after ages, God was of the same mind. God is as gracious to his people as terrible to his enemies; he is light to the one, when he is fire to the souls and bodies of the other, Isaiah 1:1. Christ still sits the Watchman of Ephraim with God, Hosea 9:8. He inspects his church, waits to bring the day of visitation upon his enemies. The covenant is of special force with God to move him to deliver his people: Isaiah 63:8, 'He said, Surely they are my people ; so he was their Saviour.' It seems to refer to the deliverance from Egypt. Shall I have so little regard to the league I have entered into with their fathers, as to be unconcerned in their

misery? There is hope in Israel till God forgets his covenant, and Christ strip himself of the name of a Saviour. Christ hath his priestly habit in heaven for his people, but eyes as flames of fire, quick and piercing, to consume the very hearts of his enemies, and feet like fine brass to trample upon them, Revelation 1:13-15. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to tear his enemies, as well as a Lamb slain, to expiate the sins of his people. He hath meekness for his friends, and terrible majesty for his enemies: Psalms 45:4, 'In thy majesty ride prosperously, because of meekness.' His kindness to big people makes him ride in majesty against the others. God will not be at rest till he hath revenged the cause of his people. Egypt will be drowned; Babylon will fall, Revelation 18:2. Christ can have no satisfaction without it. The executioners of his judgments in the north country, which was Babylon, lying northward. from Jerusalem, do quiet his Spirit, both as tending to the glory of his justice and the manifestation of his mercy to his people, Zechariah 6:8. Christ will, stain his garments in the blood of Edom and Bozrah, Isaiah 63:2, Isaiah 63:8 : Edom, the posterity of Esau; Bozrah, a city of Moab, types of the church's enemies. The Jewish doctors, by Edom in the prophets, understand Rome. Christ sits in heaven till his enemies be made his footstool. All the time of his sitting, God is acting and preparing things for a final issue. There is a strong cry of blood, and a file of prayers; the one will be revenged, and the other will be answered. Their own pride and cruelty witness against them. God hath a noise of petitions every day for a full end; a combined importunity will prevail. But clouds now hang over us; a gloomy storm seems to threaten us. God may indeed blow over the cloud. Our Saviour hath the command of the storms and winds in heaven, as well as he had upon the earth. The pillar of the cloud, which hath hitherto conducted us, may be our guardian in the rear to defend us. But yet, if he doth suffer them to prevail, they shall be but as whisks to brush off the dust, wisps of straw to cleanse the filthy pot. You know what is to be done with them when their work is done. Their language indeed is, Let Sion be defiled; but they understand not the counsel of the Lord, who in time will make the horn of Sion iron, and her hoofs brass, Micah 4:11. Though the beasts that ascend out of the bottomless pit do kill God's people, Revelation 11:7, yet, even in this victory of theirs, Satan himself shall be overcome. As when Christ was taken out from among the living by Satan's means, it was but for a time, but himself was cast out for ever, so, after this victory, the church shall overcome, Revelation 11:1-19, and God shall break the head of the leviathan in, the waters; and when he doth, by his wisdom, contrive ways of salvation, he will, by his power, execute them, and save in such a way as may most glorify himself, and witness that the salvation was the immediate work of his arm : Hosea 2:7, 'I will save them by the Lord their God.'

2. Remember former deliverances in time of straits. In our plenty of mercies, we should not be unmindful how near we were to the pit, nor let the impression of God's power, wisdom, and mercy wear off from our hearts. The Israelites were apt to forget the most signal mercies, though they had seen them, and had more sensibly tasted the sweetness of them than their posterity. God, therefore, often puts them in mind of them; the Lord that brought them out of the land of Egypt; out of the iron furnace, Deuteronomy 4:20 : Hosea 12:9, 'I the Lord your God from the land of Egypt.' It was the more fit to be remembered by them, because many of them were fitter subjects for God's wrath with the Egyptians than for his delivering kindness, since she committed whoredoms in Egypt in her youth, i.e. had been guilty of the Egyptian idolatry, Ezekiel 23:3. Unmindfulness of former experiences may make you hopeless of future deliverances., The remembrance of former mercies is a ground of confidence in God for the like mercies for the future. God recalls to his people's minds, in their afflictions, the memorable defeat of the Moabites by his sole power, in the

time of Jehoshaphat's reign; they should, from that deliverance, hope for as great from the hands of God in their straits. And, Zechariah 10:11, God would have them consider their deliverance at the Red Sea as a ground of hope in the time of their distress.

8. Thankfully remember former deliverances. If we have not some praise for God, we may suspect ourselves. It is observed that the city Shushan, the royal seat of the Persian monarchy, was portrayed upon the east gate of the temple, not because of the Persian command, or because of their fear; of that king, as some think, but to have a thankful remembrance of the wonderful deliverance of Purim, which was wrought in Shushan, Esther 9:26. If it had been only by the Persians' command, it would have been defaced after the fall of that monarchy, which held but thirty-four years after the building of the second temple. Psalms 136:1-26 is a good copy, where is a threefold exhortation to thankfulness in the beginning, and one at the end; and in the record of every mercy, the burden of every verse is, 'his mercy endureth for ever.' How should we imitate the psalmist! He broke the teeth of the invincible leviathan in '88, and sent a strong wind to disperse the fleet, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God prevented the dreadful blast of gunpowder, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God sent the light of the gospel into England, and freed it from the yoke of antichrist's tyranny, 'for his mercy endures for ever.' God hath been a wall of fire about Ireland, in the protection of it, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' Let mercy receive the praise of what our own wisdom and power could not effect. The way to overcome the same enemies we fear, is to praise God for what he hath before acted against them. The strength of a people consists in praises, as well as praying: Psalms 8:2, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength ;' in the evangelist, 'thou hast perfected praise,' Matthew 21:16. The more hallelujahs we put up, the more occasion God may give us for them. If we have any fears of the overflowing deluge God formerly delivered us from, our non-improvement of those deliverances, the fruits whereof we enjoy this day, may strengthen our fears. When Israel was idolatrous in Jeroboam's reign, yet God delivered them from the Syrians, because he saw their affliction was bitter, and there was no helper; yet when they did not thankfully improve it to a reformation, God denounced judgments against them for their idolatry: 2 Kings 14:26-27, 'The Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel;' so that he had not yet denounced it, for he waited to see the improvement of this mercy. But before the end of Jeroboam's reign, by the prophet Hosea, who began to prophesy in his time, he declared their final captivity, from whence they are not restored to this day. Praise for former mercies is a means to gain future ones; the music of voices in Jehoshaphat's camp, praising the beauty of holiness, was a prologue of a deliverance from a formidable army, 2 Chronicles 20:21-22, and more successful than the warlike music of drums and trumpets.

4. Exercise faith on the power of God manifested in deliverances in the time of straits. It is not for want of ability in God, but for want of faith in us, that we at any time go groaning under misery. Faith would quiet the soul. When David relied upon God, and found by experience God sustaining him, he would not then be afraid of ten thousand, Psalms 3:5-6. Let that be our carriage which is recorded of the Israelites after this memorable defeat: Exodus 14:31, 'They believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.' We must never expect to see God's arm bare without faith in him. Christ can do no great work where unbelief is predominant, Unbelief doth not strip God of his power and mercy, but it stops the streams and effluxes [outflow] of it. Unbelief against experience is a double sin. It is gross when against a bare word, worse when against the word confirmed by a witness.

Israel was past thoughts of any relief in this strait, but expected to perish by the hand of their enemies, yet God brought them into straits in mercy, to bring them out of straits with power. He makes their distress a snare to their enemies, and a scaffold for their faith. That deliverance ought to be a foundation for our trust in God, though bestowed upon another nation; yet not so much upon them as a state, but as a church, and a type of those future ones under the gospel which are yet expected. Well, then, trust upon this foundation. Great trust in God is a sort of obligation upon God. Men, out of generosity, will do much for them that depend upon them. Dependence on God magnifies his attributes; this will bring deliverance, whereby God will magnify himself. Do not distrust him, till you meet with an enemy too strong for him to quell, a Red Sea too deep for him to divide, an affliction too sturdy for him to rebuke, an Egyptian too proud for him to master; then part with your faith, but not till God hath parted with his power, which he hath formerly evidenced.

5. Expect and provide for sharp conflicts. God brings into straits before he delivers. Another deliverance is yet to come; the church's distresses are not come to a period; Babylon hath another game to play. The right of the devil to tyrannise over the mystical body was taken away at the death of the head, yet he still bruise Christ's heel, and bites, though he cannot totally overcome. As long as Christ's enemies are not made his footstool, as long as there is the seed of the serpent in the world, as long as Christ's members want a conformity to the head, Satan's pinches must be expected; as long as the beast is in being, he will make wax with the followers of the Lamb; his power is to continue forty-two months, to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, Revelation 13:5, Revelation 13:7. Forty-two months, of years; it is like the time is not expired. One thousand six hundred and twenty years, which make forty-two months; no ending since he first had his power. When his time draws near to an end, he will bite sharpest. This deliverance from Egypt is yet again to be acted over, and that must be at the end, when the whole Israel of God shall be freed from Antichrist, the antitype of Pharaoh.

6. Yet let us not be afraid. Apostasies may be great. There will be but two witnesses; not two in number, but in regard of the fewness of those that shall bear testimony to the doctrine of Christ. There may be no advocate for the church. Sion may be an outcast, cast out of the affection of many that served or favoured her; but the sharpest convulsions in the world are presages of an approaching redemption, Luke 21:28, and the gospel will shine clearer, as the sun doth after it hath been muffled with a thick cloud. The words in the mouths of the witnesses will be most killing and convincing. Fear not a natural above a supernatural power. Was not all the church God had in the world in as low a condition at the Red Sea? Not a soul that we read of exempt (or but few, as Job, and some few others in other parts), yet the church was then delivered for a pattern, to shew forth the power of God in the ages to come. What though there may be a want of instruments? Are not all instruments outlived by God? Has God dismissed the care of his people? Is he not always the church's guardian?

He must be dethroned before he can be disarmed. While heaven is too high for human hands to reach, the church is too well guarded for them to conquer. Fear not, till Christ lets his scepter fall out of his hands, and ceases to rule in the midst of his enemies, and flings away the keys of death and hell; fear not till God strips himself of his strength wherewith he is clothed; he is clothed with strength, Ps. 93:1. Though there be little strength in the church, there is an almighty one in their confederate. It is no matter what the enemy resolves against what God ordains. Pharaoh intended to destroy, God intended to deliver. God will have his will, and Pharaoh's lust goes, unsatisfied.

When the enemies are most numerous, God shall darken their glory and strength and then shall he be the hope and strength of his people, Joel 3:14-16. The valley of Achor, the valley of the sharpest trouble, shall be a door of hope, Hosea 2:15. That God that can create a world out of nothing, can create deliverance when there is no visible means to produce it. What can be too hard for him that can work without materials, that can make matter when it is wanting, and call non-entities into being? He created the world with a word, and can destroy the sturdiest men in the world with a look. The strongest devil trembles before him, and the whole seed of the serpent is but as the dust of the balance before the breath of his mouth. He looked, the Egyptian host into disorder, and their chariot wheels into a falling sickness, Exodus 14:24. He, created the world by a word; he restored Jerusalem by a word, Isaiah 44:26-27, dispirited Egypt by a look. There is no need of an arm; a word, and a look of omnipotency, will be efficacious both for the one and the other; one royal edict from him will perform it: Psalms 44:4, 'Thou art my King, command deliverance for Jacob.' He hath authority as a king, engagement as the church's king. As he hath right of dominion, so he hath an office of protection, which the church of right may claim. And is it Jacob that wants, deliverance? Be not afraid, but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, Isaiah 8:12, Isaiah 8:18. To trust in his power is to sanctify his name, and regard him as the sovereign of all creatures, and the Lord of hosts. If we sanctify his name by relying on his power, he will sanctify his name by engaging his power.

7. To this end study the promises God hath made to his church, and what predictions are upon record. It is a title of the faithful, that they are such as keep the sayings of the book of the Revelation, Revelation 22:9. The angel that came to John owns himself his fellow-servant, and of the prophets, and those that keep the sayings of that book. See God's bond, and behold his witness; compare the promise, the prophecy, and performance. See his mercy in making them, his truth in performing them; let these be as the Hur and Aaron to support the glory of God in our souls. This will be a matter of praise, and furnish us with arguments to spread before God. Daniel first looked into the book for the set time of the Jews' return from Babylon, Daniel 9:2, and took his rise for pleas from thence. You may have need of this food; a divine promise is the best cordial at a stake or gibbet, or when a sword is at your breast.

8. When a time of straits comes, wait patiently upon God. Let not hope, sink when reason is nonplussed by storms, and sees nothing but wrecks. Wait upon God in the way of his judgments, Isaiah 26:8, in his storms as well as calms. God waits to be gracious, and therefore we should wait to be gratified. Not to wait, is to be partners in that sin which brought destruction upon the church's enemies, viz. pride. It concerns God more in point of his glory to hasten deliverance in its due time, than us in point of security; but there is as much danger in coming too soon as too late. By waiting, we imitate the highest pattern, who waits with patience for the reformation of his enemies, and Christ, who waits for the total victory. The longer God keeps the church at any time under the enemy's chains, the sweeter will be his mercy to the one, and the severer his justice on the other. The Israelites waited, and God followed Pharaoh with plagues, as he followed them with hardens, and took his time to out off their oppressors, with most glory to himself, and most comfort to them. The vision hath its appointed time. Impatience will not make God break the chains of his resolves, but patience will bring down the blessing with great success, and big with noble births. God is not out of the way of his wisdom and grace, and we can never keep in our way but by patience in waiting; by this we give him the honour of his wisdom; by too much hastiness we check and

control him, and will not let him be the master and conductor of his own blessings. We many times get more good by waiting than we do by enjoying a mercy. Such a posture keeps the soul humble and believing, whereas, many times, when we receive a mercy too hastily with one hand, we let go faith and humility with the other. Sincere souls have the strongest and most heavenly raptures in a time of waiting: Isaiah 40:31, 'They mount up with wings like eagles.'

9. In times of such straits, be found only in a way of duty. If our straits should ever prove as hard as the Israelites' at the Red Sea, i.e. have something of a resemblance to their case, let us follow Moses his counsel to them: Exodus 14:18, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.' Let us not anticipate God's gracious designs. If we will have our finger where God only will have his arm, God may withdraw this arm, and leave us to the weakness of our own fingers. Let them that want a God to relieve them use sinful and unworthy shifts. for their deliverance. If any success be found out of the way of duty, it may be attended with a curse, and want that favour of God which only can sanctify it. We may purchase a present deliverance with a more durable plague at the end of it, because we forfeit that favour which only can work a real freedom. Sinful ways do not glorify God, but disparage him. Our actions at such a time particularly should adorn the gospel, not discredit it, for, it is by the sword of his mouth that such enemies will be destroyed, and every sword cuts best when it is sharpest and cleanest, not when it is blunt and rusty. Not but that lawful means may, nay, they must be used. Noah,. though he went into the ark by God's command, and was not to stir out without his order, yet he sets open the windows, and sends forth a raven and a dove, to bring him notice when the waters were dried up. It is a foolish thing to offend God, who only can help us in our straits, and by our sin to hold his sword in his sheath, which, upon our obedience, would be drawn for our relief. We know not how soon we may need him, and our distress be such, that none but he can bring salvation. Let no sin be a bar in the way.

10. Be much in prayer. Israel cried unto the Lord before God did relieve, Exodus 14:10. The persecuted church cried, travailing in birth, and found a security both for herself and her offspring, Revelation 12:2, &c. The distress of the time is an argument to be used: Psalms 123:3-4, 'Have mercy upon us, Lord, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.' When enemies are high, and access to God free, it is an high contempt of God not to use the privilege he allows us, and it is to trust in an arm of flesh rather than an arm of omnipotence; to think him either inexorable or unable. And for encouragement, consider you have Christ armed against his spouse's enemies, and provided with merit to make her prayers successful. Our prayers may at last be turned into praises, and we may say with David, Psalms 9:6, 'O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.'

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A Discourse of Afflictions

A Discourse of Afflictions by Stephen Charnock And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with Sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. — Hebrews 12:5 - 1 Kings

The apostle, after having drawn a catalogue of those illustrious souls that had manifested a choice faith upon several occasions, descends in this chapter to press the believing Hebrews to an exercise of patience and faith under those pressures they should meet with in their Christian course; where he proposeth first to them the example of Christ, Hebrews 12:2, Hebrews 12:8; next, the exhortation of the Holy Ghost, drawn from Proverbs 3:11-12, 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he corrects, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth;' which, being an instruction concerning the nature and use of afflictions God sends upon us, the apostle applies to the particular case of the Hebrews, but discourseth in general of the author, subjects, and ends of the afflictions God exerciseth his children with. 'Have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children?' Have you lost the remembrance of what God saith in that exhortation by his wisdom, Proverbs 3:1-35, where he commends his goodness, and shews the obligation you have to listen to him, by vouchsafing you the name of children, the greatest glory and the highest comfort of a creature? Have you, saith he, forgot this? Have you not the intent of it in your minds and memories, in your hearts and considerations? The apostle discourses here of the necessity and advantages of afflictions. In Hebrews 12:5, he orders us not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to despond under it: 'Faint not when thou art rebuked of him.' This he backs with many motives in the following verses. Mhj oligwxei do not make a light account of afflictions.

1. One motive is in the word chastening (paideia), which signifies the instruction whereby a child is brought to the knowledge of things profitable for him, which being it is not effected in that age, subject to extravagancy, without stripes as well as words, the word is therefore used for the discipline which attends such instruction.

2. Another motive is from the author of afflictions, the Lord: despise not the chastening of the Lord.

Observations.

1. It must be our great care not to make slight of afflictions, nor to be too much dejected under them. The smart will keep us from despising an affliction in itself; but we make light of it when we

are careless of improving it for the ends for which God inflicts it. We may be sensible of the pain, when we are not sensible of the profit which may accrue to us by it. God forbids here two extremities; the one an excess, the other a want of courage. Both dishonour God, the one in his sovereignty, the other in his goodness and love; and both are injurious to the sufferer, as he rebels against the one, and loseth the sweetness of the other. We should receive the afflictions God sends with a humility without despondency, with a reverence without distrust, and keep ourselves from either fearing too much, or not fearing God enough. Mix reverence with confidence, adore the hand which we feel, and rest in the goodness which he promiseth. This is the way to reap the fruit of afflictions.

2. All afflictions, let them be from what immediate causes soever, are from the hand of God. Whether they come from man, as loss of goods or other calamities; whether they be sicknesses, griefs, &c.; they are all dispensed by the order of God for one and the same design, viz., our instruction. Human reason doth not believe this. Some think they come by chance, or look only to second causes, and regard them not as wholesome instructions from God, and the orders of his providence.

1. This should stop any impatient motions. It is fit we should be of the psalmist's temper, 'hold our peace, because God hath done it,' Psalms 32:9. Shall the clay formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou thus? We should rather say as Eli, 1 Samuel 3:18, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.' Especially since an infinite wisdom is joined with the sovereign authority of God, and when we are not able to understand the reason of his conduct, we ought to acquiesce in his will and in his wisdom, and stop the motion of any passion, by a humiliation under his hand.

2. It teacheth us to whom to have recourse. That hand that strikes can only cease striking. When David had stilled impatience, he awakens his prayer: Psalms 39:10, 'Remove thy strokes from me: I am consumed with the blows of thine hand.' If Shimei casts a stone at David, it is the Lord that bade him; if the humours of our bodies rise against us, it is God that arms them, and it is he must be sought to for redress. He only can disband what force he raises. It is our comfort there is a sovereign power to whom we can make our moan in our addresses, and that our sovereign that struck us is ready to heal us.

3. How sweet is God towards his children groaning under any affliction! 'My son, despise not,' &c. He calls them his sons, his children, sweetening in the name whatsoever is rigorous in the suffering. He gives them a title whereby he manifests that he doth share in their grief, hath a resentment of their trouble. What father is there on earth, unless he hath lost all natural affection, who doth not sympathise in the suffering of his children? All the bowels of earth, met together in one combined tenderness, are not to be compared to the yearning bowels of heaven. Afflictions are not always sent by God in anger with his creatures, but sent by God as a Father.

(1.) Hence it is easy to conceive that neither the intentions of God, nor the issue of a suffering, can be any other than happy to those that are the children of God, since he gives the name of child, and son, to every one that he doth instruct as a Father by correction.

(2.) It will teach us to have a sense of the sufferings of others. The argument to press this exhortation is taken from the impulsive cause, the love of God; and the word translated chasten, signifies such a chastisement as a father gives his son, or a master his scholar.

Observation,

(1.) The afflictions of believers are effects of divine love. 'For whom the Lord loves he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth' : Revelation 3:19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' They are not acts of divine revenge, whereby God would satisfy his justice; but of divine affection, whereby he communicates his goodness, and draws the image of his Son with more beauty and glory. They are the acts of God, but not of a sleepy and careless God, but a wise and indulgent Father, who takes all the care, both of instruction and correction, to train you up to his will and likeness. God indeed afflicts other men who are not in the number of his beloved children. There are scarce any among the sons of men that pass their life in a continual prosperity, exempt from all kind of affliction; and all these evils are from God as the governor of the world. Yet though there be no difference between the sufferings of one and the other, and though the sufferings of believers are often more sharp than those of carnal men in outward appearance, yet there is a vast difference in the motives of them. Love makes him strike the believer, and fury makes him strike the unregenerate man. The design of the correction of the one is their profit, not their ruin; the strokes upon the other are often the first fruits of eternal punishment.

(1.) Then the world is much mistaken in judging the afflictions of believers to be testimonies of God's anger and hatred. God acts towards the world as a lawgiver and judge, but towards those that he hath renewed and adopted in the quality of a father. And who would judge of the hatred of a tender father by the corrections he inflicts upon a child that is so dear to him? Believers suffer by God not simply as he is a judge, but as he is Paternus Judex. There is a combination of judge and father. God doth not intend revenge on them; for though they are afflicted for sin, yet the principal aim is to prove them, reform them, that they may be worthy of a blessed inheritance. 'Lazarus whom thou lovest is sick,' was the speech of his sister to Christ. They were fearing, thinking that Christ's love was departed with Lazarus his health.

(2.) No man hath then any reason to fancy himself the object of God's love for an outward prosperity: Ecclesiastes 9:1, 'No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him.' God doth not always love those whom his providence preserves in health and ease. Such a conceit proceeds from an ignorance of another life, and too great a valuation of the things of this world. Temporal goods, credit in the world, outward conveniences, and an uninterrupted health, are effects of God's patience and common goodness, but not of his affection and choicest love. They are the marks of his affection, when, by his grace, they are made means to conduct us to a better inheritance; but how often are they pernicious to us by reason of our corruption and ill usage of them! How often doth the health of the body destroy that of the soul, and the prosperity of the flesh ruin that of the spirit! How often do riches and honours link our hearts to the earth, and expel any thoughts of an heavenly paradise! How often doth a portion in this world make many slack their endeavours for a portion in heaven! How often do they hinder our sanctification, which is the only means to an happy vision of God!

(3.) How should this move us in our afflictions to a carriage pleasing to God! This is the motive the apostle uses to press his exhortation in the former verse, neither to despise the chastening of God, nor despond of his care. Why should we despise that which is dispensed by love? Who would not be willing to satisfy a friend in his desire, which they are assured love is the motive of, though their prudence is not so exact as that we can absolutely trust it? Should we not with greater care

consider the chastisements which the love of God, both good and wise, doth ordain by providence? Is not the love, the motive of suffering, a sufficient ground to prevent distrust and discouragement? Why should any distrust him by whom he knows he is afflicted? That correction which frights us is a work of his love, not of his hatred. Should we not, therefore, wait with faith for an happy issue of that chastisement which we suffer? If we be once thus affected, we shall receive afflictions with a temper answerable to God, and improve them for those holy ends for which God sends them. We should also bear them patiently, since they are not for the reparation of the holiness of the law and the satisfaction of his justice, but to prove the soul and fit it for heaven. It is not the love of the criminal, but the love of the laws, which causes a judge to condemn and punish him. No wise man ever said that a prince did punish malefactors because he loved them, or that God makes the wicked suffer eternal punishment in hell because he loves them. It necessarily follows that, therefore, the chastisements God doth inflict are not properly punishments of the same nature with those God doth ordain for unbelievers. We have reason, therefore, to bear them with patience. It is inexcusable to murmur at an act of love. Use, then, a religious reason in the consideration of this. When the father scourgeth, the child cries, and then he thinks his father hates him. It is but the error of his childhood, and when he comes to reason he will regard it as a false opinion. When a physician hath lanced you, and given you a bitter potion, you never had any suspicion that he hated you; you have received all his charitable offices, and thought him more worthy of a reward than a rebuke. Why should not our carriage be so to God?

2. Observation. No righteous man in the world is, or ever was, free from sin. He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Sin is the cause of afflictions. Were we free from sin, we should be free from scourges. Afflictions cease not till sin be quite destroyed, which will not be in this world. Justice finds enough in every believer in the world to punish, and mercy finds enough to pardon.

(1.) It is against this, then, that we should turn our aim. What Satan would make us vent in impatience against God, let us manifest in a hatred of that which is the true cause of all the evils which in general or particular we suffer. Let us strike that as much as God strikes us; and it is but grateful reason, since it is the best way whereby we can shew our love to God, who, in his strokes upon us, shews his love to us. Let us take no rest till we have put that to death which God only hates. It is the death of sin, and not the death of the soul, God designs in afflictions.

(2.) It is, upon this account, an argument for patience. While our disease remains, why should we think ill of the physician for using means for a cure? If he did not use the means, though sharp, we then should have most reason to accuse him of a want of pity. What father would not be counted very tender, that should lance his child himself when he saw there was need for it? Sin puts God upon a necessity of scourging; his goodness and wisdom will not suffer him to do anything but what is necessary and expedient. Now, Hebrews 12:7, the apostle exhorts them to a patient bearing the hand of God, because he deals with them as a father with his sons in a way of reward afterwards. As parents caress those children, they see quiet after punishment. If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as sons. God profezetai offers himself to you as a father to his Sons. Or rather, the apostle doth render the comfort in the former verse more efficacious to the Hebrews, and makes application of what is contained in that truth which he hath cited out of the Proverbs, in the former verse : that yet, if they endure chastisement, God treats them as children; and, being men are apt to think that a troublesome affliction is inconsistent with the love of God, the apostle contradicts such a thought by the question, 'What son is there whom the father

chasteneth not?' And he goes further, Hebrews 12:8, and draws another conclusion : that we should be so far from thinking that to be afflicted is a sign of our not being the children of God, that on the contrary he affirms that not to be chastised is a sign that a man is not of God's family: Hebrews 12:8, 'If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.' For if the Lord scourgeth every son whom he receives, it is clear that he whom he leaves without chastisement is not a true and legitimate son, but a stranger, a bastard, i. e. one that is not of the family, but takes only the name and quality, without any right to it.

Observation 1. God, in chastening believers, treats them as children. If, here, is as much as when: 'if, you endure chastening,' i. e. when you endure chastening; as Leviticus 19:5, if you offer a sacrifice of peace-offering, i.e. when you offer a sacrifice. So John 14:3, 'If I go and prepare a place for you,' i. e. when I go and prepare a place for you. Since God hath commanded men expressly in his word to chastise their children, and hath engraved such a disposition in the hearts of mankind, and authorised such a carriage by his law, we must not think it strange that God, who is wisdom, goodness, and love, should exercise in his family such a just, and holy, and wholesome discipline. And as none can say that a tender father, when he chastiseth his child, deals with him as with an enemy, so none can affirm the same of God; and though affliction be an evil in itself, and sharp to the child that suffers it, yet if you compare it with the good it procures, it is not an evil, but an experienced good. Compare the lives of those children that have not been without the correction of their parents or strangers to the lives of those that have been left to themselves without it, and the advantage of the one and miseries of the other will easily appear: Proverbs 13:1, 'A wise son hears the instruction of his father.' Hear is not in the Hebrew. A wise son is the instruction or chastisement of his father. The Jews have a proverb, If you see a wise child, be sure that the father hath chastised him.(Drusius). God deals in this manner with his children, and there is need of it, for though the regenerate are freed from the slavery of sin, yet while they are clothed with flesh, the flesh will lust against the Spirit; and God not only chastises us for our infirmities, but to prevent them; and since the love which he bears us, and the salvation which he procures by his chastisements, doth infinitely surpass the affections of the best and tenderest fathers, and the best fruit we can draw from their discipline, we may well confess that no father in the world can be said to deal as a father with his children so as God doth with the believer. He offers himself to do a father's office: he is the world's sovereign, but a believer's father. As he is the governor of the word, he treats men righteously in his judgments; as he is the Father of believers, he treats them graciously in his afflictions.

Here is a great comfort, if God deal with you as with children in his striking of you. His wisdom and his goodness is infinite; he doth nothing but what is just and reasonable, and is guided by a fatherly affection in all that he doth: his blows are healthful. If David would account it a kindness if the righteous would smite him, and count his rebukes as an excellent oil, Psalms 41:5, how much more ought we to have the same sentiments of the chastisement of God. Good men may mistake in their rebukes, God cannot. He is too wise to be deceived, and too good not to make even his strokes become an excellent balsam. He doth not assault us as enemies, nor only as criminals, but as children; not to punish us in his fury, but to refine us, to make us fit for him to take pleasure in, to make us more like him in the frame and temper of our souls. This is the end of a tender father's chastising his children, and this is the end of God. We should receive his corrections therefore, not so much as a punishment as a favour, since he strikes not as an enemy to destroy,

but as a father to correct; not only as a God of righteousness, but as a God of tenderness.

Observation 2. No child of God but is one time or other under his correcting hand. The apostle makes a challenge to all to shew one in that relation privileged from it: 'What son is there whom the Father chasteneth not?' None of those mentioned among the believing Hebrews in the foregoing chapter were without this smart: Noah had an affliction in a child, Genesis 12:10, Abraham and Jacob were afflicted with famine, Isaac by an Esau, Moses fain to fly for his life, Job suffered the loss of his goods, Hezekiah a dangerous sickness. To be under afflictions, then, is to travel in the road of all that have gone before. And the apostle goes further, ver. 8, and affirms that not to be chastised is a certain sign of no right to a membership of his family: 'But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.' This is an argument from the antithesis, they are bastards, and not sons, who are not corrected. Bastards, not, saith Grotius, those whom the father of the family hath begot, but those that an adulterous mother would obtrude upon him as part of his family, which he rejects from any paternal care of instruction and discipline, as having no part in his inheritance, no right to his goods, not born of his seed, which is the word. By this the apostle signifies,

(1.) That all the true children of God are under his discipline. If they are not, they are no parts of his family. He that is left without it, is not in the number of those he owns for his children. Hereby he strengthens what he had spoken before, that God deals with those he afflicts as children; whence it follows, that there is no child of his but he doth at one time or another afflict. This is one of the clauses of the covenant God hath made with us in Jesus, which he doth peculiarly insert, when he owns himself our God and Father: Psalms 119:82, he would visit them with a rod, but not take away his loving-kindness. In the New Testament, God promiseth spiritual blessings. In the Old, when he promised most temporal blessings, his people were not exempt from his discipline. In the New Testament, it is more express, that through afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. His only Son must suffer, and so enter into glory.

(2.) That those that are not under his discipline are not his children. Afflictions therefore are so far from being discouragements, that where there is an evidence of grace in the heart, they are rather marks of adoption. We might well doubt of a relation to him if he took no care of us; that we were not his sheep if he used not his crook to pull us unto him. Let us then receive his chastisements without regret, since he manifests his care of us in them, and regards us with the eyes and heart of a father. If we were wholly strangers, he would abandon us, and leave us as persons he knew not. His paternal rod is for his children, his rod of iron for his enemies. But now in the ninth verse, and the following verses, the apostle exhorts them to a reverence of God under his chastising hand. The argument is a *minori ad majus*: Hebrews 12:9, 'Furthermore, we have had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?' And he urgeth the exhortation, (1.) from the right of God: he is the Father of spirits; (2.) from his intention, which is our spiritual profit, Hebrews 12:10; (3.) from the issue: it is as much our advantage in the event as it was in his intention, Hebrews 12:11. The fathers of our flesh have corrected us, and we gave them reverence; how much rather ought we to be subject to the Father of spirits, who chasteneth us that we may live? The two persons which the apostle compares together, viz. God and man, have this in common: one and the other is a father, one and the other chasteneth, one and the other is carried out to it by love, one and the other designs advantage; but as there is this resemblance, so there is a great difference: man is but the

father of the body, the more ignoble part of our natures, that which we have common with beasts; God is the Father of our spirits, the more noble part, and that which makes us properly men. More submission is therefore due to him, who confers more upon us, than to them who confer less. The love which fathers bear to their children is a passion, and many times is not regulated by reason; but the love of God is a true love, not mingled with any imperfection either of excess or defect, and therefore doth nothing but with the justest reason. Again, earthly fathers aim at the good of their children, but their ignorance is so great that often they mistake it; but the knowledge of God is as perfect as his love, who always chastiseth his people for their true good, and therefore a greater submission is due to him.

(1.) How glorious is the condition of a true believer! He is the child of God: 1 John 3:1, 'What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!' It is an argument of great love to give his people so honorable and dear a title, to call himself their Father, as well as their God. It is not so strange that he should call all the pure spirits in heaven his children, as that he should call those that have defiled his image by that title; that he should own himself a Father to them that are by nature children of wrath, slaves to Satan, sold under sin, that have nothing in them to please him by nature, but are fit objects of his wrath and curse. Wonderful love, that God should not think it a dishonour to him to be called our Father! And hence it is reason we should carry ourselves to him in all his dispensations as children to a father, that we should comfort ourselves in this relation in all the sufferings we encounter. If he be our Father, what should we fear? Nothing passes in the world without his order; no evil arrives to us without his will. Every affliction is the rod of his hand. The very thought that God is our Father should sweeten any grief.

(2.) God is the creator of souls. By spirits are meant the souls of men; some understand it also of spiritual gifts, the graces God infuseth into the souls of his people. Both are good motives to that submission unto, and reverence of God, the apostle urgeth. Most interpreters run the first way. The antithesis requires that we should understand by this expression that God is the creator of souls, because it is opposed to the fathers of the flesh. God is called the God of the spirits of all flesh, Numbers 16:22. As by the flesh the apostle means the body, the material and visible part of our natures; so by the spirit he means the soul, the spiritual and invisible part of our being. As for the body, man engendered it; as for the soul, God only formed it; as in Ecclesiastes 12:7, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit shall return to God that gave it;' where by the dust is meant the body, and by the spirit the soul. The body was formed of the dust of the ground, Genesis 2:7; but the soul was breathed in by God. It is the spirit that gives life and sense to the parts of the body, which otherwise are without sense and motion; and God is said to form the spirit of man, Zechariah 12:1, and challengeth to himself the particular forming of the soul: Isa. Leviticus 16:1-34, 'The soul which I have made.' God, indeed, forms the body too by the hand of nature, by the intervention of second causes which he employs; but the soul he forms without any other cause but his own will. The first manner of acting by nature in the production of the body is not sufficient to demonstrate God the Father of it, no more than he can be called the Father of beasts and plants, which are produced by his powerful providence, as well as the bodies of men; but the second manner of acting in the production of an immortal and spiritual substance is sufficient to demonstrate God the Father of spirits, as they also are called the children of God, because God immediately created them, and clothed them with an immortal nature. The apostle, therefore, hath good reason to call men which have begot us the fathers of the flesh; because, though the wisdom

and power of God in his providence acts in our conception and generation, yet it is also the work of man, who acts as a second cause; but the production of the soul is purely by the will and power of God, without the action of any creature. Hence it follows that the soul is immortal; for since it doth not depend in its original upon matter, it doth not in its subsistence, neither after death hath separated the body from it. It follows also that the reasonable soul is more excellent than the bodies which we receive from earthly fathers; and therefore we owe more submission and reverence to God and his chastisements than to those who have been only the fathers of our bodies, which the interrogation intimates, 'Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?'

(3.) 'And live;' or that we may live. This is an argument from the reward of a patient suffering. The apostle seems tacitly to refer to the promise of life to children that honour their parents. As a temporal life was promised to them, so a spiritual and eternal life is promised to those that are patiently obedient under the hand of God. As in Israel those that slighted the rebukes of their parents were stoned without pity, so will God handle those that kick against his discipline, and make no profit of his rod. Corrections cause life, not meritoriously, but instrumentally. If we, therefore, own God as a Father, we ought to carry ourselves to him as our Father. If we desire an happy and eternal life, we must subject ourselves to his hand, acknowledge the righteousness of his discipline, and, by how much the paternity of God is more excellent, our submission ought to be the more reverential. In Hebrews 12:10, the apostle urgeth the exhortation further, from the manner of God's proceedings with us, different from that of earthly fathers, and from his aim in it: 'For they for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' This he doth by comparing of the heavenly Father and the earthly father with one another, and acquaints us that it is the aim of God, in those afflictions which seem most bitter, to reduce us to that holiness which we have lost in Adam.

1. They verily for a few days chastened us. Either death deprives them of their authority, or the growth of their children exempts them from suffering under it. Parents only take care to correct their children during the weakness of their childhood, when, by ignorance and inexperience, they are incapable to conduct themselves. They have, therefore, need of their parents to form their spirits, and make those impressions upon them whereby they may govern themselves the rest of their lives. But when they are arrived at years of discretion, they are left to govern themselves according to their own reasons, without using the rod to supply the defect of their understanding; so that the corrections of earthly parents are but for few years, a little time.

Observation.

1. Hereby appears the advantage of God's discipline above that of earthly parents. God continues his care to us all our lives upon the earth, as long as we have need; exercises a greater providence over us than earthly parents over their children.

2. Hereby the apostle comforts us. It is but a little time that God subjects us to chastisements; only that part of our life which we are to pass on earth, which is but a small time to that eternity wherein we shall be exempt from suffering; bears infinitely less proportion to eternity than the least instant doth to all the time from the creation to the end of the world; so that the time of a believer's chastisement is shorter than that of children under their parents. And herein is the kindness and love of God apparent, who deals more favourably with his children in regard of the time of their

correction than the best father in the world can do.

2. The motive of, and rule that parents too often follow, in their chastising their children, 'after their own pleasure.' They have often a greater regard to their own passions than their children's advantage, correct oftener in humour than with reason. Having no other law but their own will, their judgment is apt to be deceived, whereby it happens that their corrections often injure their children instead of advantaging them, whatsoever their intention may be, and that either by mistake of the nature of things for which they chastise them, or the indiscreet measure and manner of their chastening.

(1.) Mistaking the nature of the things for which they chastise their children. Fathers endeavour to form their children to that which they judge best and most profitable for them in this life; but their judgments are often mistaken, as a covetous parent, that acknowledges no other happiness than wealth, will instill such instructions into his child to think nothing unjust that is profitable and enriching; an ambitious man will endeavour to imprint the sentiments of worldly honour upon his children; a superstitious parent will correct his child for not conforming himself to that mode of worship he is himself addicted to. Thus parents often use their power to extinguish good principles in their children, and discourage beginnings of virtue in them.

(2.) Mistaking the measure. How often are good parents transported with choler in the corrections they inflict? Others, through a fond indulgence, altogether neglect it, and give the reins to the follies of their children. But the chastisements God inflicts are otherwise; he hath a perfect knowledge of all things, is subject to no passion, never afflicts but when there is need, never chastiseth his own but for their good. God, being infinitely wise, cannot err in his judgment of what is convenient for us; he is not biassed by weak affections. David acknowledged this wisdom of God: Psalms 119:71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.' He is wise, and foresees an evil we are apt to run into, and prevents it by affliction; sends Paul a thorn in the flesh, not so much to correct a present default as to prevent it, 2 Corinthians 12:7, that he might not be lifted up above measure. Sometimes he afflicts to make their graces apparent. God afflicted Job in his goods, in his person, that the truth of his faith and patience might be seen in the midst of his sufferings, to the praise of God. He sends not temptations unless there be need, and that the trial of faith may be found to praise and honour, 1 Peter 1:6-7. Other parents use their arbitrariness often, and not their wisdom. God's afflictions are sovereign acts, but not separated from wise and gracious intentions. But the apostle explains the particular profit which God aims at, 'That we might be partakers of his holiness;' to refine their dross, and purify them for himself, and render them fit for the place wherein dwells nothing that is unclean. Earthly parents correct their children that they may learn useful arts and manners in the world: an external profit chiefly they aim at; sometimes they correct that their vices may be imitated; God, that his holiness may be communicated here, and blessedness hereafter. This seems to be an exposition of what he meant by live in the former verse. This preserves us, and renders us partakers not only of holiness, but of his holiness; the holiness which he approves, which he commands, and hath some resemblance and conformity to his own. In the same sense we are said to be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4, whereby we have a portraiture of the nature and holiness of God drawn in our souls by the Spirit. It is not that we may possess the holiness of God, but partake of the holiness of God. The lineaments of his image, formed in us by the gospel and by afflictions, are as the beams and sparks of his holiness. The original is in God, the picture of it in the believer; as

light is in the sun, but some splendour of it in the glass upon which it shines. This God works by afflictions, whereby he makes us exercise ourselves more in repentance; weans us from the flesh, that would alienate us from God; cleave faster to Christ by faith, who is the spring of holiness; more earnestly thirst to draw of the fountain, and pursue those things that are heavenly. Parents correct their children to bring them to an imitation of their manners; God corrects his to bring them to an imitation of his holiness. They chastise to make their children like them; and God, to make his children conform to him.

(1.) Then afflictions are not always punishments; they are not inflicted for satisfaction for sin. God aims at our profit. A judge regards not the profit of a criminal when he condemns him to punishment, but only the honour of the law; and to repair the offence done to the law by the violation of it, and satisfy that justice which hath been violated. But God aims at the advantage of the believing sufferers, and makes them smart to make them gracious and glorious, to impart to them the highest excellency a creature is capable of.

(2.) A great argument there is from hence to love God even for afflictions. 'In all things give thanks,' saith the apostle. In these there is great reason to give thanks, in regard of their fruit. An earthly father transmits his inheritance to his son, but not his internal endowments; but God communicates his holiness to his children by these means.

(3.) How patiently should we bear them! The majesty of God above earthly parents, and his gracious aim and wise conduct of them, doth oblige us to this duty. He never strikes but with reason, never strikes his children but for their good. Happy blows should be received without murmuring. It is a welcome weapon that hath more of balsam than smart, a blessed sword that breaks the imposthume. That which is not only profitable, but necessary, calls not only for our patience, but our willing embracing when God doth wisely inflict it; besides, they are short, they are of no longer duration than this life. There might be reason to complain much if it were an eternal smart, but it is only for a little time.

(4.) We should endeavour to answer the intention of God To form ourselves to that holiness he aims at, to embrace every motion of the Spirit in our afflictions. To that purpose the rod hath a voice, the Spirit hath a voice; both must be listened to. And because it is a hard matter to be without complaints, the apostle still urgeth it further, and prevents the ground of complaint, which is the sharpness of a rod, and sets the smart and fruit in opposition one to another: Hebrews 12:11, 'Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.' It is confessed they are grievous, but it is in appearance only. They seem so; but as a beautiful face under a frightful mask, as a bitter potion, that gripes, but purgeth. This is an argument taken from the fruit of correction, and amplified by concession of the objection; I confess suffering is grievous, but wholesome. The end and issue of it is to be considered. A rational creature in all things should mind the end as well as the means. The end makes a vast difference between things Because the trouble and grief which is in every chastisement makes our flesh to apprehend it is an evil, the apostle distinguisheth between what is troublesome and what is desirable, between the pain and the fruit; and draws an argument of patience from the effect.

[1.] All afflictions are grievous to the flesh. God doth not expect we should be Stoics, to be without sense or grief. Christ himself hath set us a pattern of it; he shed tears for the death of his friend

Lazarus, and shed drops of blood at the approaching of his sufferings: 'his soul was sorrowful, even to the death;' he was 'tempted in all things like to us, yet without sin.' It is no sin to grieve under, to complain of suffering, without murmuring. If we have not a sense of the grief, we can never be capable of the profit of affliction. Without some grief, affliction would leave us worse than it finds us. As we ought to hear God when he speaks, so we ought to fear God when he strikes. At first the trouble of a chastisement doth wholly possess our spirits, it makes us mistake the end of it, we cannot sometimes in our pressures imagine that a root so bitter should bear a joyful fruit; as the griping physic afflicts the patient so much sometimes, that he scarce thinks of the good which will issue from it. David often is full of complaints while he is under an affliction, and seems often to have no sense of anything but the present trouble, but afterwards he hath no sentiments but of the gracious fruit: 'In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me' 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' 'Thy rod doth comfort me.' After experience manifests a truth which the present grief will not often give us leave to consider.

[2.] Though afflictions be grievous, the fruit is gracious to a believer. Experience corrects the false judgment we have while we are under a stroke. Indeed, afflictions of themselves are rather a means to cool our affections to holiness, to extinguish in our minds the sparks of godliness, and make us despond and distrust the grace of God; but God in his sovereign wisdom doth so dispose and manage them, that he makes them end in a happy fruit. By the grace of God they break off those inclinations we have to the world, quicken our prayers, awaken us out of our lethargies, put us upon a review of ourselves. The strings of an instrument yield a different sound when they are stretched, from what they did when they were slack. It is a fruit of righteousness, holiness, and sanctification, which he had spoken of in the former verse; also righteousness, which is a peaceable fruit; as when it is said, the 'incorruptible crown of glory,' 1 Peter 5:4. it is as much as to say, the glory which is a crown incorruptible, so a righteousness which is the spring of peace and serenity of conscience: Isaiah 33:17, 'And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.' It yields the fruit of righteousness, as being a means that brings us nearer to God, in communion with whom that peace doth consist. It brings us to seek in God and Christ the true remedy of all our evils; and by this means, the trouble of our souls is calmed, and an assurance of the grace of God promoted. The joy of the Holy Ghost is often strongest in us when afflictions are sharpest upon us: 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 'Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.' And though it be not always so with a believer, yet after the affliction hath wrought kindly, and done its work, God comes in with comfort and joy; as cheering cordials follow bitter physic. They bring forth the fruits of righteousness, not as the efficient cause, but the means.

1. Let us then make a right judgment of afflictions. Let us not think God intends to destroy when he begins to strike. We are often in the same error the apostles were in when they saw Christ walking upon the waves in the dead of the night, and terrors of a tempest, coming to succour them, they imagined he was a spirit coming to mischief them, Mark 6:47 - Ephesians The flesh makes us think God often to be our enemy when he is our friend. But as Christ cried out to them, 'Fear not, it is I,' so the apostle doth to believers here. Fear not; though the smart be grievous, the fruit is peaceable; if the flesh suffer, it is for the good of the spirit. The issue will declare, that 'all things work together for the good of them that love God,' Romans 8:27.

2. Let patience and faith have their perfect work. Affliction makes the beginning sad, patience will make the success glorious. Had the Israelites believed God's promise of deliverance, they had not murmured at the Red Sea. God brought them to the Red Sea to deliver them from the Egyptians, and made all their fears end in joy and triumph. The more we trust God, the more he is concerned in our welfare; the more we trust ourselves, the more he doth to cross us. The committing our way to the Lord renders our minds calm and composed: Proverbs 16:3, 'Commit thy way to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' God hath always 'an eye upon them that fear him,' Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19; not to keep distress and affliction from them, but to quicken them in it, and give them as it were a new life from the dead, new fruit from the rod. God brings us into straits, that we may have more lively experiments of his tenderness and wisdom. We should submit our way to the guidance of God's wisdom, with an obedience to his will and a reliance on his goodness; and then the success will be gracious in this life, and glorious in that which is to come,—a peaceable fruit of righteousness in earth and heaven. Wait upon God, being he is a God of judgment: Isa. xxx. 18, 'For the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all those that wait for him.' He goes judicially to work, and can best time the execution of his will. God hath as much wisdom to bring an affliction to a good issue, as he hath love at first to inflict it.

Author

Stephen Charnock, B.D., was born in the year 1628, in the parish of St. Katharine Cree, London. After a course of preparatory study, he entered himself, at an early period of life, a student in Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was placed under the immediate tuition of the celebrated Dr. William Sancroft. On his leaving the University he spent some time in a private family, either as a preceptor or for the purpose of qualifying himself the better for discharging the solemn and arduous duties of public life, on which he was about to enter. Soon after this, just as the Civil War broke out in England, he commenced his official labors as a minister of the gospel of peace, somewhere in Southwark. In 1649, Charnock removed from Southwark to Oxford, where through favor of the Parliamentary Visitors, he obtained a fellowship in New College; and, not long afterwards, in consequence of his own merits, was incorporated Master of Arts. In 1652 he was elevated to the dignity of Senior Proctor, —an office which he continued to hold till 1656. After spending some time in Ireland, he accepted a call in 1675 to become co-pastor with the Rev. Thomas Watson. The death of Charnock took place July 27, 1680, when he was in the fifty-third year of his age. He is most noted for his treatise on The Existence and Attributes of God.

A Discourse of Delight In Prayer

A Discourse of Delight In Prayer by Stephen Charnock

Edited by William Symington "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give the desires of thine heart." Psalms 37:4 The beginning of this psalm is a heap of instructions: The great lesson intended in it is placed in Psalms 37:1. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." It is resumed, Psalms 37:7-8, where many reasons are asserted to enforce it.

Fret not.

1. Do not envy them. Be not troubled at their prosperity.
2. Do not imitate them. Be not provoked by their glow-worm happiness, to practise the same wickedness to arrive to the same prosperity.
3. Be not sinfully impatient, and quarrel not with God, because he hath not by his providence allowed thee the same measures of prosperity in the world. Accuse him not of injustice and cruelty, because he afflicts the good, and is indulgent to the wicked. Leave him to dispense his blessings according to his own mind.
4. Condemn not the way of piety and religion wherein thou art. Think not the worse of thy profession, because it is attended with affliction. The reason of this exhortation is rendered, Psalms 37:2. "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb;" amplified by a similitude or resemblance of their prosperity to grass: their happiness hath no stability. It hath, like grass, more of colour and show, than strength and substance. Grass nods this and that way with every wind. The mouth of a beast may pull it up, or the foot of a beast may tread it down; the scorching sun in summer, or the fainting sun in winter, will deface its complexion. The Psalmist then proceeds to positive duties, Psalms 37:3.

1. Faith. Trust in the Lord. This is a grace most fit to quell such impatience. The stronger the faith, the weaker the passion. Impatient motions are signs of a flagging faith. Many times men are ready to cast off their help in Jehovah, and address to the God of Ekron multitudes of friends or riches. But trust thou in the Lord; in the promises of God, in the providence of God.

2. Obedience. Do good. Trust in God's promises, and observance of his precepts, must be linked together. It is but a pretended trust in Cod, where there is a real walking in the paths of wickedness. Let not the glitter of the world render thee faint and feeble in a course of piety.

3. The keeping our station. Do good. Because wicked men flourish, hide not thyself therefore in a corner, but keep thy sphere, run thy race. "And verily thou shalt be fed;" have every thing needful for thee. And now, because men delight in that wherein they trust, the Psalmist diverts us from all other objects of delight, to God as the true object. "Delight thyself in the Lord;" place all thy pleasure and joy in him. And because the motive expresseth the answer of prayer, the duty

enjoined seems to respect the act of prayer, as well as the object of prayer; prayer coming from a delight in God, and a delight in seeking him. Trust is both the spring of joy and the spring of supplication. When we trust him for sustenance and preservation, we shall receive them; so when we delight in seeking him, we shall be answered by him.

1. The duty. In the act, delight. In the object, the Lord.

2. The motive. "He shall give thee the desires of thy heart;" the most substantial desires, those desires which he approves of; the desire of thy heart as gracious, though not the desire of thy heart as carnal: the desire of thy heart as a Christian, though not the desire of thy heart as a creature. He shall give; God is the object of Our joy, and the author of our comfort.

Doctrine. Delight in God, in seeking him only, procures gracious answers; or, without cheerful prayers, we cannot have gracious answers.

There are two parts. 1. Cheerfulness on our parts. 2. Grants on God's part.

1. Cheerfulness and delight on our parts. Joy is the tuning the soul. The command to rejoice precedes the command to pray. "Rejoice evermore: pray without ceasing," 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17. Delight makes the melody, otherwise prayer will be but a harsh sound. God accepts the heart only, when it is a gift given, not forced. Delight is the marrow of religion.

1. Dullness is not suitable to the great things we are chiefly to beg for. The things revealed in the Gospel are a feast, Isaiah 25:6. Dullness becomes not such a solemnity. Manna must not be sought for with a lumpish heart. With joy we are to draw water out of the wells of salvation, Isaiah 12:3. Faith is the bucket, but joy and love are the hands that move it. They are the Hur and Aaron that hold up the hands of this Moses. God doth not value that man's service, who accounts not his service a privilege and a pleasure.

2. Dullness is not suitable to the duty. Gospel-duties are to be performed with a gospel-disposition. God's people ought to be a willing people, Psalms 110:3, a people of willingness: as though in prayer no other faculty of the soul had its exercise but the will. This must breathe fully in every word; as the spirit in Ezekiel's wheels. Delight, like the angel, Judges 13:20, must ascend in the smoke and flame of the soul. Though there be a kind of union by contemplations yet the real union is by affection. A man cannot be said to be a spiritual king, if he doth not present his performances with a royal and prince-like spirit. It is for vigorous wrestling that Jacob is called a prince, Genesis 32:28. This disposition is essential to grace. Natural men are described to be of a heavy and weary spirit in the offering of sacrifices, Malachi 1:13. It was but a sickly lame lamb they brought for an offering, and yet they were weary of it; that which was not fit for their table, they thought fit for the altar. In the handling this doctrine I shall shew, 1. What this delight is.

2. Whence it springs.

3. The reasons of the doctrine.

4. The use.

1. What this delight is. Delight properly is an affection of the mind that springs from the possession of the good which hath been ardently desired. This is the top stone, the highest step; delight is but

an embryo till it come to fruition, and that certain and immutable: otherwise, if there be probability or possibility of losing that which we have present possession of, the fear of it is as a drop of gall that infects the sweetness of this passion; delight properly is a silencing of desire, and the banquet of the soul on the presence of its desired object. But there is a delight of a lower stamp.

1. In desires. There is a delight in desire, as well as in fruition. A cheerfulness in labour, as well as in attainment. The desire of Canaan made the good Israelites cheerful in the wilderness. There is an beginning delight in motion, but a consummate delight in rest and fruition.

2. In hopes. Desired happiness affects the soul; much more expected happiness. "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," Romans 5:2. Joy is the natural issue of a well-grounded hope. A tottering expectation will engender but a tottering delight: such a delight will mad men have, which is rather to be pitied than desired. But if an imaginary hope can affect the heart with some real joy, much more a hope settled upon a sure bottom, and raised upon a good foundation, there may be joy in a title as well as in possession.

3. In contemplation. The consideration and serious thoughts of heaven do affect a gracious heart, and fill it with pleasure, though itself be as if in a wilderness. The near approach to a desired good doth much affect the heart. Moses was surely more pleased with the sight of Canaan from Pisgah, than with the hopes of it in the desert. A traveller's delight is more raised when he is nearest his journey's end, and a hungry stomach hath a greater joy when he sees the meat approaching which must satisfy the appetite. As the union with the object is nearer, so the delight is stronger. Now this delight the soul hath in duty, is not a delight of fruition, but of desire, hope, or contemplation; *Gaudium viae*, not *patriae* [a delight of the journey, not of the home].

1. We may consider delight as active or passive.

1. Active: which is an act of our souls in our approaches to God. When the heart, like the sun, rouseth up itself as a giant to run a spiritual race.

2. Passive: which is God's dispensation in approaches to us, and often met with in our cheerful addresses to God, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness," Isaiah 64:5. When we delightfully draw close about the throne of grace, God doth often cast his arms about our necks: especially when cheerful prayer is accompanied with a cheerful obedience. This joy is, when Christ meets us in prayer with a "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven," thy request granted. The active delight is the health of the soul, the passive is the good complexion of the soul. The one is man's duty, the other God's peculiar gift. The one is the inseparable property of the new birth, the other a separable privilege. There may be a joy in God when there is little joy from God. There may be gold in the mine, when no flowers are on the surface.

2. We may consider delight as settled or transient: As spiritual or sensitive.

1. A settled delight. In strong and grown Christians, when prayer proceeds out of a thankfulness to God, a judicious knowledge and apprehension of God. The nearer to God the more delight; as the motion of a stone is most speedy when nearest its centre.

2. A sensitive delight. As in persons troubled in mind, there may be a kind of delight in prayer, because there is some sense of ease in the very venting itself; and in some, because of the novelty of a duty they were not accustomed to before. Many prayers may be put up by persons in

necessity without any spiritual delight in them; as crazy persons take more medicine than those that are healthy, yet they delight not in that medicine. The Pharisee could pray longer, and perhaps with some delight too, but upon a sensual ground, with a proud and a vaunting kind of cheerfulness, a delight in himself, when the publican had a more spiritual delight; though a humble Sorrow in the consideration of his own vileness, yet a delight in the consideration of God's mercy. This sensitive delight may be more sensible in a young, than in a grown Christian. There is a more sensible affection at the first meeting of friends, though more solid after some converse; as there is a love which is called the love of the espousals. As it is in sorrow for sin, so in this delight: a young convert hath a greater torrent, a grown Christian a more constant stream; as at the first conversion of a sinner there is an overflowing joy among the angels, which we read not of after, though, without question, there is a settled joy in them at the growth of a Christian. An elder son may have a delight in his father's presence, more rooted, firm, and rational, than a younger child that clings more about him with affectionate expressions. As sincerity is the soul of all graces and duties, so this delight is the lustre and embroidery of them.

Now this delight in prayer,

1. It is an inward and hearty delight. As to the subject of it, it is seated in the heart. A man in prayer may have a cheerful countenance and a drowsy spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in the heart, and love and joy are the first-fruits of it, Galatians 5:22. Love to duty, and joy in it; joy as a grace, not as a mere comfort. As God is hearty in offering mercy, so is the soul in petitioning for it. There is a harmony between God and the heart. Where there is delight, there is great pains taken with the heart; a gracious heart strikes itself again and again, as Moses did the rock twice. Those ends which God hath in giving, are a Christian's end in asking. Now the more of our hearts in the requests, the more of God's heart in the grants. The emphasis of mercy is God's whole heart and whole soul in it, Jeremiah 32:41. So the emphasis of duty is our whole heart and whole soul. As without God's cheerful answering, a gracious soul would not relish a mercy, so without our hearty asking, God doth not relish our prayer.

2. It is a delight in God, who is the object of prayer. The glory of God, communion with him, enjoyment of him, is the great end of a believer in his supplications. That delight which is in prayer, is chiefly in it as a means conducing to such an end, and is but a spark of that delight which the soul hath in the object of prayer. God is the centre wherein the soul rests, and the end which the soul aims at. According to our apprehensions of God are our desires for him; when we apprehend him as the chiefest good, we shall desire him, and delight in him as the chiefest good. There must first be a delight in God, before there can be a spiritual delight, or a permanency in duty. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job 27:10. Delight is a grace; and as faith, desire, and love, have God for their object, so hath this. And according to the strength of our delight in the object or end, is the strength of our delight in the means of attainment. When we delight in God as glorious, we shall delight to honour him; when we regard him as good, we shall delight to pursue and enjoy him, and delight in that which brings us to an intercourse with him. He that rejoices in God, will rejoice in every approach to him. "The joy of the Lord is our strength," Nehemiah 8:10. The more joy in God, the more strength to come to him. The lack of this is the reason of our snail-like motion to him. Men have no sweet thoughts of God, and therefore no mind to converse with him. We cannot judge our delight in prayer to be right, if we have not a delight in God; for natural men may have a delight in prayer, when they have corrupt and selfish ends; they

may have a delight in a duty, as it is a means, according to their apprehensions, to gain such an end: As Balaam and Balak offered their sacrifice cheerfully, hoping to ingratiate themselves with God, and to have liberty to curse his people.

3. A delight in the precepts and promises of God, which are the ground and rules of prayer. First, David delights in God's testimonies, and then calls upon him with his whole heart. A gracious heart must first delight in precepts and promises, before it can turn them into prayers: for prayer is nothing else but a presenting God with his own promise, desiring to work that in us and for us which he hath promised to us. None was more cheerful in prayer than David, because none was more rejoicing in the statutes of God. God's statutes were his songs, Psalms 119:54. And the divine Word was sweeter to him than the honey and the honey-comb. If our hearts leap not at divine promises, we are like to have but drowsy souls in desiring them. If our eye be not upon the dainties God sets before us, our desires cannot be strong for him. If we have no delight in the great charters of heaven, the rich legacies of God, how can we sue for them? If we delight not in the covenant of grace, we shall not delight in prayers for grace. It was the hopes of reward made Moses so valiant in suffering, and the joy set before Christ in a promise, made him so cheerful in enduring the shame, Hebrews 12:1-2.

4. A delight in prayer itself. A Christian's heart is in secret ravished into heaven. There is a delight in coming near God, and warming the soul by the fire of his love. The angels are cheerful in the act of praise; their work is their glory. A holy soul doth so delight in this duty, that if there were no command to engage him, no promise to encourage him, he would be stepping into God's courts. He thinks it not a good day that passeth without some intercourse with God. David would have taken up his lodgings in the courts of God, and regards it as the only blessedness, Psalms 65:4. And so great a delight he had in being in God's presence, that he envies the birds the happiness of building their nests near his tabernacle. A delight there is in the holiness of prayer; a natural man under some troubles may delight in God's comforting and easing presence, but not in his sanctifying presence. He may delight to pray to God as a store-house to supply his wants, but not as a refiner's fire to purge away his dross. "Prayer, as praise, is a melody to God in the heart," Ephesians 5:19. And the soul loves to be fingering the instrument and touching the strings.

5. A delight in the things asked. This heavenly cheerfulness is most in heavenly things. What delight others have in asking worldly goods, a gracious heart hath in begging the light of God's countenance. That soul cannot be dull in prayer that seriously considers he prays for no less than heaven and happiness; no less than the glory of the great God. A gracious man is never weary of spiritual things, as men are never weary of the sun, but though it is enjoyed every day, yet long for the rising of it again. From this delight in the matter of prayer it is that the saints have redoubled and repeated their petitions, and redoubled the Amen at the end of prayer, to manifest the great affections to those things they have asked. The soul loves to think of those things the heart is set upon; and frequent thoughts express a delight.

6. A delight in those graces and affections which are exercised in prayer. A gracious heart is most delighted with that prayer wherein grace hath been more stirring, and gracious affections have been boiling over. The soul desires not only to speak to God, but to make melody to God; the heart is the instrument, but graces are the strings, and prayer the touching them, and therefore he is more displeased with the flagging of his graces than with missing an answer. There may he a

delight in gifts, in a man's own gifts, in the gifts of another, in the pomp and varnish of devotion; but a delight in exercising spiritual graces is an ingredient in this true delight. The Pharisees are marked by Christ to make long prayers; vaunting in an outward bravery of words, as if they were playing the courtiers with God, and complimenting him: but the publican had a short prayer, but more grace, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner;" there is reliance and humility. A gracious heart labours to bring flaming affections; and if he cannot bring flaming grace, he will bring smoking grace: he desires the preparation of his heart as well as the answer of his prayer, Psalms 10:17.

2. Whence this delight springs.

1. From the Spirit of God. Not a spark of fire upon our own hearth is able to kindle this spiritual delight; it is the Holy Ghost that breathes such a heavenly heat into our affections. The Spirit is the fire that kindles the soul, the spring that moves the watch, the wind that drives the ship. The swiftest ship with spread sails will be but sluggish in its motion, unless the wind fills its sails; without this Spirit we are but in a weak and sickly condition, our breath but short, a heavy and troublesome asthma is upon us. "When I cried unto thee, thou didst strengthen me with strength in my soul." Psalms 138:3. As prayer is the work of the Spirit in the heart, so doth delight in prayer owe itself to the same author. God will make them joyful in his house of prayer, Isaiah 56:7.

2. From grace. The Spirit kindles, but gives us the oil of grace to make the lamp burn clear. There must not only be wind to drive, but sails to catch it; a prayer without grace is a prayer without wings. There must be grace to begin it. A dead man cannot rejoice in his land, money, or food; he cannot act, and therefore cannot be cheerful in action. Cheerfulness supposeth life; dead men cannot perform a duty, "The dead praise not the Lord," (Psalms 115:17), nor dead souls a cheerful duty. There must not only be grace infused, but grace actuated. No man in a sleep or swoon can rejoice. There must not only be a living principle, but a lively operation. If the sap lurk only in the root, the branches can bring forth no fruit: our best prayers without the sap of grace diffusing itself, will be but as withered branches. Grace actuated puts heat into performances, without which they are but benumbed and frozen, (Reynolds). Just as a rusty key will not unlock a door, rusty grace will not enlarge the heart. There must be grace to maintain it. There is not only need of fire to kindle the lamp, but of oil to preserve the flame. Natural men may have their affections kindled in a way of common working, but they will presently faint and die, as the flame of cotton will dim and vanish, if there be no oil to nourish it. There is a temporary joy in hearing the word; and if in one duty, why not in another? Why not in prayer? Like a fire of thorns that makes a great blaze but a short stay, Matthew 13:20.

3. From a good conscience. "A good heart is a continual feast," Proverbs 15:15 He that hath a good conscience must needs be cheerful in his religious and civil duties. Guilt will come trembling, and with a sad countenance, into the presence of God's majesty. A guilty child cannot with cheerfulness come into a displeased father's presence. A soul smoked with hell, cannot with delight approach to he heaven. Guilty souls, in regard of the injury they have done to God, will be afraid to come; and in regard of the soot of sin wherewith they are defiled, and the blackness they have contracted, they will be ashamed to come. They know that by their sins they should provoke his anger, not allure his love. A soul under conscience of sin cannot up to God, Psalms 40:12. Nor will God with favour look down upon it, Psalms 59:8. It must be a pure heart that must see him with pleasure, Matthew 5:8. And pure hands must be lifted up to him, 1 Timothy 2:8. Jonah was asleep

after his sin, and was outdone in readiness to pray even by idolaters. The mariners jog him, but could not get him, that we read of, to call upon that God whom he had offended, Jonah 1:1-17. Where there is corruption, the sparks of sin will kindle that tinder, and weaken a spiritual delight. A perfect heart and a willing mind are put together, 1 Chronicles 29:9. There cannot be willingness without sincerity, nor sincerity without willingness.

4. From a holy and frequent familiarity with God. Where there is a great familiarity there is a great delight; delight in one another's company, and delight in one another's converse; strangeness contracts, and familiarity enlarges the soul. There is more swiftness in going to a God with whom we are acquainted, than to a God to whom we are strangers. This encourages the soul to go to God; I go to a God whose face I have seen, whose goodness I have tasted, with whom I have often met in prayer. Frequent familiarity makes us more understanding of the excellency of another; an excellency understood will be beloved, and being beloved, will be delighted in.

5. From hopes of receiving. There is an delight which ariseth from hopes of enjoying. "Rejoicing in hope," Romans 12:12. There cannot be a pleasant motion where there is a paralysis of doubts. How full of delight must that soul be that can plead a promise, and carry God's hand and seal to heaven, and shew him his own bond; when it can be pleaded not only as a favour to engage his mercy, but in some sense a debt to engage his truth and righteousness! Christ in his prayer, which was his swan-like song, (John 17:1-26) pleads the terms of the covenant between his Father and himself; "I have glorified thee on earth, glorify me with that glory I had with thee before the world was." This is the case of a delightful approach, when we carry a covenant of grace with us for ourselves, and a promise of security and perpetuity for the church. Upon this account we have more cause of a pleasant motion to God than the ancient believers had. Fear motivated them under the law; love motivates us under the gospel. He cannot but delight in prayer that hath arguments Of God's own framing to plead with God, who cannot deny his own arguments and reasonings. Little comfort can be sucked from a perhaps. But when we come to seek covenant-mercies, God's faithfulness to his covenant puts the mercy past a perhaps. We come to a God sitting upon a throne of grace, upon Mount Sion, not on Mount Sinai; to a God that desires our presence, more than we desire his assistance.

6. From a sense of former mercies. If manna be rained down, it doth not only take off our thoughts from Egyptian garlic, but quickens our desires for a second shower. A sense of God's majesty will make us lose our showy self-satisfaction; and a sense of God's love will make us lose our dumpishness. We may as well come again with a merry heart, when God accepts our prayers, as go away and eat our bread with joy when God accepts our works, Ecclesiastes 9:7. The doves will readily fly to the windows where they have formerly found shelter; and the beggar to the door where he hath often received alms. "Because he hath inclined his ear to hear me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live," Psalms 116:2. I have found refuge with God before; I have found my wants supplied, my soul raised, my temptations checked, my doubts answered, and my prayers accepted, therefore I will repeat my appeals with cheerfulness.

I might also add other causes; as a love to God, a heavenliness of spirit, a consideration of Christ's intercession, a deep humiliation. The more unpleasant sin is to our relish, the more delightful will God be, and the more cheerful our souls in addresses to him. The more unpleasant sin is to us, the more spiritual our souls are; and the more spiritual our souls, the more spiritual our

affections; the more stony, the more lumpish and unable to move; the more contrite, the more supple. Another cause is a spiritual taste: a report of a thing may give some pleasure, but a taste greater.

3. Reasons. Without cheerful seeking we cannot have a gracious answer.

1. God will not give an answer to those prayers that dishonour him. A flat and dumpish attitude is not for his honour. The heathens themselves thought their gods should not be put off with a sacrifice dragged to the altar. We do not read of lead, that lumpish earthly metal, employed about the tabernacle or temple, but the purer and most glittering sorts of metals. God will have the most excellent service, because he is the most excellent being. He will have the most delightful service, because he bestows the most delightful and excellent gifts. All sacrifices were to be offered up with fire, which is the quickest and most active element. It is a dishonour to so great, so glorious a majesty, to put him off with such low and dead-hearted services. Those petitions cannot expect an answer, which are offered in a manner injurious to the person we address them to. It is not for the credit of our great Master to have his servants dejected in his work: As though His service were an uncomfortable thing; as though God were a wilderness, and the world a paradise.

2. Dull and lumpish prayer doth not reach him, and therefore cannot expect an answer. Such desires are as arrows that sink down at our feet; there is no force to carry them to heaven: The heart is an unbent bow that hath no strength. When God will hear, he makes first a prepared heart, Psalms 10:17. He first strings the instrument, and then receives the sound. An enlarged heart only runs, Psalms 119:32. A contracted heart moves slowly, and often faints in the journey.

3. Lumpishness speaks an unwillingness that God should hear us. It speaks a kind of a fear that God should grant our petitions. He that puts up a petition to a prince coldly and dully, gives him good reason to think that he doth not care for an answer. That husbandman hath no great mind to harvest, that is lazy in tilling his ground and sowing his seed. How can we think God should delight to read over our petitions, when we take so little delight in presenting them? God gives not mercy to an unwilling person. The first thing God doth, is to make his people willing. Dull spirits seek God as if they did not care for finding him: such tempers either account not God real, or their petitions unnecessary.

4. Without delight we are not fit to receive a mercy. Delight in a mercy wanted, makes room for desire; and large desires make room for mercy. If no delight in begging, there will be no delight in enjoying. If there be no cheerfulness to quicken our prayers when we need a blessing, there will be little joy to quicken our praise when we receive a blessing. A weak, sickly stomach, is not fit to be seated at a plentiful table. Where there is a dull asking supply, there is none, or a very dull sense of wants. Now, God will not send His mercies but to a soul that will welcome them. The deeper the sense of our wants, the higher the estimation of our supplies. A cheerful soul is fit to receive the least, and fit to receive the greatest mercy. He will more prize a little mercy, than a dull petitioner shall prize a greater, because he hath a sense of his wants. If Zaccheus had not a great joy at the news of Christ's coming by his door, he would not have so readily entertained and welcomed him.

Use 1. Of information.

1. There is a great pleasure in the ways of God, if rightly understood. Prayer, which is a duty wherein we express our wants, is delightful. There is more sweetness in a Christian's asking, than in a wicked man's enjoying blessings.

2. What delight will there be in heaven! If there be such sweetness in desire, what will there be in a full fruition! If there is joy in seeking, what is there then in finding! Duty hath its sweets, its thousands; but glory its ten thousands. If the pleasure of the seed-time be so great, what will the pleasure of the harvest be!

3. The miserable condition of those who can delight in any thing but prayer. It is an aggravation of our enmity to God, when we can sin cheerfully and pray dully: when duty is more loathsome than iniquity.

Use 2. Of examination. We pray; but how are our hearts? If it be for what concerns our momentary being, is not our running like the running of Ahimaaz? But when for spiritual things, do not our hearts sink within us, like Nabal's? Let us, therefore, observe our hearts closely; allow them not to give us the slip in our examination of them; resolve not to take the first answer, but search to the bottom.

1. Whether we delight at all in prayer,

1. How do we prize the opportunities of duty? There is an opportunity of an earthly, and an opportunity of a heavenly gain; consider which our hearts more readily close with. Can we with much pleasure follow a vain world, and heartlessly welcome an opportunity of duty, delight more with Judas in bags, than in Christ's company? This is sad! But are praying opportunities our festival times? Do we go to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise?

2. Whether we seek excuses to avoid a present duty, when conscience and opportunity urge and invite us to it? Are our souls more skilful in delays than in performances? Are there no excuses when sin calls us, and studied put-offs when God invites us? Like the sluggard, folding our arms, yet a little while longer? Or do our hearts rise and beat quick against frivolous excuses that step in to hinder us from prayer?

3. How are our hearts affected in prayer? Are we more ready to pray ourselves asleep, than into a vigorous frame? Do we enter into it with some life, and find our hearts quickly tire and fatigue us? Are we more awake when we are up, than we were all the time upon our knees? Are our hearts in prayer like withered sapless things, and very quick afterwards if any worldly business invite us? Are we like logs and blocks in prayer, and like a roe upon the mountains in earthly concerns? Surely what our pulse beats quickest to, is the object most delighted in.

4. What time is it we choose for prayer? Is it not our drowsiest and laziest time, when our nods are as many, or more than our petitions; as though the dullest time, and the deadest state of mind were most suitable to a rising God? Do we come with our hearts full of the world, to pray for heaven? Or do we pick out the most lively seasons? Luther chose those hours for prayer and meditation wherein he found himself most lively for study.

5. Do we not often wish a duty over? As those in the prophet that were glad when the Sabbath was over, that they might run to their buying and selling? Or, are we of Peter's temper, and express Peter's language? It is good to be here with Christ on the mount.

6. Do we prepare ourselves by delightful and enlivening considerations? Do we think of the precept of God, which should spur us, and of the promise of God which should allure us? Do we rub our souls to heat them, Do we blow them to kindle them into a flame? Do we send up quick prayers for a quickening spirit? If thoughts of God be a burden, requests to him will not be a pleasure. If we have a coldness in our thoughts of God and duty, we can have no warmth in our desire, no delight in our petitions.

7. Do we content ourselves with dull motions, or do we give check to them? Can we, though our hearts be never so lazy, stroke ourselves at the end, and call ourselves good and faithful servants? Do we take our souls to task afterwards, and examine why they are so lazy, why so heavy? Do we inquire into the causes of our deadness? A gracious soul is more troubled at its dullness in prayer, than a natural conscience is at the omission of prayer. He will complain of his sluggishness and mend his pace.

2. If we find we have a delight, let us examine whether it be a delight of the right kind.

1. Do we delight in it because of the gift, we have ourselves, or the gift of others we join with? A man may rejoice in hearing the word, not because of the holiness and spirituality of the matter, but because of the goodness of the dress, and the elegance of the expression. Ezekiel 33:32; The prophet was unto them as a lovely song; as one that kind a pleasant voice. He may, upon the same ground, delight in prayer. But this is a temper not kindled by the true fire of the sanctuary. Or, do we delight in it, not when our tongues are most quick, but our hearts most warm; not because we have the best words, but the most spiritualized affections? We may have angels' gifts in prayer, without an angel's spirit.

2. Is there a delight in all parts of a duty? Not only in asking temporal blessings, or some spiritual, as pardoning mercy, but in begging for refining grace? Are we earnest only when we have bosom quarrels and conscience-convulsions, but tire when we come to pray for sanctifying mercy? The cause of this is a sense of discomfort with the trouble and danger, not with the sin and cause.

3. Doth our delight in prayer and spiritual things outdo our delight in outward things? The Psalmist's joy in God was more than his delight in the harvest of vintage, Psalms 4:7. Are we like ravens that delight to hover in the air sometimes, but our greatest delight is to feed upon carrion? Though we have, and may have a sensible delight in worldly things, yet is it as solid and rational as that we have in duty?

4. Is our delight in prayer a humble delight? Is it a rejoicing with humbling? "Serve the Lord with gladness, and rejoice before him with trembling," Psalms 2:11. If our service be right, it will be cheerful, and if truly cheerful, it will be humble.

5. Is our delight in prayer accompanied with a delight in waiting? Do we, like merchants, not only delight in the first launching of a ship, or the setting it out of the haven with a full freight; but also in expectations of a rich return of spiritual mercies? Do we delight to pray, though God for the present doth not delight to give, and wait, like David, with an owning God's wisdom in delaying? Or do we shoot them only as arrows at random, and never look after them where they strike, or where to find them?

6. Is our delight in praising God when mercy comes, answerable to the delight in praying when a wanted mercy was begged? The ten lepers desired mercy with an equal cheerfulness, in hopes of having their leprosy cured; but only the one who returned expressed genuine delight. As he prayed with a loud voice, so he praised with a loud voice, Luke 17:13, Luke 17:15. And Christ tells him, his faith had made him whole. As he had an answer in the way of grace, so he had before a gracious delight in his asking; the others had a natural delight, and so a return in the way of common providence.

Use 3. Of exhortation. Let us delight in prayer. God loves a cheerful giver in alms, and a cheerful petitioner in prayer. God would have his children free with him. He takes special notice of a spiritual frame, "who hath engaged his heart?" Jeremiah 30:21. The more delight we have in God, the more delight he will have in us. He takes no pleasure in a lumpish service. It is an uncomely sight to see a joyful sinner and a dumpish petitioner. Why should we not exercise as much joy in holy duties, as formerly we did in sinful practices? How delightfully will men sit at their games, and spend their days in gluttony and luxury? And shall not a Christian find much more delight in applying himself to God? We should delight that we can, and have hearts to ask such gifts, that thousands in the world never dream of begging. To be dull, is a discontentedness with our own petitions. Delight in prayer is the way to gain assurance. To seek God, and treat him as our chiefest good, endears the soul to him. Delighting in accesses to him, will enflame our love. And there is no greater sign of an interest in him than a powerful estimation of him. God casts off none that affectionately clasp about his throne. To this purpose,

1. Pray for quickening grace. How often do we find David upon his knees for it? God only gives this grace, and God only stirs this grace.

2. Meditate on the promises you intend to plead. Unbelief is the great root of all dumpishness. It was by the belief of the word we had life at first, and by an exercise of that belief we gain liveliness. What maintains our love will maintain our delight; the amiableness of God, and the excellency of the promises, are the incentives and fuel both of the one and of the other. Think that they are eternal things you are to pray for and that you have as much invitation to beg them, and as good a promise to attain them, as David, Paul, or any other ever had. How would this awaken our drowsy souls, and elevate our heavy hearts, and open the lazy eye-lids to look up! And whatever meditation we find begin to kindle our souls, let us follow it on, that the spark may not go out.

3. Choose the time when your hearts are most revived. Observe when God sends an invitation, and hoist up the sails when the wind begins to blow. There is no Christian but hath one time or another a greater activeness of spirit. Choose none of those seasons which may quench the heat, and dull the sprightliness of your affection. Resolve beforehand this, to delight yourselves in the Lord, and thereby you shall gain the desire of your hearts.

A Discourse of God's being the Author of Reconciliation

A Discourse of God's being the Author of Reconciliation by Stephen Charnock And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

These words are small in bulk, but great in mystery, it is the heads of the gospel in a nut-shell; the most sparkling diamond in the whole golden ring of Scripture. It comprehends the counsels of eternity and the transactions of time. A wonder in heaven, God bringing forth a man-child to be a propitiation for sin, which was the Jews' stumbling-block and the Gentiles' scoff. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24; but wherein the wisdom and grace of God's counsel in heaven, and the power of his actions on earth, clearly shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. The Jacob's ladder, the upper part fixed in heaven, and the lower foot standing upon the earth. Angels descended on that; God descends to man by this in acts of wisdom and grace, and man ascends to God in acts of faith and love.

If there be any mystery in Christianity more admirable than another, it is this of reconciliation. If any mystery in this mystery, it is the various and incomprehensible engagement of the Father in it, in and through Christ. If anything in Scripture sets forth this mystery in a few words like a picture in a little medal, it is this which I have read, wherein the apostle gives us a short but full and clear account of the doctrine of reconciliation, which is the substantial part of the gospel.

There is a double reconciliation here and in the following verse expressed.

First, Fundamental; at the death of Christ, whereby it was obtained. This is the ground of God's laying aside his anger; this is reconciliatio legalis or de jure.

Secondly, Actual or particular, when it is complied with by faith. This regards the application of it, when God does actually lay aside his enmity, and imputes sin no more to the person. Which consists of two parts.

1. The proclamation of this: 2 Corinthians 5:20, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' declaring God's willingness to take men into favour. This is the declaration of reconciliation de jure, or the right of reconciliation. The gospel contains the articles of peace, and the counsels and methods of God about it. It is the copy of God's heart from eternity.

2. Particular acceptance, which is on our part an acceptance of the terms of reconciliation, on God's part an acceptance of us into his favour, and a non-imputation of our sins to us, which the apostle calls, Romans 5:11, the receiving the atonement; this is the accepting the atonement, the ground of reconciliation on man's part, and the application on God's part. The first, viz., the proclamation of it to us, is God's promise to us, the other is the performance; the one is God's gracious favour to us, the other is God's gracious act in us. Christ is the cause of both these reconciliations: of the fundamental reconciliation by his death, of our actual reconciliation by his

life; the one by himself in person, the other by his deputy the Spirit.

God. God is taken here by some* "ousiodos", for the whole trinity, Christ, "oikonomikos", as mediator.

Others, and more likely, understand by God the Father, to whom reconciliation is ascribed per modum appropriationis, as he is the fountain of the divinity, as the fathers use to call him. As the Father is the principal person wronged, and declaring his anger against us, the reconciliation is principally made to him; in which sense we are said to have 'access to the Father,' Ephesians 2:18, through Christ, and by the Spirit. The Son brings us to the Father, and the Spirit directs us to the Son. Christ takes away God's enmity to us, and the Spirit takes away our enmity to God. As the first creation is appropriated to the Father, so is the second also. The apostle having described the new state of things, Ephesians 2:17, tells us, Ephesians 2:18, that 'all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' that this new state is of God, who is no less the creator of the second state than of the first. Adam, the common head of God's appointment, by his falling, overthrew himself and his posterity; God therefore appoints another head to reduce men again to himself. What is here called reconciling, is called, Ephesians 1:10, 'gathering together in one,' "anakephalaaiosasthai". God would gather them together to himself under one head, as they had been separated from him under one head.

God was in Christ. Some make this expression to signify no more than by Christ, Ephesians 2:18; or for Christ's sake: Eph. 4:34, 'As God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.' But the expression notes something more than for Christ's sake. In actual pardon, Christ, is the moving cause by his intercession, as well as the meritorious cause by his propitiation: 1 John 2:2, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation,' &c. But the first purpose of reconciliation, and the appointing Christ as the medium for it, had no moving cause but the infinite compassion of God to his fallen creature. Christ was not the moving cause of this, though he be the meritorious cause of all the effects of it, and laid the foundation of an actual reconciliation by being the centre of the agreement between the justice and mercy of God. God's anger was appeased by the death of Christ, but God was the first author of this propitiation, appointing this method of restoring the creature, and this person, or Jesus, to do it.

God was in Christ. It may be meant of the Trinity: the Father was in Christ constituting and directing, the Son was in Christ by personal union, the Spirit was in Christ gifting him for this work of reconciliation; but I would rather understand it of the Father. Being in Christ is not meant,

1. Of that essential inness or oneness whereby the Father and the Son are one in essence. Or as a father of the flesh and his son are said to be of the same nature, disposition, and likeness, whereby we say the father lives in the son, in the lineaments and temper of the son, whereby he resembles the father. It is true, the father and the son have the same nature, the same perfections and divine excellencies; so the Father is in the Son without any respect to reconciliation. He is so in the Son in creation also; he is so also one with the Spirit. But this notes some singular manner of inness in Christ, which is not in the third person, or in any else.

2. Nor in regard of that affection the Father bears to Christ. He is indeed in a peculiar manner in Christ in regard of love, more than in all believers besides. He loved him as the head, believers as the members. This is common to believers with Christ, though not in the same degree.

3. But it notes some peculiar manner of operation in Christ as mediator. Redemption was not the work only of the Son; the Son wrought it, the Father directed it; the Son paid the price, the Father appointed him to do so, received it of him, accepted it from him, and accounted it to others through him, which is that we are bound to believe, as Christ tells the Jews, John 10:38, 'that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him,' John 14:20, 'I am in my Father.' The Father is in Christ by way of direction, support, and influence, and Christ in the Father by way of observance, obedience, and dependence. As the world was in Christ as in their surety and head, satisfying God, so God is in Christ as in his ambassador, making peace with the world. All things that Christ acted and managed in this work are to be referred to God as the prime author. The world. The world properly signifies the frame of heaven and earth, and all creatures therein, joined together by an exact harmony, order, and dependence upon one another; but in the Scripture is chiefly understood of mankind, the top of the lower world and end of its creation. It is frequent in all writers to put the place for the inhabitants; and it is taken for the most part for the corrupted world, the world fallen under sin and wrath, and opposing God: John 1:10, 'The world knew him not.' And when God takes some out of the world, he calls them not by the name of the world, but his church. And those that he brings out of this sinful condition, he is said to bring 'out of the world'" John 15:19, and to choose 'out of the world,' John 17:6. The world is fundamentally reconciled, there being a foundation laid for the world to be at peace with God, if they accept of the terms upon which this amity is to be obtained; or all ages of the world, those before the coming of Christ in the flesh as well as those after, 1 John 2:2.

Reconciling. The greatest controversy lies in this word, whether by it be meant God's reconciliation to us, or our laying down our enmity against God. Socinus and his followers say God was not angry with man, he was reconciled before, but that this place is meant of affection towards God, because it is said we are reconciled to God, and not God to us. But learned men have cleared this. The phrase in heathen authors of men's being reconciled to their gods, is always understood for appeasing the anger of their gods, and escaping those dreadful judgments either actually inflicted or certainly threatened from heaven. By reconciliation of us to God in this place cannot be meant our conversion, or any act of ours.

1. Because the reconciliation here spoken of was the matter of the apostles' discourses and sermons, and the great argument they used to convert the world to God. If, then, that sense were true, it would be an impertinent argument, unworthy of those that Christ called out to be the first messengers and heralds of this redemption. The sense of their discourse would run thus: God has already converted you, therefore be converted to him; as it is nonsense to exhort a man to do that very act which he has already done.

2. This reconciliation does formally consist in the non-imputation of sin to men. Now this is God's act, not the creature's. 'Not imputing sin' and 'forgiving sin' are the same thing, Romans 4:7-8, therefore the reconciliation itself is an act of God. If God were to be brought into our favour as a person offending, we should be said rather not to impute God's supposed offences to him, and not to charge him with that which was the ground of our hatred of him. The apostle tells us that God does not impute the trespasses of the world to them emphatically, as Grotius observes, but he does to another whom he had made sin for them: 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' And the apostles were sent about the world to testify this benefit, that men might give credit to God, and turn to him. And upon the declaration of this doctrine, that God

had in Christ laid aside his anger for their sins, and having punished another for them, would not punish them if they embraced by faith what was proposed to them, they besought men that they would lay aside their enmity against God, as he declared himself willing to lay aside his enmity against them, and had testified this by sending his own Son to bear their punishment.

There is a like place with this: Romans 5:6, Romans 5:10, 'if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' If Christ died for sinners to make an atonement for them, it was then to procure God's well-pleasedness with them, because they had offended him. But if he died to bring God in favour with us, then his death was an atonement for God, and to expiate God's offences, who never was, nor can be, guilty of any towards his creature. But it is evident the reconciliation there mentioned, as well as in the text, was antecedent to conversion, and therefore is not the same with the conversion of the creature.

1. Because otherwise the apostle's argument would have little validity in it, for it proceeds a majori, 'much more, being reconciled by his death, we shall be saved.' If God were so infinitely kind to us as to turn away his anger from us by the death of his Son when we were yet enemies, how much more tender will he be of us since he has taken us into favour, and we are actually converted to him!

2. The effect of this reconciliation is a saving from wrath by the blood of Christ: Romans 5:9, 'Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' Therefore this reconciliation must be by appeasing that wrath under which we should otherwise have fallen. And the effect of it is to have peace with God: Romans 5:1, 'We have peace with God;' whereas, if it were meant of God's being brought into our favour, it should have been said, God has peace with us, and that God has access to us.

3. Justification is the effect and consequent of this reconciliation. And this Crellius confesses, *Justificatio est effectus reconciliationis*. But this is the act of God, Romans 4:5, Romans 8:33.

4. Reconciliation is here attributed to the death of Christ as a distinct cause from that of conversion: Romans 5:10, 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;' that is the *reconciliatio impetrata*, which in the second expression of our actual or applied reconciliation is ascribed to the life of Christ or intercession, that being the end for which he lives in heaven, Hebrews 7:25.

5. We are said to 'receive the atonement,' Romans 5:11, which is the same with 'receiving forgiveness of sins,' Acts 10:43. But to receive conversion is a phrase not at all used in Scripture. When a man turns to the east, no man says he receives turning to the east. Besides, if it were meant of bringing God into our favour, it were more proper to say God received the atonement, and not we.

6. If by reconciliations were meant our bending our hearts to love God, there could not be any sufficient reason rendered why the sanctification of the heart should be laid down by the apostle as the end of this reconciliation, as it is Colossians 1:22, 'Yet now has he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unreprouable in his sight.' For nothing can be both medium and finis sui ipsius, its own end and means too. By reconciliation is meant the whole work of redemption. The Scripture has various terms for our recovery by Christ, which all amount to one

thing, but imply the variety of our misery by sin, and the full proportion of the remedy to all our capacities in that misery. Our fall put us under various relations; our Saviour has cut those knots, and tied new ones of a contrary nature. It is called reconciliation as it respects us as enemies, salvation as it respects us in a state of damnation, propitiation as we are guilty, redemption as captives, and bound over to punishment. Reconciliation, justification, and adoption differ thus: in reconciliation, God is considered as the supreme Lord and the injured party, and man is considered as an enemy that has wronged him; in justification, God is considered as a judge, and man as guilty; in adoption, God is considered as a father, and man as an alien. Reconciliation makes us friends, justification makes us righteous, adoption makes us heirs. This verse then represents to us the doctrine of redemption under the term of reconciliation. In it we have, I. The principal author and spring of this reconciliation, God.

II. The immediate efficient or the meritorious cause of it, Christ.

III. The subjects, God and the world: 'the world to himself.'

IV. The form of this reconciliation, or the fruit of it: 'not imputing their trespasses unto them,' not charging them with their crimes.

V. The instrumental cause of actual reconciling, the ministry of the word. The observations we may take notice of are these:

First, Reconciliation by Christ is the foundation of the regeneration of nature: 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 'All things are become new, and all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' The design of God was to reduce us to happiness, which was not to be done without the satisfaction of his justice. Christ by his death satisfies that; in his life is a model of our sanctification. God is first the God of peace before he be the God of sanctification: 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 'and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' The destruction of the enmity of our nature was founded upon the removing the enmity in God. There had been no sanctification of our natures had there not been a redemption of our persons, no more than for devils, who remain unholy because they remain unreconciled. Besides, since God has been at peace with us he will sanctify us, that the actual peace may be preserved by the weeding out the remainders of the enmity in our natures. It is as he is a God of peace that he conquers any of our spiritual enemies. He will never engage in the bruising Satan under our feet till he be our reconciled God in Christ: Romans 6:20, 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.'

Secondly, God does not act principally as a Creator, but as a reconcilable God ever since the first promise All blessings flow from him as standing in that relation. All his providences in keeping up the world, the fruitful showers, the enjoyments of the sons of men in the world, are upon the account of the Mediator, wherein he has declared himself a reconciling God. He acts towards the world as a reconciling God, towards believers as reconciled. He is reconcilable as long as he is inviting and keeps men alive in a state of probation. But he is not reconciled but to those that accept of the way of reconciliation which he has wrought in his Son, and according to the methods whereby he wrought it. The relation of a Creator cannot cease while there is any creature; but if God should act towards the world only as Creator, the dissolution of the world had been long ago, because the law of the creation had been transgressed. But he acts as a 'faithful Creator', 1 Peter 4:19, as a Creator according to the promise of the new covenant, which his faithfulness respects.

Thirdly, And that which I only intend, is this,

I. Doctrine. God is the great spring and author of our recovery. Or God was principally engaged in the whole undertaking and effecting of our redemption and reconciliation by Christ. God was the first mover in those acts whereby the first foundation-stone was laid and the building reared. All was begun by his order, and managed by his direction and influence: 2 Corinthians 5:18, 'All things are of God, who has reconciled,' i. e. all things are of God in this reconciling act. The whole Trinity is concerned in it. Each person acts a distinct part. The glory of contriving is appropriated to the Father, as he that made the first motion, counselled Christ to undertake it, sent him in the fullness of time, and bruised him upon the cross, making his soul an offering for sin. The glory of effecting it is ascribed to the second person, both in the satisfactory part to the justice of God, and also in the victorious part, the conquest of Satan. The glory of working the conditions upon which it is enjoyed, and the applying it, is attributed wholly to the Spirit. The story of the creation seems to intimate some other work to be done in the world by God besides that work of creation which God the Father made at that time: Genesis 2:2, 'And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made, and rested from all his work which he had made;' and Genesis 2:3, 'and rested from all the work which God created and made;' thrice repeated, He rested from that work which he had made, he made no more of that kind and nature. But a rest he could not find; he rested from it, but not in it; there was a work of a nobler strain behind to be made by him for his rest. He foresaw how soon he should be disturbed by the entrance of sin; and though he rested from making any more creatures of that sort, yet he had works of grace to make afterwards, more wonderful than those of nature. He had a further display to make of his gracious perfections, which could not be deciphered on the face of that creation; but a work there was remaining wherein he intended to bring forth the glory of his divine excellency which yet lay hid. This is the highest draught of divine wisdom and goodness; therefore if the Father created all things wherein his wisdom and goodness appears in a shadowy manner, drawn with fainter colours, he should have no less hand in this, wherein his wisdom was to appear without a veil, in its full lustre and eternally durable colours, when this material world shall pass away: Ephesians 3:10, 'A mighty variety of wisdom,' "polupoikilos sophia", which delights the Creator and amazes the creature! He would no less have a hand in the second creation of all things by Christ than he had in the first, since a greater glory was to redound to him as reconciling than as creating, by how much it is more excellent to give man a happy being than to give man a bare being. God is therefore said to be the 'head of Christ,' 1 Corinthians 11:3, as Christ is the head of man. As man was made to declare the glory of Christ, so is Christ formed to declare the glory of God. As all influences the members receive in point of direction and motion are from the head, so all the influences Christ had were from God, as the head directing and moving him. As the head counsels what the members act, so God counsels what Christ acts. God brings forth this Mediator as his divine image, and diffuses all his perfections in and through him before the eyes of men, and thought it a work too worthy to be contrived by any but himself, and transacted by any but his Son. God only sent him to make it, and called him back to himself as soon as ever he had finished it.

We shall consider, 1. What reconciliation is, and wherein the nature of it consists.

2. That God the Father is and must be the prime cause of this.

3. Wherein the agency of the Father appears, and by what acts it is manifested in this transaction.

4. The use.

1. First, What reconciliation is.

(1.) Reconciliation implies that there was a former friendship. There were once good terms between God and man, there was a time wherein they lovingly met and conversed together. Man loved God and was beloved by him, till he left his first love and broke out into rebellion against him. God pronounced all his creatures 'good,' and man at the last 'very good,' with an emphasis. A God of infinite goodness could not hate his creature, which was an extract of his own image. Man had the law of God engraved upon his heart, and therefore could not in that state hate God, while he was guided by that law of righteousness and exact goodness in himself. Thus was man God's favourite above all creatures of the lower world, styled his son, Luke 3:38; but how quickly did he prove a parricide, and a quarrel was commenced between God and him! Now, reconciliation is piecing up of a broken amity, and a reglutination of those affections which were disjoined. And the miracle of this reconciliation made by God in Christ excels the former friendship; that might be broken off, as we find by woeful experience it was. This as to some acts and fruits may be interrupted, not abolished; as the beams of the sun may be clouded, but the influence of the sun cannot be eclipsed. Then God and man were not so closely united but they might be parted; now God and the believer are so affectionately knit that they cannot be separated.

(2.) Reconciliation implies an enmity and hatred, or at least a disgust on one or both sides. Adam was created in a state of God's favour, but not long after his creation he apostatised to corruption; by his creation a child of God's love, by his corruption a child of God's wrath. While he stood, he was the possessor of paradise and heir of heaven; when he fell, God seals a lease of ejection, and man becomes an heir of hell; he turns rebel, and joins with Satan, God's greatest enemy. God took the forfeiture of his possession, turns him out of house and home, and hinders his re-entrance by a flaming sword turning every way to keep his fingers off from the tree of life, Genesis 3:24, or hope of felicity upon the former score. Man invaded God's right of sovereignty, and God, of a sovereign Father, becomes a punishing judge. Man falls into sin, and wrath falls upon man; sin separated between God and him, and unsheathed the flaming sword. Thus are heaven and earth at variance. The hatred is mutual: God hates men, not as his creatures, but sinners; man hates God, not as God, but as sovereign and judge. Man turned off God from being his Lord, and God turned off man from being his favourite; man vents his serpentine poison against God, God pours out his wrathful anger on man. On man's part this enmity is by sin; on the part of God (1.) from the righteousness of his nature, since he cannot behold iniquity without indignation, Habakkuk 1:13. As he cannot but love goodness, so he cannot but hate iniquity, Psalms 5:5-6. He hates and abhors all the workers of iniquity. He hates the sins of his saints, though not their persons; he hates the persons of wicked men, not primarily, but for their sin. (2.) From the righteousness of his law made against sin, whereby he cannot but according to his veracity punish it. His curses must be executed, his law vindicated, and his justice satisfied; truth and fidelity to his law, his nature, his justice engages him. Since there is nothing of the life of God in us naturally, there can be nothing of the love of God to us; for what affection can the Deity have to brutishness, and infinite purity to loathsomeness? Now, there having been such an enmity, man is properly said to be reconciled. Good angels cannot properly be said to be reconciled, because there was no difference between God and them. It is a question, because believers are said to be reconciled, and reconciliation implying a former hatred, Whether God hated believers before their conversion? In answer to this,

[1.] To say God hated them fully before, and loves them now, would argue a mutability in God, which the apostle excludes: James 1:17, he is 'the Father of lights,' who is so far from having any real change, that he has not 'a shadow' of it. If he did not love his elect before Christ died for them, and loves them afterwards, then there is a change in his will; for to love them is nothing else but to will eternal life to them, and for God to hate any is not to will eternal life to be their inheritance. If God did so hate his elect before Christ's death as to will that they should not inherit eternal life at all, and after Christ's death did will that they should, his will would then be inconsistent and changeable. If God chose them from eternity, he loved them from eternity; if he chose them in Christ as their Head, Ephesians 1:4, he loved them in Christ as their Head, he could not choose them to eternal life in those methods without loving them. As he loved Christ the Head before he died for those that were to be his members, so he loved those that were to be his members before they were actually engrafted in him. As he loved Christ as Mediator before he was actually sacrificed, so he loved his chosen ones before they were actually reconciled. When Christ came to reconcile, he came to do God's will; and when any soul is actually reconciled, it is not a change in God's will, but the performance of God's eternal will.

[2.] There is a change in the creature, but that does not imply a change in God. It is not a new will in God, but a new state in the creature. The creation adds no new relation or accident, but a change and effect in the creature. And as the schools generally determine, it is one thing *mutare voluntatem*, another thing *velle mutationem*; as a master commands a servant this work one day, another work another day, the master changes not his will, but wills a change in his work, or as some illustrate it, as a physician prescribes his patient one sort of physic one day, another kind of physic the next, the physician does not change his will, but will a change. As a man has a mind to adopt a poor child to be his son, affection is the ground of this resolution; but he lets him for a while run about in rags, and seems to take no notice of his misery, yet at length takes him, and clothes him, and adopts him. There is a change in the state of this child, but not in the affection, the original of it. There was a change in the prodigal when he returned, but not in the father when he embraced him: "My son which was lost is found," it was a new finding of the son, but not a new affection in the father.

Well, but how may God be said to love or hate believers before their actual reconciliation, since he is the author of it?

[1.] God loves them with a love of purpose. God loves them with a love of purpose or election, but till grace be wrought, not with a love of acceptance, we are within the love of his purpose as we are designed to be the servants of Christ, not within the love of his acceptance till we are actually the servants of Christ: Romans 14:18, 'serves Christ,' and is 'acceptable to God.' They are alienated from God while in a state of nature, and not accepted by God till in a state of grace. There is in God a love of good will and a love of delight, *amor benevolentiae*, seu "*eudokias*", *amor complacentiae* seu "*euarestias*". The love of good will is love in the root, the love of delight is love in the flower. The love of good will looks upon us afar off, the love of delight inns itself in us, draws near to us. By peace with God we have access to God, by his love of delight he has access to us. God wills well to them before grace, but is not well pleased with them till grace. Christ is the effect of his love of benevolence and compassion to relieve us, which love ordered Christ as the means, John 3:16; but Christ is the cause of that love of friendship wherewith God loves us. A king has a kindness for a prisoner in his bolts, and sends some to clothe him; but he has no delight in him to

think him fit for his embraces, till he be delivered, both from his fetters and his filthiness. An elect person is not simply beloved before his actual reconciliation, because he has no gracious quality which may be the object of that love. Neither is he simply hated, for if so, how could he have any gracious habits infused into him whereby he may be made the object of delight? It cannot be denied but that God intends to bestow supernatural gifts upon those he has chosen, else wherein does his love consist? And it cannot be conceived how a simple hatred can consist with such an intention. He loves them to make them his friends, and after reconciliation he loves them as his friends. It is love in God to make an object for his love. God loves an object qualified with grace, therefore to qualify an object so as to make it lovely, argues love in God to that object he so qualifies; love in intention before the qualification. Hatred could never be the foundation and cause of that qualification; sea, the gift of Christ, which is the effect, does suppose the love of God which is the cause. God indeed was angry with all mankind, but it was an anger mixed with love; he was angry, but yet willing to be appeased. A pregnant example of this, which may give us an understanding of it, we have from the mouth of God himself: Job 13:7-8, 'My wrath is kindled against thee' (speaking to Eliphaz), 'and against thy two friends. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering.' There is a cloud upon God's face, but his mercy as the sun peeps out behind the cloud, as he acquaints them with his anger, so he shows them the way to pacify it. Though his wrath was kindled, yet he is not so ready to inflame it as he is to have it quenched by the means he prescribes them, wherein Job was a type of Christ, whose sacrifice God only accepts as well as appoints. There is no love of complacency either in the persons or services of any, but as considered in Christ the reconciler satisfying the justice of God. When an elect person is engrafted in Christ, that love which was bubbling in the fountain from eternity flows out in the streams.[2.] God does hate his elect in some sense before their actual reconciliation. God was placable before Christ, appeased by Christ. But till there be such conditions which God has appointed in the creature, he has no interest in this reconciliation of God; and whatsoever person he be in whom the condition is not found, he remains under the wrath of God, and therefore is in some sense under God's hatred.

First, God does not hate their persons, nor any natural or moral good in them. Not indeed the person of any creature, for as persons they are his own work. The creation was good in God's eye at the first framing, and whatsoever of goodness remains is still affected by an unchangeable Being, for infinite and unbounded goodness cannot hate that which is good either naturally or morally. Christ loved that morality he saw in the young man. God loves their moral qualities, and they are the common gifts of his Spirit, and qualities wherewith he has endowed them; as their primitive natures were good, so what approaches nearest to that nature has some tincture of goodness, and therefore has some amiableness in the eye of God. But he took no pleasure in them, neither in their persons nor services, as acceptable to him, without the Son of his love.

Secondly, God hates their sins. Sin is always odious to God, let the person be what it will. God never hated, nor ever could, the person of Christ, yet he hated and testified in the highest measure his hatred of those iniquities he stood charged with as one surety. The father could not but hate the practices of a prodigal, though he loved his person. God loves nothing but himself, and other things as they are like himself, and in order to himself; therefore God must needs hate whatsoever is contrary to his immaculate purity, and different from his image. He hates the sins of believers,

though pardoned and mortified; though his mercy pardons them, his holiness can never love them; though the punishment be removed from the person, yet the nature and sinfulness is not taken from the sin. Much more does God hate the sins of his unconverted elect, which are neither pardoned nor mortified. If he hates sin in its weakness, much more in its strength. He hates their sins objectively, that is the object of, and the only object of, his hatred; their persons terminative, as the effects of his wrath do terminate in their persons. Though sin is the object of God's hatred, as being a contrariety to his holy law, yet it is not the object of his wrath, but the person sinning; actions are not immediately punished, neither can, but the persons so acting. In that respect God may be said to hate the persons of men, and of his elect before conversion, as the effects of his wrath do terminate in them.

Thirdly, God hates their state. Though God loves morality in men, yet that does not include the acceptation of their persons, or of their moral acts, or any love to their state. Though Christ loved the young man's morality, yet he could not love his state, since it was at some distance from the kingdom of heaven, though not so great a distance from it. The elect before their conversion are in a state of enmity, a state of darkness, a state of ignorance, and a state of slavery; and that state is odious to God, and makes them incapable, while in that state, to 'inherit the kingdom of God.' 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 'Such were some of you,' such sinners, and in such a state of sin that could not inherit the kingdom of God. A man that has a love to a beggarly child, and does intend to adopt him, he loves his person, but hates his present state of nastiness and beggary; and when he does actually adopt him, changes his state, his relation, and divests him of his filthiness. The state of the elect before actual reconciliation is odious, because it is a state of alienation from God; whatsoever grows up from the root of the old Adam cannot be delightful to him.

Fourthly, God hates them as to the withholding the effects of his love. We call the effects of God's grace grace, and the effects of God's wrath wrath. So God may be said to hate an elect person before his conversion, because, being in that state a child of wrath, the wrath of God abides on him, and the curses of the law are in force against him. As God is said to repent, when he withholds those judgments and effects of his anger which he had threatened against a nation, so God may be said to be angry and to hate, when he pours out vials of wrath, and also when he withholds the fruits and proper effects of love.

(3.) Proposition as a caution. Though God be the prime author of this reconciliation, yet no man is actually reconciled to God till he does comply with those conditions whereupon God offers it. 'God was in Christ' when he was 'reconciling the world;' we must be in Christ if we be reconciled to God: he in a way of direction, we in a way of dependency. Till a man does believe, though God has been reconciling the world in Christ, yet he is not under the actual peace with God, though under the offers of this peace. 'The wrath of God abides' on him, as well as the offers of peace are proposed to him, otherwise what need had the apostle to beseech men to be reconciled to God, upon the account that he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, if there were not something to be done by us in order to it: 2 Corinthians 5:20, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' To what purpose should we be exhorted to lay down our arms, discard our enmity, offer up our weapons, if nothing were to be done on our parts. It is true, God is in Christ 'reconciling the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' But to whom? To all the world without any distinction? Though the offers are made to all, yet while men accept not of them, sin will be imputed to the unbelieving world. Shall we think God will recede from his anger till we recede from

our sins? What rebels can be said to be reconciled to their prince till they observe the conditions in his proclamation? Christ cannot present men friends till by faith they are united to him; for though there be an accomplishment of the general reconciliation in the death of Christ, yet there is no benefit accruing to us till full union by faith. Much less can man be said to be reconciled from eternity; the apostle cuts off that conceit: Colossians 1:21, 'Yet now has he reconciled,' now, not before. If it were from eternity, the Colossians were never enemies to God, if always reconciled, the apostle speaks a falsehood, for to be enemies and friends at the same time implies a contradiction, to be reconciled from eternity, and yet but now, are inconsistent. Alas! we come into the world with the badge of God's wrath upon us, and our backs turned upon God. The first thing we do is to kick against him. Reconciliation in the decree is from eternity; but we cannot more properly be said to be reconciled from eternity because of that, than to be created and born from eternity, because decreed to come upon the stage of the world in time. Reconciliation in the purchase is temporary; we were reconciled meritoriously at the time of Christ's death, but no more actually reconciled than we can be said to be born when Adam was created, because we were in him as a cause. Reconciliation particular and actual is temporary; we have then God appeased towards us, when we can by faith hold upon his Son upon the cross, and with a hearty sincere faith plead the wounds made in Christ's sides, the sorrows in his soul as a propitiation for sin, an atonement of God's own appointment. It is not sin but the sinner is reconciled. 'God will hold an eternal antipathy to sin, as sin does to God; God will never be pacified towards sin, though he will towards the sinner. He is in Christ reconciling the world, not sin in the world, to himself; let none, therefore, build false conceits upon this doctrine. We must distinguish between reconciliation designed by God, obtained by Christ, owned by the gospel, received by the soul.

(4.) This reconciliation on God's part in and by Christ is very congruous for the honour of God, and absolutely necessary for us.

[1.] For the honour of God.

First, For the honour of his wisdom. Had not a mediator been appointed, mankind had been destroyed at the beginning of his sin, God had lost the glory of his present works, and his wisdom would seem to lie under a disparagement in publishing a rest from his works and pronouncing them good, when the very same day (as some think) they should be sullied with an universal spot, and the choicest part of the lower creation turned back upon God, and all the other creatures employed to base and unworthy ends, below their creation and contrary to the honour of their Creator. Without the appointment of a reconciler, the honour of God in creation had been impaired, the creation had been in vain. No creatures could have attained the true end of their creation, since man, whom they were designed to serve, had apostatised from the service of his and their Creator; they could not be employed by him in that state for the service they were ultimately intended for.

Secondly, For the honour of his truth and justice. Since God had decreed and enacted that whosoever sinned should die, God must either, upon man's sin, destroy him to preserve his truth and justice, or neglect his own law, and turn it upside down for the discovery of his mercy. These things were impossible to the nature of God; he must be true to himself, just to his law. If justice then should destroy, what way was there to discover his mercy? If God should restore man to his friendship without any consideration, where would be the honour of his justice, the firmness of his

truth in his threatening? The wisdom of God finds a way for the honour of both, whereby he preserves the righteousness of his law and the counsel of his mercy, not by changing the sentence against sin, but the person, and laying that upon his Son as our surety, which we by the rigour of the law were to endure in our own persons, whereby justice was satisfied with the punishment due to the sinner, and mercy was satisfied with the merit due to our Saviour.

[2.] Necessary for us. Necessary since all men had breathed in the contagion of Adam, had his corrupt blood, and the poison of the old serpent diffused in their veins; and being thus enemies to God, became subject to wrath and the eternal malediction of the law. Necessary at the very first defection; had there not been an advocate to interpose, we cannot conceive how, according to the methods of the established law, God could have borne one moment with the world. There was as much necessity for some extraordinary remedy against the biting of the old serpent as against the bitings of the fiery ones in the wilderness, which could not be cured by any natural means. They must have inevitably perished under their venom, and man under his. If we come to God in ourselves, what are we but as criminals before a judge, stubble before fire? God is infinitely good, i. e. infinitely contrary to evil; and if to evil, then to us, who think, speak, act nothing but evil. The justice of God upon man's sin required that man should endure an infinite punishment; and because he could not endure a punishment intensely infinite, by reason of the limitedness of his nature, as a finite creature, therefore he was to endure a punishment extensively infinite in regard of duration, whereof he was capable by reason of the immortality of his soul. Since things stood thus, the fallen creature could not be restored to felicity till some way were found out to restore the amity, with a full satisfaction to both, that God might, without any dishonour to himself and his law, rejoice in his creature, that the creature might with a firm security rejoice again in God. The will of God is an evidence of the necessity of it. Why did God ordain it if it had not been necessary? The natural inclination and will of Christ as man was contrary to it; for he in the flesh desired this cup might pass from him. How, then, should the infinite wisdom of God, the infinite affection to his Son, put him upon that which was so ignominious, and the infinite wisdom of the Son consent to such an event, without an apparent necessity?

2. Second thing. That God the Father must needs be, and is, the author of this reconciliation.

1. That God must needs be the author of this work. Reconciliation in all the parts and degrees of it, in all the model and frame of it, is his act. The first invention of this way, the first proposition, the last execution and acceptation, owns him for the author. To him we must needs owe the contrivance, declaration, and accomplishment. If God be the first cause in all things, he is the first cause in the highest of his works. Nothing comes to pass in time but what was decreed in eternity, If anything were done which he did not first know, he were not infinitely wise; if anything were done which he did not first will, positively or permissively, he were not infinitely supreme and powerful. All things are wrought by his counsel, which is the act of his understanding; all things are wrought by his will, which is the act of his sovereignty, Ephesians 1:11. By God in Scripture sometimes is meant the Father, by way of eminency, because he is the fountain of the Deity: Ephesians 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

(1.) No creature could be the original author of this work.

[1.] All human nature could not first invent it. The whole wisdom of Moses and the Jewish nation in the wilderness could not find a remedy against the bitings of the fiery serpents, which indeed were

so venomous that they were absolutely mortal. And if they were the presteres, as the Greeks call them, which word signifies the same that the Hebrew does, burning serpents, no remedy was found against their venom for many ages after. In the time of the Romans' flourishing, the poison suddenly inflamed the blood, puffed up the skin, disfigured the countenance, deprived them of the shape of men, with the benefit of life; an exact representation of the misery of man by the fall. No remedy could be found in nature against this evil in the figure, no more can any against the evil represented by it; neither the languishing law of nature, nor the sickly philosophy of the heathens, could ever find a cure. The reconciliation of God to man was too stupendous a work for the joint wit and wisdom of man to arrive at. Man was so plunged in the sink of lapsed nature, that he knew not how to desire it; so amiable were his dreams of happiness in his rebellion, that he had no mind to cherish any thoughts of it. He was so furious in his unjust war against God, that he had no will to accept of any such motion. The world was filled with all unrighteousness, and men were 'haters of God,' Romans 1:29-30. By all their wisdom they knew him not, 1 Corinthians 1:21. No mind to know God, no will to be at peace with him. Had the wisdom of the world been sensible of their deplorable condition, could it have contrived a way for the glorifying his mercy without invading the rights of his justice, they might have dreamt of a pardon from his mercy as the supreme governor. But how would the contentment of his justice, as eminent a perfection in God as that of his mercy, and the stability of his truth in his threatening, have insuperably puzzled them? The difficulty lay not upon the point of mercy; every day's sun, and every seasonable shower were rich discoveries of this. But there was no direction in the other case, to be read in the whole manuscript of nature. The heavens declare the glory of God as creator, not as reconciler; they discovered his glory, not any way of entrance into it. Had they had thoughts of accomplishing it by a surety between God and them, where could they have pitched upon one worthy of God's acceptance? If they could have found out and proposed one, what tie was there upon God to accept any other offer for the offenders but to exact it of their own persons? What man could have thought of such an extensive love as the reconciliation, not of one or two particular men, but of the world, by so strange a means as the death of God's own Son? We read, indeed, of some one or two of the heathen philosophers that declared an impossibility of the world's reformation without God's taking flesh, but none imagined anything of the death of the Son of God; no, not the Jews, but here and there one of their rabbis, long before his coming. Oh the immense grace of God, to discover that to us in his gospel, which all the wisdom of fallen nature might have fruitlessly studied to eternity! As no man can frame an universal law, accommodated to the several states and tempers of all the men in the world, and to those notions of fit and just in the minds of men, but God, who knows what he has engraved upon men's minds; so none but God can know how to find a way of redemption that may answer the glory of all his attributes, and the pressing urgency of men's necessities.

[2.] But might not the unblemished wisdom of angels, out of pity to mankind, have found out a way of reconcilment? They knew much more of God than man; they knew the wonders of his goodness, yet had seen many of their own order drop into hell under his wrath. They might know that the devils, a stronger nature, could not satisfy God for their offence, much less man, the weaker nature. They would never have stood gazing upon it with astonishment when it was revealed, had it been so obvious to their clear and comprehensive reasons. The greatest learning they have in it is by the church: Ephesians 3:10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' Objectively, not efficient. It was a mystery hid in God, and only in him; not an angel seems to

have had any thoughts of it till the revelation of it was made to the church. Now, not before; all the angels in heaven were ignorant of it, and probably understood not the meaning of the first promise in paradise till the coming of Christ in the flesh. Yea, after the revelation, those intelligent spirits have not a perfect knowledge of the whole scope of the gospel state, for, 1 Peter 1:12, they 'desire to look into' those things they could never be inventors of, or consulters in, that which they did not understand. Well, then, angels and men may admire it when revealed, but not before imagine it; they may applaud it, but never contrive it. Which of them could presume to nourish such a thought, that the Father should call out his eternal Son to be a temporary sufferer, to veil his divinity with the rags of an afflicted humanity? What, then, was impossible to the approved wisdom of men and angels, must only be ascribed to the wisdom and grace of God.

(2.) God the Father must needs be the principal in this business.

[1.] The order of the Trinity requires it. There is an order in the operation as well as the subsistence of the three persons. As the Son is from the Father in order of subsistence, so the actions of the Son are from the Father in order of motion and direction. The Son is sent by the Father, not only as man, but as God; for the Spirit, that has only a divine nature, is said to be sent by the Father and the Son. The persons are all equal: Php 2:6, Christ 'thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' yet one operation is appropriated to the Father, another to the Son, another to the Holy Ghost, in regard of order; and the Father, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is the fountain of all divine operation. As the sun is the fountain of its beams, so it is the fountain of all the operation of its beams. All things are of the Father, by the Son. He 'created all things by Jesus Christ,' Ephesians 3:9. He reconciled us unto himself by Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:18. All things of the Father as the fountain, by the Son as the medium. There is a priority of order in the divine paternity upon the account of generation, and this order is observed in the divine institutions. Baptism is first in the name of the Father, then of the Son, then of the Holy Ghost, Matthew 28:19. Now, it is most congruous, that as the Father was the original of our Saviour's person, so he should be of his office; as he was God of his substance, so he should be mediator of his will, the Father first sets the copy, after which the Son writes. John 5:19, 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do, for what things soever he does, those also does the Son likewise.' All operations begin first from the Father; this place the ancient fathers understood of Christ as the second person, not as mediator. If the first motion come from Christ, the order of working in the Trinity would be inverted; the Father would then do what he sees the Son do; the Son would be the director, the preceder, and the Father the follower; the Son would go before in proposal, and the Father follow after in consent. God would not then be the God of order in heaven. Besides, the love of the Father would not then be the principal cause of our redemption, upon which the Scripture everywhere places it, but the love of the Son. Nay, if the authority of constituting the mediator were not in the Father by way of order, there could be little or no testimony of his love since the fall of man. To imagine, therefore, any other root of our redemption, is to contradict the order in the trinity. But this is agreeable to our conceptions of things, as far as we can apprehend such mysteries. The Father from himself, Christ from the Father, the Spirit from both, so the Father contrives this, and is pleased with it, as being the most exact model of his love, wisdom, and justice, and the highest act of love he could show to his Son. The Son consents to it, and is pleased with it, as being the highest act of love he could show to his Father, and to men, in being their reconciler, and to angels in being their head. The Spirit is pleased with gifting him, as being

the greatest demonstration of his power to gift Christ for so great a work, therefore the Spirit is said to 'rest upon him,' Isaiah 11:2. Not only noting the continuance of the Spirit on him, but the satisfaction the Spirit should have in his employment, as much in gifting Christ for it, as Christ in undertaking and managing the work.

[2.] If the Father were not principal in it, the undertaking a reconciliation could not of itself be valid.

First, There had been an injury to the Father in undertaking it without his full consent at least. The Father is the principal party injured, and was therefore to be consulted with in that which concerned his own right. He is also the governor of the world. It is not convenient that a public work should be undertaken in a nation without the consent of the chief magistrate, who may else make it frustrate. When princes of equal dignity are at war, none undertakes the composing of the quarrel, till both parties accept of the mediation. But here is the supreme Lord of the world and ungrateful rebels at variance; the chief governor unjustly wronged. Now, every man would judge it a presumption for any to offer terms of peace to his enemies, and undertake the satisfaction of himself without his own consent in the case.

Secondly, The Father could only by right appoint the terms upon which, and the way whereby, this reconciliation should be made. The Father being the law-maker could only dispense with his law, and judge that satisfaction was fit for the vindication of it. The law ran in that strain, that the party sinning should die. Had the letter of the law been exacted, every man had been a stranger to salvation; the right, therefore, of waiving the letter of the law, while he maintained the reason and substance of it, belonged to the Father. As the supreme Governor, too, he could only transfer the punishment from the offending party to another that was willing to stand under the penalty in his stead. Since creation is appropriated to the Father, and sin entered upon the world immediately after the creation, it was God as a creator was principally injured. The first sin struck more immediately at the Father, as creator; unbelief at the second person, the Redeemer; and a despitefull contempt of Christ, after the manifestation of him by the Spirit, and the motions pressing upon men, is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. Christ intimates this when he says, 'They have both hated me and my Father;' i. e. me now, as well as my Father before. Non they show a particular hatred to me by unbelief, as well as they have done to my Father formerly by idolatry. The Father, therefore, only had the right to appoint the way of reconciliation according to his good pleasure; since he was chiefly dishonoured, he is fittest to prescribe the method which he judges most convenient for the restitution of his honour. As all his attributes were wronged by sin, so it was fit all his attributes should be glorified in reconciliation of his enemies. It was not fit that glory he is so jealous of should be entrusted in any hands but by his own will; and his prescribing all the ways of vindicating and illustrating it, and the glorifying of himself, was his end in appointing Christ to this work: Isaiah 49:3, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified;' and the glory of God seems to be a name whereby Christ is called: Isaiah 60:1, 'The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' Since, therefore, a greater glory was his end in redemption than barely in creation, he had as much a right to be principal in the miracle of restoration as in that of creation.

Thirdly, The Father was not obliged, nor could be obliged by any to entertain any thoughts of a reconciliation. He might, without any prejudice to his goodness, have demolished this defiled world, and by his power reared another wherein to show forth the glory of his immense perfections; he might have made good the law upon the person of every sinner, much less was he

bound to accept of any surety; he might have exacted the satisfaction at the hands of the criminal before he would have been reconciled. Being sovereign, it was at his liberty whether he would be appeased or no towards rebels. If he was willing to be appeased, he might have chosen whether he would have admitted of any surety to stand in their place. When Reuben offered Jacob his two sons as a pledge for Benjamin, Genesis 42:37, Jacob was not bound to receive this offer, but at his liberty whether he would take them or no. Nor was Naboth bound to part with his vineyard for a better than his own upon Ahab's offer, 1 Kings 21:2-3. No man is bound to part with his propriety in his goods, or his right over his prisoner; but if a price be agreed upon, he is then bound by the rules of commutative justice to set the prisoner at liberty.

Fourthly, Therefore if the Son of God himself had been incarnate, and died for the world without the Father's call and mission, the Father was not obliged to accept it as the price of our redemption. For all things without a call are of themselves invalid, and depend only upon the will of the person to whom they are related for their acceptance. God's institution confers validity upon any things. Could the brazen serpent ever have cured the bitings of the fiery ones had not God fixed it as a remedy?

Three things go to the establishing the reconciliation: 1. The dignity of the person reconciling; 2. The valuableness of the satisfaction he offers; 3. The call of the person injured, or the acceptance of it. The two first makes the merit sufficient, the third only makes it accepted. Had Christ endured all the torments of the cross, the acceptance of him for us might not have been, had not the Father's constitution of him for that purpose preceded his undertaking. Though the death of Christ had an intrinsic value, and therefore was in itself acceptable, yet the consent of the Father only made it accepted; he 'made us accepted' in Christ, Ephesians 1:6; therefore our acceptance depends first upon the acceptance of Christ. The strength, therefore, of it in Scripture is put upon God's well-pleasedness with him, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And upon God's call of him, Ephesians 1:9, it was his will, the 'good pleasure of his will', and 'purposed in himself;' it rose up in his own heart and mind. Though the satisfaction of Christ derives not its virtue of meriting from the grace of God, yet it derives its acceptance from the grace of God. The grace of God, and the merit of Christ, relate to one another as the cause and the effect, the antecedent and the consequent. The merit of Christ is the cause of our actual favour with God, but the merit of Christ is not the first spring of it; for it is subordinate to the general grace of God, which orders it as a means of that reconciliation which he purposed in himself. In short, it is like this case: when a man desires the goods of another, and offers him as much as they are worth, and more, though what he offers has an intrinsic value to compensate the possessor for those goods, whether the person accept of that offer or no, yet the acceptance of it depends purely upon his will, and the sum has no validity to purchase what is desired without the will of the present possessor.

First, If the Father had been obliged to receive any satisfaction, it must be from the person offending. No obligation can be conceived incumbent upon him to receive it from a person wholly innocent, though it were of infinite value, because none can transfer over the right of another but he whose right it is.

Secondly, Had not the Father fully agreed to this, I do not see how Christ could have made a compensation by his sufferings. Had he assumed a body, and laid down that body, and courted death, had that been justifiable without a call? The humanity of Christ was a creature, and

therefore obliged by the law of nature, as creatures are, to preserve itself. All men are bound to do so, unless God calls them to lay down their lives, who is the supreme Lord of life and death. Suppose our Saviour might have laid down his life intentionally as a compensation for us, what could he have undergone in his humanity but a temporal death? Was it not more we were to suffer? Was not the wrath of God due to our souls? The soul was the chief offender, the soul then ought to be the principal sufferer. If God therefore had not appointed Christ for those ends, the wrath of God could not have been inflicted upon the soul of Christ, for who should have inflicted it? Had it been just with God to have loaded a person with his wrath, who was innocent from any actual or imputed crime both in his own person and transferred from others? His mere bodily sufferings could not have been a recompense for the sin of the soul. The order of things fairly lies thus: man being unable to satisfy God for himself, nor any creature being sufficient to satisfy God for them, the Father calls the Son to take upon him the human nature, and by satisfying his justice for sin, restore us to happiness. The Father's call, and his own voluntary consent, make him capable of having our sins transferred upon him, and bearing them in his own body on the tree. And Christ lays it upon the commandment received from his Father, together with his own free consent: John 10:18, 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father.' He had an authority to lay down his life, he had also a promise of restoration of it by his resurrection. And to this end he had received, not only an invitation, but a command, which gave him full authority to die, and a ground also to plead the validity of it, for the ends designed by it. Therefore had he not received such a command, he had had no authority to lay down his life; no more than Abraham had authority to sacrifice Isaac of his own head, neither could he have challenged any acceptance of it for man at the hands of God.

Thirdly, The Scripture does ground the merit of Christ upon the grace of God. It is called the 'gift of God,' and 'the gift by grace, which by Christ has abounded to many,' Romans 5:16, &c. Some bring this place to prove the absolute efficiency of Christ's merit, had he laid down his life without the appointment of the Father, because, as the sin of Adam had demerit enough to condemn the world, so the righteousness of Christ had merit enough to save the world. But the question is, whence this merit did arise? It did arise personally from Christ himself and the dignity of his person; but as to the acceptation, from the Father, which the apostle resolves in this place in telling us; it is the grace of God, and the gift of God, because if Christ's death had a natural power of merit without any precursory agreement between the Father and the Son, it could not be said then to be the grace of God, for God could not but in a way of justice accept it. There is a double merit, absolute, and ex pacto or covenanted merit, absolute when any good is done to a person, which in the very deed itself obliges him for whose good it is done to the benefactor which does it, as generation and education are the acts whereby parents merit of their children. So that, whether children will or no, upon that very account that they are begotten and brought up they owe everything to their parents so creation being the work of God, the good of the creature, for that very cause every creature, especially rational, is obliged to God, and God by this act does merit all adoration, obedience, and respect from his creature. Covenanted merit is a work done which does not in its own nature oblige, but by virtue of some preceding compact and agreement between the person meriting and that person of whom he does merit. As when a king proposes a reward to those that run a race, let men run never so well, they have no right to demand a reward but upon such a declaration of the prince; and supposing that edict and declaration, he that runs has a right to the reward promised and appointed by the king, but no right to a reward in general. The whole

right does rise, not from the race simply considered, but as it respects the declaration and order of the prince. If we speak of a covenant merit, Christ did fully merit at the hands of God eternal salvation, for he fully performed what was agreed upon; but if we speak of absolute merit, neither Christ nor any creature could merit anything at the hands of God, or render God obliged to them by a natural right, no more than any man that runs a race can oblige a king by his swiftness. As the merit of Christ regards us, it is absolute, for Christ by his very undertaking (supposing he had not had any agreement with the Father) to deliver us, and appease the wrath of God against us, he had absolutely merited of us all love and observance, yea, though he had failed in it; but he had not merited of God anything for us, by any undoubted right, but as it respects that agreement between the Father and the Son. Psalms 16:2, 'My goodness extends not unto thee, but to the saints which are in the earth.' Christ did not add anything to God, whereby he might absolutely merit of him; but to the saints he did, whereby they are for ever obliged to him. Christ did not merit anything for us at the hands of God but as mediator, and to this office he was predestinated by God, and therefore he merited nothing but by that decree. What he did was from the office of mediator or priest; and because he was so, therefore he merited. As when any officers are appointed by the king, whatsoever they act by virtue of their office has its foundation in, and force from, the royal authority. His faithfulness whereby he merited has its validity from the appointment of him in his offices by God, who, Hebrews 3:2, was 'faithful to him that appointed him.' There had been no honour accruing to him, and consequently nothing challenged by him, unless he had been called of God: Hebrews 5:4, 'No man takes this honour unto himself but he that is called of God.' Christ himself owns the Father to be the foundation and stability of all the salvation he wrought: Psalms 89:27, 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation; also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.' This is taken from 2 Samuel 7:14, and cited, Hebrews 1:6, as belonging to Christ, to prove his dignity above the angels. 'The rock of my salvation,' the strength and foundation of the salvation I have wrought for men, or alluding to the rock from whence the waters flowed to the Israelites in the wilderness; either way our Saviour owns his Father as the stability of it. This salvation, i.e. not personal but mediatory salvation.

Thirdly, As it could not have been valid had not the Father been principal in it, so it must needs be principally from him, because it had not been for his honour that it should principally have come from another hand. It was not expedient that we should be redeemed by any but God, both as to the medium of our redemption and the grand author and contriver of it. As God created us for happiness, so we by our own fault revolted from him. To be restored to that happiness from which we fell is a greater good than simply to be created, because it is more deplorable to lie under the intolerable vengeance of an infinite God, than to lie in the depth of nothing. Since therefore man's happiness does consist in a blessed immortality, how much more would man be obliged to him who restores him to his lost happiness, than to him who created him in a state wherein he might fall to imperfection and misery! Being God has given us life, if another should bring us to a better life, without his interesting himself in it, how much more of tender melting bowels would he discover in conferring upon us that which is more magnificent! And we should be indebted to him for the greater, to the former for the less. If it were so honourable a thing for his goodness to create us by himself, it is no less honourable to interest himself in our restoration. It had been no honour to him to have his work restored to beauty and perfection by any other skill and directions rather than his own. It is as much for the honour of the Father to appoint a head for the restoring the

world, as he did a head for the increase of it. By that one man which he appointed, the root of mankind, a blot came upon the world; it were not honourable for him to have another head stand up for reinvesting man in a nobler happiness without his appointment.

Considering that in this work there is a discovery of the dearest love and profoundest wisdom, therefore the Father, the principal person in the Deity, must needs be the principal author and director, otherwise the principal glory of these perfections would not belong to the principal person.

Love. If the first motion came not from him, it would represent him a hard master, negligent of the good of his creature, without bowels, and only won by the importunities of his Son to have pity towards us. It would represent him only with thunders and the Son with bowels; the greatest honour would redound to the Son, and the Son would deserve more honour than the Father, whereas the honour upon the account of mediation is equally due to both: John 5:23, 'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.' The Father is to be honoured for the greatness of his love, in committing his right of judging to the Son. As the Son is to be honoured for undertaking, so the Father is to be honoured for sending him. 'He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father which has sent him.' The sending Christ is the ground of the honour due to the Father in the work of redemption. If the Father were not then the chief author, the honour of this love of Christ would not redound to him; it would not be 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' as Ephesians 1:6, but to the praise of the glory of the grace of the Son. Herein is the love of the Father, that he was placable, desirous to be at peace, orders his Son to procure it upon such honourable terms for himself, and secure in the issue for the creature, that he might communicate his goodness through a mediation to the polluted and rebellious world. The love of the Father in this dispensation is as great in moving it, as the love of Christ was in consenting. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son was a type of this. Christ's death was prefigured in Isaac, the Father's willingness represented in Abraham.

Wisdom. As goodness was the motive of this reconciliation, so wisdom was the director. The Father would not be principal in the greatest and highest notes of wisdom that ever sounded in the ears of men; the highest act of wisdom would originally flow from the Son, not from the Father. In this business he is known to be the only wise God, which attribute Paul celebrates with an emphasis: 1 Timothy 1:17, 'Now unto the King eternal, &c., the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever,' after he had spoken of salvation by Christ. No less than the wisdom of God could invent it. A punishment was due to lapsed man, that justice might not be defrauded; an infinite punishment the creature could not bear; the honour of God could not be fully vindicated in that way. Man justly owed a satisfaction, but could not pay it; nor without that satisfaction could be acquitted by justice from the obligation to an eternal curse. What but infinite wisdom could contrive a way for man's deliverance, whereby justice might have the highest right, and mercy the greatest applause; that the enmity between God and the creature might be totally demolished, never to break out again; the security of the creature established never to be unravelled any more! The wisdom of God must then be the arbitrator in this great affair, to compose all seeming contradictions, and appoint means fully proportioned to the ends intended. His love would not leave the world to perish, nor his justice leave sin without punishment. The one did not consist with his merciful goodness, nor the other with the honour of his law and the immutability of his sentence. There is a way therefore found in the treasures of his wisdom to procure peace to the sinner with honour to himself; to reconcile the sinner without impunity for the sin; to satisfy both the

cries of his justice and the yearnings of his bowels: the one in the punishment of sin in a surety, the other in pardoning sin in our persons. That God might be appeased, and that man might have wherewith to appease him, there is given to the human nature a new man, greater than a man, which might satisfy for man, and have that in himself which might exceed all the debt man owed to God. This is such a manifold wisdom which must spring from the Father, and to whom the honour of it is due, as being the eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord, Ephesians 3:10-11. This being therefore the highest act of wisdom, must originally arise from the Father, the principal person in the Deity, the fountain of all decrees, and therefore of those wherein the choicest wisdom of the Deity sparkles. How could it be the praise of the glory of his grace, Ephesians 1:6, if he had not concerned himself in the whole undertaking? It is hereby that title of the Father of Glory belongs to him, as he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, Ephesians 1:17; herein shines the glory of his paternity.

2. God the Father is the principal author of this reconciliation.

(1.) The particular style God assumes in the New Testament manifests it. A title not known in the Old Testament, often in the New, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 3:14, 1 Peter 1:3. In the Old Testament he was called the God of Israel; and immediately before the discovery of Christ in the flesh, Zacharias blesses him under that tide: Luke 1:68, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.' And God in a solemn manner entitles himself 'the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.' This was to be his name for ever, and his memorial to all generations, Exodus 3:15, because he was a God settling his covenant with them, and promising the Messiah out of their loins; therefore when he was to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage according to his promise to Abraham, he entitles himself thus, that their fathers might respect him in that promise, and among them he was chiefly known by this title, and that of 'their God that brought them out of the land of Egypt,' and sometimes 'the Lord which created heaven and earth.' But when the mystery of redemption, hid in God from ages and generations, was drawn out of his treasury, he appears upon the stage in another garb, with a new title, when the spiritual redemption, whereof all their other deliverances were as types, was wrought. He declares himself in a new style as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' because the seed promised, upon which account he was called the God of Abraham, was now come, and the covenant of redemption was fully settled with him and in him; and so he is called the God of Christ, Ephesians 1:17. [1.] Not in regard of the divine nature, for so Christ is God equal with the Father, Php 2:6; but in regard of his human nature, as he was a creature, and subject to God as a creature. [2.] In regard of his mediatory office, in which respect he is his Father's ambassador, sent with a commission, acting according to instructions received from him. In this regard he often owns that he acted by his Father's authority, that his Father was greater than himself. [3.] In regard of the covenant between them: in this respect chiefly he is said to be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is said to be the God in a special manner to Abraham, Genesis 17:7, as being in covenant with him. Christ was in covenant with God several ways: under the legal covenant, having subjected himself to it, and covenanted to fulfil the conditions of it; in the covenant of redemption, wherein it was promised him to have a seed, and to be the mediator and foundation of the covenant of grace, the confirmer of it by his death, and interpreter of it, and advocate for the fulfilling the terms of it, though he was not properly in that under the covenant of grace himself. And as he is thus the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is the 'Father of

mercies,' and 'God of all comfort to us,' 2 Corinthians 1:3. And as he stands in this relation, all spiritual blessings flow from him to us, Ephesians 1:3; he is therefore the principal person to be considered in the work of reconciliation, not only as the party to whom we are reconciled, but the party by whom the whole plot and model of our reconciliation was laid, which is effected by the Son, and applied by the Spirit.

(2.) All the spiritual blessings we have by Christ spring from the Father. Surely, then, reconciliation and redemption, which are none of the meanest blessings, indeed the visible foundation of all the rest, arising immediately from election, the secret foundation, and which are indeed the end which electing love aimed at, these are the corner stone upon which all the rest are built. What communications could we have from a God implacable? a God not reconciled? Therefore to God the Father the apostle ascribes all: Ephesians 1:8, 'blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' If all, then this; none are excepted, pardon of sin, endowment with righteousness, adoption of sons, infusions of grace, participation of the divine nature; whatsoever blessings deserve the title of spiritual own the Father as the first fountain. He adds, 'in heavenly places,' as our translation, or 'heavenly things,' as others; both amount to the same, all the blessings which respect our heavenly state. The Father was the authoritative actor in all that Christ did: John 14:10, 'The Father that dwells in me, he does the works.' As the power of a prince resides in the ambassador for the performance of those actions to which he is designed. Whatsoever Christ purchased of the Father, he purchased by the will of the Father, that he might communicate himself to us with honour to all his glorious perfections. The Old Testament also ascribes this to the principal person in the Deity: Hosea 1:7, 'I will save them by the Lord their God,' or Jehovah their God; or, as the Chaldee, 'I will redeem them by the word of the Lord.' He is therefore frequently called 'the God of peace,' because he is full of thoughts of peace, and is the fountain of our peace in Christ; as he is called the God of holiness, because there is nothing he thinks, nothing he does, nothing he speaks, but is holy, and is the fountain of all holiness to his creatures. All that which we have by Christ is said to be 'the mystery of his will, purposed in himself, according to his good pleasure,' Ephesians 1:9. What was the object of this purpose? All those spiritual blessings the apostle had numbered up before, which he resolved himself to complete and communicate to us by Christ. As all the motions in the world depend upon the motion of the primum mobile, so all our blessings upon the motion of God's love. In the communication of those blessings the Father has a particular hand; it is not said only that Christ is 'made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' but made all those to us of God, 2 Cor. 1:80. And the apostle distinguishes the Father from the Son by this character, 'The Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,' 1 Corinthians 8:6. The Father is the first cause, first mover, first contriver of all spiritual mercies for us: 'of him are all things.' Christ, the only means appointed by the Father to work those things for us, and communicate them to us; therefore it is said, 'by him are all things.' Therefore the whole work of redemption is often in the Old Testament called God's salvation, and in the New Testament called 'the will of the Father;' and Christ all along owns it: 'As my Father has commanded me, so I do.' Even those blessings which follow upon the death of Christ are the issues of the grace of God; 'the riches of his grace' is the first cause of forgiveness, Ephesians 1:7; the freeness of his grace, of our justification: Romans 3:24, 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ.' Yet those are the meritorious fruits of Christ's death, much more are the counsels, contrivances, and resolves about this, the acts of his free grace.

(3.) The order and foundation of election discovers it. God chose men in Christ, Ephesians 1:4, which election is there ascribed to the Father. This was an act of love in the Father, which in no wise falls under the merit of Christ. Some things Christ merited, as our reconciliation, justification, &c.; some things were purely the acts of God's love, without any merit of Christ, as election, and the incarnation of Christ, Christ did not merit election, for he was the first fruit of it; nor God's purpose of reconciliation, nor his own mission into the world. Election, then, being the proper act of the Father, all those means which were ordered for the accomplishing the ends of election are of the Father's appointment, for under election does fall both the manner and order of that which is to be done, therefore Christ also, who is the only means of our redemption; and Christ himself tells us that the love of the Father did precede his mission, John 3:16; it did therefore precede his designation. And Peter expressly asserts it: 1 Peter 1:19-20, 'Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for you.' For you relates not only to the manifestation in the latter times, but to the foreordination of him before the foundation of the world. Christ was first elected as head and mediator, and as the cornerstone to bear up the whole building; for the act of the Father's election in Christ supposes him first chosen to this mediatory work, and to be the head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated to be conformed to this image of his: Romans 8:29, 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren;' i. e. to Christ as mediator, and taking human nature; not to Christ barely considered as God, for, as God, Christ is nowhere said to be the first-born among many brethren. This conformity being specially intended in election, Christ was in the intention of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the centre, while the other walked about the circumference, pointing out one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. It is likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before he did about the head. Christ was registered at the top of the book of election, and his members after him. It is called, therefore, 'the book of the Lamb;' Christ was the title and chief subject-matter of the book. He was first chosen as the well-head of grace and glory, then others chosen on whom, from, and through him those should be conferred; for he has chosen us in him, that we should be holy, therefore he chose Christ as the spring to convey this holiness to his elect. The elect were given by the Father to Christ as mediator. Christ therefore was set up as mediator by the Father's pleasure; his office was settled by the Father before the gift was bestowed upon him.

(4.) The creation of the world, which is ascribed to the Father, was principally intended by him for this end: 'All things were created by him and for him,' Colossians 3:16. Christ was the means whereby God created all things, and the end for which they were created, that he might be head of the elect kingdom which God intended to establish by him, and discover the perfections of God in an illustrious manner, and therefore God willed Christ then as the head of all his works. It was from eternity decreed by God to create a world, to communicate himself to his creature, and to have a number of elect to praise him; therefore he resolved to create man, and endue him with such faculties, yet mutable. He knew that everything would work if it were created in this or that state and condition. He knew the devil would be envious of man's happiness; he knew what temptation would assault man, and the full strength of that temptation, to what degree it would arise, and that

man would sink under his temptation, apostatise from him, engulf himself and the whole human race in misery, and give him thereby an occasion to lay open his wisdom, goodness, mercy, and justice; for God sees all things distinctly in their true causes, and therefore cannot but know the event of them. Upon this foreknowledge God appointed a remedy for man, wherein to manifest his perfections in a transcendent manner. And indeed God willed the creation, and upon that the permission of sin, that he might take occasion from thence to communicate himself to man in the most excellent manner; for he that works wisely does not only work from foreknowledge, but from a previous intention; as when God would make Joseph a prince in Egypt, and use to that end the envy and ill-will of his brothers, it is not to be thought that God only, after the foresight of their sin, did will to make Joseph a prince, but, on the contrary, he would advance Joseph to a prince-like state; and therefore did permit his brothers' sin, to use their evil to a good end. We find all the providences of God concurring since the foundation of the world, to the bringing forth Christ the head of it; therefore, the first will of God in the creation was the advancement of his Son, and founding an everlasting kingdom under him, because in all wise disposals of things, even by men, the execution of things answers the intention, and those things which are last in execution are first in intention. And the Scripture does clearly evidence this, for it speaks of 'a promise of eternal life given to those that believe before the world began,' Titus 1:1. He does not say the decree, but the promise. This promise was then made by the Father to Christ, for the constituting this mediatory kingdom; he is therefore, by this promise, settled by the Father as head of the creation, and the author of reconciliation; for it is made to him as the head of the believing world, and as the feoffee in that for them, for it concerns eternal life. To us, says he, i. e. to those that believe; and this promise was nothing else but that word which is now manifested through preaching, Titus 1:3. The whole gospel is built upon this promise, and is nothing else but the manifestation and result of that negotiation between them before the beginning of the world. The gospel is nothing else but this piece of gold beaten into lead. We cannot rightly understand the gospel till we understand this transaction, because the gospel is nothing else but the explication of this first promise of God to Christ. Now these great acts of election and creation being the acts principally of the Father, and done for the glory of Christ, and the completing under him an eternal kingdom, it will follow, that the Father was also principal in all the designs of Christ, and in what he did. All things are for the elect, the elect for Christ, Christ for God. The glory of God stands at the top, as the chief end of all: 1 Corinthians 3:22-23, 'All are yours, you are Christ's, and Christ is God's'. They were all created for Christ as the immediate end, for God as the ultimate end, and therefore now ruled and governed by Christ; and at last the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all, 1 Corinthians 15:24.

(5.) All the thoughts of God in all ages of the world were about this concern. Christ owns this in his acknowledgement to God: Psalms 40:6, 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' Some observe that this psalm has wholly a respect to Christ, by reason of the different placing the words of the title; the name of David in the Hebrew being put before the word psalm, "ledawid mizmor", and rather to be rendered, 'To the chief musician, concerning David, a psalm,' i. e. the antitype of David, Christ being called David, Hosea 3:5, Jeremiah 30:9. He that speaks of the innumerable thoughts or consultations of God about this, is the same person that speaks, Jeremiah 30:6-8; which words are applied to Christ, Hebrews 10:6-7, and those verses seem to tell us what those counsels of

God which appear so admirable were, viz. about redemption by Christ. To this result did they all come, that 'Sacrifice thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' The infinite numberless thoughts of God centre in this one thing, of making Christ the foundation of the reconciliation intended, and exalting him thereupon. All the thoughts of God discovered to us in the Scripture refer to this; the spirit of prophecy seems to be given chiefly for the publication of this. This God spake by the mouth of all his holy prophets ever since the world began, concerning the sufferings of Christ: Acts 3:18, 'Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he has fulfilled.' Concerning also his exaltation, and the completing of his kingdom, it was spoken 'by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began,' Acts 3:21. This thing run so in the mind of God, that he would have all the mouths of all his prophets filled with it; and when prophecy began first to breathe in the world, it was to declare this grace of God. Not a signal prophecy revealed since the foundation of the world, but there was something of Christ in it. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,' Revelation 19:10. The prophetic Spirit which was from the beginning of the world, was a witness of Christ, what God had appointed him to do; not one prophet is excepted, Luke 1:70, Acts 10:43. And therefore the Spirit is sometimes more large in those stories or passages which were types or declarations of Christ, than in other things; as in Abel's death by Cain, when nothing is spoken of the death of the other children of Adam. How lively and largely is the story of Joseph, a type of Christ in his sufferings and advancement, represented; David's flights, and his ascent to the crown; Solomon's temple, the particular description and punctual delineation of the Jewish ceremonies, all relating to this; the story of Jonah upon record, when many other prophecies were lost, chiefly as a type of his death in the belly of the whale, and of his resurrection in being cast out upon dry land, after three days' lying in the pit. The law and the prophets appear two distinct things at the first sight, as Moses and Elias at Christ's transfiguration appeared distinct from Christ, Matthew 17:8; but when the cloud was removed, none but Christ was seen. So law and prophets centre in him, and his reconciling expiatory death; they, as it were, disappear, and Christ appears to be the full sum and scope of them, when we lay our eyes nearer to the divine mystery. His whole undertaking was enclosed in the types, and represented by the prophets. God has discovered that all his counsels and thoughts from the beginning of the world were about this, and whenever he sent any prophetic message, it was a witness of Christ, or had some relation to him. This may give us an item how we should read the prophets with an eye to Christ, that our thoughts in reading may agree with God's thoughts in declaring. So that I think, from these put together, it appears that the Father is the principal author of our redemption; that the original of God's favour to lapsed men must spring from his own natural grace and goodness, that the death of Christ did not first dispose God to have mercy on us. The Father's love preceded the gift, and therefore preceded his resolution concerning the gift. The Scripture makes Christ's death everywhere the effect of God's love; what is the effect is not the moving cause; his first workings of mercy to us were not raised up by the death of the Redeemer.

III. Third thing. Wherein the agency of the Father in this affair does appear. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world.'

1. As choosing and appointing Christ. In which respect he is called, Isaiah 13:1, 'the Elect of God,' the servant whom he has chosen, Isa. 43:10, said to be appointed by him, Hebrews 3:2. He was foreordained in the decree, designed in the promise, prefigured in the types, predicted by the prophets. Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of a decree from eternity, before he came out of

the womb of the virgin in time; he was hid in the will of God before he was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer; he was a lamb slain in decree before he was slain upon the cross; he was possessed by God in the beginning, or the beginning of his way, Proverbs 8:22-23, Proverbs 8:31, the head of his works, and set up from everlasting to have his delights among the sons of men. The Father's appointment of Christ is not to be understood of an appointment to his Sonship, for so he was from eternity begotten; but to his mediatorship. As he was from eternity the Son of God by generation, so he was from eternity the Mediator between God and man by constitution. The one is natural, the other arbitrary. As he was the Son, he was only God; as Mediator, God and man. His being a Son is in order of nature before his being a Mediator; his being a Son is from God's nature, his being a Mediator is from God's will. Believers are said to be begotten sons according to his will, but Christ is a begotten Son according to his nature, and Mediator according to his will. Christ is a name of charge and office, not of nature. He had been a Son had he never been a Mediator, or stepped in for the rescue of the world. All therefore that Christ did is comprehended in one word, doing the will of God: Hebrews 10:7, 'I come to do thy will, O God.' There was an antecedent act of will in God before there was a subsequent act of will in Christ in order of nature. It is called therefore the wisdom of God in regard of contrivance, Ephesians 3:10; his purpose in regard of the immutability and peremptoriness of his will, :Ephesians 1:9; the pleasure of the Lord, Isaiah 53:10, in regard of the delight he took both in the contrivance and resolution, both in the act of his head and heart.

(1.) He was appointed by the Father to this end, viz. of redemption. God set him up as a screen between the injured Deity and the offending creature. It is the scope of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews to manifest that Christ was designed to be an high priest, to offer sacrifice for men. He was designed to be a sacrifice, because all other were insufficient, Psalms 40:6-7 and he submits to be a sacrifice, for to that purpose he had a body to do the will of God in. This was God's aim in his first choice; he was to be the foundation of the covenant for his people, to bring the prisoners from prison, and those that sit in darkness out of the prison-house, Isaiah 13:1, Isaiah 13:6-7; he intended him as a propitiation for sin: Romans 3:25, 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation,' "proetheto", purposed (the same word is translated, Ephesians 1:9, purposed), Romans 3:25-26; 'to declare, I say, his righteousness at this time that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.' "Hilasterion", alluding to the propitiatory under the law, a type of Christ. He purposed him in his eternal decree to this end, he shadowed him in the mercy-seat under the law, and afterwards exposed him to public view, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin. And because it seems incredible, which a wounded conscience especially will hardly believe, the apostle repeats it again. One would think that justice should lay aside its demands against the sinner rather than feed on so rich a sacrifice. But God did, notwithstanding his near relation to him, single him out in his eternal council from angels and men, intended him in the "hilasterion", and all the types of the law, and brought him upon the stage in time to declare his justice to be as ready to be appeased and save upon that account, as before it was to damn. He is therefore called the Lamb of God, John 1:29 (in allusion to the lambs separated for the daily sacrifice), to be offered up to God for the taking away the sins of the world. It was with respect to the will of God in this first appointment that he delivered up himself, Galatians 1:4. :He 'gave himself for our sins according to the will of God,' whereby is meant the Father in the Deity. In the very ordaining him, the Father respected our glory: 1 Corinthians 2:7, 'Hidden wisdom which was ordained for our glory.' This hidden wisdom is Christ crucified, as

appears in the next verse. Christ as reconciling by his suffering is the wisdom of God, hidden with him, not known to the world for many ages. Had God had a mind to remain an enemy, he had dealt with mankind after that covenant of works which they had transgressed, and never had deputed a mediator to stand between himself and them, to administer things according to the tenor of another covenant. It was highly represented, Exodus 24:8, when Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the people, calling it the blood of the covenant. At the end of this action Moses and Aaron, with his sons and the seventy elders, saw the God of Israel in a human shape: Exodus 24:10, 'There was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness.' The sapphire, some tell us, was an emblem of the kingly and priestly office. Such a representation there was when he appeared as a man to Ezekiel, Ezekiel 1:26. Immediately after this typical representation of him in the sprinkling the blood of the covenant, he appeared to them in a human form, as the great intended antitype of that type they had been immediately before celebrating. As the Spirit is appointed to a peculiar office to sanctify, and therefore is called a 'Spirit of holiness,' and the end of his mission is to sanctify, Romans 1:4, so the appointment of Christ was to an office of high priest and reconciler, and therefore whatsoever he did and suffered belonged to that office by peculiar designation. He was appointed to be a 'witness to the people, Isaiah 55:4-5, a witness of the transcendent love of God, to bring men to God, that the nations which knew him not might run unto him.

(2.) God appointed him to every office in order to this redemption, to every degree and circumstance: as a priest, to appease his wrath; a prophet, to declare his mercy; a king, to bring men to the terms of reconciliation. He was appointed a priest for ever, that we might draw nigh to God, Hebrews 7:17, Hebrews 7:19; God designed him as a prophet, from whom we might receive his lively oracles, Acts 7:37-38; God set him up as a king, that those might be blessed that put their trust in him, Psalms 2:6, Psalms 2:12. The very circumstances were appointed by God: that he should be born of a virgin; the place where, Bethlehem; of the Jewish race; of the royal line of David, and that when it was decayed and sunk to poverty and misery, 'a rod out of the stem of Jesse,' Isaiah 11:1, a 'root out of a dry ground,' Isaiah 53:2; and the Jews never questioned the royalty of Christ's extraction. The time of his coming was fixed in Jacob's prophecy about the time of the fall of the Jewish government, Genesis 49:10, before the ruin of the second temple, Malachi 3:1, after seventy weeks of years from the time of Daniel's prophecy. What was figured in God's opening Adam's side to form a spouse; in the death of righteous Abel by the hands of his brother Cain; in Isaac, under the edge of the knife upon mount Moriah, and raised to be a blessing to the world; in Joseph in the pit and prison, and afterwards on the throne, to deliver the church from famine; in the paschal lamb, killed to save the sprinkled houses with its blood from the destroying angel, were really fulfilled in him; all the circumstances were appointed with a particular designation of the end of them. The manner of his death was foretold by David: Psalms 22:16, 'They have pierced my hands and my feet.' The manner of his crucifixion, his burial, resurrection, and prosperity afterwards, the blessing of men by him, justification by the knowledge of him, were deciphered by Isaiah, chap. liii., above seven hundred years before his coming, so exactly, as it that prophecy had rather been a Gospel written after his death, since the events answered so punctually to each prediction. He was promised as a 'Prince of peace,' Isaiah 9:6, one that should make no noise, appear with no pomp and grandeur, Zechariah 9:10, send forth the prisoners out of the pit, Zechariah 9:11; be 'the peace' himself, Micah 5:5; as a king destroy the empire of the devil, pour the waters of grace upon the world, Ezek. xxxvi., take away iniquity, make reconciliation

for sin, bring in everlasting righteousness, Daniel 9:24.

(3.) It was a settled, firm, and irreversible constitution. It was not only a counsel, wherein wisdom pitched upon it as absolutely the best means for the creation's standing; but determinate, wherein it was unalterable: Acts 2:23, 'Delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' Counsel and foreknowledge are joined, to show that there was the highest reason and most resolute will; not a casual thing or contingency, but an immutable decree for his reconciling death, fixed after the wisest counsel. And therefore, in this appointment to this office, God took an oath, and thereby constituted Christ an irrevocable priest, 'after the order of Melchisedec,' Hebrews 7:21, to bless his people with peace, which oath must refer to the first appointment of Christ to this office, in order to the making him a surety of a better testament, Hebrews 7:22; better, for the preservation of the honour of God and happiness of man. It was such a constitution that admitted not of the least alteration or repentance in God; an oath which was not taken for the creation of the world, or the settling of the Aaronical priesthood. By this oath he declares this constitution to be irreversible. In this regard he is said to be sealed by God, to skew the perpetuity of this constitution, as the seal to the book, Revelation 5:1, skews the irreversible certainty of God's decrees. And therefore his appearance before his incarnation in his glory, as well as after his ascension, was with a rainbow encircling him, Ezekiel 1:28, Revelation 4:8; a sign of an everlasting covenant that God would no more bring a destroying deluge upon the world, Genesis 9:16. The apostle seems to intimate as though this decree and constitution was the standard of all God's other actions; the point in which they should all centre, or the rule which they should be squared by; for as all our sins met on Christ, Isaiah 53:6, so all God's counsels met in him, Ephesians 1:9. The rule must be perpetual, since all God's works were to be regulated by this counsel. Speaking of this mystery of his will, which he had purposed in himself, to gather in one all things in Christ, he repeats again, Ephesians 1:11, this purpose of him 'who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.' All things took birth from this counsel, and were for the perfecting this will.

(4.) God chose him to this work with an high delight, as one fully fit for the work, in whom he could confide. He 'put no trust in his saints,' Job 15:15, for they were in their own nature defectible. Where a man cannot trust his concerns, he can have no pleasure. The Son of God's undertaking to be the head of the elect, and satisfy for them, was that the Father could only place his confidence in. This was that which could only be acceptable to him. He calls him his elect: Isaiah 42:1, "bechiri", 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, my Elect in whom my soul delights.' My tried elect; the word signifies, one chosen after serious consideration and trial. God found none so fit among all the legions of angels, none that could so completely answer his design for reconciliation; but upon a full examination of the whole affair he found him exactly fit for it, and therefore brings him in with a Behold, a note of admiration, as one he could rest in; for so the word "etmach" signifies, as well as to uphold. Upon this trial, and upon this confidence, his soul, as it follows, delighted in him. He knew he would be faithful, and able to perfect it; some therefore refer Hebrews 1:9, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, &c., therefore God has anointed thee,' &c., to the first constitution of Christ. God rested upon the holiness of his nature; and that Isaiah 49:1, 'From the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name,' expresses (in the judgment of some) the great joy of God in this mediator. He had my name, as I was constituted mediator, continually in his mouth. It was his pleasure to be always thinking and speaking of it; or it may note the familiar

converse between the Father and the Son, concerning this work of redemption. We speak and think much of that wherein we have the greatest pleasure; and those words, Proverbs 8:30-31, 'I was daily his delight, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth,' intimate that the Son was the daily delight of the Father, as he had placed his mediatory delights among the sons of men, as the Father saw all things exactly settled and governed by the Son, according to his mind and counsel. And therefore, when this suretyship of Christ is mentioned, God is pleased to express himself with a pleasing admiration: Jeremiah 30:21, 'Their governor shall proceed out of the midst of them, and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engages his heart to approach unto me? says the Lord;' showing the delight of his soul in his own choice, and his Son's acceptance, in the greatness of his person, and the heartiness of his undertaking. The word "arav" signifies to pawn, or be a surety. We many times express our joy in a mode of admiration; so is God pleased to descend to our capacities in expressing his. What is the ground of it? Jeremiah 30:22, the everlastingness of the covenant: 'And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.' How may we approach to God with the pleas of Christ in our mouths, since the Father had so mighty a delight in him?

(5.) The Father had a particular love to Christ in this appointment, and highly loved him for his acceptance of it. If he loved his Son's consent to it, he loved his own proposal of it: John 17:24, 'Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world;' which, according to the best interpreters, respects Christ's person as mediator, rather than his naked deity. The Father loved Christ as mediator in the first designment, that in him he might love his elect. Our Saviour prays as mediator; the love therefore which he uses as an argument, was the love of the Father to him as mediator. The Father's love to him as the second person in the Trinity, had not been an argument congruous for that petition of his people's seeing his glory; for the love of the Father to him in that regard, did not necessarily infer a love to any creature; but his love to him as mediator and head does infer his love to all his members, and was a suitable argument wherewith to press him for a glorifying his whole body. Certainly if God loved Christ because he did 'lay down his life for his sheep,' John 10:17, there must be an high degree of love to him, because he answered the Father's appointment of him from eternity, by a voluntary consent. As the act of suffering, so the first undertaking, draws out the Father's love. The Father loved him before as his natural Son, he now loves him as the universal head. The Father's loving him for complying with this appointment, manifests the height of his love to all his members, for whose sake, next to his own glory, he constituted him in his mediatory office. Some think that the well-pleasedness of the Father with Christ for this work was one part of the glory of Christ; no doubt it was, after his performance of it, and is his glory now in heaven. If so, I would thus understand John 17:5, 'Glorify me with thy own self, with that glory which I had with thee before the world was;' i. e. testify thyself well-pleased with my mediation, which was the glory I had with thee as mediator before the world was. The glory of his deity was not impaired; that was not therefore the glory he prays for. It is a glorifying him with his own self. What is it, then, but the high affection the Father bore to him; for what glory can we conceive to come from the Father to the Son, as mediator, before the world was, but this? The argument he uses evidences it. John 17:6, 'I have manifested thy name,' i. e., I have actually done that, in the undertaking whereof, O Father, thou were so highly pleased. And John 17:4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth, and finished the work thou gave me to do.' I have glorified thee by witnessing that thou art a God placable, full of love, reconciling the world, therefore glorify me. As the glory Christ brought to God relates to the business of redemption, so the glory he requests of

God, which he had before, more likely relates, not to the glory of his deity, but his glory as mediator, which is God's mighty pleasure with it, acceptance of his willingness to perform it, and great affection he bore to him thereupon. The glory of his deity was not a subject to be prayed for; the glory which he was by covenant to have after his death and resurrection in his human nature, was a glory in decree, and by compact, but not actually possessed before his ascension. But the acceptance of him, and high pleasure in him, as undertaking to be our surety, was a glory he really had with the Father before the world was. Nor does this sense weaken the proof from hence of the deity of Christ; for if he were in being before the world was, he was no creature. How comfortably may we take up the same argument in our mouths as Christ did here, since the love he bore to Christ, as mediator, before the world was, did redound to every member of his sons which was to be in time!

(6.) God does glory in this contrivance and appointment. With what daring expressions to all creatures does God challenge the honour of founding this covenant of love and peace wholly to himself! No creature did so much as put in his opinion in this counsel, or contribute anything to it, but he would go away with the whole glory himself: Isaiah 14:21, 'Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who has declared this from ancient time? who has told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God besides me; a just God, and a Saviour.' There is no contriver, no declarer of this but myself. It is not meant of the deliverance from Babylon, as some interpret it, which is evinced by the following verses, to the end of the chapter; as also Isaiah 14:17, where it is called an 'everlasting salvation,' which shall admit of no shame and confusion, world without end; a salvation that shall last as long as eternity endures. Well might all the attributes of God glory. How surprising is his love, that the Holy of holies should so love sinners, the sovereign Monarch justly jealous of his glory, furious rebels, and unprofitable slaves, as to appoint his Son for the reconciler and saviour. What motives could there be but misery to draw out the bowels of his love! What attractives in ungrateful creatures lying in their blood! What arguments could be in our thoughts to plead with God for so admirable a design! Justice and mercy are comprehended as the great things he glories in; 'just God, and a Saviour.' Wisdom might glory in the contrivance, and goodness in the appointment of one so strong to be a sacrifice for propitiation; to be himself a just Judge, and yet a tender Saviour (for the Father is called Saviour as well as the Son, Titus 3:4; 'the kindness of God our Saviour,' distinguished from Christ our Saviour, Titus 3:6). He finds a way to have a valuable satisfaction of his justice, wherein should be bound up an eternal security to the sinner: a great priest for our guilt, and a beautiful pattern for our imitation; justice should triumph in the punishment, mercy in the redemption, the creature in the fruits redounding from both. How much was his sovereignty glorified in it, which he seems also to aim at: 'I am a God, and there is none besides me.' His sovereignty was manifest over all the creation, men and angels were his absolute vassals, there was nothing wanting to declare the highest pitch of it, when his own Son became a servant; the Lord of all things became lower than angels, and as low as the meanest man. Who shall stand out against his pleasure, since the Son, equal with him, stood not out against his Father's will? God does this of himself, of his own grace; by himself, his own wisdom; for himself, his own glory,

2. God the Father solemnly called him: John 10:36, 'Say you of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest? because I said, I am the Son of God?' Our Saviour mentions a double act of the Father towards him, separation and mission, a dedication of

Christ to his mediatorship, and then his actual mission. This call is expressed, Isaiah 49:1, 'The Cord has called me from the womb,' which does not imply, says Calvin, that he was but then called, when he came out of the womb of the virgin, or that the prophet does define the beginning of time; but it is as much as if he had said, Before I came out of the womb, God called me, and separated me to this office. As Paul speaks of his separation from the womb, Galatians 1:5, yet he was chosen before the foundation of the world; and Jeremiah was known before he was formed in the belly, and sanctified and ordained a prophet before he came out of the womb, Jeremiah 1:6; so that in this place the prophet introduces Christ speaking of his call to this office after it was formed in the eternal counsel of God. In regard of this call by God, and his acceptance of it, he is the same yesterday that he was today, and will be for ever. His call to the mediatorship was of a higher date than the types of the law, for before Abraham was, he was, in the call to and actual exercise of his mediatory function, it was an argument to prove his former assertion, that Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced in the sight of it, which would be of no strength if he were not then known as mediator, by whom God was to be reconciled to man. It is I am, to show the constant relation he had to this office: 'Before Abraham was, I am,' mediator, affirming himself here to be the Messiah, according to the Jews' usual speech, that the law and the Messiah were before the creation of the world. The words used to express the call of Christ are of a greater signification than the word used for the call of Aaron, Hebrews 5:4, *kaloumenos*", as if you should in an ordinary way call a man to you, or call him by his name; but Hebrews 5:10, speaking of the call of Christ, it is a word of more weighty signification, "*prosagoreutheis*", solemnly called and pronounced a high priest.

(1.) God called him to it as an honour: Hebrews 5:4, 'No man takes this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.' Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he, i. e. the Father, glorified him, and bestowed an honour upon him when he called him. The Father thought it an honour at the time of the call, not that there could be any addition of honour to the person of Christ as God, or as though he had been defective in honour in being the Son of God and not the mediator, but as the mediatory or priestly office is an excellent office and honourable employment. Supposing the incarnation of Christ designed, the mediatory office was the highest honour could be conferred upon him. What greater glory can there be than to be placed in such a sphere, wherein he may honour the Creator more than all besides! Can there be a greater honour, next to being the Son of God, than to compensate the injuries God had suffered, and repair the ruins under which the creature had fallen; to restore God's honour to him without blemish, yea, with a greater brightness; like a bloody sun in the evening, rising fairer and fresher the next day; and happiness to man without a flaw; to give God ground to look upon his works with pleasure, and man a foundation to look upon God with delight? The honour appears to consist in being the 'author of eternal salvation,' as it follows, Hebrews 5:9. Though this honour was to cost him dear, yet he was recompensed in the ends of it, the high satisfaction of God and reparation of the creatures. In which sense 'his reward' is said to be 'with him,' as well as 'his work before him,' Isaiah 40:10-11. How is his work his reward? 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs with his arm;' he shall restore God's chosen ones into his fold. What greater glory than to be a reconciling mediator, through whose hands all the communications between God and man were to pass! Nay, the very calling him to death, and proposing it to him for such high ends, seems to be a greater honour than his innocence barely considered, or his exaltation afterwards: Hebrews 2:9, 'But we see Jesus, who was made a little

lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man.' It would be worth consideration whether this glory and honour be not meant of the honour of his office, as his being lower than the angels is meant of his state of humiliation in the world; and understanding it so, the words lie very fair before us. If it were understood of his glory after his sufferings, why should it be added immediately after, 'that he should taste death for every man'? That was not the end of his exaltation after his death, but his exaltation was the reward of that. But the sense runs cleverly thus: But we see Jesus, who in his state in the world was lower than the angels, yet in regard of his office and design had a crown of honour and glory above them all, in that by the grace of God he was set apart to taste death for every man; and by the pursuit of the apostle's discourse, speaking of his perfection by suffering for the destruction of the devil, who had brought death upon mankind, and the making reconciliation for the sins of the people, the office itself in which he was placed for those great ends may be well said to be a crown of honour and glory. It was an honourable office in a state of humiliation, as David's line was an honourable line in a state of poverty. It was in his death he discovered his virtues, victories, and triumph. In his death he blazoned out all the perfections of his Father; he illustrated his mercy, and showed how dear the souls of men were to him. He displayed his holiness, and manifested how odious the sins of men were to him. What would Christ have been (supposing the union of the second person to the humanity) if he had not died? He had not been made perfect, as the apostle intimates (Hebrews 2:10, 'to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering') without suffering. He was called by God to suffering, that he might be perfect as mediator, that the justice of God might as it were quench its thirst in his blood, and the mercy of God rise out of that sea of blood, like a rich morning sun; and perfect also as a pattern, for in that his humility, charity, patience appeared in the highest manner to the sons of men for their imitation. God called him to it as an honour, and placed the very honour of it in the very suffering that death, as well as in acting afterwards upon that foundation as high priest for reconciling man. It is inconsistent with the immense goodness of God, to bind his creature to anything but what is highly conducing to the honour and happiness of his creature. Much less does it consist with the goodness of God, and that infinite affection he bore to his Son, to call him to that which was not an honour in itself. But this honour of high priest God calls him to, is an honour next to that of his sonship, which those words intimate, Hebrews 5:5, but 'thou hast said to him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee,' as if it were a new begetting him. If it be then an honour in the account of God for Christ to die for such worthy ends, it is not less an honour to him to exercise that office, which is so honourable in itself, which is an high ground of faith and confidence in him, in all our approaches to him, wherein we do engage him in glorious acts and worthy of him.

2. God counselled him upon this call to undertake it with large proffers: Psalms 16:7, 'I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel.' It was the same person that blesses God for this counsel, who says, Psalms 16:8, that he had 'set the Lord always before him;' which words are expressly said by Peter to be spoken by David concerning him, i.e. Christ: Acts 2:25, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand;' and so cites it to the end of the psalm. Christ does bless God for this counsel, and set this counsel of God always before him, which I have spoken of in reference to Christ blessing God for it, before upon another occasion. I now cite it to evidence that there was a counsel of God to Christ about this affair. What was that he was counselled unto? To his sufferings, which are intimated in the following verse; upon the assurance, that his flesh should rest in hope, and that his soul should not be left in hell or the grave, the state

of the dead, and the assurance of the fullness of joy and pleasure which he should have upon the account of this mediation for evermore. If the Father were the first mover, that motion was not without an advice to Christ to concern himself as mediator, and declaring how agreeable it would be to him; upon which account, what Christ did and suffered was not only out of a bare obedience, but an affectionate obedience: John 14:81, 'That the world may know that I love the Father.' Therefore, Psalms 40:8, it is said, 'God's law was within his heart,' or within his bowels. It proceeded out of a tenderness of affection to satisfy his Father, who was desirous of reconciling man to him. For in Christ's undertaking, it could not be love to the Father, unless the effect of it, which was reconciliation of man, had been declared by his Father to be a thing highly pleasing to him, which declaration was as a counselling Christ to this work. The Father counsels the creation of man: Genesis 1:26, 'Let us make man;' no less was the counsel about redemption the Father's counsel, Let us so make man. The Father counselled him to be the head and knot of the whole creation, whereby he might rest in it with a full complacency; the Son clasped about the Father with love and joy, the Father enfolds Christ in the glorious bosom of his counsel; the Son embraces the Father with the arms of an affectionate compliance: a mighty harmony! The one in proposing, the other in complying, that the glory of God, and the felicity of the creature, might be completed in an eternal marriage. The truth is, the manner of the eternal decrees and counsels of God, are to us finite creatures incomprehensible; but the Scripture lowers itself in expressions suitable to our conceptions. As God is, in his word, represented to us with eyes and ears and human members, in a way of condescension to our capacities, upon the same account are the transactions of God, by such ways of expression, brought down to our apprehensions. Add to this, Zechariah 6:12-13, 'The counsel of peace shall be between them both.' Some make this counsel of peace to be between the two offices, the royal and priestly, both in conjunction and not interfering one with another, as sometimes they did in the Jewish state. Others, between the two persons, the Lord, and the man that is called the Branch. The will of the Father and the Son, as they are one essence, is one; as they are two persons, there is the counsel of both. Counsels seem to belong rather to persons than offices.

3. God gives Christ a particular command concerning our reconciliation and redemption. God purposing the redemption of man, the uniting his elect under one head, designing the person, proposing to him the affair, to be managed in a body; our mediator, accepting of this constitution, receives a command to die: John 10:18, 'This commandment have I received of my Father,' i.e. to lay down his life. Sometimes it is called the will of his Father. The will of God is called a law, Ps. xl., and the sufferings of Christ are called obedience: Php 2:8, 'He became obedient unto the death of the cross.' He was obedient in all things, things antecedent to the cross, and to the last point. It could not be obedience to the law as a creature, because he never transgressed it; and being innocent, and under the covenant of works, he had not disobeyed, if he had not suffered, because, according to that covenant of works, he was not bound to suffer; for being without sin he might have pleaded his right; besides, God would never command any thing against his own covenant. It must, therefore, be obedience to some other precept, concerning his mediatory sufferings. And Romans 5:19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' The obedience of Christ is opposed to the disobedience of Adam; therefore, as the disobedience of Adam was a proper disobedience, opposite to a plain precept, so the obedience of Christ was a proper obedience, conformable to some precept. A congruous reason may be rendered for this command, because, as men were

destroyed by disobedience, so they should be repaired by obedience; and because a work done in obedience is more perfect in itself and acceptable to God, for his authority and sovereignty, the righteousness, holiness, and equity of his law is solemnly owned thereby. Some question whether the command laid upon Christ, as mediator, was a particular precept, or only a revealing of his incarnation and death as a necessary means for the redemption of man, because he had decreed to accept no other satisfaction. Some think this latter, and that, upon God's revealing his mind, there presently did arise in Christ an obligation to undertake this. It is more likely that this affair is expressed to us under the notion of a call, counsel, command, to show the ardency of the Father's affection for man's recovery, in an honourable way, to himself; because the Scripture places redemption in the Father's love and grace, as the fountain, and in Christ's love to his Father as well as to us, as has been before noted. There was the declaration of the will of the Father, which was the rule of Christ's acting, as the will of God is the rule of the Spirit's intercession in us: Romans 8:27, 'According to God;' or as our translators have it, 'according to the will of God.' A rule seems to be set for the Spirit's acting when he was sent, and a rule set for Christ's acting when he was called. The Spirit had a rule set, for he was to glorify Christ, John 16:14, and act upon that foundation. This does not weaken the voluntariness of Christ in his undertaking, who was ready to comply with the call, 'and made himself of no reputation, when he became obedient to the death of the cross.' When this command was given, is not so clear; but as the promise was made before the world began, Titus 1:2, so might the precept be given, before the world began, to Christ, considered as mediator; for precepts many times accompany promises. The divine nature, which undertook the mediatory office, was not in itself capable of a command or a promise.

Use of these two heads.

1. First, How adorable then is the depth of God's wisdom, and the vehemence of his kindness, to have a remedy ready to apply for the cure of fallen nature! God had a salve lying by him for the sore, and provided himself with a remedy for defeating the designs of Satan. When he came to make a process against Adam for his disobedience, and pronounce that death which he had merited, he like a merciful Father declared this appointment of one that should suffer indignities from Satan, and delivered man from the death he had deserved. When he came to expel Adam out of his forfeited paradise, he assures him of one that should open the gates of the heavenly paradise to him. He appoints his recovery, as well as charges him with his crime; and though he barred the garden against him by a flaming sword, he promises to re-admit him by the 'seed of the woman,' Genesis 3:15, in whose blood that sword should lose both its edge and flame, its cutting and scorching quality. Oh the miracles of divine love! The law saw us guilty, insolently taking up arms against him, plunging ourselves into those crimes he had prohibited, loathing those virtues he had commanded, guilty of millions of sins, meriting millions of deaths, and the wrath of God, the quintessence of hell. Yet how did his bowels work within him, and never ceased till he had found a way infinitely satisfactory to himself, and infallibly safe for his creature, whereby his injured attributes are righted, and our offending souls rendered capable of the happiness they had made themselves unworthy of! He did this, and did it himself, by a decree incapable of any alteration, standing like a firm pillar to support man's happiness; the everlasting fountain of his love and joy were opened at the very thoughts of this admirable design. He clasped about the mediator with the dearest affections never to be withdrawn, counselled, commanded, would not grow cool, and faint in the concern. He drew out of the depths of his infinite wisdom such a model which makes angels

gaze, and believing sinners fall down to the dust in an humble admiration. He has appointed the heir of all things to be a servant for rebels, the Lord of glory to be a man of sorrows, to pay his life, more worth than the lives of all the angels, as a ransom for us; appointed him to shed his blood, to preserve ours, and singled him out to feel the sword of his wrath in his own heart, that we might feel the effusions of his healing balm in ours. Oh wonderful goodness, to appoint and call out purity to suffer for impurity, and the innocent for the criminal!

2. Raise pleas in prayer from these considerations. You address yourselves to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; represent to him his eternal design, the mark of his love, the centre of his delight. Desire of him that Jesus, with all his glories, with all his graces. Argue with him, whether he has not as much joy to see the fruits of his Son's death, to confer them upon his lost and sensible creatures, as to call him out for so great a purpose. Spread before him his eternal counsels, open the book of his resolves about Christ, read every syllable before him; let your soaring admirations, and your ardent petitions, keep pace together. How infinitely will the Father be pleased with such arguments, drawn from his own eternal thoughts of redemption. If he appointed a mediator for you when you were rebellions, he will not deny that mediator to you, when you are earnest and humble suppliants. His delight will be as much to bestow him upon them that seek him, as it was to consecrate him for men, when he knew they would spurn against him. He has the same thoughts of reconciling mercy, and nothing that he has done in order to this does he yet repent of; he has sworn when he called his Son, and will not repent: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' Make use therefore of him as supports of faith, and arguments in prayer.

3. The Father enters into terms of agreement with the Son about the work and methods of redemption, which is expressed by divines by the term of a covenant. A covenant is an agreement of two or more persons, in some common end pleasing to them both, upon certain articles and conditions voluntarily consented to by both, and to be performed by each party with solemn obligations. So that in it there are two persons, mutual proposals and conditions, mutual consent, terminating in one and the same end. Now this covenant between the Father and the Son was a transaction between them concerning man's recovery, consisting of articles to be performed by both parties; something to be performed by Christ to the Father, something to be performed by the Father to Christ; something the Father required of him, something the Father promised to him. Some make this covenant to be rather God's purpose and decree concerning Christ's incarnation and, passion, and success of his suffering, and the issue thereupon, and therefore improperly called a covenant. I do not stand upon the term, though it seems to be best represented to our conceptions under the notion of a covenant. And the Scripture delivers it to us under the form of a treaty and debate, Isa. xlix. Though the Father, Son, and Spirit have but one will essentially, yet in this affair they are distinctly considered as two Persons treating and agreeing in one point upon certain conditions; or, as there was a new habitude of will in the Father and the Son towards each other, that is not in them essentially, and it is called new, as being in God freely, not naturally. Such a covenant is acknowledged by most. Arminius confesses it to be pretty clear from Isaiah 53:10, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,' in his oration de sacerdotio Christi. And some of the greatest Jesuits, as Suarez, Tirinus on Isaiah 53:10, which is much. For, asserting this covenant, the doctrines of election, efficacious grace, and perseverance of that seed, are established. That there is such a covenant, I shall offer

some considerations.

1. As there was a covenant made with the first Adam for himself and his posterity, so it is very likely there was a covenant made with the second Adam, for himself and those which were chosen in him. Though this covenant of redemption be not the same with the covenant of grace, yet something in this covenant of redemption did concern the seed of Christ. Upon the account of this covenant, God is the God of Christ, Psalms 89:26, Psalms 40:8, and Revelation 3:12; you have Christ calling God his God, no less than four times in that verse. He is a surety of the covenant of grace; there was then some other previous treaty whereby Christ entered into terms of suretyship.

2. Christ is said to be faithful, Hebrews 3:2. As obedience implies a precept, so faithfulness implies a trust, and a promise whereby a man has obliged himself to perform that trust, according to the direction given him; and Christ is said to trust God, Hebrews 2:13. As a precept is a formal object of obedience, so a promise is a formal object of trust; as he had a command, so he had a promise, both which imply a covenant.

3. Christ's prayer does in various parts manifest this; he does not only entreat and petition, but he challenges something as due to him, upon the account of what he had done; in John 17:1-26, he seems to run altogether upon a covenant strain, which must suppose some agreement and promise on the Father's part. God had not else been obliged to accept what he had done, nor could our Saviour have challenged it at the hands of God. A claim implies a promise preceding, annexed to a condition to be done by the party to whom the promise is made, which being performed, gives a right to demand the reward. And hence, perhaps, it is that he calls God 'righteous Father,' appealing therein to the faithfulness of God in this business. And, indeed, the mediatory covenant seems to me, by that John 17:1-26, to be the ground upon which Christ builds his whole intercession; that being a transcript of it, and the pleas there being drawn by a strong compact.

4. This treaty is distinctly evidenced, Isaiah 49:3-6, from which chapter to the end of that prophecy, there seems to be a continued discourse concerning Christ. Christ directs his discourse to the Gentiles, acquainting them with the manner of this treaty: Isaiah 49:1, 'Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far.'

(1.) God calls out Christ by the name of Israel: Isaiah 49:3, 'and said unto me,' i. e. the Lord, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified;' the name of the body being given to the head, as the name of the head is given to the body. The church in union with Christ the head is called Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12, which some think also to be the meaning of Galatians 3:16. The promises were made to Abraham and his seed; 'not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and thy seed which is Christ,' Christ mystical. I will be glorified in thee, as the head of the Jews, to prepare them a spiritual people for me.

(2.) Christ thinks this too low: Isaiah 49:4, 'Then I said,' i. e. he whose mouth God had made a sharp sword, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work is with my God.' A small income for so great pains and cost. What, shall I glorify thee only in Israel? It is but a little glory thou wilt get from so small a handful that will believe in me among them, however, I refer myself to thee, O Father, and will stand to thy judgment. It is a glorious thing to be the Redeemer of Israel, yet it seems to be too narrow a field

for me to run my race in. Judge of the greatness of my pains; and though I shall be in thy eye, though Israel be not gathered, yet consider whether so great an undertaking will not require a greater reward than a few Israelites. Thou shalt, O Father, be glorified in me, but I foresee that few of the Jews will embrace my doctrine; I shall spend my strength, prayers, and blood for nought, "hevel tohu", the word used to express the chaos before it was formed into a world. It will be as a thing without form, a very little part of a new creation. Christ was at first God's angel to Israel, and before his coming in the flesh had no other nations, but as some sprinklings of them were proselyted to the Jews; and therefore the Gentiles are said, Isaiah 55:5, to be a people that he knew not, i.e. that he did not actually possess as his peculiar, in that manner as he ruled in Israel, though the providential government of all nations was committed to him. But after his exaltation in his human nature, he had the possession of them. Therefore

(3.) Christ then declares God's enlarging his terms: Isaiah 49:5, 'My God shall be my strength;' which words some take by themselves, as the beginnings of God's further grant. My God was my strength, he added courage to me by enlarging his gift, which is expressed, Isaiah 49:6, 'And he said, It is a light thing that thou should be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.' The word also represents as it were a former sticking in the Jews. It is too low a thing to take flesh, sweat, labour, and die for one nation; thou shalt spread thy tents to the end of the earth, and have the Gentiles for thy possession. When God saw me ready for so high a work, he did in his treaty extend the bounds of my power and advantage further. He said the limits of Israel were too narrow, the gain of Israel too light a recompense for so great a labour. God is brought in here proposing; Christ grieving at the narrowness of it, yet complying with it. God making a second proposal, wherein Christ does acquiesce; and no further debate is mentioned, after the Gentiles were cast into his lap. Whereupon some make a double decree, or at least two parts of the decree of salvation: 1, for the conversion of the Jews; 2, a decree for the conversion of the Gentiles.

5. The notion of a treaty and covenant is suitable to our conceptions, and gives us a distinct account of the methods of redemption; and also of the ground of the salvation of the fathers, who died before the coming of the Redeemer in the flesh. In order of conception, the first resolution was this, that man should be redeemed; the second, by what ways and means this redemption should be wrought; and how to make it sure, that there may be no revolt again. The second person is pitched upon for this undertaking. We must then conceive his voluntary consent to this, and also some terms upon which he undertakes it, which is necessary to every action according to the rules of wisdom. Had not this way of redemption been settled and stated, the fathers before and under the lay could not have been saved; for they were saved by faith. Faith could not be without a promise; a promise could not be without a previous ascertaining the method of redemption. Had Christ only consented to it at the time of his coming into the world, there had been no ground of any promise before, because the consent of the Redeemer had till that time been uncertain; but the promise supposes his consent positively given, before the promise was made. Again, the covenant of grace is as ancient as the first promise of the seed of the woman. And since the grace the patriarchs had was communicated by virtue of a covenant of grace, it implies that there was an agreement between the Father and the Son for it is by this agreement the covenant of grace is established. Faith in a mediator, the condition of that covenant, supposes the settlement of the

mediator. We cannot suppose how anything could be bestowed upon men by virtue of a covenant of grace, before the Redeemer had actually merited, without this agreement; for whatsoever was bestowed, was given upon the account of that merit to be wrought in time, therefore at least a promise of so meriting must precede; as articles of agreement are made among men, before the sealing of writings and payment of the money, by virtue of which articles there is some kind of right converted. Upon the account of this agreement, the Spirit was given to some particular men, but to very few, and in a less measure, for it was not congruous that there should be as great an effusion of the Spirit before the actual payment required for it, as after. How this could be without a designation of the person of Christ to this work of redemption, and a voluntary undertaking on his part, and how there could be this designing and appointing him to it, and his accepting of it, without some terms in the nature of a covenant between the Father and the Son, cannot so distinctly and easily be conceived by us. But such a notion as this makes the whole work more obvious to our weak understandings. For a close of this part, I shall direct you to Psalms 89:1-52 throughout, where this covenant is very plainly mentioned; and the whole contexture of the psalm discovers the design of it to be, to set forth some higher person than David; and seems to be too magnificent and lofty for an earthly prince. As Psalms 89:2, 'Mercy shall be built up for ever, thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.' But how was it established in the heavens? Psalms 89:8, in making a covenant with his chosen, and swearing to David his servant: 'Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.' Here indeed was faithfulness established in heaven. This will be more remarkable if the notion of a learned man of our own be true, that this psalm was penned in the time of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt, by Ethan, the son of Zerah, and grandchild of Judah, the son of Jacob, who is mentioned 1 Chronicles 2:6; therefore called Ethan the Ezraite, or of Zerah, who was the son of Judah. Though there is mention made of Ethan in the time of David, 1 Chronicles 15:17, 1 Chronicles 15:19, and though David be often mentioned in the psalm, yet, says he, that was done prophetically. Howsoever it is, the psalm is understood of Christ by most of our interpreters. And Christ is several times called David in the prophets, who lived after the time of David. Why might not David be prophetically mentioned many years before his birth, as well as Cyrus was by the prophet Isaiah, some years before his? Some make this covenant of redemption the same with the covenant of grace. But they seem to be two distinct covenants

1. The parties are distinct. In the one, the Father and the Son are the parties covenanting. In the covenant of grace, God and man. In the mediatory covenant, there were two persons equal. In the covenant of grace there is a superior, God; and an inferior, man.

2. The conditions are different. Death, and satisfaction for sin thereby, was the condition of the covenant of redemption. Faith is the condition in the covenant of grace; death required on Christ's part, faith required on man's part. The giving Christ a seed, and eternal life to that seed, is the condition on God's part to Christ, the giving eternal life only to the party believing, is the condition on God's part in the other. So that the reward in that covenant is larger than the reward promised to us in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace, the condition runs thus, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' In the covenant of redemption the condition runs thus, 'Make thy soul an offering for sin, and thou shalt see a seed.' The promises of God to Christ, or rather God absolutely considered in that covenant, was the object of Christ's faith; God in Christ is the object of our faith in the covenant of grace. Believing in Christ could be no condition in the

covenant of redemption, as it is in the covenant of grace. Christ must be then the object of his own faith, not his Father's.

3. The time of making these covenants is different. The covenant of grace was made in time, after man had broke the covenant of works; the covenant of redemption was made from eternity. 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there were no depths, I was brought forth, while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world; (set up as mediator) rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth,' Proverbs 8:24-25, Proverbs 8:31. He rejoiced in angels, the chief parts of his creation, as God; in the habitable parts of the earth, as mediator. The revelation of the covenant of redemption was in time, but the stipulation was from eternity; the Father and Son being actually in being, and so stipulators. The decree of making a covenant of grace was from eternity, but not the actual covenant, because there was no soul to covenant with; as the decree of creating the world was in time, but the actual creation at the beginning of time. The covenant of redemption is expressed, Isa. liii., whence we can no more conclude, that it was but then made, than we may say, that Christ suffered then, because his sufferings are spoken of there as already undergone. It was made when some were given to Christ, and therefore must be as ancient as election, which was before the foundation of the world.

4. Christ is the mediator of the covenant of grace, Hebrews 12:24, but not the mediator of the covenant of redemption, but a party. He was the surety of the covenant of grace, Hebrews 7:22. The covenant of redemption had no surety; the Father and the Son trusted one another upon the agreement. The covenant of grace is confirmed by the blood of Christ; but we cannot say that the covenant of redemption was confirmed properly by that blood, any more than as the shedding of his blood was a necessary article in that covenant.

5. Christ performed his part in the covenant of redemption; and by virtue of this mediatory covenant, performed the covenant of works; but he did confirm, not perform, the covenant of grace.

6. By the covenant of redemption, Christ could challenge his reward upon his own account; but by the covenant of grace, believers have a right to the reward only upon the account of Christ. There is an intrinsic worth in the obedience of Christ whereby he merited, for there was a proportion between it, in regard of the dignity of his person and the infiniteness of God; but there is no intrinsic worth in that grace which is the condition of the covenant of grace, to merit anything. There was a condition of a valuable consideration required of Christ, but the condition required of us has no valuable proportion to the greatness of the reward. The reward was of debt to him, because what he performed was by his own strength; of grace to us, because what we perform is by the strength of another. And though the exaltation of Christ is called a free gift, 'He has given him a name above every name,' "echarisato", Php 2:9, that is in respect of the whole economy of the mission of Christ, and the manifestation of him, which is an act of God's free grace to us. And in his exaltation he is considered as appearing for us, and receiving from the Father all for our good; and because it was an act of free grace to us, to unite the second person in the Trinity to our flesh.

7. The mediatory covenant respects others in Christ, as well as Christ himself, viz. his seed, and the giving them a glory. In the covenant of grace, the promise respects only the particular person

that believes; it regards none else but the particular person answering the terms of that covenant. No person can challenge any right upon another's believing, but must believe himself, if he will be within the compass of the covenant. But Christ, upon the performance of the condition of the mediatory covenant, could challenge not only for himself, but for others, and all that were to be his seed, and were to believe on him to the end of the world, John 17:20, John 17:24, because that covenant respected not only himself, but others, upon those conditions he was to perform; for the redemption, justification, and happiness of believers are promised to Christ upon the condition of dying, Isaiah 53:11. All the seed of Christ are in the covenant of redemption before they are regenerate, but not actually in the covenant of grace, and under the influence of the special benefits of it, till they are regenerate; as all mankind were in the loins of Adam, but not guilty of his pollution till their natural generation.

8. If the covenant of grace and that of redemption were the same, then Christ should be both the testator and a party. Christ is the testator of the covenant of grace, Hebrews 9:16-17. A testator makes not a will to bequeath legacies to himself. So that these two covenants are distinct; they agree in the common nature of a covenant, that there are conditions to be performed, and privileges thereupon to be enjoyed. But the conditions and privileges are distinct. They agree in this, that the salvation of the seed is promised in both covenants: it is promised to the believer upon his faith; it is promised to Christ in behalf of the seed upon his suffering; and, further, the covenant of redemption is the foundation of the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace, Christ, or God in Christ, is the object of faith. Christ had not been the object of faith, had not such an agreement between the Father and the Son preceded. How is Christ the object of faith, but as dying? What force had his death had, without some compact between the Father as the principal party wronged, and the Redeemer as the person satisfying? The everlastingness of the covenant of grace depends upon the perpetuity of the covenant of redemption: Psalms 89:28-29, 'My covenant shall stand fast with him; his seed will I make to endure for ever.' This covenant between the Father and the Son must be broken, before the covenant of God can fail to a believer. Upon this account Christ is said to be 'given for a covenant to the people,' Isaiah 42:6; a covenant to the people, i. e. to bring the people into covenant with me; as being the foundation of the covenant of grace, upon which account he is called the peace, Ephesians 2:17; as being the foundation and cause of peace between God and man. And all the promises as established by his death are yea and amen in him: they receive their validity from his death, and his death receives its validity from the covenant of redemption. He thereby performing what was required on his part, settled the covenant of grace between God and us for ever unrepealable, and it had not its full settlement but in the establishment of this. Upon the account of this covenant, the right of Christ as a testator bequeathing the inheritance is grounded, for he could not as a testator bequeath what he had no right unto. His testament was made by him, not as God, but as mediator by means of his death, Hebrews 9:15-16. Therefore, as mediator, he had a right, which cannot well be supposed without some precedent agreement between the Father and the Son, because the right originally resided in the Father. And this covenant of redemption is the ground of our hope and faith: Titus 1:2, 'In hope of eternal life, which was promised before the world began.' The hope believers have of eternal life springs up originally from that promise made by the Father to the Son before the foundation of the world; for the promises of the covenant of grace were included in this covenant of redemption; and to be made good when Christ made the conditions on his part in that covenant good. In this agreement, then, God was in Christ reconciling the world.

(1.) The Father covenants with Christ, that he should undertake for man as a common head; to free men from that dreadful condition, wherein God foresaw from eternity they would fall upon their creation. Hence he is called the second Adam, as being a public person; and as Adam had fallen off from righteousness to the love of iniquity, and violated the law of God, so the second Adam, as a head of many fellows, was to 'love righteousness, and hate iniquity,' Hebrews 1:9, i. e. vindicate the honour of God, laid prostrate by sin, and restore the righteousness of the law. This being rendered there the ground of his advancement by God as his God, a God in covenant with him, implies that it was the main article insisted on, and a condition in the covenant which Christ was to perform. Man was a criminal debtor, the debt must be paid; Christ by agreement puts himself in the sinner's stead, to pay this debt, submit to the revenging arm of justice, and thereby release the prisoner: Galatians 4:4-5, 'He was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law;' as we were under the law, so was Christ to bear the curse of the law for us, that whatsoever power the law had over us in regard of its precepts, Christ was to obey, in regard of its curses he was to undergo, and thus undertaking for us, he was to endure the shock of his Father's wrath, which we sinners are liable to: and, therefore, he is brought in, offering himself as a surety in our stead Psalms 40:7, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God;' thy covenant-will, as thou art my God; which will was our sanctification by the 'offering of his body,' Hebrews 10:10. Referring to Psalms 40:7, and as being instead of us the principal debtors, he calls our sins his own (Psalms 40:13, 'mine iniquities have taken hold of me'); as he was our surety, the debt which a surety engages to pay being legally his own debt, though he did not personally incur it by any crime of his own, or receipt of that for which he stands indebted.

(2.) In order to this, another condition necessarily consequent upon the other was, that he was to take a body. This debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant be performed, but in the human nature, the divine being impassible. He was therefore to have a passible nature, a nature capable of, and prepared for suffering, Hebrews 10:5; a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure, Hebrews 10:6. He was to have a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted; whereupon Christ does freely comply, 'I come to do thy will, O my God;' I am come to take such a body, which by thy will is allotted to me.

(3.) In this body he was to pay a service and obedience to his Father. After this agreement, whatsoever Christ did in the body falls under the term of obedience to the mediatory law prescribed him. Hence he is called God's servant, Isaiah 13:1, and 'took upon him the form of a servant,' Php 2:7; not as servants were formerly bought with a price, and passed wholly into the right and dominion of another, but a servant who, by covenant and agreement, undertakes an employment by the order of another; for he was such a servant, that he was also Lord, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 1:2. This is expressed, Isaiah 1:5, 'The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious.' God constituted him his servant by the opening his ear, according to the Jewish custom of boring the ear, and he was not in any thing rebellious, he was to do whatsoever was commanded him to do; and, therefore, all the time of his life before his death, he acted an obedience to his Father, and did nothing but by his Father's command and order: John 14:31, 'As the Father has given me commandment, so I do.' He stipulated to take upon him the 'form of a servant,' Php 2:6-7, which seems to refer to this agreement; and after that, 'was made in the likeness of men,' referring to his incarnation; as a man is said to take upon him such a task, when

he has covenanted to do it.

(4.) In this body he was to die at last; and, therefore, his dying is said to be obedience: Php 2:8, 'He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross;' his dying, and dying so ignominiously upon the cross, was obedience; which implies a command and order to die, and to die such a death, otherwise it had not been obedience, though it might be termed affection. This was the chief article of the covenant: Isaiah 53:10, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.' "Tasim" is then the third person, and being feminine, agrees well with "nefesh", a feminine noun. Other translations read it, If he shall make his soul an offering for sin; or, rather, according to others, and according to grammar, If his soul shall make an offering for sin. In this death he was to respect the satisfaction of God's justice; for it was not a bare offering, but an offering for sin. God, in imposing this article, respected this chiefly, as this was the main end of sending him to be an "hilasmios": 1 John 4:10, 'God has sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' So it was the main end of this article of dying, which Christ was to respect in his dying; for the regarding the end of any service or command is a principal ingredient in obedience; by virtue of which covenant and command thereupon, there was an ought upon Christ: Luke 24:26, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered those things?' And a command, John 10:18, 'I have power to lay down my life; I have,' "ksousian", 'authority, for I have received a command from my Father.' Hence his death is said to be determined: Luke 22:22, 'The Son of man goes as it was determined.' In the first giving himself to God, he gave himself as a ransom, to be testified and brought forth upon the stage in time, wherein his mediatory office chiefly consisted, 1 Timothy 2:5-6. And methinks Christ does intimate this laying down his life for his sheep to be the effect of this mutual agreement between the Father and himself: John 10:15, 'As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.' It was the effect of their knowledge of one another, not a bare knowledge, for that might have been without Christ's dying; but an intimate conjunction of mind, an approbation on both parts. This mind, to take upon him the form of a servant, was in Christ, Php 2:5, and therefore this mind was in his Father, for their minds could not be different; there was a mutual knowledge and agreement in the whole affair, and from this knowledge one of another, did arise the laying down of his life. God required this sacrifice of Christ, exclusively of all others, in the first treaty, as to any satisfaction: Hebrews 10:5-7, 'Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldst not; in them thou had no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come.' He pronounced them utterly useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice he intended. And that voice of Christ upon the cross, 'It is finished,' John 19:30, seems to refer to this agreement. I am come to a period on my part, the article on my part is completed, there remain no more deaths for me to suffer. This seems to be a necessary article, very congruous to the wisdom of God, as he is creator, governor, and the end of all things: Hebrews 2:10, 'It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' It became him as a wise Creator, as a wise Governor, as he is the end of all things, to insist upon the sufferings of Christ as the fittest means for the attaining the end he aimed at; for hereby his justice and mercy are glorified. In the performance, Christ was very exact in every punctilio: 'As they were skewed by the mouths of the prophets, he so fulfilled them,' Acts 3:18; and God showed them by the mouth of the prophets as they were determined and agreed upon. The ancient Jews had some prospect of this covenant. One of their writers. says, God treated with the Messiah: Righteous Messiah, those who are hid with thee, are such whose sins in time shall bring thee into grief; thy ears shall hear reproaches, thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy

mouth, thou shalt be wearied with sorrow. The Messiah answered, Lord of the world, I joyfully take them upon me, and charge myself with their torments, but upon this condition, that thou shalt quicken the dead in their days. God, says the rabbi, granted him this, and from that time the Messiah charged himself with all kind of torments; as it is written, Isa. liii., 'He was afflicted.' So that the death of Christ was not by a fortuitous reencounter of things, nor merely by the violence of the Jewish rage, nor from any inability in his Father or himself to hinder so strange an event, but it was the issue of a previous agreement, flowing from infinite love, managed by incomparable wisdom, disposing things to so great an end.

(5.) In regard of what Christ was to do and suffer, the Father makes excellent promises to him.

[1.] Promises of assistance. [2.] Of a seed. [3.] Of glory.

[1.] Promises of assistance.

First, Promises of a fitness for it. He had the promise of the Spirit to this purpose: Isaiah 11:1-3, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord;' to distribute all his gifts to him, in a fullness of measure, in a fullness of duration. All the gifts of the Spirit should reside in him, as in a proper habitation, perpetually; as the Deity dwelt in the humanity, and was never to forsake it. The human nature being a creature, could not beautify and enrich itself with needful gifts; this promise of the Spirit was therefore necessary, his humanity could not else have performed the work it was designed for. So that the habitual holiness residing in the humanity of Christ, was a fruit of this eternal covenant. Though the divine nature of Christ by virtue of its union, might sanctify the human nature, yet the Spirit is promised him, because it is the proper office of the Holy Ghost to confer those gifts which are necessary for any undertaking in the world; and the personal operations of the Trinity do not interfere. It also might be, because every person in the Trinity might evidently have a distinct hand in our redemption.

Secondly, Promises of protection in it. Upon this one stone there were to be seven eyes, Zechariah 3:10. Seven eyes upon one stone, a special care of him, and counsel about him. Seven notes multitude; eyes note intention. Providence is signified by eyes in Scripture; a special providence shall be exercised towards Christ in the whole management of his office, and defence of his kingdom; hence, he does acknowledge that he was under the choice care of God: Luke 2:49, 'Wist you not that I am about my Father's business?' "en tois tou patros", among those things my leather takes care of; 'why sought you me?' Do you not know that I am the choicest jewel of my Father, and that he has his eye upon me; as one of the cabinet rarities of my Father? God promised to hide him in the shadow of his hand, preserve him as a shaft in his quiver, in the midst of the rage and fury of his enemies. He does solemnly promise his omnipotence, all his creating and governing power, to hold his hand in his being for a covenant of the people, and a light of the Gentiles, till he had brought 'the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house,' Isaiah 13:5-7. He promises here, in the loftiest expressions, to strengthen him so, that he should not be discouraged, but see the blessed effects of his undertaking. He would uphold him tenderly, as a father does his son in his arms, that no hurt may happen to him, and that because he had called him in righteousness; or, as some, our righteousness, to settle an evangelical righteousness in the earth. He is said, therefore, to be made strong by God for himself: Psalms 80:16, 'The Son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself,' the King, Messiah,

whom thou hast strengthened for thyself; so the Targum. The title of Son of man was by way of eminency given to the Messiah in Daniel, and the title he commonly gave himself in the New Testament. This assistance of Christ was represented by the ark, which had three coverings, together with the table of shewbread representing the Church, Numbers 4:8, as a type of a special protection to both, whereas other consecrated things had but two coverings.

Thirdly, This assistance was to run through the whole course of his mediation. He was to be assisted in his conflict, and in his success, while his soul was travailing, and while it was triumphing. He should not be discouraged, till he had 'set judgment in the earth,' Isaiah 13:4. It is a meiosis; he shall be mightily encouraged, till he have wrought a perfect deliverance for his people; and there shall be a supporting hand under him till he has completed the work of redemption. He should stand, and be established, and 'feed in the strength of the Lord,' Micah 5:4, 'in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.' He should gather, rule, and save his sheep in the choicest of God's strength, as he was his God, i. e. a God in covenant with him, and had appointed him to be 'the Judge of Israel,' ver. 1, and this, till he should be 'the peace,' Micah 5:5, not only laying the cornerstone by his death, but the top-stone by his exaltation.

Fourthly, Christ was to plead these promises, and encourage himself in them. He was to plead them: Psalms 89:26, 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.' After the repetition of the promises of strength and assistance, Psalms 89:19-21, &c., he was enjoined to put those covenant promises in suit, and then he should be made the firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth, and his covenant should stand fast with him; as though God promised him the Gentiles for his possession, yet he was to ask it, Psalms 2:8. In this covenant there was an injunction upon Christ to intercede and plead for himself, and for his people; so that the intercession Christ does manage in heaven for the completing of those promises, which were formerly in that covenant, or depended upon it (as all the promises in the covenant of grace do), is an article in that covenant, and therefore will be kept up till all enemies are made his footstool, and death, which is the last, swallowed up in victory. Christ encouraged himself in those promises; by these God made him hope when he was 'upon his mother's breasts,' Psalms 22:9, and he prophetically pleads them, Psalms 22:10-11, 'I was cast upon thee from the womb: be not far from me, for trouble is near.' It was an high satisfaction to him, that he should not be moved, therefore he set God always before him, Acts 2:25. In regard of confidence, and supply of strength, his eye was not upon him in one strait or two, but in the whole affair, Psalms 16:8-9; he had a confidence that God would be at his right hand, which signifies to be an helper and fellow-champion in fight for the weakening of his enemies; it being a metaphor taken from conflicts, where he that is at the right hand of his companion does first expose himself to danger, and receiving the enemies' force defends his associate from the blows. The same expression is used of standing by Christ: Psalms 110:5, 'The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings.' How loftily does he express his confidence in it: Isaiah 50:8-10, 'The Lord God will help me; therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. The Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?' and challenges all the power of earth and hell to contend with him, since he had the promise of God to justify him. 'My God shall be my strength,' Isaiah 49:5, my God in covenant with me. And the apostle brings him in declaring his trust in God: Hebrews 2:13, and 'I will put my trust in him.' And he acknowledges that the preservation of his disciples, and consequently all his people enjoy by him, is through the 'name of his Father,' John 17:12. He acknowledges his powerful assistance

in every particle of his work. 'I have kept them in thy name.'

[2.] Promises of a seed, as the success of his undertaking. He was first in order to die, and then to see his seed: Isaiah 53:10-11, 'When his soul shall make an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall see the travail of his soul;' his grief and pain shall not be fruitless. He was to have a flock to guide as a shepherd, members to animate as an head, a spouse to cherish as a husband, children to breed up as a father, subjects to reign over as a king. There was a designation of some to him for those relations at this first agree meet, which he does acknowledge as a donative from his Father: John 6:6, 'Thine they were, and thou gave them me.' Thine by election and creation, mine by donation and merit; they belonged to Christ as God before, though originally to the Father as the fountain of the Deity; but now to Christ by another tie, as mediator, as jewels to be made up by him; upon the account of which gift by compact, he calls them his sheep before their actual enfolding, John 10:15-16. The promise made to Abraham of the blessing of the nations in his seed is said to be made to Christ, Galatians 3:19; 'till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, which seed is Christ,' Galatians 3:16. And some interpret Galatians 3:17, 'the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ,' "eis Christon" for to Christ, as Ephesians 1:5, "eis auton" for "heautoi", and Colossians 1:20, reconcile all things "eis auton", to himself; but howsoever, the promise to Abraham is certainly grounded upon a promise to Christ, that in him who was Abraham's seed all nations should be blessed; whether that Hosea 14:5-6, be a promise to Christ, who is called Israel, or rather a promise or prophecy concerning the church, of the beauty of Christ's seed as a lily, the firmness as a cedar, and the fruitfulness as an olive.

God promised, 1. A numerous seed. 2. A succession of seed. 3. A duration of seed.

God promised him a numerous seed, like the dew that falls at the dawn of the morning in abundance upon the flowers and plants of the earth, Psalms 110:3: 'The dew of thy youth, from the womb of the morning.' Micah 5:7, As the dew upon the grass. As the poets call the dew the tears of the morning, so was this the fruit of Christ's tears and blood; they were upon his ascension to flock to him from all quarters of the world. He promised to 'bring his seed from the east, and gather them from the west; he would say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth,' Isaiah 43:5-6. And Isaiah 54:1, 'More shall be the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.' The Rachel of our mystical Jacob, that had remained so long barren, should be suddenly mother of a numerous train. Then was our Saviour Israel indeed, one that prevailed with God (as the word signifies) to enlarge the lines of his inheritance to the Gentiles. He was to 'speak peace to the heathens,' Zechariah 9:10. And, according to this article, God enlarged the tents of the church, so that twenty-three years after the publication of the gospel, not only Syria and Arabia, and the bordering provinces on Judea, were full of Christians, but Asia, Italy, Spain, and the chiefest of the western part. And Tacitus says, that in the eleventh year of Nero, which was thirty-one years after Christ's ascension, Rome, the capital city of the world, swarmed with men professing the name of Christ. The death of Christ was to be more fruitful than his life, and being lifted up upon the cross, he was to draw all men after him, and gather a plentiful harvest of all kindreds, tongues, and nations; a mighty generation to be new born to serve him. He was to be cast into the ground, that seed should spring up from him, John 12:24. He was to be dead in reality, as Isaac in figure, that he might be the everlasting father of many nations. Thus, when he was on his part to be laid low as a root in the earth, by making his soul an offering for sin, God, the husbandman of this vine,

promises to bring forth a new set, an abundance of branches sprouting up from him. They should come 'from afar off and build in the temple of the Lord,' Zechariah 6:15. Gentiles as well as Jews should be knit together as lively stones to rise up for a temple to the Lord.

God promises a succession of seed. 'His name shall be continued as long as the sun,' Psalms 72:17, "yinion", filiabitur, his name shall be childed in him, as the name of a man is continued successively in his posterity. It is not only one morning that the rich and plentiful dew shall fall from heaven upon the hearts of men, but successively to the end of the world, as long as this Sun of righteousness shall rise in any horizon, and the day dawn before him. Grace shall be dropped upon the hearts of men for a succession of seed, till in the last generation a period be put to the world. Seed shall be springing up till the last fire seize upon the world, at which time there shall be some caught up into the air to meet him, and a generation among the nations shall be successively blessed in him. A perpetual seed is promised him. God's covenant shall stand fast with him, and the issue of that is, that his seed will God make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven, Psalms 89:28-29. His seed and throne are coupled together, as if his throne could not stand if his seed did fail. If his subjects should perish, what would he be king of? If his members should consume, what would he be head of? The promise of a perpetual kingdom secures the duration of his seed. This was so considerable an article, that in his plea he insists on it more resolutely, and challenges it with a more vigorous earnestness: John 17:24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me,' &c., as he had at the first treaty insisted upon the enlarging his inheritance among the Gentiles. He had hitherto been praying only for his own glory, and their preservation and sanctification in the world. He now brings in an also; there was an article for the glory of his seed, as well as for the glory of his person, and the word also signifies that he would be as earnest for them, and insist as much upon the performance of this article which concerned them, as upon that which concerned himself. And the reason rendered signifies thus, 'For thou loved me from the foundation of the world.' Thou did manifest the love to me as mediator before the foundation of the world, in this promise of a seed, and that they should be perpetually with me to behold my glory; this was the main article which encouraged Christ to this work, wherein the Father manifested his love to him as mediator before the world, and therefore in that rich promise wherein God engages the majesty of his name for the strengthening of him, the perpetuity of his seed is ensured: Micah 5:4, 'He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide.' Who? Micah 5:3, the remnant of his brethren that shall return to the children of Israel, the brethren of that ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from everlasting, they shall abide. And some thus interpret Isaiah 53:10, 'He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,' i. e. the days of his seed. They shall be perpetually with him. For it was the pleasure of the Lord in this compact to give them a kingdom (as Christ tells his disciples); and this pleasure of the Lord should prosper in the hands of the mediator. That which God in his wisdom aimed at in his Son's sufferings, he aimed at certainly in the calling him and engaging him by covenant to suffer, and that was the bringing many sons to glory: Hebrews 2:10, 'It became him, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' The end and the means were becoming propositions for the wisdom of God to make, and as becoming for the wisdom of God to perform. Since the means have been fully wrought, the end will be perfectly attained. Christ had those promises of eternal life made to him as a common head, and a feoffee in trust for them: Titus 1:2, 'Eternal life was promised before the world began.' Not for himself, who was the eternal Son of God. Could the

promise of eternal life to his humanity make him take flesh barely for that? It was promised to him for his seed, for whose redemption he was to lay down his life as a ransom. As God made a covenant with Adam, not as an individual person, but as a nature, he being the representative of mankind, so that if he had stood, his posterity had stood and enjoyed life; so he made a covenant with Christ to give eternal life to those that should believe in him, who are as really in him by regeneration as men are in Adam by natural descent. To which may be added,

God promised his grace to draw men to him. That this seed should be sure to him, God promises to prepare men for him: to remove the stony heart, mollify their hearts, give them hearts of flesh, conquer their carnal principles and resolutions, and put his Spirit into them, that they might be a fit progeny for Christ. Christ intimates this in that speech 'None can come unto me except the Father, which has sent me, draw him,' John 6:44. As the Father's sending him was the issue of a compact between them, so the drawing any is a fruit of that compact; for Christ removes this from himself, as an article to be performed on his part, as that which lay solely upon his Father's hands, as belonging to him as much as his own mission, and the particular circumstances of it. And this promise he had, Psalms 9:2, 'That the people should be willing in the day of his power.' God ordered him indeed to call the nations: Isaiah 55:5, 'Thou shalt call a nation which thou know not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God; for he has glorified thee.' But the vigour which should spirit them to so quick a race to Christ he reserves to himself; they shall run because of the Lord thy God; by his power, as he was the Lord, by his faithfulness, as he was his God in covenant; and the reason rendered is the glorifying him; which is both an engagement to Christ to call those his Father would have him call, and an engagement on the Father to bring the nations to him. The coming in of nations would redound to his honour; and it is likely this is part of the glory Christ prays for, John 17:5. He does not particularise what that glory was, but some guess may be made by his falling off from that petition to the praying for his people. The preservation of them and keeping those that had been given to him (which includes the bringing them all in) is part of the glory which was promised to him. And this glorifying of him in his people he begs for at his Father's hand, as being by this covenant to be his act. The coming in of nations to him was a great part of the glory of Christ promised him in this covenant. The conversion of every man by the efficacy of grace, is the fruit of the covenant between the Father and the Son, as God is the Lord God of Christ. And therefore the calling of us by God is said to be according to his own purpose, and that grace, which was given us in Christ before the world was, 2 Timothy 1:9, a promise of grace for us, and of our calling in time, made then. For what is here called the purpose of God is, Titus 1:2, called the promise of God, and intimated as a promise in those words, 'given us in Jesus Christ,' by an agreement with him as our head, as the promise of life upon the covenant of works was given us in Adam as our common head. And so the promise of taking away the heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh, may be said to be promises made to Christ on the behalf of his seed, not of his person; because, without this taking away the heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh, it was impossible the nations, or any man, could be blessed in him. Notwithstanding that this efficacious grace is from the Father, and by his Spirit, by the covenant, yet all thus regenerated may well be called the seed of Christ, because the end of the sufferings of Christ was to merit a spirit of grace for those that were given to him; and the Spirit does nothing in forming a seed, but what rises up from the merit of Christ's sufferings. It is the travail of his soul, though the formation of the Spirit. Christ endured the pangs upon the cross for every new creature, though the Spirit brings it forth into the world. So that they are his

seed, as springing up from the merit of his death, and being animated by the power of his life; they are Christ's seed by right of purchase, the Spirit's seed in regard of operation; yet as they are the Spirit's seed, they may be called Christ's seed, because the coming of the Spirit in its plentiful effusion for such an end was a fruit of his death and his ascension, John 16:7. He was sent by him as the greatest gift of his royalty.

There was something concerned Christ to do in this article of a seed; he was to take a special care of them. There was not only a may, but a must bring: John 10:16, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.' He was to call them, and the Father would draw them, and he was to bring them into one fold with the Israelites; and this does arise from this compact, or the mutual knowledge the Father and he had of one another; the mutual agreement, which was the cause of laying down his life, John 10:15. Knowing, in God, sometimes signifies election, 2 Timothy 2:19. God had chosen Christ to this end, and Christ had accepted of it to this end. These he was to teach, Isaiah 8:16. Those which he calls children, which the Lord had given, are, ver. 18, called his disciples, among whom he was to seal the law; whom he was to instruct in that knowledge of God which was eternal life, and manifest his name to them, John 17:2-3, John 17:6. And particularly, he was to instruct them in this great doctrine we are now treating of: John 17:7, 'Now they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee'; which was indeed the manifestation of the name of his Father, which he had spoken of, John 17:5, that all things which I do are by thy appointment, order, and assistance. I have ascribed nothing to myself, but magnified thy love, as the sole fountain of all that I have done; which was necessary, for I doubt many men think the Father to be cruel, and full of hatred to his creatures, and that he was over-persuaded to redemption by the importunities of his Son, as a severe prince might be mollified by the supplications of his heir. It was not so, and Christ was to acquaint men with the true notion of God, and what his thoughts and affections were concerning them, and to show him to be a proper object of faith in this business. He was to use a great tenderness towards them, he was not only to gather the lambs with his arm and power, but to carry them in his bosom, not only to lead them, but gently to lead them; to have a special care of them, Isaiah 40:11. When they were given to him, they were given with some rules and orders how he should manage them, and he was to have his eye not only upon the flock in general, but upon every one in particular, that as any of them were weak, he should use them with more gentleness; take such an one in his bosom, he should have seven eyes upon the weakest, as his Father had upon him the corner-stone. He is therefore said to know his sheep, John 10:14 (every one in particular, as he knows the stars by name); otherwise the foundation of the Lord, this covenant of redemption, which is the foundation of all his proceedings, could not stand sure. The Father knew them in particular when he gave them to Christ, and Christ knew them in particular when he received them from him. It seems also that by this covenant he was to bring every conquering soul to a triumph, and he had power given him to this purpose, John 17:2. In the perfection he promises to them that overcome, he seems to refer it all to the covenant with the Father: Revelation 3:12, he would make them pillars in the temple of his God, write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from his God; where he mentions God as his God in every reward he promises the victorious souls in the church of Philadelphia, four times in that verse, as I have observed before.

[3.] Promises of a glory upon his suffering. As he was to endure the cross, so he was also to enjoy a crown. The enduring the cross was an article on his part, the bestowing a crown was an article on God's part. It was testified before by the prophets that sufferings should precede, the glory follow, 1 Peter 1:11. The solemn inauguration into all his offices was after his making reconciliation; making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and thereby shutting up all prophecy and vision, because all the prophecies tended to him, and were accomplished in him, and then as manifesting himself the most holy, he was to be anointed, i.e. fully invested in all the offices of king, priest, and prophet, Daniel 9:24. The compact runs thus, Do this, suffer death for the vindication of the honour of my law, and thou shalt be a priest and king for ever. He could not, therefore, be solemnly installed till he had performed the condition on his part (for the promise was made to him considered as mediator, or God-man); then it was that he was advanced, for the ground of his exaltation is pitched wholly upon his sufferings: Php 2:9, 'Wherefore God has highly exalted him;' i.e. because he became obedient to the death of the cross. God has given him a name which is above every name; and because he loved righteousness, therefore God, as his God covenanting with him, has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, Hebrews 1:9, therefore he has given him a glory, as a just debt due to the price paid, the sufferings undergone, and the obedience yielded to the mediatory law. Therefore the glory Christ prayed for, which he had before the world was, John 17:5, may be understood of that glory which he had in promise to be given to him upon the completing the work he then engaged for. For this covenant was not about giving him his essential kingdom, for that belonged to him by nature, as he was God equal with the Father. But the mediatory kingdom belonged to his office by a particular grant. There were two works of Christ, works of humiliation, which were suffering and dying; which were voluntary, not natural works; no natural tie upon him as the Son of God to undergo them, but a moral tie, after agreement and promise. There are regal works which were conferred on him by his Father, that he should be honoured and adored in the world as mediator, Hebrews 1:6, worshipped by all the angels of God, when the glory of his deity should be manifested in the humanity, which had been so long veiled, and had but now and then beamed out; and this full shine of the Deity through the humanity was a new mode of glory acquired by the right of his death.

First, He had a promise of resurrection. As he had a power or authority by command to lay down his life, so he had a power and authority by promise to take it again, John 10:18. His heart was glad, his glory rejoiced, his flesh had hope in his sufferings; the ground of which hope was the assurance from his Father that his soul should not be left in hell, nor his Holy One (one so holy in the undertaking, and so holy in the execution) see corruption, but should be reduced again to the path of life more glorious, and attended with a fullness of joy, Psalms 16:10-11. It is contained in the promise of seeing his seed; for if he were to remain dead, how should he see his seed?

Secondly, A promise of a royal inheritance. The appointing him in the human nature heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2, 'Whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds'), which is distinguished from that power he had over all things by right of the creation of them, as the person by whom God made the worlds. That power was natural, this by appointment. The inheritance that belonged to Adam, as the head of the lower creation, being forfeited by him, was restored to the human nature of Christ; which Christ was so pleased with in the first grant, that he esteems it a goodly heritage, Psalms 16:6, which appointing him head and heir of all things was

for the behoof of the church, his spiritual seed: Ephesians 1:22, 'The head over all things to the church.'

Thirdly, An extensive power. In heaven as well as earth, Matthew 28:18, not only to judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations, Micah 4:3, but to be the head of principalities and powers. That every knee in heaven, and under the earth, as well as in the earth, should bow down to him, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, who appointed him, Php 2:10-11. A power over all flesh was granted to him, and claimed by him, as a glory given him by promise upon his glorifying of his Father: John 17:2, 'Glorify thy Son, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' A power over the seed of the serpent, the whole flesh as it stood in opposition to spirit and the interest of the redeemed ones; for it was granted to him as a feoffee in trust for the use and behoof of his seed, and to be exercised by him in subservience to the eternal happiness of his people, the great design and fruit of reconciliation. He had power before his suffering; for as God saved men upon the promise of his suffering, so upon the same promise he committed all power of judgment to him; but the solemn investiture and publication of it was at his resurrection and ascension: Acts 2:86, 'God has made that same Jesus whom thou have crucified both Lord and Christ.' For the setting him at his right hand in the human nature was a full declaration and confirmation of the right of that power which he had acquired by his death; therefore he prays for his glory, and pleads a deed of gift for it, which was by this agreement, and therefore desires a full investiture of it, as it had been agreed on first to be asked by him, and then given by God: Psalms 2:8, 'Ask of me.'

Fourthly, A perpetual and royal priesthood, Psalms 110:4. And indeed all the rights of the firstborn, which were the right of government, and the right of priesthood; by virtue of which he was to perpetuate the virtue of his expiation, and also purify the sons of Levi, and purge then as gold and silver, that they might offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness, Malachi 2:2.

Fifthly, An universal victory; the propagation of his kingdom in all parts of the world. Isaiah 13:4, 'The isles shall wait for his law;' the conquest of many hearts by his Spirit, the willingness of people in the day of his power, the subduing some rebellions by the sword of his mouth, others by the sword of his arm, when the Lord at his right hand should strike through kings in the day of his wrath, Psalms 110:5-6. At last a conquest of all his enemies, the devil and death, 1 Corinthians 15:26, which was for the benefit of his people. He had conquered the devil and death in his person, he was to have a complete victory over both in his members; so that we see the encouraging promise made him by his Father was the purchase of a seed, and the glory God promised him was in relation to, and for the advantage of, that seed, that the reconciliation to be purchased for them might be completely enjoyed by them. Judge then whether the Father was not signally, in this agreement in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.

We have handled this covenant, let us see what confirmation there was of it. On God's part we find an oath. God swears that Christ should be a priest, Psalms 110:4; he is therefore called the man of God's right hand in the prayer of the church: Psalms 80:17, 'Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,' whether for the hastening the suffering of Christ, or for his assistance, is uncertain; the man to whom thou hast sworn with thy right hand, so the Targum; the manner of taking oaths being to lift up the right hand: so Psalms 89:3, 'I have sworn to David my servant,' when he made

a covenant with him; though this was spoken to David in the type, 1 Samuel 7:1-17, yet, 1 Samuel 7:14, 'I will be his Father and he shall be my Son,' is applied to Christ, Hebrews 1:5. And he swears by his holiness: Psalms 89:36, 'Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.' By David I understand Christ; once, i.e. once for all, irrevocably, unchangeable; and that by his holiness, by all that will fit him for a governor and judge of the world, by that holiness which he chiefly aimed to advance by this undertaking of his Son. As I am an holy God, and desire my holiness may be trusted by this undertaking, I will stand to my word, by that holiness which is the beauty of every attribute, without which, neither power, mercy, justice, nor wisdom could be perfections worthy of a God, as they could not be if holiness could not be ascribed to every one of them, holy power, holy mercy, holy justice, and holy wisdom. By his holiness, which comprehends all his attributes, which would fail, should he violate his oath; whereby it appears that this of settling the seed of Christ, was the main article which God intended, which his heart was set upon, since he assures it by the strongest bond of an oath, and an oath by that attribute which was so necessary to the being of the Deity, without which we can have no conception of a God. We may conceive God punishing all men by justice, or pardoning all men by mercy, but we cannot conceive a God without holiness, for then we conceive a God without the highest perfection belonging to the Deity, an ungodded God. Now, by this seed is not meant Christ the seed of David, because that David whom he had found as his servant, Psalms 89:20, must be meant of Christ, by the greatness of the expression which follows after, and it is the seed of this David he will make to endure for ever, Psalms 89:29; 'his seed,' his seed who was the first born. And though the word of the oath is said to be since the law, Hebrews 7:28, that must be in regard of the manifestation of it, or rather in order of nature. For in this covenant God excluded all other sacrifices as insufficient, the order in the decree runs thus: first, the creation of man, covenant of works, &c. The foresight of the violation of that covenant, the insufficiency of other sacrifices for expiation, then the settling this grand sacrifice and high priest by an oath; for the first call of Christ was upon the inability of other sacrifices to afford God any pleasure, Hebrews 10:5-7; i. e. the foresight of their inability. It was confirmed also to Abraham by an oath, that the nations should be blessed in his seed: Hebrews 6:17, "emesiteusen" he mediated by an oath, the tenor whereof was, that as Abraham was willing to offer his son in a bloody sacrifice to him, so he would offer up his only Son for Abraham, and all such as should follow his example of faith and obedience.

Use of this.

1. We see the main cause of unbelief and despair. It is the ignorance of the Father's interest in redemption; the ignorance of the transaction between the Father and the Son is the cause of this, John 15:21, 'because they know not him that sent me.' They consider not that this was the Father's contrivance, that I am sent forth by him, and ordered by him to do what I do. If we had a clear vision of the gospel, and remembered God as intent upon a way of redemption, we should not nourish that which disparages the whole plot. Such souls look upon him as a God of wrath rather than a God of peace, whose hand is more filled with thunders than his heart with love; they regard him as one of a narrow and contracted goodness; that God minded nothing after man's sin but preparing his bow and sharpening his arrows. Hence they have frightful thoughts of God, slavish fears, fretful jealousies, that he will never accomplish their desires though they seek him never so fervently.

2. See the blackness of unbelief. It is as much as lies in a man to make void the end of God, frustrate the covenant of redemption, deprive God of all the glory he was to get by the articles of it, and Christ of the honour of his undertaking, and make the whole covenant insignificant, rejecting the eternal counsel of wisdom, as well as the rejecting John's baptism, Luke 7:30, was so interpreted. Whosoever does not believe upon the declaration of the gospel does endeavour to deprive Christ of a seed as far as he can. And those that endeavour to keep off others from Christ, endeavour, as far as their power extends, to make God violate his oath. This contrivance of God is the greatest masterpiece of wisdom and love; it was the most becoming thing God ever set about, most agreeable to his mercy and justice. Unbelief does what it can to demolish this fabric of God's erecting, as though the contrivance of his wisdom were a piece of folly, and the beating of his heart only worthy of the spurns of our feet.

3. Salvation is upon the most certain terms to every believer.

(1.) In regard that every believer is the seed of Christ. God has given such to Christ with an absolute will that they should not perish. Christ by covenant was to take care of them; God by covenant was engaged that Christ should see his seed. He confirmed it by oath, that his seed should endure for ever. Shall God be defeated of his will and the design of his everlasting covenant? He committed by covenant the souls of his people to Christ as his charge, John 6:37-39. Would God put a charge he values into the hands of impotence or unskilfulness. Will Christ be guilty of disaffection to his Father? Can he break the trust reposed in him? Will the Father be guilty of unfaithfulness to Christ? Can there be a violation of articles so solemnly made between them? This seed was to be perfect, Christ was to see the travail of his soul, which will be when he has given Christ a full possession of that trust he acquired for him upon the cross; but they must wait, for it is with his people as with himself. He obtained a right upon the cross for himself and them, but neither he nor they are yet in a full possession of the right he then purchased.

(2.) In regard of the firmness of the covenant between them. The covenant the Father has made with Christ is an obligation wherein he stands bound to Christ, and consequently to every parcel of his seed. Free grace to us made him a promiser to Christ, and his promise made him a debtor to him. Therefore if it be possible that the infinitely true God could be false to a temporary promise, how could he be false to his Son, the Son of his dearest love, the Son that he appointed, called out, and put upon this undertaking! How can he be false to his own counsel, and to a solemn everlasting covenant! His truth is a powerful engagement for performance, especially added to that love which first moved him to make this covenant. The covenant indeed was firm between God and Adam, had Adam stood; but there was not altogether so strong an obligation on God, he never confirmed it by an oath; he never was so much pleased with that, as with this. The greater pleasure any man has in the promise he makes, and the stronger resolution to perform it, the stronger asseverations he backs it with. To what purpose does Christ give us a draught and epitome of this eternal transaction as the ground of his pleas in heaven, but that the joy of believers may be full, that they might have his joy fulfilled in themselves? John 17:13, 'These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves;' that they might have a joy in the consideration of it, as he had in the making this covenant, and performing his part in it. 'These things I speak in the world.' I give them this history of our agreement, this copy of the articles between thee and me, that they may read thy eternal counsel concerning their good, and

have a strong consolation, and run to this public record in all cases, spread it before, yea, and plead it with thee. And by virtue of this covenant, though a believer fall into sin (for it is not possible he can run on in a course of sin), God will reduce him. The afflicting them to that end is a condition ensured in this covenant, Psalms 89:28-32, God will visit them with rods, but not lash them with scorpions; he will afflict them, but not destroy them; whip them, but not damn them; because he will not take away his loving-kindness from his Son, or suffer his faithfulness to fail.

(3.) In regard that Christ has suffered and performed all on his part. Christ has performed his part by making his soul an offering for sin; he must therefore see his seed, and that to satisfaction, Isaiah 53:11, otherwise there would be a breach of covenant and promise on the Father's part. God was to please Christ, as Christ had pleased him; and the pleasure is not mutual unless both be pleased alike. The wafting therefore of every believer through this vale of misery is a debt God owes to Christ, and a satisfaction necessary to make his happiness as mediator complete, and which our Saviour may challenge as a due debt by virtue of compact. Will God ever go back from his word, tear the articles on his part in pieces, and so let the strength and blood of Christ be spent for nought?

(4.) In this covenant God has linked his own glory and the salvation of believers together. For in this covenant, wherein God was to be glorified, Christ was to be his salvation to the ends of the earth, Isaiah 49:3, Isaiah 49:6. As he covenanted with Christ for a glory from him, so by covenant he gave up the Gentiles to him; and thus having settled them together upon one corner stone, the happiness of a believer is as firmly upon that basis established as the honour of God. And therefore what the prophet calls the glory of God, Isaiah 40:5, 'All flesh shall see the glory of God,' Luke expresses by salvation, Luke 3:6, 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God;' and when God has declared his will for the sending Christ for the redeeming of the prisoners from captivity, Isaiah 13:5-6, Isaiah 13:8 he says, 'My glory will I not give unto another.' I will entrust no other with redeeming work, which is my glory, but this servant of mine; so that the peace is as firm as God's honour, and can then only cease when God shall cease to love himself, his Son, and his own glory. What greater ground of faith can there be than this, since God's love cannot reach a strain higher than to venture his own glory in the same bottom with a believer's happiness?

4. Fly to this covenant of redemption, as well as to the covenant of grace, since that is the foundation of this. All other considerations of Christ's death, merit, and everything stored up in Christ, can give us little hope, unless we consider this covenant, which supports all the other stones of the building. Fly to it when your souls are in heaviness. Though there may be sometimes clouds upon the face of God, yet consider those compassion in his heart, when he struck this covenant with Christ. He covenanted to bruise his own Son by his wrath, while he promised to support him by his strength, and the sounding of his bowels always kept pace with the blows of his hand. The consideration of this will encourage our faintness, silence our fears, nonplus our scruples, and settle a staggering faith. Is a believer in a storm? Here is an anchor to hold him. Is he sinking? Here is a bough to catch at. Is he pursued by spiritual enemies? Here is a refuge to fly to. Sin cannot so much oblige God's justice to punish, as his oath to Christ obliges him to save a repenting and believing sinner. These two covenants, that of redemption, and the other of grace, are as a Hur and Aaron to hold up the hands of a feeble faith. His love cannot die, as long as his faithfulness remains, nor his peace with the soul perish as long as the covenant with his Son endures. This covenant of redemption is to be pleaded by us, as well as the merit of Christ's

death, because the merit of his death is founded upon this compact.

IV. The Father did fit Christ for this great undertaking to make reconciliation. Christ was the vine, John 15:1, 'I am the vine, and my Father the husbandman,' a vine of the Father's planting, a vine of the Father's dressing. And God planted him a noble vine, in order to the bearing branches. He made him a vine fit to cherish those he should insert in him. He is therefore said to be sanctified by the Father when he is sent into the world: John 10:36, 'Say you of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world,' sanctified in order to his mission, or sanctified at his mission, that the glory of God's reconciling love might be manifest by him; sanctified to do the works of his Father, for which end he was sent into the world, as John 10:37 intimates, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.' Much of God's secret counsel was spent about him, whence he is called 'a polished shaft in his quiver,' Isaiah 49:2, 'in the quiver of his secret counsel wherein he was hid.' This promise he had in that agreement between them, that 'the Spirit of the Lord should be put upon him,' Isaiah 42:1; and for this great end of redemption, as you may read in the following verses in that chapter. And since the end of his undertaking was to glorify God in the work of redemption, the wisest counsels would be employed to furnish Christ for bringing about the highest glory to God and happiness to man.

1. A fitness for so great a task was absolutely necessary. In regard of his office: As he was settled in an office by the Father, so the graces and gifts of the Spirit were necessary to fit the human nature for those great works of the Father which were to be performed in it. The human nature had been unprofitable without an office, and an office had been unsuccessful without graces and gifts for the execution of it. An office of mediator, without capacity, fullness, charity, and goodness, had been useless, and to no purpose. In regard of the greatness of the work he was to do: Sin had blemished the world, turned all creatures from their true end by man's revolt from the service of God, whereby those creatures which were made to serve a loyal subject were forced to serve a rebel. The world then was to be restored, the ruins by sin repaired, the sin removed, and the sinner redeemed. As this required infinite skill for the contrivance, so it required infinite fitness for the execution. The glory of God's design required it, which was to make his attributes most illustrious, and display them more magnificently in the work of redemption than in that of creation; and this being to be done in the human nature (whose fall had necessitated a reparation or destruction) because by that God was dishonoured, in that therefore the glory of his attributes was to be manifested, it required a mighty fitness for the manifestation of an infinite glory.

2. Christ in regard of his divine nature was infinitely fit, and in regard of the union of that to the human suitably fit. For in regard of his infinite knowledge, he knew the rights of God in the infinite extent of his glory, and what was fit for the reparation of those rights which had been violated, he knew the infinite holiness of his Father, he knew the utmost malice of the inward bowels of sin, which he was to expiate; for he knew all things; for 'the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that himself does,' John 5:21. As God, he knew what wrong God had sustained in point of honour, and in point of service; and what was necessary to restore the honour to God, and reduce the creature to the service of the Creator. In regard of his infinite holiness therefore, God, who is holy, could be sanctified in his righteousness, Isaiah 5:16. In regard of his power, as he was the fittest medium by whom God created the world, Hebrews 1:2, so he was the fittest medium by whom God might repair the world, and give a new consistency to it: Colossians 1:16, 'He was before all things, and by him all things consist.' He was 'the mighty God, the everlasting Father,' or

the Father of the age to come, and therefore 'the prince of peace,' Isaiah 9:6. It was necessary he should be God, as it was necessary he should be man, to make the compensation suitable, because the human nature had committed the trespass; so it was necessary he should be God, to make the compensation sufficient, because God had received the wrong. Two things were requisite: suffering, therefore he must be man; satisfaction by that suffering, therefore he must be God. Two things in justice to be considered: the equity of justice, therefore the nature offending must suffer; the infiniteness of justice, therefore an infinite person must suffer. He therefore being thus infinite, could answer the infiniteness of God's honour in the reparation, and the infiniteness of our debts in the expiation. For as he had a human nature, wherein to merit, so he had a divine nature whereby to make that merit sufficient. No other nature could be fit; the angelical nature was not infinite, and therefore could not pay an infinite price; the human nature was neither infinite nor innocent, and therefore could not satisfy for infinite guilt. He was to stand under the sin of the world, and what creature could ever be fit to bear so vast a burden! As none but an infinite goodness could exercise so great a patience towards the sins of men, so none but an infinite goodness could pay a satisfaction for them. Now, though Christ, as he was the Son of man, 'gave his life a ransom for many,' Matthew 20:28, yet the value of the redeeming price arose from it, as 'the blood of God,' Acts 20:28. He gave his life as man, but the purchase was made by him as God. It could not have been for our glory, or purchased a glory for us, unless he who was the Lord of glory had been crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:6, 1 Corinthians 2:8; for 'being the express image of God, and upholding all things by the word of his power, he did by himself purge our sins,' Hebrews 1:8. So that his shoulders were able to bear the weightiest burden, his strength able to endure the sharpest curses, and his soul able to drink down the bitterest potions. Christ therefore being God, and united to the human nature, was every way fit, as being God and man in one person, that what the human nature could not do by reason of its imbecility as a creature, the divine might; and what the divine nature could not do by reason of its perfection, the human nature might perform: that God's honour might be repaired by an infinite satisfaction, and man reduced to service by the highest motive, viz. the incarnation of his Son, than which God could not afford a greater.

3. The fitness, whether of his divine nature or his human, did originally arise from the Father. The Father, as the fountain of the Deity, did confer on him his natural fitness, by communicating to him the divine nature from eternity by natural generation. He had a natural fitness as the Son of God, and a gracious fitness as the Son of man. The natural fitness was from the Father, for 'as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself,' John 5:26. To have life in himself is the property of God, who is therefore called the living God, and this is given by the Father.

(1.) All the fullness whereby he is fit to reconcile, and accomplish his mediatory work, he is enriched with from the Father: Colossians 1:19, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.' It is true, the word Father is not in the Greek text, but is to be supplied from the discourse of the apostle before, Colossians 1:12, where he begins a thanksgiving to the Father. He did not only ordain him to be head of the church, but he fitted him with whatsoever was necessary to constitute him in that office, and enable him for the exercise of it. By this fullness is meant both a fullness of the divinity, as he is the image of God, and a fullness of habitual grace, as he is the first born of every creature, having the rights of the firstborn given to him, as he is the head of the body the church, and the firstborn from the dead. God would have this great mediator

filled with all the perfection of the Deity, and all the excellency of grace in his humanity, that he might be in this office of mediation every way acceptable to God, and successful for man; that no fault might be found in him, either by God or man, to stave off the acceptance of the one or the reliance of the other, that so the reconciliation might be in all parts and degrees complete.

(2.) The Father stored up this fullness in Christ with a mighty pleasure. He did not only order the communication of this fullness to him, and the perpetual residence of it in him for his appointed ends, but he did it with a transcendent pleasure, an "eudochia", such a pleasure as he had in his person, as that which answered all his ends, both for his own glory and his creatures' recovery. As he was the treasury of grace for us, so he was the object of God's delight.

(3.) This fullness was lodged in Christ, for the making peace with his Father, and accomplishing all the ends of it. As he assembled all light together and fixed it in the sun, as a natural type of Christ, to convey light and heat thereby to all sublunary bodies, as also to the stars in the firmament, whence both might derive that excellency they have, and so agree in one point and principle, so he has espoused together the divine and human perfections in one person, that thereby he might reconcile all things to himself; by him I say, 'whether they be things in earth or things in heaven,' that both the restoration of the broken peace with men, and the confirmation of the standing peace with angels, might meet in him, and be derived from him as one centre of both. For as it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell, so it was a pleasure to him that it should perpetually reside in him to this end, that peace might be made, and all the intendments and consequence of it be promoted to a perfect issue; that he having an alliance to God by his divinity, and an alliance to man by his humanity, might stand as a perfect mediator between God and his creature, to make peace and preserve it. For hereby he understood the rights of God to secure them, and the indigences of man to relieve him. He had his humanity fitted to be a sufferer, and his divinity fitted to be a repairer; the one made him possible, the other able, and the holiness of his person made him acceptable. His being in the form of a servant made him obnoxious to suffering, and his being in the form of God made that suffering meritorious of our peace, that in all respects he might become a prince of peace both in heaven and earth.

4. We may note also the constancy of it; it dwells in him. This was the pleasure of the Father, that it should not only be communicated to him to lodge, but dwell in him; not as a private person, but an universal principle; as head of the body, as well as a reconciler, that he might be able to do the works of God, and fill the emptiness of man. God promised to engrave the engravings of this stone, which is ushered in with a repetition of a behold: Zechariah 3:5, 'Behold the stone that I have laid: behold, I will engrave the engravings thereof, says the Lord,' that men might observe it, and the end of it. He would work all habitual grace in him with an indelible character; as the engravings of a stone cannot be razed out without defacing and dissolving some part of the stone at least, sometimes not without breaking the whole. The end of this engraving is expressed in the following words: 'And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.' Some understand it also of his death; and I think it may be understood of both his fitness for suffering, and his actual suffering. The end of this sculpture was for the taking away sin, and making reconciliation with God by the expiation of it. So that the graces of the Spirit are not only poured upon his head, as that which may be dried up again, but engraved on him, as noting fixedness and duration. Fullness acquaints us with the abundance of this grace, and dwelling signifies the perpetual residence of it, engraving the deep rootedness, and all for this end of redemption. This fitness of his human nature was the

work of the Father, not immediately, but by his Spirit.

1. He is fitted with a body.

(1.) This was necessary. Man, as constituted of soul and body, had violated the articles of the first covenant; therefore man, as constituted of soul and body, must answer the violations of it. He was therefore to have a body of the same kind with that man that had broken the covenant, whose punishment he was to remove; therefore he was not to be new made from the earth as Adam was, but to descend from him; otherwise he had not been of the same kind, and so could not satisfy for that kind whereof he was not a part. As the obligation descended upon all men from the first man, so it was fit that one descended from him should satisfy that obligation.

(2.) It was also necessary that he should have a mortal body, that he might be nearly related to us in all things (sin excepted), and redeem us by his passion. Blood was to be shed, death was to be endured (for we owed to God our life and blood), the righteousness of God was to be declared, Romans 3:25, which could not be but in the offending nature. His life he must lose, thereby to lay a strong foundation for the removing of sin, with a rich manifestation of God's righteousness. Now, to make a body mortal, which was not in itself sinful, was a work only to be wrought by the wisdom of God, whereby to make a salvo for his righteousness, always manifested to his rational creatures. That soul that sins, it shall die. Had not Adam sinned, he had not died. Our Saviour died who never sinned; he was therefore to have such a body whereby our sins might be imputed to him, yet not inherent in him. He was then to have a human nature to suffer our punishment, as well as a divine nature to surmount it. A flesh was necessary to be a sacrifice for sin, as well as the Deity to be a priest. What could he have offered for us, had he not had flesh and blood? Without a body he had been a priest without a sacrifice, without an holy flesh he had been a priest with a sinful sacrifice. He was to have a body to 'bear our sins on a tree,' 1 Peter 2:24; yet an holy body, that by the offering of that body 'once for all, we might be sanctified,' Hebrews 10:10. As God only could, so he did provide him such a body. This he ascribes to God: Hebrews 10:5, 'A body hast thou prepared me.' A mortal body, fit to be a sacrifice; a body prepared, after the rejection of all other sacrifices, wherein God could find no pleasure; a body also prepared to be a reconciling sacrifice, such a body wherein he might do the will of God, i. e. the whole will of God, which was to take away sin. It was a body so fitted as to be obedient to the soul, to have no rebellious power in it against reason and command, but to be fully and readily obedient in all its motions to God; not barely a body, but a body so tempered as to do the service required of it. It was not indeed fit that the body wherein the Deity was to tabernacle, John 1:14, "eskenosen", should be framed by a less wisdom, and slighter order, than the Mosaical tabernacle, which was a shadow of it, which was done by exact order, and by the inspirations of the Spirit, filling the workmen with skill, Exodus 31:2-3.

(3.) Yet he was to have a holy body, free from any taint of moral imperfection, fit for the service he was devoted to, for which the least speck upon his humanity had rendered him unfit. This could not have been, had he descended from Adam by way of ordinary and natural generation. He had then been a debtor himself, a lamb with blemish, and so wanted a sacrifice for himself. His sacrifice would have been defective, and have needed some other sacrifice to fill up the gaps of it. It was necessary he should descend from Adam in a way of birth, but not in a way of seminal traduction, that he might have the nature of Adam without the spot. Such a knot could not be

untied without infinite skill, nor such a way of production be wrought without the infinite power of God.

Therefore,

(1.) The Holy Ghost frames the body of Christ of this seed of the woman, that it might be mortal, and have his heel bruised by the devil, Genesis 3:15; not of the seed of the man in an ordinary way of generation, that it might be without any taint of sin, sanctifying therefore the seed of the woman in a peculiar manner. Wherefore in relation to his humanity, conception, and birth, he is 'the holy thing,' Luke 1:35; as his body is called the Holy One in the grave: Psalms 16:10, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' His soul was not in the grave, being separated from the body upon the recommendation of it upon the cross into his Father's hand. And as it was an holy body, so it was a mortal body, called therefore a 'body of flesh,' Colossians 1:22. This God had appointed and predicted as an extraordinary thing: Jeremiah 31:22, 'The Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man;' "gibor", a mighty man. By calling it a new thing, he points to a miraculous birth of the Messiah, and the word creating signifies something out of a natural course, next to a mere creation, and God's work as much as creation. A new thing as not being from the old stock; for though his nature was the same with Adam's, yet he had no taint of original sin; because he was not morally in the loins of Adam before his fall (the promise of his incarnation of the seed of the woman being given after the fall), whereby the sin of Adam could not be imputed to him. It was therefore a new thing, and an holy thing according to that new promise after the fall. Though the Spirit was the immediate agent in fitting this body, yet it was by the appointment and power of the Father: Luke 1:35, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;' where by the Highest is understood the Father, the mystery of the Trinity being manifested in the incarnation of the Son of God.

(2.) The Holy Ghost makes the union between the divine and human nature. The overshadowing by the power of the Highest unites the two natures, whereby that 'holy thing' in the virgin's womb should be 'called the Son of God,' Luke 1:35, which could not be without a union of the divine nature to the substance made of the seed of the woman, by this overshadowing; which also is the act of the Father by the Spirit, as being in the 'power of the Highest.' And this is that which is called the *gratia unionis*, grace of union, which Christ had from God, whereby the Godhead dwelt bodily in him, or personally, Colossians 2:9; the two natures—the divine, signified by the Godhead, the human, by that wherein it dwelt—making up one person; "Soma" among the Greeks signifying not a bare body, but a person, as it does also in common speech among us. The union of the two natures by a particular conjunction, whereby the divine nature dwelt substantially in the human, and was acted by it in all undertakings, was the work of God by his Spirit. This union of both natures was for the making peace: Colossians 1:21-22, 'And you that were sometimes alienated, yet now he has reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death.' Who? Colossians 1:15 : He who was 'the image of the invisible God.' The image of the invisible Deity rendered himself visible in the humanity, to reconcile us to his Father, so that by this union we who are afar off from the Deity are brought near in his humanity; and the gulf of original sin, which consisted in enmity to God, and which hindered the passage of God to man, or man to God, is filled up, taken away, and the work done in and by him. As he was God, he knew the terrors of hell, because he knew all things; but, as God, he could not have experience of them: he was to have a body of flesh to bear them, as well as he was the image of the invisible God to support that body under them. As man, he was fit

to endure his wrath; and as God, fit to appease it. As man, he was fit to undergo the sharpness of the curse; and as God, able to remove it. As man, he was capable to obey both the moral and mediatory law; and as God, to transmit the fruit of that obedience to us, which is intimated in these words, 'Yet now has he' (who was the image of the invisible God) 'reconciled, &c. to present you holy, and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight.' Presenting us, as he is the image of God in our nature, free from sin by the washing of his blood, after he had reconciled us through the body of his flesh; the meriting of reconciliation was wrought in his flesh, but arose from his deity.

Thus Christ had a body every way fitted with a holy soul, with a glorious indweller, that he might be every way fit for making peace: a body in all things like ours, but without impurity, that he might be our kinsman, and become a Goel, a redeemer by right of propinquity; that he might be the suffering head of the human nature, which he could not be without our nature. Had he taken the angelical nature, which was more excellent in itself, and suffered in that, his sufferings would have been esteemed the sufferings of that whole nature, but not of the human nature, because not partaking of it, and so he could not have suffered for it unless he had suffered in it: for since he was to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, 'he took upon him not the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham, because it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make this reconciliation,' Hebrews 2:16-17. We may note, besides the holiness of his body, it was so framed by the appointment of the Father, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, and tempered with such affections, as to do this work with the greatest compassion to the fallen nature of man, that whereas he had a holiness to make him faithful to God, so he had a tenderness in his nature to make him merciful to us for the carrying on this reconciliation and the ends of it to the highest perfection, so that those two natures, thus united by God, made him every way capable and fit to be a reconciler, knowing the justice of God's claim, that he might give to God what he knew to be his due, and feeling the infirmities of our nature, that he might purchase that remedy he knew we wanted. Herein we see the incomparable wisdom and love of the Father, in fitting Christ, so that he might be in him reconciling the world to himself.

(3.) He is filled with his Spirit by the Father, i. e. with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit necessary to this work. That precious ointment, composed of so many sweet and excellent ingredients, wherewith the Levitical high priest was anointed, Exodus 30:1-38, was a type of those excellent graces of the great high priest, whereby he was qualified for the exercise of his offices. As the Spirit espoused the human nature to the divine, so he espoused all his gifts and graces to the human. As the body was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, so his soul was beautified and adorned by the graces of the Holy Ghost, whereby he became 'fairer than the children of men, and grace was poured into his lips,' Psalms 45:9 : 'His going forth is prepared as the morning,' Hosea 6:3, furnished with all things necessary to work out redemption, and free the world from the wrath of God, as the sun is with light to deliver the world from the darkness of the night.

[1.] The subject of these gifts was the rational soul of Christ. The human nature was only anointed with the Spirit; the divine nature being infinite, could receive no increase of gifts, it having a fullness of perfection by eternal generation. Yet though the divine nature stood in no need of those gifts, it did capacitate the humanity of Christ for greater receipts, by reason of its union with it, than any other mere creature was capable of. We must not think, as some may conceive, that the divine nature was instead of a soul to the body of Christ. He had a real rational soul; for since the

whole nature of man was corrupted, both soul and body, the whole nature of man was to be repaired. How could he have suffered in a body, without a soul, the wrath due to our souls as well as bodies? Had he only had a body, he had not taken the human nature; only the meanest and worst part of man, not that which constitutes the man. Unless he had been God and man in one person, his blood could not have been called 'the blood of God;' and unless he had a soul and body, an entire nature, his blood could not have been the blood of man. As he was to have a body prepared, so he was to have a soul proportionately furnished.

[2.] He was abundantly filled with them; he had 'the Spirit not by measure,' John 3:34; not as light in a room, but as light in the sun; not as water in a vessel where the bounds are visible, but like water in the ocean, where the depths and limits are unknown. In him there was nothing but Spirit and fullness, without limits for quantity, without imperfections for quality; all the treasures, the fountain, not the rivers. There are varieties of gifts, as there are of stars, and the qualities of them, in heaven; and of flowers, and the beauties of them upon earth: what were various in others were entire in him. Others have parcels of those gifts and graces, like Abraham's children by Keturah; but Christ had them entire. As Isaac had an inheritance as the heir of promise, so Christ, as the heir of all things, had the possession of the choicest gifts in the treasures of his Father. As God had communicated an infinite being to him by eternal generation, so it was convenient to communicate a fullness of graces and gifts to the humanity as far as it was capable to receive and contain it, because it was joined to so excellent a nature as the divine; for though he was made flesh, yet he had 'the glory as of the only begotten Son of God.' It was fit therefore he should be 'full of grace and truth' in that flesh, John 1:14. It was not congruous that the Spirit of God should come into the soul of Christ with half his attendants, but with the greatest majesty, with his whole train of excellencies. Not that the perfections poured out upon his soul by the Spirit of grace and glory were infinite, because those graces were created qualities, and infiniteness can never be ascribed to a creature; and his soul was the subject of them, and that being a creature, was not capable of receiving into it subjectively that which is infinite; but he had them without measure, as to the kinds of gifts; in the mass, not in parcels. As to the degrees of them, others have them in a lower degree, as light in a candle; Christ in the highest degree, as light in the heavens: so that whatsoever pertains to the nature of grace was conferred on Christ, as whatsoever belongs to the nature of light and heat is stored up in the sun. 'All his garments did smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,' Ps. 14:8. As God has made the sea a treasure of waters, emptied into it from all the rivers of the world, so he has made Christ a mighty ocean of all perfections, in a vaster quantity and richer qualities than any other creature is capable to receive, as the sea is more capacious to receive the perpetual floods than the greatest river in the world. If the whole creation should be reaped, and gleaned, and stored up in one person, it would be but as the drops of a bucket to the fullness of Christ, which the Father has laid up in him.

(4.) These graces were infused into him at once. As the new creature has all its parts framed at once, so the head of all the new creatures was principled at once with them, though in regard of the various exercises of them, they grew up in him by degrees: Luke 2:40, 'The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom,' Luke 2:52, and shone forth as he increased in age, by new excitations of them by the Spirit of God. Grace came into the soul of Christ, as his soul into his body, or as light into the sun at the creation, not by pieces; but as the soul did not exercise its functions, so his graces did not exert their strength, but by degrees, according to the capacity of

his age, and occasional occurrences. The anointing of this Spirit was conferred upon him at his incarnation; when he was made flesh, he was full of grace and truth, John 1:14. Also visibly at his baptism, which was his entrance into the exercise of his office, as a visible token of his Father's acceptance of him, now at his inauguration, Matthew 3:16-17; as David, the type, was anointed at Bethlehem, the place of his habitation, by Samuel, and afterwards at Hebron, when he was actually installed king by the tribe of Judah. The first anointing at his incarnation was his furniture for his office, that at his baptism his investiture in his office.

(5.) These gifts and graces of the Spirit were necessary for the human nature. It was necessary that the soul of Christ should exert supernatural acts. There was a necessity of love to God, to spirit him in his mighty difficulties; of faith in God, to suck refreshment from the promises made to him as mediator, when he should arrive at any conflict: these were supernatural acts in themselves, and so were above the bare natural strength of the soul of Christ, and the powers of it. As the soul of Christ did need a natural concourse to natural actions, as other souls do, and needed the gift of miracles for the working of miracles, so he needed a supernatural grace to exert supernatural acts. It is essential to the nature of a creature to depend upon God for all communications. To act independently, and without the influence of another, is a property of God, not to be derived to any creature. The humanity of Christ then being a creature, could not act of itself without the influence of a superior being; the humanity then did not endow itself; grace is not minted by any creature. It did no more inspire itself with grace than it did inspire itself with life. As God was the Father of Christ, so he was the Father of grace to him; the divine nature of Christ gave a personal dignity by union, but conferred not of itself a beauty upon it. Had the divine nature, by virtue of its union, elevated the faculties of Christ's soul, he needed not have grown in wisdom and knowledge; the divine nature, though united to the humanity, did not communicate to it all that it was capable of receiving. This communication was the proper work of the Spirit, according to the order in the operations of the Trinity: hence his human soul knew not the time of the day of judgment, though as God he did. If his divine nature had advanced his rational faculties, it had also stocked him with full comforts, without the mission of an angel to refresh him in the garden, Luke 22:43, and why did it not also advance the vegetative power to rear up his body to a full stature? This elevation was the work of the Spirit. It was necessary he should be thus furnished.

[1.] In regard of the greatness of his task. Gifts are imparted to men suitable to the places wherein they stand for action, and according to the largeness of the vessel. Christ's place was higher, his work harder than any creature's, therefore required a greater measure of gifts than all creatures in heaven and earth put together. Though he was mighty in his person, and fit to have help laid upon him for us, yet he was to be anointed with the holy oil, Psalms 89:19-20). Without this fullness of grace the human nature could never have arrived to the perfection of the great undertaking, but would have sunk in the midst of the work.

[2.] In regard he was to be a pattern, as well as the prince of believers. A pattern ought to be the most perfect in the kind. Christ was to be set up as a pattern for believers, both of the Spirit's operation in him, and of their imitation of him. Those who draw pictures look upon the original, that they may work them into a likeness to it. The Spirit of God in the fashioning souls, is to conform them to the image of Christ, Romans 8:29. It was fit that the pattern of all the heirs of heaven should be fully exact to the pleasure of God. It being God's end to bestow more upon the creature in this redemption than he did upon it by creation, and that in a more suitable manner, there was

as much need of an infinite fitness in the person that was to prepare the way for those communications in an honourable manner to God, and everlastingly comfortable to the creature.

(6.) The Father was the principal cause of this furniture. It was God that 'anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost,' Acts 10:38, and 'God gives the Spirit not by measure to him,' John 3:34. It is rendered as a reason why 'he that God has sent' (which is a peculiar and ancient title of Christ) 'speaks the words of God.' This the Father did out of the infinite affection he bore his Son for this work of mediation; John 3:35, 'The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.' The power he had conferred upon him, giving all things into his hand, did require a fullness of the Spirit to manage that power also, that he might be a person fit to be believed on, and confided in, John 3:30. All this was that he might do the Father's will, speak his words, perform his command of love in the repair of his creature. The Lord anointed him, Isaiah 61:1, and as a God in covenant with him. God, Hebrews 1:9, 'Even thy God,' according to the promise made to him, and with an oil of gladness, a joyful oil, as that which is a pleasure to the Father, makes the countenance of Christ cheerful, as the psalmist speaks of oil in another case, and joyful to the church; because upon this fitness depends its happiness and salvation, its reconciliation, and all the fruits of it. And if "dia toutou", therefore, notes to us the final cause or end of this anointing, viz., that he might love righteousness, and hate iniquity; it acquaints us that the end of this unction was to fit him for this work of redemption with a perfect holiness, without which he could not have restored God's honour, nor appeased his wrath, nor consequently reduced the creature to terms of amity with God. This putting his Spirit upon him was a fruit of that delight God had in him as his servant: Isaiah 13:1, 'My servant in whom my soul delights, I have put my Spirit upon him.' Which delight is also testified, when the Spirit did visibly descend upon him, that he was 'his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased,' Matthew 3:16-17. The gifts and graces he was endowed with by this Spirit the Father had given him, were

[1.] Habitual holiness. He was infinitely holy in regard of his deity holy by the hypostatical union in his humanity, holy by the residence of the Spirit; a greater holiness than man in innocence or angels in heaven have. The giving the Spirit not by measure to him implies a greater holiness, as well as other abilities in the human nature, than all the angels in heaven ever had, who have the Spirit by measure. The holiness, therefore, of Christ's person incomparably exceeds all the holiness of the angelical nature, which has a limited communication of the Spirit. As the apostle argues for his deity, Hebrews 1:5, 'Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?' so to which of the angels did he at any time give the Spirit not by measure? Though he took upon him the form of a servant, yet he was a righteous servant. There was no original sin in his conception, nor actual sin in his conversation; he was separate from sinners in the manner of his birth and in the actions of his life; he had a purity of nature and a purity of life commensurate to the law, that he might be our paschal lamb without blemish; he was holy in the account of angels, Luke 1:35; holy in the account of devils, Mark 1:24, 'the Holy One of God;' holy in the account of his Father: John 8:29, 'He always did those things which pleased him.' This was necessary for his office. It became him and us, as our high priest, to be undefiled, Hebrews 7:26. As it was necessary he should suffer for the satisfaction of God's justice, so it was necessary he should by a purity be fit for so great a task. As reasonable creatures we owe a perfect obedience, as rebellious creatures an eternal punishment; there must, therefore, be an holiness commensurate to the precepts of the law, as well as a passion commensurate to the curses of the law. Upon this

holiness of his is our reconciliation grounded: 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'For he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Had he known experimentally the least spot, he could not by his sacrifice have been made the righteousness of God to us; for not only as his servant, but as his 'righteous servant,' he was to 'justify many,' Isaiah 53:11. Hereby he was able to 'appear to take away our sins,' and did do it, because 'in him there was no sin,' 1 John 3:5, the apostle rendering the latter as the reason of the former. Had he had the least speck, he could not have been a mediator, because he had then been a party in being a sinner; his office could not have been performed, which was to make up the breach, not to make a new one; he had rather polluted than purged us, and fastened our sins rather than took them away. What could he have offered if he had not had flesh and blood? How could he have offered acceptably if there had been any spot upon him in his appearance before the holy justice of his Father? Hebrews 9:14. He had then been a rebel, a prisoner, and had forfeited all that might have been a ransom for us. How could he have made peace with God for us, when by reason of a blemish he could not make peace in his own conscience? An inevitable destruction had been brought upon mankind, which could not have been repaired. His intercession kept up the world from sinking when Adam fell; but whose mediation should have preserved the world had this mediator failed, since God had no other son to employ in so great an affair?

It was necessary in regard of his dignity. The Deity, because of infinite holiness, could not have dwelt in a tainted humanity. Though this habitual grace be given by God, yet it is a connatural property of Christ, God-man, because by the dignity of his person it was due to him. It had been a prodigious and preternatural thing to unite the human nature without the ornaments of grace to the divine, as it had been if the body of Christ had not by reason of the hypostatical union been made immortal and glorious, though those properties of the body do not flow from the union by any physical resultant; for to the humanity by this union there is only communicated *esse personale*, not *essentiale divinae naturae*, the personal, not the essential being of the divine nature; and therefore divine operations of grace do not physically follow this union, but as they are due to that nature so united. Had they followed physically this union, the body of Christ could not have been weary, hungry, and subject to the infirmities of our flesh. In regard of the dignity of his person, this holiness was due to him; without it, it had been the greatest disparagement to God to send him, and the greatest prejudice to us; for had there been any spot, the person of Christ had been said to sin, as well as the person of Christ is said to suffer. Since the Father had placed his delight in him, and had promised to uphold him, it could not be that that should enter upon him, which was so contrary to the perpetual delight God had promised to fix in him. This was the act of the Father, and ascribed to him: John 10:36, 'Say ye of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world.' Some understand it of the sanctification of Christ by eternal generation, receiving, by that, holiness *per essentiam*, by essence; others by sanctification understand only a separation of him to his office. But it rather seems to be meant of the preparations for the exercise of his office, sanctification and mission being joined together; the Father separated him and anointed him with the Spirit, who, as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord resting upon him, Isaiah 11:2, was the immediate inspirer of him with this internal holiness.

[2.] With wisdom and knowledge. As God, he had an uncreated knowledge, but this could not be communicated to his humanity, because a creature is not capable of anything infinite; and though he was filled with all gifts from his conception, "*hupestatikos*", personally, yet it does not follow

from thence that the soul of Christ should know everything, because this did not belong to the property of that nature. And though he was the head of angels, it will not follow that he should know, as man, what the angels knew; for then he had not stood in need of an angel to strengthen him. And if he were made lower than the angels, it was no disparagement to him, as being in the form of a servant, to be ignorant in some things which the angels knew, which he implies he was in that speech concerning his ignorance of the day of judgement: Matthew 24:36, 'Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven.' But there was no privative ignorance in Christ, but a negative, which is not sinful; and this kind of ignorance was no more disparagement to Christ than it was, that his soul, which was the soul of God, as well as his blood the blood of God, should be sad to death. But the wisdom he was filled with was the wisdom pertaining to his office of mediator; as he was to reprove, and convince, and smite the earth with the rod of his mouth: Isaiah 11:2-4, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord'. He had wisdom, i.e. a right judgement of things pertaining to his office, judging of things according to the divine will, counsel and prudence in the direction of his actions, knowledge of all accidents and circumstances which might occur to hinder him from the accomplishment of his work, and might to effect all; which gifts were bestowed upon him by the Spirit. All which gifts did end in this of the fear of the Lord, a reverence and observance of his Father as superior to him in this work of mediation. And therefore it is repeated again, verse 3, 'Shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord;' an observance of the will of God in that work committed to him. All the gifts he had were to run into this ocean of faithfulness to God. The fear of the Lord in Christ was a reverence of the divine majesty and the divine command; not a fear of separation from the Father by any sin, or a fear of punishment by him for any sin, because he could not sin. Without a reverence of God, he had not been faithful; without wisdom and knowledge, he had not been able. Ignorance could never have managed his work, unfaithfulness could never have accomplished it; the one had made him incapable to attempt it, the other to perfect it; the one had stripped him of all capacity for it, the other of all successfulness in it. The knowledge of the will of God was that whereby he was 'mighty to help', Psalms 89:19. He had counsel to direct as well as power to effect; he had the gift of wisdom to manage his power to the defeating of his enemies. This was necessary; the human nature had been defective in that which it was designed for, unless it had understood what was fit to be done in order to it. It had not consisted with the wisdom of God to send one about so great a work who did not understand the nature of it, who was not fully instructed how to manage it. This was necessary as well as holiness, without knowledge he could not have been a reasonable and voluntary sacrifice, all voluntary acts being to be founded in reason; and without holiness concurring with it, he could not have been an acceptable sacrifice. This wisdom did fit him to sprinkle many nations: Isaiah 52:13, Isaiah 52:15, 'My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be extolled, and be very high; so shall he sprinkle many nations.' "Yashchil", some translate prosper, it signifies both; when any one prospers, it is commonly ascribed to his own prudence and wise management of things. He shall understand what is due to God for the reparation of his honour, what is necessary for men for the relieving their necessities, and so purge many by the blood of his sacrifice. Now this wisdom, and the increase of it, was from the strength of the Spirit in him, and the grace of God upon him, Luke 2:40. There were constant revelations to him of what was fit to be done by him in the exercise of his office, according as the Father pleased by his Spirit to communicate himself to his humanity.

[3.] The Spirit was given him to fit him with a tenderness to man, and to lead him out to those exercises whereby he might be sensible of the indigences of man. He had not only the law of redeeming love in his head, whereby he had a knowledge of his office, but in his bowels, whereby he was fitted for a tender execution of that office: Psalms 40:8, 'Thy law is within my heart,' "me'ay", bowels. The Spirit therefore descended upon him in the likeness of a dove, an emblem of meekness and tenderness. And the apostle Peter, Acts 10:3, intimates that the intendment of this unction of him was to fit him for a compassionate converse with man: 'God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.' He had a tenderness as God, and his humanity is fitted with a tenderness to keep pace with that of the Deity as much as was possible, that the tenderness of both natures might be joined together in one person. And when this Spirit visibly settled on him after his baptism, he led him presently to an exercise whereby he might feel the miseries of man, and from an experience of them, be affected with more tenderness towards him: Matthew 4:1, 'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit in the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.' Then; when? As soon as ever he had the Spirit as a dove lighting upon him, and had heard those encouraging words, Matthew 3:16-17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' He was led by this Spirit to be tempted by the evil one, that he might in his humanity be acquainted with the craft and subtilty of that adversary which had overturned the world, brought all the dishonour upon his Father, and sank mankind into their present misery; that he might know the enemy which was threatened in the promise of his incarnation, and experience the subtilties of that serpent which had wrought all those mischiefs he came to redress, and so, as he was to be 'acquainted with grief,' Isaiah 53:3, he might understand the first author of that which occasioned this grief to him. It was by this grace of meekness and humility he was specially fitted to be a second Adam to redeem us, because pride was the sin of the first Adam to destroy us, who, because he would become as high as God who created him, the Redeemer would become lower than man that was created by him; yea, 'a worm and no man,' Psalms 22:6; so excellently did the Spirit fit him with a humility proportionable to his undertaking.

[4.] The Spirit was given to him by his Father, to enable him with a mighty power to go through this undertaking. He had a 'Spirit of might,' executive of his wisdom and counsel, Isaiah 11:2, a courage to attempt the most daring difficulties, and endure the fiercest calamities: a power to suffer for the satisfaction of justice, a power to relieve the pressures of our wants, a power to conquer his and our enemies. When he was anointed by God with the Holy Ghost, he was anointed 'with power,' Acts 10:38, "dunamei", not "eksousiai", for the exercise of his office and the doing good. The design of putting the Spirit upon him, was that he might bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, for that immediately follows the promise of the Spirit to him, Isaiah 42:1. This was his encouragement actually to engage in the exercise of every part of his office: Isaiah 60:1, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek,' &c. The Spirit was upon him in all the acts of his mediation, the Spirit therefore did continually assist him in every exercise; he was not left alone, but 'he that sent him was with him,' John 8:29. The Father was with him by his Spirit: the Father had promised his assistance. Now, assisting grace is the work of the Holy Ghost. His grace was fed and actuated by the Spirit, and brought forth into exercise. The Spirit led him into temptation, what? only to lead him to the conflict and desert him in it? No, surely, but to actuate those graces wherewith he had filled him against the tempter: 'God was with him,' Acts 10:38, assisting, exciting, actuating him. And the Spirit did assist him, and excite the graces in him to the very last gasp, for 'through the Spirit he offered up himself' Hebrews

9:14, through the virtue of this Spirit sanctifying his human nature, gifting him with strength and wisdom, exciting those eminent graces upon the cross, wherewith he had filled him at his conception, and supporting him with his power while the Father was bruising him. As he lived in this holiness of Spirit, so he died and offered up himself through the strength of it, without spot to God. Through the Spirit, signifies the strength and power of the Spirit, as when we are said 'to mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit,' Romans 8:13, i.e. through the powerful operation of the Spirit. For as the highest graces of Christ, faith, love, and obedience, were to be exercised upon the cross, so the assistance of the Spirit was necessary to the exciting and actuating those graces; for acts of grace being supernatural, a suitable concourse is necessary for the exerting those acts, and this concourse is truly the exciting and assisting grace of the Spirit. The natural powers of the humanity cannot otherwise be helped by the word, but as the "logos" or word does flow in upon it to actuate those powers of the soul. But this influx and motion is common to the Trinity, and therefore it is not from the divine nature, as hypostatically united, but from God as the first cause, and from the Spirit as the person whose office it is to excite grace, and assist it in the exercise. Not that the Spirit did so possess Christ, as that he did not exercise his own faculties in his whole office; but as the Spirit is said to pray in us, Romans 8:26, and we said to pray in him, Jude 1:20. The Spirit quickens our faculties, and by his inspiration excites and assists the act. The Spirit did all along enable Christ with a mighty power; it did first unite his soul to his body, his divine nature to the human, strengthened him in his temptation, stood by him in his passion, and at last united his body to his soul at his resurrection: 1 Peter 3:18, 'Quickened by the Spirit', Romans 1:14, 'Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead;' showing himself here in the whole administration a Spirit of holiness, in his conception, conversation, oblation, justification, and resurrection. Upon which account he is said to be 'justified in the Spirit,' in the administration and ordering of the church. For it was 'through the Holy Ghost he gave commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen,' Acts 1:2, not leaving his human nature till it was made immortal and glorious in heaven, that thereby the redemption and reconciliation might be every way complete. It was to those ends and purposes God gave the Spirit not by measure to him.

[5.] The Spirit was given to him by his Father, not only to fit him for his mediatory undertaking, but thereby to accomplish all the fruits of reconciliation in his seed. As God prepared him a body to lay down as a ransom for us, Matthew 20:28, so he gave him the Spirit to bestow as a largess on us. He was given to him to be derived from him, as from the fountain, to all believers, whence they are said to be his fellows, Hebrews 1:9. As he made himself their fellow, by descending to the fellowship of their nature, so they were to be his fellows by the communications of his Spirit. All men are his fellows in regard of his partaking of human nature, but believers only are his fellows in regard of conformity to the image of God. There is a fullness of merit in him resident in heaven, as a sweet smelling savour before God, and a fullness of grace to distil upon his seed to make them acceptable to God: merit to keep up the amity on his Father's part, and grace to keep up the amity on the believer's part. The graces of the Spirit were given to him, not only as mediator, without which the human nature had not been capable for the work, but as a head, which redound from him upon his members, Colossians 2:19, and convey nourishment to every part. As God assembled light in the sun to fit it for a full fountain of light, to transmit from heaven to the creatures on earth motion, warmth, and influences, whereby the qualities in all bodies are preserved and excited, so has God given the Spirit to Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and stored him with grace

and holiness, as a common fountain of gardens, a public head, for the quickening, beautifying, and enriching believers. Without this fullness of light, the sun could not be beneficial to the world, nor answer the end of its creation, so without this fullness of Spirit in Christ, he could not accomplish the fruits and ends of the reconciliation he has made. And therefore, though the Spirit sanctified Adam in innocence, as the third person in the Trinity, and so he breathed an holiness upon Christ, yet he sanctifies believers now in a new habitude, not only as the third person in the Trinity but as the Spirit of Christ, the mediator, sent in his name by the Father, John 14:26, as purchased by Christ, upon which account he is called the Spirit of Christ, and Christ is said to send him, John 16:7. Because, as mediator, he acquired a right by the merit of his sufferings to dispense this fullness of the Spirit, who now acts as a fruit of Christ's intercession upon believers: John 14:16, 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter.'

Use of this part.

1. How gross a sin is unbelief, which practically denies the ability of that Saviour, which the Father so richly fitted by his Spirit to the work of reconciliation! It is a charge and imputation upon God, as though he did not furnish him with sufficient abilities. It is a deriving his divinity or humanity, or both. It is all the heresies that ever were started against the person of the Son of God in the mass; they are all practically bundled up in this one single sin. God's anger will most flame when that which cost him the greatest treasures is despised. It is the despising all that is great in God; his riches, his power, his honour: his riches in furnishing him, his power in supporting him, his honour designed by him in both. It is a more sensible contradiction to the Trinity than any sin against the light of nature, because there is a more evident discovery of the Trinity in his mediation; the Father appointing, calling, counselling, ordering; the Spirit furnishing, fitting, exciting, supporting; the Son acting as the subject of all this. It does affront not a man; nor an angel, no, nor only the Son of God himself, but the magnificence of the Father towards him, and the pains of the Spirit on him.

2. How should we be encouraged to faith in this able Saviour! Since he has all the fitness that could delight God, and all the fullness whereby he can pleasure man, he is every way able to satisfy God and save the believer. His ability being so much and so great upon the earth, is not diminished in heaven, no more than his compassions are abated. As he learned a new mode of compassionating men before his departure out of the world, so, since his ascension to heaven, he has received a greater power of assisting men. Before, he had the Spirit to gift himself, now he has the Spirit to send upon his people. He has a fullness of grace, a fitness of gifts, that he may be every way able to help. He had a body to bear our sins, and a divine nature whereby to expiate them, his merit was as infinite as his person. He is an holy high priest, not tainted with any of those evils which he was to expiate in others. He is not only man; then he might have fallen as the first Adam did, and left us in the same, or a worse condition than before: he is not only God, then he could have performed no obedience to the law, as being not concerned in it as a subject, but as the lawgiver; nor could he have offered any satisfaction to God, as being incapable of suffering in the Deity; but God and man, fit to repair the honour of God and the fallen state of the creature. He had an enlarged understanding to know his work, inconceivable power to perform it, and incomparable goodness to be faithful in it. Such wisdom as he was furnished with could not be ignorant of his office, nor is to this day; such power could not be weak, nor will ever languish; such integrity could not be false, nor will ever deceive the comers to him.

3. Admire these infinite compassions of God. Oh marvellous grace! that Christ should be endued with the richest grace by his Father to relieve our poverty, with the highest might to help our weakness, with a powerful assistance to conquer our enemies, with an overflowing fullness to fill up our emptiness, and abundant grace poured into his lips to comfort our dejectedness. God cannot show greater love than to send his Son to make the peace, and unlock his cabinet wherewith to furnish him. An old frame of thankfulness will not fit an evangelical discovery of love. When God tells them, Isaiah 13:9-10, of his 'Servant in whom his soul delights,' and upon whom he had put his Spirit for the redemption of man, then he makes this use of exhortation of it, 'Sing unto the Lord a new song.' New love calls for new praise. God might have destroyed us with less cost than he has reconciled us; for our destruction there was no need of his counsel, nor of fitting out his Son, nor opening his treasures; a word would have done it, whereas our reconciliation stood him in much charge. It was performed at the expense of his grace and Spirit, to furnish his eternal Son to be a sacrifice for our atonement. An inexpressible wonder, that the Father should prepare his Son a mortal body, that our souls might be prepared for an incorruptible glory!

4. God commissioned Christ to this work of reconciliation. He gave him a fullness of authority as well as a fullness of ability. He is therefore said to be sealed, as having his commission under the great seal of heaven: John 6:27, "Touton gar ho pater esfregisen, o Theos". Sealing notes a special designment of the thing sealed to some special purpose; so the sealing of Christ signifies his separation and authority to exercise his offices, and in particular, of giving meat to the world, which should endure to everlasting life. By virtue of this commission, whatsoever Christ does is valid, for he does it as God's attorney, to whom he has transferred a power to carry on the work of redemption, in which respect he is called God's servant, not by nature, but a servant by office. In this respect he is said to be anointed, Isaiah 61:1. Anointing was not so much the fitting a person as a declaration of his fitness, and an authorising him to an exercise of his offices. Anointing under the law signified an authority conferred upon a person for government, priesthood, or prophecy. In that place Christ does distinguish his commission from his fitness, and declares himself fit, because he was commissioned. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;' there is his fitness, 'because, "ya'an", therefore the Lord has anointed me.' It was not agreeable to the divine wisdom to commission any for an office but whom he had furnished with an ability for that office. What was he commissioned for? Not to thunder the law, but to declare the gospel, the gospel of peace to the broken-hearted, to reveal the thoughts of amity which his Father had. Upon this account Christ tells us he did not come of himself, John 7:28, and in regard of this commission he is called God's angel, Malachi 3:1, 'messenger;' the word signifies an angel, the 'apostle of our profession,' Hebrews 3:1, because, as he authorised and sent the apostles, so the Father authorised and sent him; 'a messenger, and an interpreter,' John 33:23. Though this commission was given him at his birth, yet God renewed the declaration of it several times: at his baptism, Matthew 3:17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' at his transfiguration, Matthew 17:5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you him.' Christ pleads this commission, as well as the covenant between them: John 17:4, 'I have finished the work thou gave me to do,' when he calls it a work given him to do. What work I have done was appointed me, and I have done it by thy authority, and therefore our redemption and security in it depends primarily upon the covenant or federal transaction between the Father and the Son; and next, upon the commission given to Christ, which was indeed but the performance of the first articles on the Father's part. Christ's commission was declared several ways; by the miracles he wrought by his own hand, as well as

by the apostles; by the holiness of his life; by the accomplishment of all the predictions of the prophets in his person; by his resurrection from the dead; and by the conversion of the world executed in the most astonishing and divine manner. This commission he had at once, as well as his fitness; but he did successively enter into the exercise of his offices. At first he performed his prophetic, then exercised his priestly a little before his death, at his authoritative prayer, John xvii., where he begins his intercession, the greatest, choicest, and most durable part of his priesthood. His kingly he exercised more especially after his resurrection, in the orders he settled for the church; all power was then more manifestly declared to be given him.

He had then in the whole, the stamp of all God's authority upon him.

(1.) His whole work was prescribed him; which is expressed by the notion of a precept as he was God's servant. The command of a superior is a sufficient commission to a servant to do a work he is ordered to perform; and Christ, in regard of his mediatory office, was inferior to his Father, John 14:28. In which respect the Father is said to be greater than he. The command was his commission from God, but miracles were the manifestation of that commission to man. This command implies not any unwillingness in Christ to undertake and perform this work (as though God were necessitated to bend his will thereunto, and to force him by virtue of his obedience to it); but it is rather a law or rule of his acting voluntarily, agreed upon between the Father and the Son, and as heartily embraced by Christ as it was kindly enacted by God for the good of man. In regard of this particular order, his whole mediatory management in the world is called obedience: Php 2:8, 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' Obedient to death, even to the utmost and sharpest point; which infers an extension of the command on God's part, and obedience on Christ's part, in all things preceding the cross, and all the circumstances of his reconciling death, doing nothing in his whole state of humiliation but in obedience to his Father's injunctions; which injunctions were so particular, that there is no material thing in the whole life and death of Christ upon record in the New Testament, but is expressed in the mysteries of the law, or the oracles of the prophets in the Old. He did nothing either as man or as mediator, but according to God's order. As he was man, he was observant of the moral law, as being that covenant of works he was to make up the breach of, which he performed in the highest manner upon the cross, manifesting his love to God in laying down his life according to his order, and love to man in giving his life for a ransom for him; and by an act of charity incumbent upon him by the moral law, praying for his persecutors. As he was born under the Jewish administration, he observed God's orders in that: in circumcision, as a federal rite, which he suffered in his flesh; and the Passover, a commemoration of a national deliverance, which he celebrated with his disciples; but not in purifications and sacrifices, which were appointed for atonement, and implied sin in the offerer, which it was not congruous for him to be subject to by reason of the exact purity of his person. But above all, he was an exact observer of the mediatory law, which was a law added over and above to him in that economy, and incumbent upon none else, neither angels nor men. In this he did nothing but by order; he 'did nothing of himself, but what he saw the Father do,' John 5:19, i.e. what he had directions from his Father to perform; for if you understand it of Christ as mediator, he did many things which the Father did not do, but nothing but what the Father did order him to do. And therefore whatsoever Christ did was manifested to him by the Father: John 5:20, 'For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that himself does,' &c.; and he had no respect to his own will, did nothing of his own head, but observed exactly the pattern set him by the will of his

Father: John 5:30, 'I can of my own self do nothing; I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me.' As he was sent by his Father's order, so he was altogether guided by his Father's will, wherewith his own will exactly concurred. Therefore those good works he had done were showed them from his Father, John 10:32, those "kala erga", those comely works; all that tenderness he had showed, either to soul or body, were wrought by his Father's commission and his Father's power. In this respect, as he was polished in regard of fitness, so he was a shaft in regard of motion, Isaiah 49:2, flying swiftly to the mark whereto the archer designed him. And because he had so exactly observed his commission, he did 'abide in his Father's love,' which he uses as an incentive to his disciples' obedience, both from his own example and the issue of it, John 15:10.

(2.) God gave him instructions how to manage this work. When any wise man intends an end, and fixes upon the best means for it, he orders every circumstance, time, place, manner, as far as he is able. God intending the mediation and incarnation of Christ, comprehended under that decree the place, manner, and all the circumstances of it in every punctilio. It is so evident that Christ had his instructions from God, that the Socinians fancy an ascension of Christ into heaven after his birth, and before his preaching in the world, to be instructed by God what he should preach; for Paul, say they, ascended into heaven before he was sent to the Gentiles; and if the servant did, why not the master? But this is to argue against the deity of Christ. It is strange that the Scripture, which speaks so particularly of the actions of Christ, of what was done before his preaching, viz. his birth and baptism, should be silent in so remarkable an occurrence, and every evangelist be forgetful of it. It is not credible, that if they had known it, they should be silent in it. But the Scripture plainly denies this pretended ascension: Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:24, 'He entered once into the holy place.' In regard of this instruction, God is said to call Christ to his foot, Isaiah 12:2, i.e. taught him, as scholars used to sit at their master's feet: 'Who raised up the righteous man from the east,' "tsedek", righteousness. Some understand it of Abraham, some of Cyrus, both which were raised from the east; but the following expressions are too high to suit either of them. God brought him as the sun from the east, to shine upon a dark and blind world. His work is in this respect said to be before him, Isaiah 62:11, as having his instructions copied out to him, as ambassadors receive instructions from the prince. His doctrine is therefore said not to be so much his as his Father's, John 17:16; it is a transcript of his Father's mind and will: whence Psalms 40:9-10, 'I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation, I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth;' wherein Christ is represented speaking to his Father, and giving an account how he had observed his rule, and how faithful he had been in the declarations of his will; how emphatically is he referring all to God, thy righteousness, thy faithfulness, thy salvation, thy loving-kindness, thy truth. Whatsoever Christ spoke, he heard from the Father; not only as a Son by eternal generation, but as a mediator by an authoritative instruction, he spoke to the world those things which he had heard of the Father, John 8:26, and every little of his instructions was observed, John 15:16. He had communicated all things which he had heard of his Father; and whatsoever he did communicate, was revealed to him by his Father. This declaration, which was the chief part of his instructions, was of the name of God, which he pleads he had declared, John 17:6, John 17:26, the name of grace and love which is expressed, Exodus 34:1-35, his reconciling name. The name of God is said to be in him: Exodus 23:21, 'My name,' i.e. my law and doctrine, as in some places the law of Christ is expounded, his law, Isaiah 13:4, which is rendered his name, Matthew 12:21. This was promised, Deuteronomy 18:18-19, 'I

will raise them a prophet, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' They were God's words in his mouth; God's words which he should speak in God's name. God gave him authority to reveal his will, and commanded men to hear him if then had any mind to eternal happiness. You have the full instructions of the work he was to do and the words he was to speak, Isaiah 49:8-9, after the covenant made with him: he was to establish the tottering earth, which was shaken and disordered by sin, he was to be an herald, to proclaim pardon and liberty in favour to the prisoners bound in chains of guilt. God instructs him what he should say: 'That thou may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves;' come out of your dungeon, you that are sold under the power of sin, show yourselves, appear before God as a reconciled Father; for I am the covenant of the people, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

(3.) Miracles performed by him were a confirmation of the authenticity of his commission. They were miracles of that nature that had not been performed by any prophet before him. The opening the eyes of one that was born blind was an act unheard of in the world, and the raising one that had lain some days putrefying in his grave was not to be paralleled by any of the ancient prophets. And those miracles done by him which were of the same kind with those done by the prophets of old, were done with more ease, and in a way of absolute authority. These were such credentials, that not only Nicodemus acknowledged him upon that account to be 'a teacher sent from God,' John 3:2, but the devils knew him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, Luke 4:41. The casting out devils was an unanswerable argument of his authority, since those malicious spirits were too strong to be subject to a created power, or obey his command without a touch of omnipotence to compel them to it; these he dispossesses with authority, as one that had power over them, whence the people began to admire the excellency of his doctrine, because accompanied with such triumphant seals, Mark 1:27. Without a divine commission to fortify his command, his word had been as ridiculous to them as they were malicious against him. The end of all those miracles wrought by him was to testify God's approbation and mission of him. Acts 2:22, 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you,' "apodeideigmenon". They were demonstrations of his commission, and are called signs which God did by him, as they are called also the works of his Father, John 5:36, which did bear witness of him that the Father had sent him, and challenge from the Jews a belief of him, and he intimates that their unbelief had been excusable if he had not done such works, John 10:37. These miracles were an evident testimony that the Father was in him, because, exceeding the sphere of natural causes, they were products of the creative power which is ascribed in Scripture principally to the Father, and therefore more unanswerable than an audible voice from heaven, which had been more liable to evasions and objections than ocular demonstrations, allowed by the common sense of all spectators, and felt by the subject who received the benefit of them. These being acts of omnipotence, could not be affixed to a falsity. For it would follow that either God were deceived himself, which he cannot be because of his omniscience, or that he would deceive others, which is impossible, because of his truth. And especially when he was solemnly desired to assist him with his omnipotence in the raising Lazarus, to this end, that 'they might believe that he had sent him,' John 11:42, which he durst never have desired, nor would God ever have granted, had he only pretended an authority; for then he had settled the faith of man upon a false foundation, in overpowering their reason by a supernatural work, to assent to those things which they could not have been induced unto by lower

arguments. These were the seals of his patent from heaven; whence, when John sent his disciples to know of him whether he were the Messiah, he gives no other demonstration than that of the supernatural works he had wrought.

(4.) The end of this commission was the reconciliation and redemption of man.

[1.] Satisfaction for our sins: Galatians 1:4, 'Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.' It was the will of God and our Father, that he should give himself for our sins; wherein God acted not only as a just judge, to have the honour of his law maintained; nor only as a sovereign lord, to reduce the creature to obedience; but as a tender father, out of a paternal affection to restore the creature to happiness, 'according to the will of God and our Father.' The apostle lays therefore our atonement upon the will of God whereby Christ was authorised to this work, 'by which will we are sanctified,' Hebrews 10:10. By this will of God given in charge, and instructions to Christ, we are atoned and brought into a state of reconciliation, through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. Hence "hilaskesthai", a making reconciliation for the sins of the people, is said to be a thing pertaining to God, wherein Christ expressed his faithfulness to the instructions God gave him as a high priest, Hebrews 2:7.

[2.] Testification of the love of God. Isaiah 43:10-11, 'Ye are my witnesses, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he, I, even I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour.' To witness the nature and love of God in the salvation he has provided, to evidence that he was the only true God, because the only fountain of salvation to the lost world. He had therefore an account of all from his Father upon whose hearts an impression of this love was to be made, so that he knew them all by name, John 10:3. It was to give us an understanding of God, both of his truth and of his love, 1 John 5:20.

[3.] Final and perfect salvation. It was the will of God not only that he should give himself for our sins, but that he should deliver us from this evil world, i. e. conduct us to heaven, that we might be for ever there without spot or any stain of the evil of the world upon us, Galatians 1:4. Upon this account he had authority, "eksousian", to give eternal life to as many as God had given him, and it was in his instructions not to cast off any that came to him, John 6:38. Whence the conversion of the Samaritan woman is said to be the will of his Father, John 4:34, and there is no work of grace upon any soul by the merit of his passion and power of the Spirit, but is by an order of his Father to him for it; and therefore when God shall call for all those that as a right are deposited in his hands, he expects the full performance of his charge, and a resignation of them all to him without the loss of one, John 6:39. For his commission and instructions extended not only to take away the enmity on God's part by the satisfaction of his justice, but to present them unblameable and unreprouable in the sight of God, that there might be no ground for the breaking out of this enmity again on either side, Colossians 1:20, Colossians 1:22. Thus was our Saviour made, by the authority of God, a 'surety of a better testament,' Hebrews 7:22: a surety on man's part, to satisfy the debts which were owing to the justice of God, which he performed as a priest by his death; and a surety on God's part, to secure pardon and peace to believers, that they should be no more under arrest for their debts, which was ensured when all authority and power was given into his hands; so that the commission and instructions were every way extensive for the asserting the honour of God and ensuring the happiness of the creature.

5. The Father actually sends him. Nothing more frequent in the Gospels, especially of John, than Christ's affirming he was sent by the Father: John 8:42, 'I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' As he intruded not himself, nor appointed himself, so he did not take his journey, and present himself to the world, till he had his despatch from God; as he had his divine being by communication from the Father, so he had his temporary mission from his Father. His generation is the proper ground of his mission. John 7:29, 'But I know him: for I am from him, and he has sent me,' though his mission is not the necessary consequent of his eternal generation; his eternal generation did not necessitate his temporal incarnation, no more than the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son can necessitate the incarnation of the Spirit. There was in the Father a right of sending prompter relationem originis; and because of Christ's voluntary putting himself into the relation of a mediator. In respect of his being the second person in the Trinity, he is said to be begotten; as mediator and reconciler, he is said to be sent. Generation was an eternal act, mission a temporal; that was natural, this voluntary; the decree of mission was eternal, the act of mission temporal. His being sent does not impair his deity; though sent, he is Jehovah: Zechariah 2:8-9, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, After the glory he has sent me: and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me.' The person that says he is sent is Jehovah, and he is sent by Jehovah; and the end of his sending is there expressed, Zechariah 2:11 for the conjunction of many nations to the Lord, in that day of his sending and dwelling in the midst of Zion. And when he affirms that he is sent by the Lord, Isaiah 48:16, 'And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, has sent me,' óhe affirms himself to be 'the first and the last', Isaiah 48:12-13, 'Whose hand laid the foundation of the earth, and his right hand spanned the heavens,' when he called unto them to stand up together. His ancient name was sent, which some think is the signification of the word Shiloh, Gen. x59:10, which they derive from a word which signifies sending; and Moses speaks of him to God by this title. Exodus 4:13, 'O my God, send, I pray thee, by the hand thou wilt send;' which anciently was understood of the Messiah, because the patriarchs did in difficult things express their desire of the coming of the Messiah, who was to restore and settle all things in a happy state. Moses knew that God would send him to be a redeemer, and he desires God would send by him. And it is a title appropriate to Christ by John Baptist: John 3:34, 'He whom God has sent.'

(1.) There is the highest reason to acknowledge him sent of God. That there was such a person in the world, is acknowledged by the very enemies to his person, and owned in human stories as well as divine writ. Since he professed himself to be sent by God, if he were not sent by him, he had been guilty of the greatest falsity; and greatest folly in affirming so. Had he been a mere man, and come without any authority, how comes it to pass, that after his death he prevailed against the laws of the nation, the grandeur and valour of the world, the wisdom and eloquence of men, and against the whole world that resisted his doctrine; that he put to flight the powers of hell, silenced their oracles? How should one crucified as a malefactor be so powerful, after his death, to make such impressions upon the minds of men; to change the whole scene of the world, to assist his followers for many years after in the working of miracles? If God would for a time have left such a wickedness (had it been a false assertion) unrevenged, yet would he never have seconded it by his own power, and nonplussed men into a belief of it! Would he have assisted the heralds of this news even against himself, and his own truth and righteousness? Had this been done by human means, it might have been suspected; but a divine wisdom and art appeared in all. It was not by riches, honours, or the promises of worldly greatness, that this doctrine spread itself over the

world, and found such harbour in the minds of men; but by promises of an invisible and future happiness, and assurance of present misery, reproach, poverty, prisons, torments, and death; and by these means his followers increased to a formidable number, against the opposition of princes and learning of the world; and they were more willing and fond to lay down their lives to seal the truth of the doctrine, that Christ was sent of God, than to strike one stroke for the propagation of it, though they wanted not courage for acting, as well as for suffering, had any such commission been granted them. Now if God does rule the world justly and righteously, we must believe that Christ was sent by God for those ends he declared in the time of his life, or we must deny the righteous providence of God, and acknowledge all things to be ordered by chance, or some worse power; we must accuse God of the highest unrighteousness, in bearing witness by a divine power to so great an imposture, whereby millions of souls would be undone, had he not, according to his own declaration, been sent by God.

(2.) God sent him for this end of reconciliation and redemption. He was sent as 'the messenger of the covenant,' Malachi 3:1, to declare the peace, as well as to be the peace, Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 2:17. The thing itself was so incredible, that an injured God should be desirous of reconciliation, and upon such terms as the death of his Son, that it was as needful to be declared by God, as contrived and acted by God. The objections that might have been made against it had such strength, that he only who lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew all his eternal counsels, and was the actor of it in his own person, could reveal the thoughts, purposes, and resolves of his Father concerning it from all eternity, John 1:18.

6. Uses. (1.) We see again here the sad charge against unbelief and disobedience. It is a despising the stamp of all God's authority upon Christ, and tearing his commission; a refusal of one particularly sent, a rejection of the messenger of the covenant, and all the covenant treaties of love and peace. This was the aggravation of the Jews' sin, and is likewise of all the inheritors of that unbelief, to the end of the world; that Christ has an authoritative commission from his Father, and is not received by the rebels; that he speaks in his Father's name, and is not believed by the offender, John 5:43. God was in Christ reconciling the world, as a prince in an ambassador; therefore God and his reconciling offer are despised in the refusal of his commission. It is to God the affront is offered, Christ being the representative of God in the highest and most gracious charge, in the tenderest and most indulgent offers; any slight thoughts of his person, any contempt of his precepts, any disregard of his promises, redounds upon the person authorising him to those ends. He was sent to be heard and obeyed, Matthew 17:5, not to be slighted and despised.

(2.) Study Christ's commission in the extent of it. Whatsoever Christ does, he does it by command, and commission from his Father. This will support faith against fears, and hope against despondencies. It will afford us arguments in prayer, when we can open before God the commission he gave to his Son, and back every petition with some clause in it; when we can go to Christ as an officer authorised and instructed, and show him what instructions he had: Isaiah 61:1-3, 'To bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be trees of righteousness.' To bind up the broken-hearted, deliver the captives, open the prisons, change deformity into beauty, and sorrow into joy, a spirit of heaviness into a spirit of praise, a languishing frame into a fruitful growth; all which parts of his commission were owned by him, Luke 4:18, and observed in his actings in the

world. The poor woman pleaded with him for mercy, as he was the Son of David,' Matthew 15:22; we upon a higher title, as he is the commissioner of God, the apostle of our profession, the messenger of the covenant.

3.) Act faith much upon it. There is little comfort in all that Christ did and suffered, unless we respect him as one sent. Had he come of his own head, we could not with any confidence plead his merit before God. He is sent as his Father's servant, to do service for his Father and his people. Christ must be respected, not only as dying, but as one sent by the Father to such an end. This is the character he gives his disciples' faith in his relation to the Father: John 17:8, 'They have believed that thou did send me.' It is this commission Christ pleads in his intercession: 'Let not them that wait upon thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel because for thy sake I have borne reproach,' Psalms 60:6-7. It is Christ's passion prayer. John 17:9, John 17:21-22, are applied to Christ in the New Testament. It was by thy order, and for thy honour, I bore this reproach; let not, therefore, any believer be ashamed and confounded. What he desired on earth, he intercedes for in heaven, and upon the same ground. He will not therefore refuse those that come unto God by him, he has an office in heaven for their reception. You come to one who has an obligation and order from his Father to receive you, and has too faithful a disposition, and too compassionate a nature of his own, ever to reject you. It was from the strict observance of his Father's orders, that he did nothing but what was pleasing to God: John 8:29, 'I do always those things that please him' (a r e s t a) (aresta). 'Ar e s t o n (Areston) signifies, some say, an order of a court. Not a work done not a word spoken, but was agreeable to the tenor of his commission, to the copy of his instructions: John 12:49-50, 'Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.' We cannot but please God by believing one that is so exact, by presenting to him what he is so highly pleased with. The command given him by his Father, was the publishing everlasting life. We should then believingly put in plea God's order. This is a stronger ground of support than the principles of sciences, and fallibility of sense, and the totterings of reason.

(4.) Bless God for his love, and for any work in your hearts. The authorising Christ is a piece of love, that could never enter into the heart of any man, unless God had revealed it. It is therefore called a mystery, Ephesians 3:3. The apostle could not consider the will of God and our Father in this work, without interrupting his discourse with a doxology: Galatians 1:4-5, 'To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.' Bless him for any gracious work in any of your hearts. It was by the order of his Father any work was done by him in the world. It is by the same order any work is done by him in your souls. It is Christ's 'meat and drink to do his Father's will' in both. Not a person that finds the qualifications of grace in his heart, but may read his name in the commission of the Father to Christ. As the angels rejoiced in the manifestation of the wisdom and power of God, when the new creation was laid in the incarnation of Christ, so should we in the mission of the Son of God. 'Glory to God, and peace on earth,' are in conjunction in themselves, and should be in our meditations on it.

7. The Father actually bruises him. In this act is the corner-stone of our reconciliation laid. He bore from his Father our punishment; the punishment of sense in his agonies in the garden, the punishment of loss in the eclipse upon the cross. In the one, he tasted the terrors of hell, in the other, he felt the bitterness of a temporary clouding of heaven. He was 'smitten of God and afflicted,' Isaiah 53:4, percussus Dei, "muchah Elohim". Men that were extremely afflicted, they

regarded as smitten by the immediate hand of God. God indeed both loved and punished him in that act, John 10:17: he loved him as our Redeemer, and bruised him as the surety engaging for our debts; he loved him for the glory he was to gain by him, and punished him for the sins he did legally bear upon himself; he loved him as his servant in whom he would be glorified by the punishment of our sins, and the redemption of our souls. It is granted on all hands, that God was the supreme cause and author of Christ's sufferings; but some say, not the immediate executioner with his own hands. For the phrase in Scripture, that God did these or those things, concludes not that he did them with his immediate hand; but that he was the decreer, disposer, and director of them by his just judgment in a holy manner to correct the sins of men, or by his wisdom to make trial of his saints; God using for the executioners men or angels, good or bad, or other inferior creatures, as seems best to his wisdom: Amos 3:6, 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?' where he does not ascribe all evil of punishment to the immediate hand of God, but to the sovereign judgment and power of God, appointing and ordering what should be done.

It is certain, that the grace of God was the cause of his tasting death, Hebrews 2:9. But it is most likely, that the Father did immediately bruise him.

(1.) It seems necessary that the stroke should come immediately from the Father.

[1.] In regard of what he was to suffer. It was more than a bodily death was due by the first sentence against Adam in case of failure on his part. Genesis 2:17, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' "mot tamut". All kinds of death; the curse of the law reached further than the case of the body. If nothing more were due to the sinner but the temporal death of the body, it were a light and tolerable punishment. An infinite wrath surely was due both to soul and body for transgressing the precepts of an infinite majesty. The soul being principal in sin, must be the principal in suffering; the soul was the agent, the body but the instrument. The whole nature of man had sinned, and violated the articles of the covenant; the whole nature of man must therefore answer. The soul in us then being the proper subject of sin, the soul of Christ must be the immediate subject of suffering, otherwise he suffered not the penalty due to sin. Not one of those murderers, whose hands reeked with the blood of his body, could reach his invisible soul, and stain their hands immediately with the oppression of his spirit; that was beyond their touch, and was obnoxious only to the Father's stroke. No creature could drop an inward wrath upon his soul. An infinite justice was wronged, an infinite punishment must be suffered. Now none can execute infinite wrath, but an infinite person; what creatures could be sufficient to revenge an infinite offence against an infinite majesty? As every faculty of our souls had been depraved by sin, so must every faculty of the soul be afflicted with sorrow. 'The whole world was guilty before God,' Romans 3:19, *u p o d i k o V t w J e w* (*hupodikos toi Theoi*), under the judgment of God: 'his wrath abode upon us, John 3:30. We were 'by nature children of wrath,' Ephesians 2:3. Christ must endure the wrath due to us; it was more than a common death that he was to taste, and did taste, Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 2:14-15 that death which the devil had the power of, who labours not only for the death of the body, but for that of the soul; that death which men under a sense of guilt feared, which was not a temporal, but an eternal one. Men feared not a death in sin, but a death for sin; not so much the death of the body, as that of the soul. Such a death which men feared, Christ endured; the penal death of men, not the spiritual death of men; and that in regard of the nature of it, not of the continuance, nor the despairs and moral evils which follow upon it. Such sins as the damned are guilty of, are not essential to the nature of punishment, but arise from the

inherent unrighteousness of the person; neither is the eternal duration of the punishment essential to its nature, but arises from the finite nature of the suffering creature which renders a commensurate satisfaction from him impossible. The infinite holiness of Christ's nature was a bar against the sins which are committed by others under that wrath, and the infinite grandeur and dignity of his person was a bar against the eternal duration of that punishment. Now such a death is immediately inflicted by the wrath of God. I cannot see how any creature can inflict that which is infinite.

[2.] In regard of the attributes the Father intended to glorify in the death of Christ. He acted herein as judge, for the manifestation of his vindictive justice; as supreme lawgiver, for the vindication of his holiness; as a governor, for the declaration of his tenderness and kindness towards man: all which attributes were glorified in the highest strain by his being an actor in the death of his beloved Son. His Justice. His justice had not been so eminent, if Christ had only suffered the death of the body, without impressions of wrath on his soul; nor if God had left him to the strokes of others, without striking him himself. This attribute had been manifested upon the highest creatures, angels in heaven, man upon the earth, and upon the account of the latter had reached both the irrational and inanimate creatures; there wanted nothing to express it to the utmost but this of bruising his Son. God designed the utmost demonstration of this in the death of his Son, Romans 3:26. Christ was 'set out as a propitiation, that God might be just;' that God might be just, i. e. that he might be known, and declared in the highest manner to be a righteous God; implying, that all other expressions of it before had been drawn in fainter colours than what he intended here, as if he could not have been known to have an impartial justice without such a way of discovery. He did, therefore, all in this case which an exact justice could require; for to neglect what it requires, is an injury to it, as well as to do what it prohibits. In the creation, he was a God of power and wisdom; in the law, a God of vengeance, which is mounted to the highest point in inflicting wrath upon Christ for man's violation of that law. In extraordinary visible judgments by the hand of God, there are clearer notices of his justice than when the hand of instruments is more sensibly felt in them. 'The heavens' then 'declare his righteousness,' when 'the Lord is Judge himself,' Psalms 50:6. Abraham's obedience was more eminent by the laying hands upon his own son Isaac himself, according to God's order; so was God's justice in laying his own hand upon Christ, than if it had been committed merely to instruments. Had our Saviour suffered only a bodily death, with those griefs in his soul which are incident to men barely for the death of the body, he had under all that load of sin which was laid upon him suffered less than madly men have done. There was something therefore of wrath dropped into his soul, which was the act of his Father's bruising of him, for the manifestation of his justice, and giving it an unexceptionable satisfaction. His holiness. God was now upon the highest discovery of his holiness and hatred of sin. Had this punishment been left only to instruments, he had indeed declared his holiness, but in a fainter degree; his hatred of sin had not been so conspicuous, had he not with his own hands poured out a wrath upon him. His end in sending his Son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' being to make him a sacrifice to 'condemn sin in the flesh,' Romans 8:3, his shooting his wrath upon him was a more sensible, high, and full condemnation of sin, than if all the devils in hell, and all their subjects and votaries on earth, had been let loose to buffet him. Herein he showed that sin was odious and abominable to him, that it should not be spared though it were only by imputation upon his Son; and hereby he lays a foundation of greater awe and reverence of his sanctity, and pure indignation upon the hearts of men. Here was the beauty of his holiness, as well as the exactness of his justice;

vindicating the honour of his law, displaying the purity of his nature by sheathing his sword with indignation in the bowels of sin, while he pierced the heart of his beloved Son. A prince punishing his own son for some enormous crime by his own hand, would evidence a greater abhorrence of it than if he only exposed him to the hands of executioners. His love. If God's love appeared more in giving up Christ as a sacrifice than if he had saved the world without the death of his Son, and without any satisfaction, óas appears, John 3:17, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' &c., which was a purer strain of love than pardoning sin without a sacrifice, óit may also follow, that since God resolved to signalise his love to us, he would have it reach the highest note, and it could not be screwed up to a higher peg than the sacrificing of his Son for us with his own hand. If there be such an emphasis of love in sending him, there is a stronger emphasis of love in bruising him. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;' but God so loved the world, that he bruised his only begotten Son, declares a richer magnificence of love, and raises it to a height of glory, in showing what he would do for miserable creatures. He magnifies his kindness, demonstrates how much he values and delights in his elect, and gives an undeniable proof of the treasures of love in his heart for them. His earnestness in shooting his arrows into himself, rather than lose his people, and engraving upon him the marks of his anger, is the highest point his compassion to us could amount unto, and a step beyond the bare offer and mission of him. God would save us as a Judge, with the evidence of his righteousness; as a Lawgiver, in the discovery of his holiness; as a King, in the display of his sovereignty: Isaiah 33:22, 'The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, and the Lord is our King; he will save us;' and as a Father too with the clearest and dearest affection.

(2.) God did bruise him: Isaiah 53:10, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.' This chapter is the history of the cross, and the epitome of the gospel; it is Christ's crucifixion in effigy before he was crucified in person. The double state of Christ, of humiliation and exaltation, are here described. The verse is a prophecy which has something minatory and something consolatory: minatory, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him,' he speaks of what was future as if it were past, consolatory, 'He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days;' and yet, this word refers to something antecedent in Isaiah 53:9, 'he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.' Though he had an unspotted holiness in his nature, an unblameable purity in his life, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, as he stood in our stead, and represented our persons.

It pleased the Lord, "chafatz". The word signifies not only a bare will, but a will with delight. The word is used to signify God's pleasure in his church, Isaiah 62:4, where the word is Hephzibah, my delight is in her, the same word, and it is used to express Christ's delight in his saints, Psalms 16:3, 'in whom is all my delight.' Not only his resolve, but his pleasure, his heart was as much in it as his hands; the word speaks more than a bare permission. He delighted not simply in the strokes he gave, but in his own essential perfections manifested by those strokes; he delighted not simply in the rod, but in that balsam which was to drop from the end of the rod upon mankind; he was pleased with every wound, as it was a necessary medium to redemption; the text intimates it, he was pleased to bruise him, but it was in order to another pleasure that was to prosper in the hands of the bruised person. To bruise him, "racha", he has put him to grief. The word signifies to pound as in a mortar, whereby the greatness of Christ's sufferings is expressed. God came armed with

his vindictive justice, the sentence of the law in his mouth, and the penalty of the law in his hand; he appeared as a just governor of the world, with a readiness to exercise his authority for the vindication of his law, he glittered in his holiness to right the wronged holiness of his law, and in his justice to revenge the insolences committed against it. His delight in this might very well consist with his love to his Son. As a Father he loved him, as a judge he punished him; as a Father he loved his person, as a God he loved his own honour. A son enters into suretyship with his father for an insolvent debtor; the father loves his son as he is a father, but demands the debt of him as he is a creditor, and has the law passed against him as he is a governor: he did affect him as he stood in relation to himself, and punished him as he stood in relation to us; he loved him for his own holiness, and punished him for our sins.

Again, it is no wonder that it is expressed that the Lord was pleased or delighted to bruise him, since the bruising Christ was a part of the acceptation of the sacrifice: as fire descending from heaven to consume any sacrifice presented to God was a sign of the acceptableness of it to God. This is supposed to be the sign of the acceptation of Abel's sacrifice. Fire from heaven consumed Abel's sacrifice, and not Cain's. Theodotian therefore renders accepted *enepurisen* (enepurisen), and the Scripture gives us frequent examples of this way of acceptation. So it was with Gideon's offering, Judges 6:21; and so it was with Aaron's, Leviticus 9:24, and with Elijah's, 1 Kings 18:38, and with David's, 1 Chronicles 21:26. God had never kindled the sacrifice, had he not been pleased with it. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. When God was to deal with him in a way of vindictive justice, as he was a sacrifice for us, he would not spare him, nor abate one stroke due to him for our sins; he would deal with him in the same manner as he would deal with us, in whose place he stood as a sacrifice; he did not bruise him as he was his Son, but as he was a sacrifice, and so would not abate anything of that weight of suffering which was due by the law and by the demand of justice for our iniquities. The promissory part follows. 'He shall see his seed,' there shall be a succession of generations for the glory of Christ, according to that Psalms 72:17, 'His name shall be continued as long as the sun;' he shall be childless, he shall have a generation of children to keep up his name. In the verse you see, 1. The greatness of Christ's sufferings, expressed by bruising.

2. The inflicter of them, the Lord.

3. The reason of them, as he was an offering, a sacrifice for sin.

4. The subject, the Redeemer.

6. The fruit of it, a spiritual seed, with duration.

Doct. The greatest punishment inflicted upon Christ, when he stood as a sacrifice for sin, was not the act of men, but the act of God. There were sufferings in the body of Christ, as buffetings, spitting, scourging, crucifying; in these, men were the instruments, but the determinate counsel of God preceded. But there were sufferings in his soul which was beyond the reach of men. God himself made the impressions on this; the fire that as it were scalded his spirit, that made him sweat clods of blood in a cold season, came down from heaven, as the fire did upon the legal altar. He never expressed so great a sorrow under all the calamities he felt in the course of his life as in the garden; he was sore amazed and very heavy: Mark 14:38, Mark 14:34, 'he began to be sore amazed,' as if he had tasted nothing but joy in the time past of his life, and never understood the

invasions of any sorrow before. He then began to feel the first impressions of that wrath due to sin, a sudden consternation seized upon his faculties. Both words, *ekthambesthai* and *ademonein*, signify that his pangs were highly strained; a mere bodily death could not amaze him thus. He had a divine nature to support his human, against a mere separation of his soul from his body, since the divine nature would be separated from neither, and he knew a few days would reunite them for ever in a glorious state. Christ did as well foreknow by the promise, the glory that was to follow upon his sufferings, as he did by the precept the passion he was to undergo. It was the wrath of God, a greater bitterness than any other gall in the cup of death, that the human nature, though supported by the divine, stood looking upon with apprehensions of grief and amazement; he knew the greatness of the punishment due to sin, and the greatness of the passion he was to undergo for sin. He is called 'the Lamb of God,' a lamb of his own appointing, a lamb of his own sacrificing, distinguished from the paschal lamb by the author and giver, called the Lamb of God, whereas those were the lambs of men. In the constitution of Christ in the office of mediator, which was God's immediate act, he acted the part of a wise governor; in punishing sin in the person of our surety, thereby satisfying his justice, he acts the part of a just judge. May not the punishment of Christ be immediate by God's own hand, as well as the constitution of Christ was immediate by his own mouth? Isaac was to be the sacrifice, and Abraham the sacrificer; Isaac a child of promise, in whom the seed should be called, ordered to fall by the hand of Abraham the father of many nations: Christ's suffering represented in the one, and God's striking prefigured in the other, God seeming to intimate, that as Abraham was willing to offer up his son at his command with his own hand, so he would offer up his Son as a sacrifice for him, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It is true the devils were let loose upon him, with all the powers of darkness, Luke 22:53, John 15:13, and upon the cross he combated with principalities and powers, because there he spoiled them, Colossians 2:15, they bruised his heel by their instruments, and his Father his soul by his wrath. The church of old expected and desired this: Psalms 80:17, 'Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man,' &c. The psalmist complains of the miserable desolation of the church, for which there was no remedy but in Christ, the man of God's right hand, the man of his love. By the hand being upon a man, is meant punishing, many times in Scripture: as Psalms 38:3, 'Thy hand came upon me,' i. e. thou did strike me with a plague. Indeed, his Father mixed the cup, would not suffer it to depart from him, though he offered up supplications with strong cries; and God, who, as a righteous judge, will not clear the guilty, did sentence him to the drinking the dregs of it; and it is as righteous an act to inflict the punishment as to pronounce the sentence. He constituted him mediator by an act of sovereign mercy, he inflicted the punishment upon him by an act of sovereign justice, he sent him into the world, as the Father who had the power of mission, and bruised him upon the cross, as a judge who had the power of punishing.

1. The imputation of our iniquities to him was the act of God: Isaiah 53:6, 'The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all;' "panenu", *accurrere fecit incursu hostili*. He gathered together the debts of men, put them into one sum, and transferred them upon Christ, as to guilt and punishment. He bound our transgression upon the back of his only Son, as Abraham did the wood upon the shoulders of his Isaac. Our sins were laid upon Christ, as the transgressions of the people were laid upon the head of the scape-goat, Leviticus 16:20-22, which was but a type of this imputation to Christ; for their sins were not truly laid upon the goat, it had then been the antitype, not the type. Sins were confessed, fathered together by confession, laid upon the beast, which is said to bear

them, he, and all that touched him, were accounted unclean. All our sins were laid upon the head of Christ by God. He it was 'made him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Corinthians 5:21; not by inhesion, but imputation; not only a sacrifice for sin, but sin itself. The double antithesis in the text intimates, he was made that sin he knew not; he knew the punishment by suffering, but he knew not the guilt by commission and practice; he was made that sin which is opposed to righteousness, and that was sin itself, which must be understood only as to the imputed guilt; for punishment could not have been indicted on him, unless guilt had first been imputed to him. Had he not first borne our sins, he could not have been driven into the wilderness of desertion and death. Upon this is laid the difference of his first and second appearance: Hebrews 9:28, 'So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' At his first he bore our sins, not personally inherent, but legally, after the substitution of him in our stead; counted to him as his proper debt; upon which account he 'restored what he took not away.' At the second, he shall 'appear without sin.' His nature was free from sin in his first coming, but not his condition; he had sin as our surety, though none in his person; it was impossible he could be our surety without this imputation. Upon the account of this suretyship, God reckoned him a debtor, as 'made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law,' Galatians 4:4. That what God in justice might charge upon the bankrupt, he might, after this constitution of him under the law, by the same right charge upon the surety, for this guilt, by the Father's act of imputation, upon his own voluntary submission to take our offending nature, became his; and, therefore, what penalty was by the law due from us was to be paid by him. All punishment supposes a guilt one way or other; but the Redeemer had no personal guilt, for 'he had done no violence,' Isaiah 53:10, 'yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, when his soul made itself an offering for sin,' imputed to him. This imputation was God's immediate act, and could not be the act of any other, because he was the sole creditor, without any partner; and therefore it is no more rejection upon God immediately to punish him, than it was to transfer our sins upon him, which was an act of God, not possible to be done by any creature. God imputed a world of sins to him, because he undertook for that world God had created by him; therefore God alone indicted upon his soul that punishment which was principally due for our sins. Since he died for our sins, he died under that hand which was to strike us for them; for God made him sin for us, i. e. he handled him as he would have done those sinners in whose stead he suffered, had he not undertaken for them.

2. His greatest sufferings appear to be above the power of any creature to indict. Was it a contest with any creature that made him desirous to waive that death, which was the main end of his coming?

(1.) How was his soul begirt with the wrath of God, before his agony in the garden! What an excess of sorrow do those words signify, Matthew 26:37, Mark 14:33, *ekqambeisqai, adhmonein*, sore amazed, sorrowful, very heavy; an inward quaking, an inexpressible amazement. What a deluge fell from heaven upon our ark, of which that of Noah was a type! How was his soul ground to powder in his agony! How did his soul boil under the fire of wrath, and his blood leak through every pore of the vessel by the extremity of the flame! Must it not be more than a finite breath that thus melted his soul in the garden? Must it not be a stronger than a finite stroke, that wrung out those bitter cries? Was there any visible person to afflict him? Yet his agonies there are thought to have more of hell-fire in them, than his sufferings on the cross; clods of blood dropped from him

when there was no visible hand to strike him. Inconceivable must be the afflictions of his soul, that could make such dismal commotions in his body, and put the whole instrument out of tune; that should make a dissolution of the parts, and make his heart like melted wax 'in the midst of his bowels,' Psalms 22:14. His spotless conscience could not flash such lightnings, as to melt the sword, when nothing touched the scabbard; his Father was then charging him with our sins, actuating his knowledge and sense of them; he had all his lifetime a knowledge of the ingratitude and rebellion of sin; he knew how it had offended and injured God, how it had deformed and ruined the creature; now was his knowledge actuated, and the charging upon him the punishment of them made his knowledge sensible and experimental. This cup discovers more bitter ingredients than any creature could wring out into it.

(2.) Could it be only the sense of an approaching bodily death, that could so deeply afflict his innocent soul? If so, he had discovered a greater weakness than many of the martyrs; nay, had been outstripped in courage by many moral heathens. His nature sure was as strong as theirs to bear it, had not his sufferings been attended with a more sensible sting than theirs were. Martyrs have suffered as great outward torments with joy, laughing in the faces of their persecutors, and edging their fury to more sharpness. But, alas, he suffered more deaths than one: Isaiah 53:9, 'He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death,' "bemuto"; the death of the soul in regard of the bitterness, though not in regard of duration. His Father inflicted what was evil, and withdrew that which was good. Were not the clouds of his Father's countenance, and a subtraction of good looks from him, a bruising him? All the outward torments of the world could not have drawn one doleful cry from any man under the full and sensible beams of God's favour, much less from Christ. Could all the instruments in hell, earth, or heaven, draw a veil between his soul and his Father's countenance? This must only be his Father's act, and was a signal stroke. It is clear there was a negative act of God, denying that comfortable presence which was due to him as a holy person by the covenant of works; and could not be denied his humanity, as united to the second person in the Trinity, had he not been in another capacity upon the cross, and not only precisely as the Son of God. The inflicting of the evil of inward punishment was sure as much the act of his Father, as the withdrawing from him an inward good, the light of his countenance. Might there not be more than a bare cloud, might there not be some bitter frowns darted upon him, since he appeared at that time in the condition of the greatest sinner? If the wrath and justice of his Father did not immediately drop upon him, how could he satisfy it; what satisfaction could arise to it, if he were not at all touched by it? The fire upon the typical altar came down from heaven, and so did this wrath which consumed our sacrifice.

3. God had a choice delight in the bruising him. With what ardency does he rouse up the sleepy sword, to sheath it in the bowels of the man that is his fellow! Zechariah 13:7, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow; strike the shepherd,' &c. The latter part of the verse is applied to Christ, Matthew 26:31. He commands it to pursue his design with a strength like a man newly refreshed and risen from sleep, and make the deeper gashes. Never was God so pleased in drawing his sword against his creatures, as in drawing it against the man his fellow, against the Shepherd, one of Christ's titles in Scripture. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isaiah 53:10. God delighted in his bruising. The word "chafatz" answers to eudokian (eudokian) in the New Testament, when he says that he is well pleased in Christ as his beloved Son. In the formal condition of this action, as it was conversant about punishment, it was not

delightful to God, for he does not punish with his heart: Lamentations 3:33, 'He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men'; 'He delights not in the death of a sinner,' much less in the death of his Son, Ezek. 18:33. But as finally considered, it is highly pleasant to him in regard of his glory and man's redemption. The reason why God bruised him was not any delight simply in the death of Christ, but because in that act he broke in pieces our sins (which were the cause of the enmity) which were borne by Christ in his body upon the tree: 1 Peter 2:14, 'Who his own self bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we were healed,' which is a comment on Isaiah 53:4-5. He has borne our griefs, he was smitten of God, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed. Christ appeared in that state, as bearing the whole body of sin, as well as the body of flesh. The Jews aimed at killing his body, and God aimed at killing our sin. Every stroke he fetched was not ultimately to put his Son to death, but the enmity to death; to destroy the dominion and power which sin by its guilt had derived from the law; for so being dead to sin must be understood, which is clear by observing the like phrase, Romans 6:11, Romans 6:14, where by being dead to sin, he means sin not having dominion, or condemning power over him, which is evidenced by a suitable expression of being 'dead to the law,' Romans 7:4, which is no more than the law not having dominion over us in regard of the curse, as appears, Romans 7:1-3. It was sin which had made the breach, that God principally struck at in the bruising his Son. He had a pleasure to bruise him as our surety, a trouble to bruise him as his Son. He was afflicted in his afflictions as his Son, and would have the sun in the heavens bear witness to it by hiding its head. But he was delighted with his sufferings as our Redeemer, because they were for the satisfaction of his justice, the condemnation of sin, and the restoration of his creature. In this respect, the death of Christ was the sweetest sacrifice that ever was offered, and consequently the smiting of him the pleasantest work that ever God engaged in.

4. The graces of Christ were most eminent in enduring the inward impressions of wrath from his Father. The odours of his graces brake out more strongly by his Father's bruising him.

(1.) His kindness and tenderness to man. Christ was now upon the highest manifestation of his compassions to mankind. His death was the emphasis of his love; his love was stronger and purer than the love of any creature, not only in regard of the excellency of his person, but the greatness of his sufferings. Had he endured only a death of the body, and not such a death that could have been inflicted only by an infinite hand, his love had lost much of its lustre. His love is principally laid upon the score of his death: Galatians 2:20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' If his passion had been only in his body, without impressions from an higher hand upon his soul, he had been in some measure paralleled in this (except in the dignity of his person) by several, who have freely resigned their lives to the enemies' swords, and some to unexpressible torments, for the public good of their country, as the Roman Regulus to the Carthaginians, because his country should not agree to disadvantageous conditions of peace. Besides, by this inward conflict he was fitted for further tenderness, having hereby an experience of the worst men were exposed unto by sin, that he might be more tender of their welfare, and with more melting bowels solicit his Father for relief; hence did arise his strongest sympathising with the condition of men.

(2.) His obedience to his Father. It is a signal testimony given him, that he was 'obedient even to the death of the cross,' Php 2:8. The sharper then his circumstances were upon the cross, the more illustrious his obedience was. The lustre of obedience is seen in engaging upon command

with the most affrighting difficulties. It was a more full acknowledgement of his Father's sovereignty, and a stronger asserting his own obedience, in 'making his soul an offering for sin,' Isaiah 53:10, than if he had only made his body so by a temporal death (though I confess by soul, many times in Scripture, is only meant life), and also to have his eye fixed upon the mediatory law, and his own duty arising from thence. When his Father seems to have forgotten all the promises he had bound himself in, and shot frowns into his heart, and denied him both the light of sun and stars, comfort both from heaven and earth, he adds yet holy inflammations to obedience, which under those circumstances was most ravishing to the Father, and most meritorious for us. It was then an offering and 'a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God,' Ephesians 5:2.

(3.) His fiduciary trust in God, and the promises made to him, was more signal and noble. To trust a God smiling, when he does east about us nothing but cords of love, is not a case of difficulty; every man has a strong impulse to this, when God drops sweetness into him. But then is faith at the highest elevation, when a man can trust God though he kills him, and wait upon him when he hides his face and drops hell from his hand. Thus was our Saviour's faith put to the trial by this proceeding; yet he went forth conquering and to conquer, and would not let go his hold. Though his Father's beams were withdrawn, and his bowels seem contracted, the heaven overcast with darkness, and all the curses of the law let fly at him, he would still depend upon God for his help in his greatest passion: Isaiah 1:7, Isaiah 1:9, 'The Lord God will help me;' Isaiah 1:10, 'Who is among You that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and sees no light? let him trust in the name of the lord, and stay himself upon his God.' He would not let the storm blow these concerns of the world out of his hands, which then were managed by him; which trust of his, in this dismal time, he seems to set as a pattern for our imitation, in the words immediately following intimating we should have his faith under those dreadful circumstances always in our eyes to encourage ours.

These graces of Christ, tenderness, obedience, and trust, had not been set forth in such orient colours to us, had not his soul drunk a cup of wrath of his Father's tempering, as well as his body felt the strokes of human fury.

5. I must add a caution or two for the better understanding this, and preventing any mistake.

(1.) Though Christ suffered from his Father an infinite wrath due to us, yet it was not necessary it should be eternally endured by him, because eternal wrath is due to us, for the eternity of punishment arises from the condition the subject suffering, not from the nature of the punishment itself. A creature being a limited nature, cannot give an infinite satisfaction commensurate to an infinite justice, without suffering eternally. Therefore though infinite punishment be due, yet eternal punishment is not in itself due, but falls in for want of the creature's ability to satisfy the demands of legal justice; since it cannot satisfy the law by one or many acts of suffering, it is always suffering, but never fully satisfies. But the infinite dignity of the person of Christ transcending all creatures, made the satisfaction he offered valuable without an eternal duration of those torments, which the insufficiency of the creature could never have made by suffering to eternity. He satisfies the debt, that pays at once the millions he owes; but he can never satisfy, but must remain in bondage, that pays a farthing in a year when his debts amounts to millions, besides his running farther into debt while he is paying. The eternity of punishment proceeds not only from old debts, but new ones contracted by blasphemies and hatred of God; for though some say that in termino

the damned do not sin, I cannot think but loving and glorifying God is the essential duty of a creature; and while he is a creature, let him be in what state he will, he is under the obligation of it. It is impossible a creature can by any conditions be freed from the obligations of loving and adoring his Creator. Christ might suffer the pains of hell, but not with all the accidental circumstances, nor in the place of hell; time and place are but accidental things, and not of the essence of punishment. It is not the place of hell makes hell, but the wrath of God, in what place soever it is poured out. A surety goes not to prison if he pays the debt; the prison is not a place of payment, but a place to enforce the payment where there is unwillingness to pay.

(2.) This act of his Father in bruising him by his wrath was no approbation of the guilt of the instruments in the death of his body. The sufferings in his soul in the garden were before the Jews had laid hands on him to apprehend him. God dropped wrath upon his soul, yet had no hand in the crime of the Jews, in the covetousness of Judas, envy of the pharisees, cowardice of Pilate, and the fury of the people: these did spring from their natural corruption; they had one end, God another; they aimed at the satisfaction of those lusts, God aimed to content his justice, declare his wisdom, manifest his mercy, clear his holiness, remove the enmity, and relieve our souls. Though God approved of the death of Christ, and 'delivered him up,' Acts 2:23, yet he did not approve of those ends which managed them in that action. It was the highest guilt that ever was manifest upon the stage of the world in them, as it was the highest love that ever God showed in the ordering things to the redemption of man. God determined redemption by the death of his Son, but did not positively determine the evil of the instruments. God laid no inward restraints upon them, left them to act as voluntary agents; he knew what their fury would do, and resolved to govern it for his own glory and the good of the world. God had given them a free power to act otherwise; he did not necessitate them to this rage; their own corruptions met together to commit this horrid crime. They were not impelled by a command, threatening, or promise; his law was a rock against it; the destruction of their city and the dissolution of their state were assured them by our Saviour if they went on in that way; they had no motives from God, but from their own lusts, which were not of God's infusion, but engendered by themselves and inflamed by the devil. God only as a wise governor used them, and ordered them to his own glorious ends, as a man uses the ravenous disposition of his hound to catch the hare, which the hound would of itself do, and governs it to his own ends, different from that of the animal. In short, they acted utterly against the law in shedding innocent blood; God acted according to the mediatory law, in bruising him who had voluntarily substituted himself in our room; they aimed not at any one end which God aimed at in it; their intentions were wholly different. Though God approved of the death of Christ precisely considered, because he delivered him up, yet his death as managed by them was the greatest wickedness that ever the sun saw, so that the Father's bruising Christ does not in the least excuse the Jews, nor had they been excusable had their intentions concurred fully with God's in the act, unless they had received a command from him to crucify him, as Abraham had for the offering his son. The Father then has been in Christ reconciling the world unto himself: in bruising him by his wrath, glorifying his attributes in that act, which were necessary to be manifested in our redemption, laying all our sins upon him, delighting in it as it was for his glory and our happiness, thereby winding up the graces of Christ, necessary for the exercise of his office and our redemption and imitation, to the greatest height, and thereby relieving us from that curse of the law which we must always have borne and could never have satisfied. So deep a hand had the Father in this work of redemption! The Trinity were signal in it: the Father bruising, Christ receiving the stroke, and the Spirit

supporting him under it.

Use 1. How may our meditations swim in this unlimited ocean of love! Oh the depth of the riches of grace, that we should have the cursed pleasure of sinning, and Christ the bitterness of suffering; that the punishment due to us should be charged upon the Son of God by the Father the Father bruise the Son for us, who had deserved as well as devils to be kept bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day? Might he not so easily have condemned us, than condemned his beloved Son for us to a bitter death? But here he would have infinite love and infinite justice kiss each other. What could we do to deserve it? If we could merit any good, could we merit so great a gift as this? If we could have deserved that he should open his arm to embrace us, noted we merit that he should wound his Son's heart to redeem us? If we could deserve to be filled with his grace, could all the world deserve that his Son should be emptied of his glory? Could they deserve that God should be wounded by God for their transgressions? God gave Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners, Romans 5:13, when we wanted motives of love as well as merits of grace, and had no incentive of his grace, unless the want of grace could pass for one. Were God as man, his thunder had crushed the world; the disciples, the best of man spin earth at that time, would have been prodigal of God's thunderbolts, if they had had them in possession, when they desired fire from heaven upon the poor Samaritans. And had man a storehouse of punishment, he would empty it upon persons that notoriously wrong him; but God poured out those vials upon his own Son, which of right belonged to us. Consider, it was his Son whom he bruised, not a servant, not an unspotted angel; his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, not an adopted Son, having only a dark representation of the divine nature; a begotten Son of his nature, not begotten of his will; a beloved Son, not a disaffected Son; an only Son, not one picked out of many children. God had no more in all the world, and yet he bruised him; he bruised him not only by a temporal death of the body, but by a weight of wrath on his soul, not to purchase some small favour, but an everlasting inheritance. How great is this love, that valued our salvation above the life of an only Son, and shed a blood more valuable than the whole creation to preserve ours, which could not be equivalent to the price of it, and put him into the posture of an enemy to his Son, to make us his friends! If the thunders of the law had been shot upon us, what strength had we to bear them? What merit to remove them? How great is the love of the Redeemer, to be willing not to be spared for a time, rather than millions of men and women should fail of being spared for ever! It was 'for our transgressions he was wounded, for our iniquities he was bruised, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him,' Isaiah 53:5. In every wound God gave him, he minded the full punishment of our sin, in the person of our Saviour, that those whom he represented might go free. He spared him not, abated not a mite of what justice might demand, that so his people might have a full redemption: Rom. 8:32, 'He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' He did not spare him in regard of the strength of justice, wherewith he punished him. What could more enhance the love of God than the terrors inflicted on Christ! And what could more enhance the love of Christ, than that he endured not only a bodily death, but a wrathful death in his soul for us!

2. Let then this love engage every man to come to God through Christ. how should it ravish us into an humble compliance with him, and subjection to him! If he has bruised him for us, he will not bruise us if we come to him. The blood shed by the order of God, is able to expiate a world of sins. God has spent his wrath upon him, and has none for those that accept of him. God has discovered

a propensity to be reconciled, though we lie open to the stroke of his justice, and have no strength to withstand him; a higher evidence he cannot give.

3. Spare nothing for God. He spared not the best thing he had in possession, and shall we spare our lust from being mortified by him? The sin of man grieved him more than the death of his Son; shall we preserve that which grieves him, and slight that which was his greatest pleasure? How comes it to pass we are so indulgent to our lusts, and murmur to be parted from that which is the grief of God and the ruin of our souls? Are those destroyers of our souls so extremely dear to us, that we are loath to bring them out of our bosoms, and deliver them to a crucifixion; no, not in love to that God who melted that Son in the fire of his wrath out of love to us, whom he had cherished by the warmth of his bosom from eternity? Sure if our souls were all flint, being smitten by such a love, they should yield some fire to consume our corruptions. How hateful should sin be to us, since it is evidenced to be so hateful to God, as that he would not spare his only begotten Son, when he lay under the imputation of our iniquities, and caused the curses of the law to meet on him with all their stings, upon whom our sins had met in all their guilt! Why should we spare that, for which God did not spare his Son who never offended him, but highly pleased him, and in this very act, too, of bowing down under his strokes by reason of our transgressions? Why should we indulge that in our hearts, which God has discovered by this act to be so abominable and odious to him, and so deserving an object of his just indignation? Let not that find rest in our bosoms, under which, while our Saviour was in the form of a servant, he found no rest from the curses of the law and the wrath of his Father, till it had bruised him, and offered him up as a sacrifice of atonement for it.

6. The Father was in Christ reconciling the world, in accepting him, and his expiatory reconciling sacrifice. The steam of his precious blood went directly up to heaven, as the smoke of the sacrifices ascended right up to heaven (as they say), not blown aside by any wind. This gave God a rest, of which sin after the creation had endeavoured to despoil him, for if God had a complacency in the work of creation, which is signified by the word refreshed, Exodus 31:17, "yinafesh", 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed'; much more must God be refreshed by the work of redemption by Christ, it being a restoring God's rest to him by a new creation, and a greater glory to God than the work of creation was, or, simply considered, could be. God did perform what was incumbent on his part, according to the covenant of redemption, in regard of acceptance, after Christ had trod the wine-press alone; and his grace was of the same tenor in the entertainment of Christ. after his work, as it was in the first designation and call of him to it, the foundation and the topstone being all the fruit of a condescending grace. The grace of God accepted it, and justice could plead nothing against it; grace and justice took him by each arm and led him to the throne of glory. It was God that justified him, Isaiah 1:8. His entrance into heaven, with the same clothes of flesh he wore upon the earth, only changed in the fashion suitable to that glorious country to which he was returning, was an evidence of his full acceptance.

(1.) It is evident that the Father did accept him.

[1.] The types and representations of this reconciling sacrifice were grateful to God upon this account. That first sacrifice after the deluge was a sweet savour, or a savour of rest: Genesis 8:21, 'And the Lord smelt a sweet savour'; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not any more curse the

ground for man's sake,' "hanikhakh". He smelt in that sacrifice a savour of that wherein he should have a rest, and which should fully quiet his mind; and such a rest, that he said in his heart, or swore, Isaiah 54:9. The oath there mentioned can refer to no other place but this. For the sake of the antitype, which was respected in that offering, God swore that he would not any more curse the ground for man's sake. What influence could the steam of the blood of a beast, and the stench of the burning fat, have upon a spiritual substance, an angel, much less upon God? Could the blood and burnt caresses of a few silly animals appease God, so much as to engage him to make so magnificent a promise, not to curse the ground any more for man's sake, when the doleful cries, and vehement supplications of multitudes of dying men in the deluge, could not persuade him to stop his hand, and shut up the flood-gates of heaven? Could this make him order the constant course of nature, and succession of times, when in the very moment he promised it he considered the perpetual fountain of evil in the heart of man, that 'the imagination of his heart was evil from his youth?' No; but God was pleased with a resemblance of Christ, presented to him in the faith of the offerer; as a man is with the picture of his friend whom he dearly esteems, and loves the person that presents such a medal to him, because of the estimation he has of his friend. If the picture be so acceptable, because of the relation it has to a delightful object, how much more dear is the object itself! In the day of the general expiation of the Jews, the sins of the people were atoned by the sacrifice of the beast, and sprinkling of the blood; what force had the blood of a brute to wash off the sins of a rational creature, and those of a nation? But this typified the mighty acceptableness of the blood of Christ, satisfactory to justice, and pleasing to the mercy of God, whence all sacrifices received what efficacy they had. God's being pleased with this sacrifice of Noah, and others of his own appointing, was but to testify how highly pleasing the death of his Son would be to him, as it was an atoning sacrifice, and sweeter than the iniquities of men were loathsome, both being under his consideration at one and the same time.

[2.] The time of Christ's coming, and being in the world, is called by way of eminency an acceptable time, much more was his suffering so, which was the complement of his humiliation work. It was an acceptable time, because it was a day of salvation for man: Isaiah 49:8, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee.' They are the words of the Father to Christ, wherein he assures him of the acceptance of his sacrifice extensively for the Gentiles: 'I will give thee for a covenant to the people;' which place the apostle uses as an argument to press the Corinthians to the sincere embracing of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 6:2, because it was an acceptable time, a time wherein Christ was accepted, and all believers accepted upon his account; a time acceptable to God in the prophet; a time which therefore ought to be acceptable to man, as the apostle infers. It is therefore called the acceptable year of the Lord: Isaiah 61:2, 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' The clearest, and serenest time that ever God saw since the creation of the world. Why was it so acceptable? Because it was the day of vengeance of our God, a day of vengeance upon sin, a day of the taking away and removal of that which had caused all the enmity. Upon the knowledge of God's approbation of it, Christ prays for his assistance in the time of his suffering, Psalms 69:13. A psalm of Christ, as appears, Psalms 69:9, Psalms 69:21, applied to him in the Gospel, 'As for me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation,' when the whole world was set against him, and he was made the song of the drunkards; the time wherein he put it up, and the circumstances he was in, were pleasing to God, as being for his greatest service and glory. Let the mercy which engaged me first in this

attempt, and the promise thou hast made me of the salvation of man, move thee to hear me now, and to manifest the truth of thy salvation which thou hast committed to me, and I am now upon the effecting of. When was this acceptable time? this t¹⁸¹ By? When he was in the mire and deep waters, Psalms 69:14; when he was reproached, and full of heaviness, Psalms 69:20; when they gave him gall for his meat, and in his thirst vinegar to drink; then was the time of this highest acceptation with God for the redemption of man.

[3.] All the fruits of his death manifest God's high acceptance of it.

First, The mission of the Spirit. The great end why the Spirit was sent, was to manifest this acceptance; to evidence to the world that Christ was no impostor, because he was gone to the Father, John 16:7-10, and had a welcome in heaven. The coming of the Spirit, and the working miracles in the name of Christ, kept up the credit of his mission and authority from the Father in the world. He was sent by the Father, in the name of Christ: John 14:26, 'The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name,' i. e. upon the account of his mediation, as a fruit of it. His name would have been of no authority for so great a gift, had not his death been of a grateful efficacy. And by the virtue of his intercession, John 14:16, 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter,' God unlocks to him all his treasures, as a testimony of the pleasure he took in his death, and the completeness of it to appease his anger, and satisfy the most extensive demands of his justice. So high a favour could not be dispensed, if justice had not first been fully contented. This Spirit was also to abide for ever with his people: John 16:16, 'That he may abide with you for ever;' which sheds the everlasting acceptance of this sacrifice by God; for since the first coming of the Spirit was upon the first acceptance of his offering, the abiding of the Spirit evidences the perpetual prevalence of it with God; for he could not abide any longer than the ground of his mission did endure, for they must both run parallel. Now, had he not gone away, the Comforter would not have come, John 16:7, which refers not only to his ascension, but to his passion. And had he gone, and his death been unapproved by God, the Spirit had stayed in heaven. His work also testifies this approbation. He was to 'bring things to remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said to them,' John 14:26, which would never have been, had not Christ in every little been faithful to his Father's instructions. He was not to speak of himself, John 16:13; he was not to be the author of a new doctrine in the church, but to impress upon men what Christ had taught, and what he had wrought by his passion; he is therefore called the Spirit of truth, teaching and clearing up to the minds of men that truth which Christ had taught, and confirmed by his blood. There was no error or mistake in any part of the management of this work on Christ's part; for the Spirit is not sent to rectify anything, but to raise the superstructure upon that foundation Christ had already laid. He was to declare only what he heard, John 16:13-14; to act the part of a minister to Christ, as Christ had acted the part of a minister to his Father; to glorify Christ, to manifest the fullness of his merit, and the benefits of his purchase; for he was to receive of Christ, i. e. the things of Christ, his truth and his grace, and manifest it to their souls, and imprint upon them the comfort of both. There had been no foundation to glorify Christ, had not Christ in this work been glorious in the eyes of God, and been acknowledged by the Father to have glorified him to the utmost. Now since all this is come to pass, according as Christ did predict it, it is an undeniable evidence that the Father has fully approved of Christ's faithfulness in his office, and rests highly contented by his death.

Secondly, The answer of prayers in his name. As his acceptance by the Father was the ground of all the miracles which were wrought in the name of the Son after his ascension, 60 it is the ground of all the answers of prayer that any believer receives from God, for our Saviour joins them both together: John 14:12-13, 'He that believes in me shall do greater works than these, because I go to the Father; and whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' 'Whatsoever you ask in my name,' i. e. says Cajetan, for my glory, not only in the intention of the petitioner, but the direct tendency of the thing petitioned for, I will do. His power to do it, is an argument of the strength of his oblation, and validity of the price. 'That the Father may be glorified in the Son,' which is the end for which our prayers are answered, and is the event of those mercies we receive as answers from the hands of Christ. The Father is glorified in the success of Christ's mediation, and the 'finishing the work he gave him to do,' John xvii. Every return of prayer, upon the account of the merit of Christ, is a testimony of this success; and glory redounds by it to the wisdom of the Father, for contriving; to the kindness of the Father, for appointing so able a Saviour, who could fully satisfy all the concerns of God, and provide for the necessities of the creature, and lay a foundation for the full communication of all mercies needful for him. His receiving from his Father the keys of all his stores, to dispense to believers, manifests how welcome he was to the Father upon his return, after his conflict in the world, and how successful he was in his execution of his office, and how fully he contented the justice of his Father, which could not by any right keep those stores from him after his meritorious passion, so that in every answer of prayer, the wisdom, love, righteousness of the Father are glorified, in the obedience, merit, and purchase of his Son; the love of the Father is manifested in sending so sufficient a mediator; and the justice and grace of the Father is glorified in accepting him, and performing the conditions requisite on his part by the covenant of redemption. There is a most intimate conjunction of the glory of the Father and the glory of the Son in this mediation of Christ, which is the foundation of the acceptation of him, and his acceptation upon the same foundation will be perpetual; because, as whatsoever he did here was for the glory of his Father, whatsoever he does above also, in distributing his gifts, communicating his grace, is for the same end, and therefore can never be unacceptable; for, by this acceptation of him, the Father has a current and standing revenue of glory established; his exchequer is daily filled with it, by virtue of this approbation. This acceptance is writ upon every return of our supplications, put up in his name, and tending to his glory; the wonderful effects whereof have been known in all ages, and in the private experience of every sincere Christian. Would God ever listen to those pleas in his name, were he not well pleased with the sacrifice of his person? Would God ever expend his gifts to man, to keep up the credit of a person he had disowned? This is the ground of that near communion believers have with God, nearer than Adam was admitted to in paradise, wherein God condescends to the familiar expressions of his grace, and converses with men in and through a mediator, who before were alienated from him, and made the marks of his wrath. The 'golden altar with incense,' Revelation 8:3. is the pleasant perfume of his merits.

[4.] The content God has in men's believing on Christ manifests it. God has made faith, the acceptance of him by men, the only condition of enjoying the fruits of his purchase; and it is not all the amiable virtues in the world, nor the riches of the whole creation, can procure us any right or title to him without it. So much does the Father stand upon the honour of his Son, that he will not grant an eternal happiness to any but those that join with him in a sincere and hearty acceptation and approbation of him, his meritorious death, and the righteousness evidenced thereby. Without

this, no beams of glory can sparkle upon us, but an eternal wrath will swallow us up. As the Father has approved him, so as to give all power into his hands, so he wills us to approve him, so as to bring all our own righteousness to the footstool of Christ, and embrace him only by a naked faith, that nothing of the glory of his work and merit may be clouded by any thing of our own. A true, willing, cordial, lively acceptance is required, a resting on him for salvation, as God rests on him upon his satisfaction. An estimation of him approaching as near as a creature can to that of God's; the knowledge and embracing of him is the best savour to God, next to that of his own oblation; and man only in a believing embracing, stands in his true posture of acceptation with God.

[5.] The naked declarations of Christ to the world are acceptable to God. The very discourses, and the discoursers of it, are a sweet savour to God: 2 Corinthians 2:15, 'We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.' Yea, though men cast away the thoughts of him, and perish in their unbelief; yet the proposal of it to them for their acceptance is very sweet to the thoughts of God. As he will express how high his acceptation of them was, in the gifts of eternal happiness to them that entertain him, so the rejecters shall learn the same in the severity of the punishment inflicted on them. But whatever men do, the sound of it in the world is a sweet savour to him; and all men shall be at last convinced, that his righteousness was acceptable to God, because he is gone to the Father.

(2.) God accepted him with a mighty pleasure. As soon as he was made perfect by his sufferings, he was saluted an high priest, 'called an high priest,' Hebrews 5:10, *Prosagoreuqeiv* saluted; *prosagoreuei*, *aspazetai* (Hesych.) When, by the accomplishment of his passion, he became the author of eternal salvation, God congratulates him for his attainment of a new honour by his consecration, as men congratulate one another upon new acquisitions. It was a 'sweet smelling savour to God,' Ephesians 5:2; there was *eudokia* in his mission, and *eudwia* in his passion. God smelled a greater fragrance in his death than stench from our sins; the sweetness of the one did drown the noisomeness of the other: his death was more satisfying to God than our sins were displeasing. As he was a vine, he sent forth a delicious fruit of his blood to cheer both the heart of God and man; of God, by the fragrance of his satisfaction; of man, by the fullness of his merit. God's soul delighted in him, Isaiah 13:1. He had an overflowing joy. All the attributes of God, which are the soul and perfections of the Deity, had an undisturbed acquiescence in him. There was an unblemished exactness in his work, because there was a fullness of delight in his Father. The delight he took in his designation was rather heightened than diminished by his faithfulness in the execution. He was, after his death, brought near before God: Daniel 7:13, 'One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him,' two words to express the height of pleasure, near and before him. As if God would express his pleasure in the strait and intimate embraces of his Son, after his great engagement and return from the battle; and so welcome he was, that God presented him with the dominion of the whole world. For the order of the vision expresses first his incarnation, and then his exaltation; so that this being 'brought near before the ancient of days,' must be upon his ascension just after his death, and before his full investiture in the dominion of the world.

[1.] He pleased him more than all the sacrifices under the Jewish economy; far more than all the devoted creatures, than oxen and bullocks which have horns and hoofs; it is the expression concerning Christ, Psalms 69:31. A mark of eminency, a how much more is put upon this offering, above the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, Hebrews 9:13-14. Though they were instituted by

God, yet they were not acceptable to God for the removal of sin, 'neither could make the offerer perfect before him,' Hebrews 10:1. Nor could the heaps of sacrificed animals, the streams of brutish blood, persuade him to the justification of any one offerer: 'In burnt offerings or sacrifices he had no pleasure,' or rest, Hebrews 10:6. He had a pleasure in them, not as they were the sacrifices of beasts, but representations of his Son's passion, and appointed as remembrances before him, of what was to be suffered by the true object of his rest in time. Christ is the person, and his death the sacrifice, wherein God only can find a rest: Isaiah 66:1-2, 'Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things has my hand made, and all these things have been, says the Lord: but to this will I look, to the poor and a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.' The temple and temple-worship was not the place of his rest; God speaks with contempt of them, and seems to cast in the whole created compares of heaven and earth, as no firm object of his pleasure. But to this will I look, i. e. this poor and contrite spirit, "nkheh", stricken; of the same root as "makhah", smitten of God and afflicted: Isaiah 53:4, 'That trembled at my word;' he speaks as of one that trembled under the curses of the law, and felt the weight and bitterness of them; to him will I look, or intently or fixedly look, as the word signifies. The word tremble, "kharad", signifies to be careful or solicitous, as, 2 Kings 4:13, it is so translated, Thou hast been careful for us with all this care,' though it signifies also to tremble. Who was more stricken than Christ? Who more careful of the honour of God's law than Christ? Or who tasted more of the gall of the curse than Christ? Who can that signal mark this point to, but Christ? Who can be set in the balance with the whole frame of the creation, angels and men, but Christ? 'All those things has my hand made,' which seems to refer not only to the temple, but to the heavens, his throne, and the earth, his footstool; all those have been, and yet no rest found in them. Now after the coming and striking of this person, upon whom the eye of God is intent, an end is put to all the ceremonial sacrifices: Isaiah 66:3, 'He that kills an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck,' &c. It was a disgrace to him for men to think he could be pleased with such sacrifices, when he had appointed and accepted another; if they then kept them up, they should be an abomination to him, as the blood of swine, and yet they kept them up after this poor stricken spirit, after the offering of his Son: he calls them 'their own ways, their abominations in which he delighted not.' And Isaiah 66:4, he would 'bring their fears upon them;' perhaps it may be meant of their fear of the Romans, which you know they pretended, for the putting Christ to death, thereby to prevent any occasion of an invasion; and Isaiah 66:6, he prophesies of their destruction. But before this destruction she should be 'delivered of a man child,' Isaiah 66:7. You know how he armed the Romans against them, discharged his wrath upon them, gave up the city and temple, which they (and even their enemies) studied to preserve, for the death of his Son, as a prey to the fury and avarice of the enemies. I have been the longer upon it, to show there is some ground to understand this place principally of Christ, though not to exclude the common interpretation; perhaps we might have had more ground for the understanding it so from Stephen's discourse, Acts 7:1-60, where he ends his citations with this place of Scripture, Acts 7:48-49, and descending to the application of what he had before cited, and charging upon them the blood of Christ, was interrupted by the fury of the Jews from any further light which his discourse might have given us. To consider it again, God demands where the place of his rest was? They might answer, the heavens. No; all these has mine hand made, yet no rest in them; but to this I will look; this is my rest, as the antithesis carries it; this stricken in spirit, as if he had

pointed to Christ on the cross and in the garden, trembling under a sense of wrath. An intent look is a look of expectation, or a look of pleasure.

[2.] He shows his mighty pleasure in the acceptance of him by a public proclamation as it were: Hebrews 1:6, 'Again, when he brings his first begotten into the world, he says, And let all the angels of God worship him.' Or as some read it, 'And when he brings his first begotten into the world again,' understanding it of his resurrection, he then proclaims him to the angels as an object of worship, He is the heir appointed, as well as the heir eternally begotten, proclaimed to the angels as their head, and the root of their standing. He was 'seen of angels,' manifested to them in such a manner as their head, after he was justified by the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii 16. Methinks being 'seen of angels' should signify something more than the simple vision. he was 'justified by the Spirit,' when he was quickened and raised by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18. His being 'preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory,' were evidences of this acceptance of him by the Father. He brings him after his resurrection, as he did Adam after his creation, into the possession of the world, and gave him dominion over the creatures. He brings in his Son, and gives him an empire over the angels as he was mediator, which he had before as he was God blessed for ever; and the angels praise him, and acknowledge him 'worthy,' as the lamb slain, 'to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,' Revelation 5:11-12.

[3.] He declares the pleasure he had in his acceptance of him, by fixing his love for ever upon him. He was settled in his Father's love, because he had performed the mediatory command: John 15:10, 'If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' A commandment was given him, and a commandment was kept by him, which obedience has been hitherto the foundation of his Father's love to him as mediator; and when he had fully finished it, would make a fixation of his Father's love. If he had not performed the mediatory command, he had had no interest in his Father's affections; as poor creatures if they observe the commands of Christ, shall for ever be rooted in his love, never to be cast out. So is Christ, upon the observation of the command his Father gave, for ever settled in his affection and acceptance, whereby he has given us assurance, that he was in Christ reconciling the world.

(3.) As the Father accepted Christ, and accepted him with a mighty pleasure, so this acceptance of him and his death redounds to every believer. Grace and glory depend upon this; take away God's approbation, and the whole chain of privileges, linked together by it, falls in pieces.

[1.] It is the stability of the covenant. His approach to God as a surety, having engaged his heart for us, is that which God speaks of with a pleasing astonishment, and is so transcendently taken with it, that he settles the covenant of being their God, and making them his people upon it; that is the issue, Jeremiah 30:21-22. And the everlastingness of the covenant is founded in his being a witness to the people: Isaiah 55:3-4, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you; behold, I have given him for a witness to the people.' All the promises of God are yea and amen, in him the faithful and true witness, Revelation 3:14.

[2.] Justification is founded upon this acceptance. God was in Christ reconciling the world, i. e. not imputing their trespasses to them, but discharging them. For the pleasure he took in Christ's sufferings upon mount Calvary, he graciously forgets our sins, and of rebels entitles us heirs.

There is a fundamental justification of future believers in the discharge of Christ, though not formal and actual till they believe. As there was a fundamental condemnation of all in the loins of Adam upon his fall, not actual till they were in being, and did actually partake of his nature; so Christ having his discharge as a common person, all those whose sins he bore have a fundamental discharge in that of his person from any more suffering. As he bore the sins of many as a common person in the offering of himself and satisfied for their guilt, so he has an absolution as the head from all that guilt he bore; no more to lie under the burden of our sins, or endure any penalties of the law for them: Hebrews 9:27, 'As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered for the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear without sin unto salvation.' As judgment is appointed for all men, as well as death, and they receive their judgment after death, so Christ after his death was judged by God, and judged perfect, fully answering the will and ends of God, and shall not appear any more as a sacrifice, but as a perfect Saviour. He is no more to appear in a corruptible body prepared to bear sin try imputation, but in a glorious body, as a manifestation of his justification, fitted for the comfort of those that look for him. Unto them does this judgment extend, for upon the score of this judgment passed by God in his behalf, he is to appear at length to them for salvation. For if Christ satisfied for believers, he is accepted by God on their behalf; therefore his sufferings are imputed to them; for it would be strange that Christ should endure a punishment for them, be approved of God as standing in their stead, and his acceptance not be counted to them. If there be an approbation of his sufferings for us, there is an imputation of his sufferings to us, or else no satisfaction is mine to justice upon our account. As he suffered, so he was acquitted as our surety and representative.

[3.] The acceptation of our persons and services redounds to us from the Father's acceptance of Christ. His love to Christ as mediator, is the ground of our acceptance: Ephesians 1:6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.' He chose him first as the head, and his members in him; he accepts him as the first beloved, and believers in him. Had not Christ been accepted first, none could have pretended an holiness worthy of the notice of God. The grace of God is the cause, his love to Christ the ground, acceptation of us in him the effect of both. In ourselves, we are the objects of his anger; in Christ, the marks of his choice affection. It is the pleasure God took in the obedience of his Son, which makes believers as his members, and their services, though weak imitations of him, delightful to God.

[4.] The constant wooings of men by God flow from hence. He entreats and beseeches men to embrace him, to be reconciled to him, because he has been thus reconciling the world in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:20, 'As though God did beseech you by us, be ye reconciled to God.' The entreaty and arguments used to persuade men to the acceptance of it, could have no validity without this foundation, that a reconciliation is wrought, and the expiatory sufferings of Christ accepted by God. So much is God in love with Christ's performance, that he condescends to the lowest step, to beseech and solicit the creatures' affections for him, and presses them with that sweet importunity, as loath to take any denial at their hands.

Use 1. See the inexpressible value of Christ's mediation with God. God truth given the highest evidence of the grandeur of it, of Christ's faithfulness in the discharge of the trust committed to him, glorifying the Father in all that he undertook and taught. It is from his being a 'righteous branch,' that he is become the Lord our righteousness, Jeremiah 13:5-6. He was by his voluntary submission, and his Father's designation, made sin for us, which performance is so grateful, that

all that believe in him are made not bare righteousness, but 'the righteousness of God in him.' He seems to become sin itself, wholly guilt, and believers thereby righteousness itself in the presence of God. His death is so valuable as to procure the casting our sins into the depths of the sea, and the advancing our persons to the heights of glory, to stand before God in his kingdom. Our persons, odious in Adam, are made beautiful in Christ; and our duties, that smell rank by nature, smell sweet by his merits, Revelation 5:8. The odours of his merits are so strong as to overcome the stench of our nature. There is no need of any masses, human satisfactions, and additions of any merits of our own.

2. Comfort to believers. Since this acceptance, how does justice itself smile! The rod of God's fury falls out of his hand upon the sweetness of his Son's offering, and gives way to a sceptre of grace; nothing was omitted which was Necessary for the pleasure of God's piercing eye. This may well calm the fears in our hearts, because it smooths the frowns in God's face. If no charge can be brought against Christ since the acknowledgement of the sufficiency of his offering, no charge can be brought against believers. For whom was it performed, but for them? For whom was it accepted, but for them? The acceptation must be for the same ends for which his sufferings were endured, shall not then the influence of it upon them answer the intention of it for them? If it should not, the first acceptation would be in vain, Christ must then return to offer another sacrifice, which shall never be. In the acceptation of Christ for you, he has accepted you in him. He stood in no need of it, but in relation to you, he was the eternal Son of God, acceptable to the Father, but by this he is established an eternal Saviour. An obedient faith on our part will entitle us to salvation on his part: Hebrews 5:9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' Since God has accepted him for you, God will appear full of omniscience to understand your wants, full of compassion to pity you, full of power to relieve you, full of wisdom to guide you, full of grace to pardon you, full of glory to bless you for ever. Every believer will be accepted by God, because by his faith he owns that which gives God a rest; and as the grace of God assists him, so he contributes to God's contentment. Oh, then, remember your offences against God, to be humbled; and God's acceptation of the blessed offering, to be comforted. The odour of this sacrifice was so agreeable to God, that, not content to discharge us from the condemnation we had merited, he would also that we should partake of the life, and enjoy the kingdom of his Son, judging it not equity to make any separation between the head and the members, the redeemer and the redeemed, and a disparagement to the greatness of the offer, and offering, to shut heaven against them. Hereby is not only condemnation removed, but eternal glory assured. It is not only a not perishing, but an eternal life upon faith, John 3:16.

3. This is the main foundation of faith. How invaluable had all Christ's sufferings been and how vain our faith, had God disapproved him; justice had been armed against us if a blemish had been in the oblation. Faith first reads Christ's commission, then casts its eye upon the streams of blood flowing from his heart, listens to his doleful cries, considers them for itself, but ultimately rests itself in God's acknowledgement of the full discharge of the debt, and his cancelling the obligation wherein Christ was bound. After this, none have any excuse for Unbelief, unless they will accuse God of weakness, or falsity, and imposture in bearing witness to the faithfulness of one who had not discharged his office.

4. Glorify God. It is the use Christ in the prophetic psalm makes of it: Psalms 22:23-24, 'Praise ye the Lord, all ye the seed of Jacob; glorify him, all ye the seed of Israel: for he has not despised nor

abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has he hid his face from him:' a meiosis. His face indeed was hid for a time, but to return with fresher and brighter beams; and the warmth at the return made a recompense for the clouds upon the cross. How should our hearts swell with praise, as heaven did with joy, and the thankful gladness of our hearts keep time with the joyful acceptance of his Father!

5. Accept Christ. What is worthy of God's acceptance cannot be unworthy of ours. If this be agreeable to the fountain of goodness, why should it not be grateful to the derived streams? That which gratifies an infinite ocean of purity would surely gratify us, were we not abominable sinks of corruption. It is the highest contrariety to God not to seek and acknowledge rest in that wherein God finds a full content. If the pure eye of God behold not the least spot to disturb, but a commensurate goodness to settle his rest, what can we see in Christ which should make us nauseate him? Christ is the object of God's rest, and well may be of ours. As God rested not in anything after the degeneracy of the world but in Christ, so neither should we rest in anything since the degeneracy of our hearts but in the same object. God will love us highly for our acceptance of him. God is highly pleased with his creatures' converse with him in and by a mediator: Deuteronomy 18:16-17, 'They have well spoken that which they have spoken,' when they desired that God would not speak to them but by Moses, a type of the Mediator. God never gave them so great a commendation as in this case, nor ever approved so highly of any action or words that came from the body of this people. God dwells above in the clouds, we cannot come to him but by Christ. He is a God of vengeance; and we the meritors of it; we cannot be screened from his wrath but by Christ; accept him, and God will accept of us in him; refuse him, and all the other righteousness in the world cannot secure us. Let God's approbation be the director of ours. Acceptance of Christ is a noble imitation of God.

7. God raised him. There was a necessity of his resurrection in regard of the predictions; for since the Messiah was to die, and not see corruption, Psalms 16:10, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption,' it is clear he was to rise again, else his body in a natural course would have seen corruption. This resurrection is a clear evidence of his acceptance; himself uses this as an argument both of the authority of his commission and fidelity in execution: John 2:18-19, John 2:21, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' speaking of the temple of his body. Revelation 1:5, he is the 'faithful witness,' manifested to be so by being the 'first begotten from the dead.' Without his resurrection, his acceptance had not been manifest; neither could he have appeared in the quality of a Redeemer and High Priest, had he, like one of us, lain rotting in his grave; he had not, without it, been powerfully declared to be the true Son of God, nor consequently evidenced to be our Redeemer, nor been in a capacity, according to the decree, to reign to the ends of the earth. All men would have concluded him an impostor' but by rising up from the power of an ignominious death, he was manifested to angels and men to be not only God's beloved Son, but his obedient servant, faithful in all his will, the exact revealer of his counsels, and grateful to him in his sufferings, whereby not only the valueness and sufficiency of his passion for a foundation of everlasting reconciliation, but the actual acceptance of it, was evidenced. It was a testimony to Christ of his faithfulness, a testimony to us of the approbation of his sacrifice for those purposes for which it was offered. As his resurrection by the Father was, as it were, a new generation of him as the Son of God, Romans 1:4, 'Declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead,' so it was as a new constitution of him as the mediator of men.

Himself calls his resurrection a regeneration, Matthew 19:28, and he is therefore called not the first risen, but the first-born from the dead: Colossians 1:18, 'Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,' this being a new birth of him from the womb of the earth. It is a rule in the language of the Scripture, *aliquid factum dicitur, cum factum esse demonstratur*. Hereby his person was owned to be the Son of God, and his works and suffering, as our Redeemer, were declared highly pleasing; the suit was depending till his resurrection, but then the controversy between God and sinners upon the account of the law was at an end, and the bond was cancelled in token of full satisfaction. The public decree of God determined it; the decree is extant, Psalms 2:7; the interpretation of it, Acts 13:33, 'God has fulfilled the same unto us, in that he has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Thus was he justified and declared righteous, and his obedience, which run through all his acts, exceeding acceptable. He was indeed approved of God by miracles, which God did by him in the time of tie life, Acts 2:22; and by such miracles that could not fall under any jealousy, but by those he was testified to be a prophet, a man approved of God, a teacher come from God, as Nicodemus argues, John 3:2. But by his resurrection he was testified to be more than a man, the Son of God in his majesty. Notwithstanding the miracles of his life, he appeared in the form of a servant, and scarce assumed any other title than that of the Son of man; but after he had by his conquest made death his captive, he illustriously appears to be the Son of God, the glory of which is increased by his ascension, exaltation, and the plentiful effusion of the Spirit: by all which his righteousness and obedience was declared to be pure without any mixture, perfect without any defect, clear gold without any dross, and a full payment of the utmost farthing to divine justice for believing sinners.

(1.) It was the act of the Father. The body of Christ was raised, and resurrection is not the work of either soul or body, but of God only. God raised him from the dead in such a manner as to declare him to be his Son. It being the declaration of the Father, his resurrection was the act of the Father: 'God raised him from the dead,' Acts 13:30, Acts 13:33. Upon which account God is set forth in this raising Christ as the object of faith: Romans 4:24, 'If you believe on him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' This being, as it were, a new begetting him, was the act of the Father, whose Son he was by eternal generation. It is particularly ascribed to the Father: Romans 6:4, 'As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father;' by the glorious power of the Father, which was made illustrious in it. Some take glory of the Father for the formal cause, as though the meaning were, Christ in his resurrection was adorned with the glory of the Father; others for the final cause, he rose to the glory of the Father; but to take it for the efficient cause is more natural; as the love of the Father was most magnificent in giving him to die, so the power of the Father is most glorious in unloosing the bands of death, and delivering him from the grave with triumph; because the reuniting the soul to the body, and restoring it to all the functions of life, in an act of creative power. And this resurrection was more glorious than a single creation, in regard of the mighty load of guilt Christ lay by imputation under when upon the cross. It is true this resurrection was the work of the Trinity, it was the work of the Spirit; he is therefore said to be 'quickened by the Spirit,' 1 Peter 3:18, and 'justified in the Spirit,' 1 Timothy 3:16. His resurrection was the justification of his person in all that he performed for the satisfaction of God. Christ also is said to raise himself: John 2:19, 'I will raise it up,' and had an authority to 'take up his life again,' John 10:18. As he is said to conquer his enemies, 1 Corinthians 15:25, 'he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet;' yet the Father is said to do it, Psalms 110:1; for acts of power are more

peculiarly ascribed to the Father, and resurrection is an act of omnipotence, as wisdom is ascribed to the Son, and love to the Holy Ghost. The conquest of his enemies is the act of his Father, and therefore the beginning of his triumph, and the overpowering the great enemy death. And as he waits at God's right hand till his enemies be subdued, so he waited in the grave till his discharge was ordered by the Father.

(2.) It was most congruous and regular for the Father to be principal in the raising Christ. The Father had the power of mission, and therefore of acceptation; and therefore the act whereby it was declared did principally pertain to the Father, as it was a full manifestation of the faithfulness of Christ in his office. As he received his commission from his Father, so it was most regular he should receive his discharge from the same hand, because he had been faithful to him that appointed him. The Father was the creditor, he had covenanted with his Father to suffer and give him satisfaction; the Father then was the most proper judge whether the articles were performed or no, whether the satisfaction was valid and the debt paid. As the Father was the lawgiver and judge, the delivering Christ to death belonged to him; upon the same account the delivering him from prison and judgment belonged to the Father. None have power to remit or discharge after the sentence but the supreme authority. So that the raising Christ belonged as properly by right to the Father as the power of delivering him to death. When the account was made up in heaven, and not a farthing of what was due was found wanting, but the demands of justice fully balanced by the satisfaction of Christ, 'he was taken from prison and judgment,' Isaiah 53:8, and God sends an angel to roll away the stone, Matthew 28:2; not indeed to make way for the resurrection of Christ, as though there was a necessity of rolling away the stone to give his body passage out of the grave, but to evidence to the women that intended to come into the sepulchre that his discharge came from heaven, and that they might see the grave empty of his body. As he that is in prison for debt ought not to go out without the judge's authority, so Christ was held in the fetters of death till his Father's absolution, and then was delivered from the grave as a debtor from prison. 'God loosed the chains of death,' Acts 2:24, 'it being not possible that he should be held' in those chains, for it was not equitable that after he had satisfied he should be held longer in his fetters. The judge only can free from prison; and when the law, where any is imprisoned, is satisfied, he is in justice bound to order the discharge, and pronounce in open court the acquittal of the prisoner.

(3.) This act of the Father in raising him was with respect to this work of reconciliation, and the accomplishment of all the fruits of it.

[1.] For the justification of every believer. As the same authority which had delivered him to death raised him from the grave, so in pursuance of the same ends for which he was delivered, he was 'delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,' Romans 4:24-25. It is declared as an encouragement to believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; which argument would have no validity in it to incite the soul to faith in God, if those ends there spoken of were not actually aimed at in those acts of his. The Father, who was the author of both, had the same ends in both those acts; they were the acts of the Father, and therefore the ends of the Father. Though his death was the foundation of his merit, yet his resurrection is the foundation of the application of that merit to all his seed. At this door comes in our justification. As God, in delivering him up to undergo the curse of the law, delivered us in him, and looked upon believers as suffering in him the punishment due to sin, so in raising him he virtually raised them in him, and fundamentally comprehended them in that discharge. His resurrection was not meritorious of our

justification, that was the fruit of his death; he paid by his death what was due for our sins, and began to receive at his resurrection what was due for his sufferings; by compact he suffered for us, and by compact he was raised for us. As the expiation of our offences depended upon the death of our surety, so the justification of our persons depended upon the discharge of our surety; and to that end he was raised up by God to be a standing foundation of and encouragement to our faith, to believe the promises of God, and grow up into hope of the enjoyment of them: 1 Peter 1:21, 'God raised him up from the dead, that your faith and hope might be in God.'

[2.] For the regeneration of the seed promised him. This depends upon his resurrection, and was the aim of God in it: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' As the resurrection of Christ was as the Father's new begetting of him to be the Son of God, so in regard that he rose as a common person, his resurrection was a new begetting all his elect to be the sons of God. Herein was the foundation of their regeneration, as well as of their justification, settled. He was 'taken from prison and from judgment,' and then it follows, 'who shall declare his generation?' Isaiah 53:8. For by the resurrection of Christ, God having declared himself pacified, has opened all the treasures of his grace to Christ for the framing a new generation in the world to serve him, without which merit of the suffering, and discharge thereupon, there could not have been a unite of grace given out of God's treasury for the renewal of the image of God in any one person. The spiritual resurrection of any one soul is as much the effect of this resurrection of Christ, as the resurrection of bodies shall be at the last day. That power which does raise any soul from a death in sin, would never have wrought in any heart without this antecedent to it, it would have wanted the foundation of satisfaction, for God only sanctifies as n God of peace. And therefore the power which was exerted for the raising of Christ from the grave was put forth as a power to work in the hearts of all his seed. As the subject of this resurrection was not a private person, but a public representative, as God acted in it in a public manner as the governor and creditor, so the poser whereby he raised him was, as I may call it, a public power, a pattern of what was to be spiritually wrought in the hearts of all those whose debts he paid and for whom the payment was accepted by God. His working in all believers is but 'according to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,' Ephesians 1:20. It was also a pattern of that power which should be employed for doing all works necessary in the hearts of those that believe. It is the fountain from whence all spiritual life streams don n to us; by this God put into him the spring of the Spirit of life to flow out upon all his seed.

[3.] For to give us the highest security for all new covenant mercies. This security was intended by God in the very act of raising him. 'For as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David,' Acts 13:34. This was in the thoughts of God when he put forth his hand to the raising of him. There can be no greater security than the fulfilling of the promises made, which the apostle there places in the resurrection of Christ, 'For,' says he, 'we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promised made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again,' Acts 13:32-33. What promise was that which was thus fulfilled? It was the promise of 'an everlasting covenant,' Isaiah 55:3. Whence this is cited, that grand promise that God made to Adam, and in him to all his posterity, was fulfilled in this act of raising Christ; it being a declaration

of the bruising the serpent's head, the author of all the enmity between God and man, by the seed of the woman. The promises also of blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham, and the bringing in an everlasting righteousness, were fulfilled. These were but initially performed by the sending Christ and bruising him. But the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, and the truth of God, did all shine forth in their fullest beams, in the raising him from the dead, which was the top-stone of our reconciliation, as his death had been the corner-stone and foundation. The certain enjoyment of all the blessings of the new covenant is insured to us by this act of God, and so intended by him in the act itself; this giving and dispensing of the sure mercies of David, i. e. the making all the mercies which this our David had purchased by his sacrifice, and had been promised to him in the first agreement, sure and settled for ever.

Use. How strong a ground is here for our faith and comfort! When our Saviour was upon the cross, there was a black cloud of wrath between God and him, the heavens were dusky, the face of God veiled; but in his resurrection the heaven looked clear, the wrath of God was pacified. It left its sting in our Saviour's side. Christ therefore after his resurrection salutes his apostles with peace: John 20:21, 'And Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father has sent me, so send I you;' which seems to be more than an ordinary salutation, since it is attended with a special commission, the fruit of his reconciling death. Peace dawned at his birth, but was not in its meridian till his resurrection. Thereby he was cleared to all the world, and eased of the burden of men's sins, which bowed down his head upon the cross. Had not God been a God of peace, i. e. fully reconciled by his death, he had not brought him again from the dead, but suffered him to have lain there: Hebrews 13:20, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.' Would we be perfect in every good work? Would we do the will of God? Would we have everything well-pleasing in his sight wrought in us? Then we should go to him as a God of peace, as a God lifting up Christ from the grave, that he might with honour to all his attributes work such excellent things in the hearts of all that believe in him, and act faith upon this act of God's power, righteousness, and truth, in the raising the great Shepherd of our souls. He delights now to be called the God of peace, and by this act has laid aside what was terrible to us in the consideration of a judge for the breach of his law. Why may we not hope to attain whatsoever is needful at his hands, since he has clothed himself with a new title? And it is to be observed that the apostle says, God 'brought him again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.' He entered into prison as our surety, and paying the price, was delivered by that payment; and freeing himself by that payment from any more satisfaction, he frees all those that are his members; so that the blood of Christ will have the same virtue for those that it has for himself. God manifested it to be the blood of the everlasting covenant, a blood sufficient to establish the everlasting covenant upon, by this deliverance of him. God has no more to lay to his charge, all bonds are cancelled, all actions against him fully answered; he rose not only by his own power and right, but by his Father's warrant, whereby God owned himself his Father, and in him our Father, upon which account he tells Mary, John 20:17, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.' This resurrection is the testimony, God is become your Father as well as mine, the enmity is abolished, you stand in a relation to God, and I ascend to him as your Father as well as mine, to take possession from his hands of the inheritance I have purchased for you.

8. God glorified Christ, and so was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, fully establishing this reconciliation wrought by him. All power was promised to him: Psalms 2:8, 'I will give thee the

heathen for shine inheritance.' It was performed: Matthew 28:18, 'All power is given me.' His resurrection had not attained its full end and perfection, had he not been exalted to a glorious government; it was for this end, *dia touto*, that he died, that 'he rose again and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living.' He died to purchase it, he rose to possess it, and lives for ever to manage it. He was exalted for the honour of God and the happiness of believers, as Joseph the type was advanced to manage things for the interest of the crown and the good of the people.

First, We must premise these two things: there is a double glory and dominion of Christ.

(1.) Essential, as God, which was communicated to him in the communication of his essence; for being God from eternity, he had all the prerogatives of God.

(2.) Mediatory, which was by an agreement between them to be bestowed upon him upon the accomplishment of his work in the world. He had a right to this by the donation of his Father at his conception, for he was made Lord when he was made Christ: Acts 2:36, 'Know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' But he had not his actual investiture and full settlement in it till after his resurrection, because his reconciling death was to precede his entrance into glory, where he was to reside for the management of this power. In this respect he is called the heir of all things: Hebrews 1:2, 'Whom he has appointed heir of all things;' which inheritance is not meant of his essential dominion, for so he is not appointed but begotten heir. He might then be said to be constituted God as well as heir, which would be an improper speech, like the Socinian's *Deus factus*. What is natural, cannot be said to be by constitution; the one is voluntary, the other necessary. He is appointed heir, as he was appointed mediator, Hebrews 3:2. He was mediator by a voluntary designation, he was heir by a voluntary donation, and all judgment was committed to him by a voluntary deputation, but he was a Son by a natural generation. Again, an heir succeeds in the place of another; so Christ as mediator succeeds in the place of his Father, in regard of government, as his delegate and deputy; but what the Son has from the Father as God, he has not as his deputy, but by an essential, natural, and eternal communication. So that these two differ.

(1.) The one belongs to his essence as God, the other to his office as mediator.

(2.) The essential is by nature, the mediatory is conferred as a reward of his humiliation and expiation of sin: Php 2:8-9, 'Wherefore God has highly exalted him,' viz. because of his obedience to death. The one belonged to him without suffering, but his suffering death for us was the moral cause of his exaltation. Since the heavenly sanctuary was shut against us, the expiation of our crimes must precede his entrance into it, and possession of it.

(3.) The essential is an absolute sovereignty, the mediatory is delegated. For it is a judgment committed to him by the Father, John 5:22. In the first he is one with the Father, in the other he is the Father's substitute and deputy; his Father's lord-lieutenant in the world according to a derived authority.

(4.) The essential is wholly free, it has no obligation upon it; the mediatory has a charge annexed to it. It is a dominion with rules, and given him as a means to bring believers to salvation, which is part of the work belonging to the charge of mediator, John 17:42. He has this power given him by the Father, 'that he should give eternal life to all that God has given him.'

(5.) The essential is necessary: he cannot possibly be God without an infinite glory and dominion. The other, though due by the covenant, yet is a free gift: Php 2:9, 'God has given him a name which is above every name,' *icarisato*. Not that God, who is infinite goodness and holiness, would ever let such an exquisite holiness and affection to his glory, which Christ discovered in the whole course of his obedience, pass without a rewarding and crowning it with the greatest glory in his treasury (it being an obedience superior to that of all the angels, it required a recompense superior to all their glory), yet that high exaltation is a free gift.

[1.] In regard that the whole economy, the mission of Christ and his incarnation, is a free gift of God to us; and in his exaltation he is considered as appearing for us, and receiving from the Father those treasures which were to be dispensed to us, and that power and dominion which was to be employed for us.

[2.] Because as it was the free gift of God to unite our flesh to the deity of the second person, it was also an act of free grace to continue the manifestation of the glory of the divinity in the same flesh.

[3.] Because the death he suffered, and the conquest he gained thereby, being by the powerful assistance of the Father, according to those promises of assistance made to him, his glory may be well said to be a free gift from the Father.

[4.] Because given without constraint, with a free pleasure, though upon a valuable consideration.

(6.) The essential is eternal, without beginning and end; the mediatory has a beginning after his death and resurrection, and shall have an end. When all the seed are brought in and perfected, all enemies subdued and conquered, (Christ shall resign his commission and his people, for whose sake he was commissioned and deputed to this government, unto his Father, 1 Corinthians 15:24, when he shall still reign with his Father in the glory of the Deity. The Father lays aside his immediate government, that Christ may- be all in all; at last Christ shall resign the government to the Father, that God may be all in all, and delight immediately in his people, when they shall be fully perfected, and free from sin. The power, in regard of the particular ends for which it was conferred on Christ, ceases when those ends cease; but what belongs of right to him AS God, or what was given him by covenant as a reward for his obedience, will endure as long as the humanity remains united to the divinity.

Secondly, This is to be considered, that it was the person of Christ which was exalted by the Father. The subject of this power is the person of Christ, and the execution of this power is by the person of Christ.

1. His divine nature was exalted and glorified in regard of its manifestation. The Father would manifest that the Redeemer of the world was God blessed for ever, above angels or men. His deity in the time of his humiliation was incapable of any change, and therefore neither did nor could receive any detriment in its nature and essential perfections. It could not be subject to infirmities, or fall under the strokes of death; yet the Son of God emptied himself in taking upon him the form of a servant, and veiled that deity which dwelt bodily in him by the flesh he took, and suffered reproaches and indignities from men, and masked the glory of it by human infirmities; but in his resurrection and ascension, the deity did gloriously spring out of that obscurity, and brake out from under the cloud of his humanity in a glorious lustre, which before had discovered itself in

some few sparklings; he was now 'clothed with a gesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God,' Revelation 19:13; i.e. he was manifested to be the Word of God after and upon the account of his death.

2. His human nature was exalted and glorified by a new acquisition and addition of perfections of glory, which had been never conferred upon any man or angel. That was really delivered from all that suffering and debasement it had been subject to before in the days of his flesh, and was drawn up into a great and glorious condition, and endowed with gifts above all creatures in heaven and earth, and received a new royalty and power of ruling; and as the Mediator had performed a new work in dying, so he received a new glory in his exaltation. Thus the person of Christ, and each nature, may be said to be glorified in a distinct sense: the divine, in the manifestation of it, from that obscurity wherein it had been disguised; the human, in the reception of that which it had not before possessed. This was fully conferred on him at his ascension, and sitting down at the right hand of God; whereas before the name of a servant was written upon him, the fashion of his vesture being changed, there was a new name writ upon him, King of kings, and Lord of lords, Revelation 19:16.

These things premised.

1. The exaltation and power of Christ is everywhere ascribed to the Father. It was his promise: Psalms 89:27, 'I will make him higher than the kings of the earth.' Several monarchies overtopped the Jewish kingdoms throughout the whole duration of that state. He bruised him as he was the rector and judge of the world, to whom belonged the right of punishment; he advanced him as the supreme governor and fountain of all honour; and thus he was in Christ ordering the application, and insuring reconciliation to us upon the conditions in his word.

(I.) In regard of donation. It is a gift from the Ancient of days, Daniel 7:14. God anointed him to this office as well as to the rest. He sets him in the highest place next to himself, at his right hand: Psalms 110:1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord;' ógives him all the ensigns of authority, a crown in the day of his espousals, an everlasting throne, a sceptre of righteousness: Hebrews 1:8, 'But unto the Son he says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;' a sword in his mouth, the keys of life and death, all royal prerogatives; subjects all the angels to him, to receive commissions from him, and be at his service; they are now the eyes and horns of the Lamb, ministers and instruments of his jurisdiction. He 'committed all judgment to his Son,' John 5:22; not only a power of judging or sentencing, but a power of governing and conducting all things. In regard of the power he received, he is said to sit down, Luke 12:69, 'at the right hand of the power of God.' In regard of the authority invested in him, he is said to sit down at 'the right hand of the throne of God;' in regard of the glory conferred upon him, he is said to sit down 'at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,' Hebrews 8:1. His royal power to manage it, and the glory attending it, being all the gifts of God to him, and that not in a way of common providence, whereby other kings reign, but by a peculiar deputation and special decree, in a mighty affection, whereby he does as it were take him by the hand and set him upon his throne, Psalms 110:1, 'Sit thou at my right hand,' óand peculiarly calls him his King, Psalms 2:6; makes him higher than the heavens, gives him by inheritance a more excellent name than all the angels; all which are peculiarly the acts of God towards him, Hebrews 1:8, 18, the special orders of God concerning him.

(2.) In regard of fitness for this government. 'The Spirit of counsel and might' did rest upon him for the exercise of this government, as well as for his other transactions in the world; that he might 'reprove with equity,' 'smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips slay the wicked,' Isaiah 11:4; righteousness was to be the 'girdle of his loins,' and 'faithfulness the girdle of his reins.' This was his excellency, conferred upon him as King of the church; he had seven horns, a full power, and seven eyes, a perfect wisdom, for the management of the government, Revelation 5:6. He had need of the highest fitness, because this government upon his shoulders was a charge incumbent upon him above what all the angels in heaven were entrusted with. He has a spirit of wisdom to guide the church, a spirit of power to defend it, a spirit of faithfulness to take care of it, a spirit of compassion to pity it, and inexhaustible fullness to impart unto his people in all their necessities, able to fill the cistern, the church, and every private bucket. He was not without power to rescue those out of the hands of the devil by conquest, whom he had redeemed from the wrath of God by his death. He had full power given him to force the jailer, after he had contented the creditor; God fitted him with wisdom against the wiles of Satan, and might against this power.

(3.) In regard of defence and protection in it. He has the whole power of the Godhead to defend him in it, he sits at his right hand. The right hand is a place of honour, and the right hand of a great king is a place of security. Though Christ has a power to subdue his enemies, yet the Father is said to make his enemies his footstool. Putting forth his power, to show in the punishment of his enemies the high acceptance of his person and passion, that he will with his own hands bring down all that concur not with him in giving honour to his Son. The power which is essential to the Deity, is promised to be employed for the subduing his enemies under his sceptre and under his feet: Psalms 110:1, 'Till I make thy enemies thy footstool.' As he did bring him to his throne in spite of all opposition, so he will establish it against the storms and powers of hell. He set him upon the throne with a mighty zeal for his honour, and indignation against his opposers: 'Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Sion,' Psalms 2:5-6, notwithstanding all their counsels against him and resolutions to cast his cords from them. So the increase of his government and peace, the ordering of it, the stability of it with judgment and justice, and the perpetuity of it, are settled, protected, and assured by the same zeal that placed him in it: Isaiah 9:7, 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this,' i. e. that vehement love which he has both to the honour of Christ and the eternal peace and security of his seed. The power of God first lifted him to his throne, and the same omnipotence will keep it from being shaken by the powers of darkness. And the Redeemer was still to exercise faith in God as his Father, as his God, the rock of his salvation, even when he had 'set his hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers', Psalms 89:25-26. Then God does promise to 'beat down his foes before his lance, and plague them that hate him,' and 'his seed' he would make to 'endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven,' Psalms 89:23, Psalms 89:29.

2. The Father did this upon the account of his death, and to show his high valuation of it, and that reconciliation he wrought by it.

(1.) This exaltation and dominion was upon the account of his reconciling death. His sufferings were the way to his crown; he first surrendered himself as our surety to the justice of God, before God surrendered his power to the management of Christ for the good of man: 'He died and rose again and revived, that he might be Lord of the living and the dead,' Romans 14:9; he obtained a

new state of life, not to die again, as Lazarus; and he was not raised barely to a life, but to a royal and princely life, to have an extensive dominion over all, the foundation whereof was laid in his death. God 'lifted up his head,' because he did 'drink of the brook in the way,' Psalms 110:7, and it was as he was a lamb that had been slain as a sacrifice, that he had both his power and his wisdom, Revelation 5:6.

[1.] The exercise of his dominion before his incarnation, did in order of nature presuppose his death. Though he exercised a power in the world before his incarnation, yet it was exercised by him as a constituted mediator; and his assumption of a mortal body, and offering it up to death, was the condition required at the first constitution of him as mediator, as a reparation of the honour of God, which had been violated in the disorder of his first form of government by the entrance of sin. As soon as ever man fell the government of the world devolved into the hands of Christ by virtue of the covenant between the Father and himself. When sin had undermined the pillars of the world, they would have fallen had he not given a new consistency to them, Colossians 1:17, and 'upheld all things by the word of his power,' Hebrews 1:3, and 'established the earth,' Isaiah 49:8, which else would have been overthrown by justice as well as the angels. Had not the government of the world been put into the hands of Christ, and a covenant of grace been erected, the world had been destroyed; the holiness of God would not have endured the sinfulness of it, and the justice of God could not have endured the standing of it according to the covenant of works. And this government was not put into the hands of the mediator, but upon a supposition of his death. What reason have we to think God should constitute a new mode of government without a reparation of his honour in the first? 'The government was upon his shoulders' when he was first given to us as a Son, Isaiah 9:6. He was given to us in promise before he was given to us in the flesh; and in that first promise wherein his power is ensured to him for us, viz. the bruising the serpent's head, his death is supposed by the serpent's bruising his heel, Genesis 3:15. He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and it was upon this presupposed oblation that the world had its standing, that any had grace bestowed upon them, and found acceptance with God. If the great end of the government he is since his death invested with, was performed by him before his incarnation, viz. the salvation of souls, yet with respect to his future death, then the government also, which was but a means in order to this, was conditionally conferred upon him. As believers were saved before his coming, so the world was governed by him, because he was to die. Hence he was the angel of the Lord in delivering his church; the captain of the Lord's hosts in fighting their battles, Joshua 5:14; the guardian of the church, and an advocate for them in their distresses, Zechariah 1:8, Zechariah 1:12, and attended upon his throne with all the angels as messengers to perform his will, Isaiah 6:1-2, which, in the evangelist's interpretation, was the Lord Jesus, whose glory Isaiah saw, John 12:41, when the seraphims celebrated his glory in the earth: it was he, the foundation of whose glory was laid in the earth, in the redemption of the sons of men. They are silent of that glory God has in the vast heavens, and speak only of his glory in the small point of earth, which relates to that of his mediation, wherein the establishing the earth and reducing it to a due order was the main concern.

[2.] He was absolutely confirmed in it upon his death. There was a confirmation of it in the first instant of his conception, for he was made Lord when he was made Christ; at his birth he was proclaimed by the angels a Lord as well as a Saviour, Luke 2:11, but his full investiture was after his death, upon his ascension, when seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. David had an

authority conferred upon him at his anointing, but was not fully inaugurated till his coronation at Hebron. So after the Redeemer had finished his ministerial work, God did fix him in his royal dignity to exercise his power, not only in the divine nature, as he had done before, but also in his human nature assumed by it. There was an 'anointing' of him after his 'bringing in everlasting righteousness' by his death, and 'making reconciliation for iniquity, making an end of sin, and sealing up the vision and prophecy' which centred in him; then was the most holy to be anointed and have his solemn investiture, Daniel 9:24. Because of that illustrious holiness he had manifested in the whole course of his humiliation, and that signal obedience upon the cross, he then was settled an high priest for ever, which he exercises by himself; a prophet of his church, which he exercises by his Spirit; an everlasting king, which he manages partly by his Spirit, partly by himself. Thus our Noah was brought out of the ark after the suffering, the terror of a deluge, to be the father of a second world, and as Isaac was raised up, after he had appeared as a victim under his father's sword, to be the father of many nations, he was to be Shiloh, a peacemaker, before the gathering of the nations under his sceptre, Genesis 49:10; and the Son of man, before he was to have a 'dominion that should not pass away,' Daniel 7:13-14. As God brought him again from the dead, 'through the blood of the everlasting covenant,' he raised him because his blood was a covenant blood, Hebrews 13:20, so by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, Hebrews 9:12. But it was not only after his death, but because it was a death for man voluntarily submitted unto. The conquests made by him in the world, his having a 'portion divided with the great, and the spoil with the strong,' was 'because he poured out his soul to death, made intercession for the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, Isaiah 53:12. It was upon this score of purging and expiating our sins by himself that he 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,' Hebrews 1:3. He expiated sin by the oblation of himself, not as other high priests, by the blood of animals. If any creature had been offered by him, though held in the highest rank in the creation, the priest had been infinite, but the sacrifice had been finite. But it was himself which he offered, a finite, human nature, in conjunction with an infinite person, and that for the atonement of our iniquity; for which infinite obedience, and infinite charity, God rewarded him with an infinite exaltation. It was his own blood which procured his admission into the holy place, and he was crowned because he had combated with the curses of the law and enemies of our peace, and conquered them for us.

There are two things requisite to the exercise of this power and dominion: the knowledge of God's decrees, and authority over the chief ministers in the execution of them; both which Christ has upon the account of his redeeming death.

First, The knowledge of God's decrees. God gave to him the knowledge of his decrees concerning his people, Revelation 1:1. No man on the earth or angel in heaven was found worthy to open the book, i.e. to be acquainted with the contents thereof, nor to unloose the seals, to dive into the depth and mysteries of his counsels and providence, but only the lion of the tribe of Judah. But it was by virtue of his death ins he was the lamb slain, the antitype of the legal lambs sacrificed) that he took the book and opened it, Revelation 5:6-7. The prevalence of his death with his Father was the cause of the knowledge of all the secrets of his will. As he was the lion of the tribe of Judah' and the root of David, as he had taken human nature according to the will of his Father, and suffered in it, he prevailed to open the book and unloose the seals thereof, Revelation 5:5, that they should not be concealed from him who was the head of the reconciled world. When the

justice of God was appeased by the prevailing death of Christ, he gives forth willingly whatsoever may conduce to the salvation of his people; and in order to this, there was a necessity Christ should understand his secrets. How else could he be an executor of all the counsels of God? This revelation is to him as mediator in his human nature, as appointed king by God, which is distinct from that knowledge he had as God, as his mediatory kingdom was distinct from that essential kingdom he had as God. As that was a delegated power, so this is a revealed knowledge; and both one and the other he had, as he was the lamb of God taking away the sins of the world.

Secondly, Authority over the chief ministers employed in the execution of his will. 'Things in heaven' must bow down to him, Php 2:10; 'all power in heaven, as well as earth, was given him,' Matthew 28:18, and nothing was exempt from his jurisdiction but only the Father, who did put all things under him, 1 Corinthians 15:27. The innumerable company of angels, which are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and mount Zion, the seat of his royalty, Hebrews 12:22, are under his sceptre. His sitting on the right hand of God (as was said) was because he purged our sins by himself, and whatsoever did accrue to him by virtue of this session was upon the same foundation with the session itself. Part of that dominion accruing to him, as sitting at the right hand of God, was the power over angels (1 Peter 3:22, 'Who is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him', who had authority and power from God in the administration of his providence either among other angels or among men; they were subjected to him, i. e. by his Father. He was passive in it, and had it conferred upon him as part of his mediatory glory. As God, he did himself subject the angels to him. Thus, as an honour for the oblation of himself, were they all marshalled under the power of Christ by the Father, who had power to dispose of his creatures under the reins of what government he pleased. And the most excellent orders of them were not exempt from this subjection, but every person to whom God had granted a principality, power, might, and dominion, either in this world or that which is to come, was brought under his sceptre, to be serviceable to him in the execution of those designs he had for the church, which he had reconciled to God by his blood: Ephesians 1:21, 'Far above all principality and power;' not only anw, but uperanw, exceedingly above in excellency of dignity and largeness of authority; whence they are called his angels, Revelation 1:1, and fellow-servants of 'those that have the testimony of Jesus,' Revelation 19:20, and therefore servants to Christ as mediator. And as a testimony of this subjection of them, God sent all his angels to wait upon him at his triumphant reception, as his chariots to convey the human nature of Christ to heaven, and to welcome him after his victory, Psalms 68:17. He was 'among them as in Sinai,' when he came down to give the law; he was commander of them, and gave them directions in that affair. This is spoken with respect to his ascension, as it follows, Psalms 68:18, 'Thou hast ascended on high;' they attended him to his throne and waited upon him, to be employed in the execution of his royal edicts. Now, this adoration which the angels are commanded to render him was because he had expiated sin, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:6. Their waiting round about his throne to attend his pleasure, and the joyful acclamations they shout forth in his praise, is because he was the lamb slain, the reconciling sacrifice, whereby God and man were brought together, Revelation 5:11-12.

[3.] It was very fit and congruous that he should have this glory. This was the agreement between the Father and the Son before he set foot out of heaven. He had glorified God, had given him a foundation by his submission to the sharpness of his mediatory work, to display his wisdom in the highest glory, his justice in the deepest severity, his mercy with the clearest lustre, his veracity in

the firmest stability. Without his undertaking this, none of those attributes could have appeared in such glory upon any other foundation; they could never have been thus manifested by any creature, or the undertaking of the whole creation. As he therefore glorified the Father more than all creatures could glorify him, so it was fit he should have a glory transcendentally above them. As he had improved his talents above them, so he should be possessed with a rule above them. Without this power he could not have conducted those whom he had purchased to a blessed eternity. It was very reasonable, that as the Father had by him done the hardest work, viz., the expiating sin, he should also by him work the full accomplishment of it. It was congruous that things should be given into the hands of the Redeemer to manage, who had purchased them all by a price so valuable as that of his death. If he died to purchase them, it was fit he should have authority to perfect them. He, being a divine sacrifice, was of infinite price, and as his sufferings surpassed the punishments of all creatures, so the value of his sacrifice exceeded the riches of the whole creation, both of heaven and earth, angels or men. He had not had a reward commensurate to the value of his death, had not a dominion been added to him as mediator, beside that of his deity, which was his by nature, and could not fall within the compass of a purchase, since he never was nor could be dispossessed of it. It was but reason the angels should be subjected to him, who had been preserved and confirmed by him; for God hath in him 'gathered together things in heaven as well as things in earth, Ephesians 1:10' which collection would have signified little, unless by it they had been wrapped up into a permanent state, and a full assurance from any danger of apostasy from God and a fall into misery, as some of their fellows had done. It was very convenient that they who had received so great a benefit by him should be subject to him, that they who had been gathered under his wing should be as well under his sceptre. Besides, as he had discovered himself faithful to death against some reluctance of human nature, he should have an opportunity to discover himself faithful in the other parts which concerned the honour of God; he that was faithful to him under the curse of the law would not be unfaithful to him under the blessing of deliverance. And very fit at last that he that was the innocent sufferer should be the judge of his guilty enemies, and condemn the great head of that enmity which was the occasion of his conflict with his Father's wrath, to remove it out of the way. As he, being rich in the deity and in the form of God, became poor in his humanity and in the form of a servant, eclipsing thereby the glory of his Godhead, it was fit he should reassume his former state as the heir of all things, and exercise that power in his humanity which he had a right unto in his deity.

[4.] This power was conferred upon him for the application and perfection of the fruits of reconciliation. This power and dominion is given to him for the advantage and full growth of his seed. When his people shall be perfected and his enemies subdued, the government devolves wholly to his Father, there being no longer any occasion for the exercise of his mediatory dominion. If it were conferred upon him only for himself, the power would not cease as long as his person endures; but the cessation of it upon the accomplishment of such effects evidences that those effects were the end for which it was first conferred. It is upon this score the Scripture places the extent of his dominion, Ephesians 1:22. He, i. e. the Father, has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, for the church's welfare, for the good of the subjects as well as the glory of his empire. He is the King of saints, to rule them by his grace; and the King of nations, to rule them by his providence. He is set to reign in Zion, the hill of holiness, Psalms 2:6, as the centre of all the power and wisdom of his government, as the chief city of a prince partakes most of the fruits of his valour in conquering, and his wisdom in ruling. As

his prophetic office is not to cease till instruction be swallowed up in vision, nor his priestly till his intercession be succeeded by immediate communion, so neither his kingly till there be a total cessation from all danger, and not an enemy left to disturb their peace.

First, For the bestowing gifts on men for the publishing this reconciliation. He received gifts at his triumph, that he might, as a royal steward of his Father, distribute them for the good of those that had been rebels to the government of God, to fit them for the great fruit of this peace, viz., a communion between God and them, 'that the Lord God might dwell among them,' Psalms 68:18; Ephesians 4:8, Ephesians 4:11-13. These gifts come from God as a God of salvation, as the doxology infers, Psalms 68:10, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation.' The intent whereof was to wound the head of the enemy Satan, who had been the first makebait: Psalms 68:21, 'God shall wound the head of his enemy.' The Spirit was not therefore given in that eminency and fullness of gifts and graces till the glorification of Christ, wherein he absolutely received the keys of all the treasures of his Father, as well as the keys of hell and death: John 7:39, 'The Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' The giving the Spirit depended on the glorification of him as Jesus, a Saviour. God would receive those gifts for the triumphal coronation of his Son as an evidence of the peace which was made by him, by the effusion of the richest treasures of God. The Spirit was in the world before, as light was upon the face of the creation the three first days, but not SO glorious, sparkling, and darting out full beams till the fourth day, the day of the creation of the sun, and fixing it in the heavens; so was the rich beaming forth of light, when after four thousand years, the fourth divine day, the Sun of righteousness was seated in the heavens to disperse his beams. The first edict he gave out after the receipt of his power, was the commission for preaching the gospel: Matthew 28:18-19, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; Go therefore and teach all nations.' It was the intention of his Father that he should dispose of his power for this end; for he who did all things according to his Father's will would not use his power in the least, but for those ends for which it was conferred upon him.

Secondly, For the inviting of men to an acceptance of him. As the most beneficial commands that ever he gave, so the most condescending affections he ever discovered, the most gracious invitations that ever he made, were at those times where he had a sense of this power in a more peculiar manner, to show the proper intendment of it, and to what ends he was to manage it. The grant of this power is the foundation of that invitation he makes to weary souls, Matthew 11:27, 'All things are delivered to me of my Father;' the inference is, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour;' and his governing them as a leader and commander to the people is the encouragement God uses to men to accept of that rich and liberal invitation of coming to the waters and buying wine and milk without money and without price, Isaiah 55:1, Isaiah 55:4. God exalted him to all his power, to enable him to make the most gracious offers to men, and encourage their acceptance of him, as himself intimates in that fore-mentioned Matthew 11:27, that the delivery of all his treasures to him was to make a revelation of his Father to the sons of men.

Thirdly, For the preserving the reconciliation for ever firm. As there is an increase of his government, so there is an increase of his peace: Isaiah 9:7, 'Of the increase of his government and peace there is no end.' His government, and the peace he purchased, go hand in hand; as his glory rises to the meridian, so does the reconciliation. He therefore went to heaven to purify the heavenly things themselves with his sacrifice, Hebrews 9:23, i. e. (say some) heaven itself, which

in some sense was polluted by the stench of our sins coming up into the presence of God, into which Christ as the high priest entered with his blood, to settle the sweet savour of that before God, instead of the loathsome savour of our sins which had offended his majesty. But howsoever, this exaltation was that he might 'appear in the presence of God for us,' Hebrews 9:24, and preserve by his intercession what he had wrought by his passion. He has therefore his head encircled with a rainbow, Revelation 10:1, to evidence the perfection of the peace he had made, and the establishment of the security in heaven, against the opening any more the flood-gates of wrath for an overflowing deluge.

Fourthly, For the subduing his and our enemies. He is to continue in the exercise of this power, 'till all the enemies be put under his feet,' 1 Corinthians 15:25. All the enemies, all the enemies to him as God, all the enemies to him as mediator, all the enemies to the great design of his mediation, all the enemies to him in that state and condition wherein he sits at the right hand of God, which is as mediator, and therefore whatsoever is contrary to his mediation and the intendment of it, all those enemies to his members which would hinder their arrival at happiness, and their blessed conjunction with their head, are to be destroyed. And those are, First, Sin, which has 'reigned unto death,' Romans 5:21.

Secondly, Satan, who as a prince has reigned in the world, and kept up sin in its vigour, John 12:31.

Thirdly, Death, the last enemy, which has reigned from Adam to Moses,, Romans 5:14, and will reign to the end of the world, 1 Corinthians 15:26. Whatsoever sets itself in contrariety to the happiness of believers, is an enemy to the design of Christ, and is to be put under his feet, as one end of the authority granted to him. All the powers of hell must be crushed, all the fortifications of the devil must be demolished, and himself despoiled of all arms. This was necessary, that his kingdom should extend over the devils, to repress them, if it did extend over his subjects to secure them; these could not be advanced by his mercy, if the others did not sink under his power.

Fifthly, For the perfect salvation of his seed. His exaltation was for the perfection and perpetuity of salvation; the apostle's inference else would have no validity: Romans 8:34, 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' But the apostle sets forth the eternal knot between him and believers, upon his session at the right hand of God, with a rather. God 'exalted him to be a prince and a Saviour,' Acts 5:31. A princely Saviour, to bestow the royal gifts of repentance and forgiveness of sins. As he appointed Christ to give it, so he has appointed men to attain it by him, and from him, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. As he merited salvation by his death, he might perfect it by his life, Romans 5:10. That as his death was by the ordination of God to purchase a seed, so his exaltation was, by the like designation, for a full sanctification of this seed, that he might at last behold them in their perfect glory; and therefore that he thought his proper work, upon a sense of it in his soul, when he considered his divine original, and his approaching glory, when yet it was not absolutely conferred upon him, John 13:3-4, he will think his work when he is in full possession of it, viz., the full sanctification of his people, the washing their souls, which was symbolically signified by the washing their feet. What seems to be the end of that present sense, will much more be the end and issue of his enjoyment. As he was humbled to save them, so he was exalted to perfect them; and since he was made sin for us in his death, he is in his

advancement made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, a full treasury to supply all our necessities, that as he was the author, so he might be the finisher of our faith. If God delivered to him the full contents of his will because he was a lamb slain, it must be in order to carry on that work for which he was slain, to perfect an eternal amity between God and them, that there might be an eternal rejoicing in one another, The mediator being to reign till the whole church be brought to heaven, the intendment therefore of his heavenly royalty is the perfection of them in a heavenly glory; that as in his humiliation he Divas the way of our access, as by his spirit he was the discoverer of the truth, so by his life he might be the perfecter of our happiness: John 14:6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' As he glorified his Father on the earth by a full satisfaction of his justice, so his Father glorified him in heaven, to make a full application of his merits, John 17:1-2.

[5.] By this the Father testifies the highest acceptance of his person, and the sufficiency of his death. John 3:35, 'The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hands.' His coronation testifies the acceptation of his person, and it being after his death, testifies the acceptation of his passion; as Pharaoh's elevating Joseph from a prison, to the highest dignity in Egypt, next to that of the sovereign, was a testimony of that king's high admiration of Joseph's wisdom. This acceptance is testified by two things: the manner of his reception and settlement; the nature of his power.

First, The manner of his reception and settlement. It was with an infinitely pleased countenance, and all the marks of joy in the soul of God, which rejoiced him more than the crown of pure gold set upon his head, or the length of days for ever and ever granted to him. The psalmist places all the joy of Christ upon his ascension in this: Psalms 21:3-6, 'Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance,' "tekhadehu besimkhah", thou hast made him glad with joy. One frown in the face of God would have damped all the joy of Christ. The psalm was anciently understood of the ascension and glory of Christ, and Ainsworth makes a pretty observation of the word rejoice, "yishmakh", by transposition to be "mashiakh", Messiah. If there be joy in heaven at the return of sinners, how great was the joy of God at the return of the Saviour of them, after the performing unto God so eminent a service! How heartily did the Father take him in his arms! How straitly did he embrace him! How magnificently did he fix him in a throne of immortality and advocacy! And when he did thus constitute him his king upon his holy hill, he established his throne and perpetuity of his kingdom by an oath: Psalms 89:35-36, 'Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David: his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.' What men are mightily pleased with, they confirm under the highest obligations. As when the daughter of Herodias pleased Herod, he confirms by an oath the grant he had made of whatsoever she should ask him, Mark 6:22-23. And the solemnity at Christ's entrance into heaven, and sitting upon his throne, lasted ten days before the sending of the Spirit as the first fruits of his purchase.

Secondly, The nature of that glory and power invested in him. It is not in the orbs of the planets, or the starry heaven, where Christ has taken up his residence, but he is mounted above all the visible heavens: Ephesians 4:10, 'Far above all heavens;' uperanw, not anw, exceedingly above the heavens, into the holy of holies, the habitation of the glorious majesty of God; a place of purity for a pure Redeemer, a place of glory for a glorious Mediator. And he is seated in his humanity in the highest place of heaven, next the Father, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, yea, 'in the midst of the throne,' Revelation 7:17, an honour never allowed to the highest angels, Hebrews

1:13, which stand before the throne of God, but sit not in the throne with him. The obedience of angels never did, never could, equal the obedience of the Son of God. His empire is of the same extent with his Father's; so highly did his Father value his expiatory offering, that he would not exempt an angel in heaven, nor a devil in hell, nor any creature upon earth from a subjection to him, but poured the whole rule and government into his hands, ordered the same worship to be performed to the Son as to himself, John 5:23, and that in heaven, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 5:13. And for duration, it is for ever and ever; he is to reign as Mediator till all the ends of it be accomplished, and afterwards for ever with the Father in the glory of the Deity, Hebrews 1:3. He is to reign as Mediator in the place of the Father, till the church be perfected, by reducing all enemies to an entire subjection, and then to resign his power to his Father. As the son of a king, sent to reduce rebellious countries to obedience, has a royal commission from his father to act as king, an authority to pardon or punish, till his conquest be finished; so when Christ shall have gained the full victory, he shall cease his mediation, and God shall reign immediately over all, and Christ shall reign with him, not as Mediator, but as God. 'God shall be all in all,' 1 Corinthians 15:28, which is opposed to Christ's interposition or intercession as mediator; there will be no need of God's communicating himself by a mediator but he will immediately shine forth upon them, when the fruits of sin, and sin itself, is abolished in them. But for the Father to resign things to the management of his Son, as the Son had given himself up to the justice of the Father, in a sort to eclipse his own glory for so long a time, as the Son had eclipsed his Deity in his humiliation, and as it were lay by the immediate exercise of his authority of Judging and governing which originally pertains to him, and veil it, to let the beams of it shoot into the world only through this medium, is such a mark of his acceptance, that higher cannot be given. It cannot be conceived how the Father should do more than this, for a testimony of his pleasure in him and his sacrifice. It is impossible the Father should dethrone himself, and therefore anything higher than what he has done cannot be imagined. For though the authority still resides in the Father, and is extant in every act of Christ's government, yet he acts not immediately, receives no addresses immediately to himself, but all in and by his glorified Son. Had he had the least displeasure with him, or found the least blemish in him, he had not lodged the exercise of his power in him.

Use of this head.

First, This exaltation of Christ by the Father is a mighty encouragement to faith in Christ.

1. Hereby we have assurance, that all that Christ spoke and did was agreeable to the will of the Father. This exaltation of Christ will not suffer us to think that anything was left undone by him which he ought to have done. Otherwise the exact justice of God would never have consented to have put the government of all things into his hand; an exact obedience was to precede before a glory was to be conferred. Since therefore this glory is conferred, it is evident his obedience was unblemished. All the world, and the concerns of it, would never have been laid upon his shoulders, had the piercing eye of the Father discerned any fault in it. The infinite wisdom of God would never have entrusted him with so great an affair, if he had not been faithful in the management of what had been before committed to him; because, if he had been unfaithful in one, there was no ground to think he would be faithful in the others. But it is a strong argument that he will be exact in the glorious part of his charge, since he has been exact in the ignominious part of his work. It is upon the account of his being a faithful witness, that he is the 'Prince of the kings of the earth,' Revelation 1:5. It is this argument the Spirit uses to convince the world of righteousness, i. e. the

righteousness of his person, the righteousness of his mediation, that there is a full expiation of sin, because he is entertained and received by the Father, John 16:10.

2. Hereby we have assurances that it is the intent of the Father, that all things should be managed by Christ for the good of those that believe in him. Since he has delivered the book to Christ, containing the secrets of his will, because he was a lamb slain, it is evident that it is the pleasure of the Father, that his government shall be for those ends for which he was slain, and that the book contains the will of God pursuant to the ends of that death. Had that book contained anything contrary to those ends, and to the interest of his people, the Father would not have delivered it into his hands. The end of his exaltation can never cross the end of his passion; nor could the unchangeable love of the Father give him rules for his acting in his government, opposite to those he had designed his humiliation for. Since therefore he was in Christ upon the cross, reconciling the world to himself, he is in Christ upon his throne, pursuing the ends of that reconciliation, and bringing the fruits of it to a glorious maturity by the glorification of the reconciler. How soon were the tears of John dried up, when he looked upon Christ opening the book of God's decrees, and found by the praises of the elders that the world was committed to him, to order all things for the good of the church, Revelation 5:4-5. What encouragement would they else have had to have fallen down, singing the praises of him, and acknowledging him as their Lord and King, and to present to him their golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints? The first homage he receives, after his opening the book, and that as a pleasant odour, is the prayers of believers: Revelation 5:8, 'And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints;' which does evidence their good to be the intendment of the Father in delivering it to him, and that the rules in it were to that purpose, and his own resolution to observe the rules of it.

3. It is to be considered who this person is that is thus exalted, in order to the encouragement of faith. It is the same person, in whose humiliation the Father was reconciling us; our kinsman, by the assumption of our nature, but more by the relation of our faith to him into whose hand this power is put. He is made the steward to dispense his Father's gifts, who knew our indigences and wants of them, and whose tenderness cannot be questioned, since he has had an experience of our infirmities. He that shed his blood to save us, will not spare his power to relieve us. As he had not died but to reconcile us, so he would not have been exalted as a reconciler, but to perfect it by bringing us to the Father: by the one he made way for our access, and by the other for our perfect conjunction. His being quickened by the Spirit, and the glory following thereupon, as well as his being put to death in the flesh, was to 'bring us to God,' 1 Peter 3:18. He had a tenderness as he is the Son of God, partaking of the same nature with his Father; he has a tenderness as our mediator, and clothed with our flesh; he has also an engagement of faithfulness, since all the treasures of heaven are put into his hands, to be expended for those ends for which he died. He is not only administrator of his Father's goods, but guardian of the souls committed to him by his Father, and faithful he is in both.

How may we then cast our souls into this bottom, since the directions he receives from the Father are agreeable to all the former economy? Since, as a lamb slain, he is God's steward to distribute; since both his heart, and the heart of his Father, are so full of love, one in the execution, the other in the acceptance, nothing can be cross to the interest of those for whom the one died and the

other accepted it. No higher ground can there be of faith, than the love the Father has strewn to our Redeemer for his reconciling passion, by his glorious exaltation. He loved him in the laying down his life, and he loved him in the taking of it again, John 10:17. Get your thoughts then up into heaven. Behold the Father taking him up in his arms, congratulating his victory, adorning his triumph, conferring upon him, and perpetuating a government. See if in all this you can find a frown on God's face, any doubt in his heart of the validity of his sacrifice; see if any letters, but those of grace, be written about his throne. And if God has no doubt of it, who is more concerned in his glory, than you in your salvation, why should any jealousies remain' in any heart that accepts him, discards all affection to sin, and endeavours to imitate him in an holy obedience to God? 'Be followers therefore of God as dear children,' since he has so magnificently entertained his Son, upon the account of what he did, for all that will believe in him; and wait upon God till he shall send his Son in all his royal attire, to bring you to the full enjoyment of all the fruits of this reconciliation, so strongly wrought, and so heartily accepted, and till that be accomplished, let hope every day pierce through the veil, and enter into that which is within it, more inward, Hebrews 6:19, eis to eswteron tou katapetasmatoV, innning our souls by faith and hope every day in the veil. This faith is a firm anchor, to hold the soul safe in storms, and the Father's admission of Christ into heaven is the rock on which it should fasten. The second use is of comfort.

1. Sin is fully expiated, since it is upon the recount of the expiation of it that he is thus dignified. The purging of our sins by himself has met not only with a bare acceptance, but an high valuation, with the Father. Since he has thus crowned and enthroned him, what assurance have we of the full atonement by the blood of his cross! How can we doubt the full satisfaction, delight, and content of the Father with him, and with us upon the condition of faith, since it was for the purging, not his own, but our sins, that he did 'sit down,' as of right, 'on the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high'? Hebrews 1:3. The gratifications the Father made to our Redeemer, manifest the satisfaction of his justice, since not only God's kindness, but his justice, which is a part of his majesty, was employed in the welcome reception of him. End that frowned, there had been no throne for him to sit on; and if it ever frown upon him, his throne will shake under him. But it never shall, for it is a 'throne for ever and ever,' and that because 'his sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness,' Hebrews 1:8. A majesty still offended would never have admitted him to this honour. Is there any room for sorrow and dejection, for jealousies of the sufficiency of the ransom, after so illustrious a discharge from the Father?

2. Accusations shall be answered. We have great enemies; the devils that tempt us, our corruptions that haunt us, and both to accuse us. To whom must they accuse us? To that majesty, at whose right hand Christ has his residence. Whence must the vengeance they call for issue, but from that majesty upon whose throne Christ sits as a lamb slain, who sits ready to answer the accusations, and stop the revenge? He tore Satan's charge upon the cross, will he let it be pieced together in his triumph? As he bowed down his head upon the cross to expiate our sins, so his head is lifted up on the throne to obviate any charge they can bring against us. Satan knows it is fruitless for him to bring his indictment there, where Christ perpetually appears, and is never out of the way. The perpetuity of our justification results from this sitting of Christ at the right hand of God; for he sits there, not as an useless spectator, but an industrious and powerful intercessor, to keep up a perpetual amity, and prevent sin from making any new breach: 1 John 2:1, sin we must not, but 'if any man sin' (not a course of sin, but fall by some temptation), 'we have an advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' He sits as an advocate, as a reconciler, and a propitiation for sin, spreading before his Father the odours of his merits and righteousness, to answer the charge and indictments of sin. 'He appears in the presence of God for us,' Hebrews 9:24, before the face of his glory in the highest heavens. It was through the blood of the covenant he arose, it was through and with the blood of the covenant he entered into the holy place, to carry the merit of his death as a standing monument into heaven. God, by his advancement, would have the sight of it always in his eye, and the savour of it in his nostrils; that as the world, after the savour of Noah's sacrifice, should no more sink under the deluge; so the believers in Christ should no more groan under the curse of the law, though they may, in this world, smart under the corrections of a Father. It is a mighty comfort in the midst of all infirmities (where there is the answer of a good conscience towards God), that Christ is gone to heaven, and is on the right hand of God, to save those that are baptised into his death, and that have the 'stipulation, eperwthma, of a good conscience towards God,' which is the apostle's reasoning, 1 Peter 3:21-22.

3. Wants shall be relieved. It is that human nature wherein the expiation was made on earth, which is crowned with glory in heaven by the Father; that human nature, with all the compassions inherent in it, with the same affections wherewith he endured the cross and despised the shame, with the same earnestness to relieve them as he had to deliver them, with the same desire to drink of the fruit of the vine with them in the kingdom as he had to eat the Passover with them upon the earth, to supply their wants as he had redeemed their persons. If the free gift of all things be argued from the Father's delivery of the Son to death, Romans 8:32, the full distribution of all things may be expected from the Father's setting him upon his throne, and giving him the keys of death and hell to stop their inroads upon a believer, and the command of his treasures to dispense at his pleasure; what can be denied to the merit of his death, since as our surety he is established in an eternal throne? Since he was admitted as a 'forerunner for us,' Hebrews 6:20, *prodromos*, what can there be necessary for us, in our journey till we overtake him, that we may not expect at his and the Father's hands? All our needs will be supplied, since there are riches in glory in Jesus Christ, Php 4:19.

4. Spiritual enemies shall be conquered. All enemies are to be made his footstool, Psalms 110:1. Satan, who was wounded by him upon the cross, shall not rise, since he is upon his throne. He that could not overpower him while he was covered with the infirmities of our flesh, cannot master him, since all power is delivered to him in heaven and earth, and the keys of hell put into his hands. He bruised him while he was known only to be the seed of the woman, and bruised him for us; and shall he be able to repair his broken strength, since his conqueror is now declared to be the Son of God with power? Our inward enemies shall fall under the same might. It was the purpose of the Father to 'conform his elect to the glorious image of his Son,' Romans 8:29. What has Christ this power in his hands for, but to destroy the power of that in the heart, the guilt whereof he expiated by his blood? That as he appeased the anger of God, and vindicated the honour of his law by removing the guilt, so he may fully content the holiness of God by cleansing out the filth. As he had a body prepared him to effect the one, so he has a power given him to perfect the other; that as there is no guilt to provoke his justice, there may be no dirt to offend his holiness; that, as the Father has been reconciled by the death of Christ, he may delight himself in the soul by the operation of the power of Christ. This will be accomplished. The first fruit of his exaltation was the mission of the Spirit, whose proper title is a Spirit of holiness, in regard of his

operation, as well as his nature; and whose proper work is, to quicken the soul to a newness of life, and mortify by grace the enemies of our nature. The apostle assures the believing Thessalonians of it, from this argument, of his being a God of peace: 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly,' autos o QeoV. That God of peace: 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 'Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it.' It is not only a petition, but an assurance; as appears by 1 Thessalonians 5:24, that it will be done by him as the author of reconciliation; and completely done, of, wholly perfect, universally for the subject, in understanding, will, affections, body, 'in spirit, and soul, and body.' The enmity else would not be taken away; as the enmity is removed from God in the satisfaction of his justice, by the blood of his Son; so the enmity shall be removed from a believer, in the renovation of his image by the grace of his Spirit, that there may be at last no disgusts on either side; for 'he is faithful who has called you.' He is not a God of peace for a day or an hour; it is not an imperfect reconciliation he designed; it is a faithfulness to himself, to his own resolves, to his own honour, to his Son's blood, to the call of his people. And this is a good argument to plead in our prayers for sanctification, since God has manifested himself to be a God of peace in the raising Christ, accepting him, exalting him; all which were evidences of a perfect reconciliation, that he would perfect in you every good work, Hebrews 13:20-21.

Use 3. As the Father's exaltation of Christ is comfortable to the believer, so it is as terrible to the unbeliever and unregenerate. He that advanced him to the throne, and conferred upon him a power of asking the heathen for his inheritance, confers also upon him a power of destroying his enemies: Psalms 2:8-9, 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,' &c. 'and thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.' The breaking refers to ask of me; and as thou shalt have blessings for believers, so thou shalt leave wrath and judgment for unbelievers. Unbelievers that break his bands, and cast his cords far from them, are so far from having the benefit of Christ's intercessions for mercy in his glorified state, that they have a dreadful interest in his pleas for wrath. He has a power of dashing them like a potter's vessel conferred upon him. He that gives Christ the whole world upon asking, will not contradict him in his severest acts against his unbelieving enemies. For that love to him that advanced him, as a lamb slain, will spirit his wrath with a greater fury against the undervaluers of his death and sufferings. Will the Father, who upon his death thought him worthy to devolve the government of the world upon him, and to act all by the hand of his Son, take it well that he is not imitated by his creature? Is it not a reflection upon the Father, as if he had acted a weak part, had set too high a value upon the death of his Son, that his eyes were too dim to pierce into the nature of it? Will God, who is pleased with him, bear with such real blasphemies against him? for so all unbelieving rejection of Christ is. Shall his obedience be so pleasant to God, and be unrevenged, if it be unpleasant to us? Shall God subject the whole host of angels to him, and let worms despise him without severe punishment? If there be not an holy estimation of Christ, obedience to his will and laws, it will not consist with the Father's exaltation of him to suffer the affront, or let his authority be an idle name, an authority without hands, an empty title. No; as he has a sceptre of righteousness, so he has an iron rod to bruise his enemies. What a folly is it to despise that Redeemer, wilfully to violate his laws, who has all power given him in heaven and earth, and the power of judging committed to him by the Father! This is to dare the curses of the law, break open the store house of his wrath, and be bent upon hell with violence.

Use 4. Let us accept Christ then, as our Reconciler and our King. God is not contented only with the establishment of him in this honour, but he loves to hear the world ring with acknowledgments of it; he will have every tongue to confess to the glory of God the Father, that Jesus is the Lord: Php 2:11, 'That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' For the glory of God, who conducted him through this great undertaking, accepted him for it, and dignified him for bringing in an everlasting righteousness. The way to glorify God the Father, is to acknowledge the dignity of Christ, and to accept him for those ends for which the Father has exalted him. All things are for the glory of God, but this more signally; hereby he has discovered the wonders of his wisdom, justice, power, and love, before men and angels; and he that owns Christ as a glorified Mediator, owns God in the glory of all those perfections; without this acceptation of him, we cannot answer the end for which God has exalted him, 'he has given him a name above every name,' that we might confess and acknowledge him as he has declared him, and pay him a service by our faith. If he do not render him a voluntary homage now, we shall be forced to render him an homage hereafter in a deplorable state. Heartily to accept him for our Lord, is to perform a duty in fellowship with the angels which encompass his throne. Faith is a choice of Christ for head and governor; it is therefore expressed, Hosea 1:11, 'They shall appoint themselves one head,' i. e. the Messiah, they shall believe in him. Christ is an head of God's appointing, and of believers' approving. God sets him as an head authoritative, and we should embrace him voluntarie and obedientialiter, freely and obediently. As the magistrate chooses a public officer, and the people consent to him; the magistrate gives him the authority, and the people encourage him in the exercise. God 'set his Son upon the holy hill of Zion,' Psalms 2:6, and we are commanded to kiss him, which is a token of acknowledgement, consent, and subjection. As he sits at the right hand of God, he ought to sit in the centre of our hearts. Since he is possessed of the highest place, and does not disdain the lowest, it is unworthy to keep him from it. Serve him as a Lord. As he has made himself a sacrifice for us, and rose again and revived, Romans 14:9, i. e. acquired a new state of life, we should serve him as a living Lord, in obedience to the pleasure and authority of God the Father, who has been in him reconciling the world, and for his work has advanced him to the dominion over all creatures. As God exalted him out of a sense of what he had done for the appeasing his wrath, and the salvation of man, so should we exalt him in our hearts, out of a sense of what he has done for our souls: 'He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father who has sent him,' John 5:22-23, and who has glorified him. For he contradicts the ends for which God has given all judgment to the Son.

Use. 6. Glorify God in Christ, glorify Christ. 'God is gone up with a shout:' Psalms 47:5, 'God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet; sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our king, sing praises;' alluding to the joy in the fetching up the ark, 1 Chronicles 13:8. There were shouts of angels at his entrance into heaven: 'God reigns over the heathen, God sits upon the throne of his holiness;' a throne which his holy and righteous obedience purchased, or the holiness of God is now gloriously apparent, fully vindicated. Glorify the Father for it, the Father and the Lamb are joined together in their praises: Revelation 5:13, 'Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' As the Father has enlarged his hand to Christ, as our reconciler, we should enlarge our hearts in thankfulness to him. God was not satisfied with giving a little mite to Christ, a small reward; all the treasures of heaven must be open for him. Why should we put off God with a little praise?

General use of the doctrine.

1. Information.

(1.) This declares the excellency of the Christian religion above any other that ever was in the world. All the philosophy and learning in the world can never acquaint us with these mysteries. In the gospel we see the face of God unveiled, whereas with natural light we can but feel or grope after him Acts 17:27. He is not far from us by the light of nature, but in a cloud not barefaced; but the light of the glory of God shines forth in the face of Christ. How does this way of the gospel shame all other religions, all other notices of God! It resolves the question, which nonplusses the natural learning of the world, and gives light to the impossibilities of reason. No other knowledge presents us with a reconciled God, and a reconciling Jesus; this only salves the honour of God, repairs the ruins of nature, ensures the happiness of the creature, and discovers an eternal inheritance upon a firm foundation; this varnishes all God's attributes, calms the conscience, cures natural jealousies of God, and restores the creature to answer the end of his creation; this declares things worthy of God, honourable to him as well as beneficial to the world; it shows him in the heights of his wisdom, and the depths of his holiness, the length of his love, and the breadth of his justice.

[1.] It declares the glory of God. We know something of God by natural reason, but the full story of his glorious perfections is not printed in the book of the creation, as in that of redemption. Hence, when he speaks of his redeeming design, he often adds, 'that I may be glorified,' Isa. x59:8, Isaiah 60:21, as though he had no glory lying in the womb of creation, but all was to spring out from that of redemption. The creation of the world was but a preparation to this; the creation was too dim a glass to show the image of God's glory. He seems to intimate, Isaiah 13:5-6, that his creating the heavens and stretching them out, the spreading forth the earth, and that which comes out of it, and giving breath to people upon it, was as a stage on which he would call Christ to act the highest part, as a covenant for the people. He laid the foundation of the old world, to build those new things upon. The glory of the creation was too low for a great God to rest in. Upon sin the creation was laid waste, and the glory of God had sunk with the ruins of it, but not this succeeded. This restored to him the glory of his creation, with interest and increase. His stretching out the heaven and spreading the earth had glorified his power; the damning man upon his fall had honoured his justice; where then should the standing angels have had prospect of his tenderest love, immense wisdom, and severest justice? He had never been known in his full beauty by any creature, had not the platform of this counsel been laid and executed; whence he calls his calling Christ in righteousness, to open the eyes of the blind, and committing the work of reconciliation to him, his glory, that he would not give to another, i. e. entrust in any other hands than in the hands of his Son, Isaiah 42:6-8, peculiarly his glory, which he does not ascribe to himself so eminently in stretching out the heavens. His attributes were glorified, some in one act, some in another; here they kiss each other with mutual congratulations; mercy rejoices that justice is satisfied, justice rejoices that mercy is manifested, wisdom and holiness join the hands of mercy and justice together. In other things they are scattered in various subjects, here they are banded in one knot, and shine forth with united beams. In which respect Christ may be said to be 'the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person,' as well as in that of his deity, Hebrews 1:3, *carakth*, wherein we may see the perfections of God engraver as visibly as a stamp upon the seal, his wisdom, mercy, justice, holiness, and truth. 'The light of the glory of God' breaks forth 'in the face

of Jesus Christ,' 2 Corinthians 4:6. In the actions and sufferings of Christ, God exhibits himself in the glory of his nature, and gives a fuller view of himself, who was but imperfectly known before. Here the world may see him in the beauty of trig holiness, the condescending sweetness of his nature, the severity of his justice, the inexhaustibleness of his bounty, and brightness of his wisdom; thus he shows himself at once clearly legible in all his perfections. What religion in the world gives us such an account of God? What discovery did so fully evidence him in his robes of royalty at once? Never was the earth seen so full of the glory of God, as in the mediation of Christ; then was there glory to God in the highest ascents, a glory reaching as high as the highest heavens, when there was peace on earth, Luke 2:14.

First, It manifests his wisdom. which shoots forth with clearer beams in his Son than in the creation. In which regard Christ is called 'the wisdom of God,' i. e. the highest discovery of his wisdom. There is a counsel, as well as will, in the more minute passages of his providence; but there is a more glorious workmanship of wisdom in the work of reconciliation, a manifold wisdom in laying the reconciliation frame with advantage to the glory of his name, and the welfare of the creature, which could not be conceived by angels or men before they saw it unfolded, for it was hid in God from the beginning of the world, and was not then made known to the angels, Ephesians 3:9-10. What is the frame of heaven and earth to this? Just as his power and wisdom is in the making a clod of earth, to that which appears in the fabric of a man. In the creation it is like a sunbeam through the cranny of a wall, this like the sun facing us in its full glory; he is the only wise God, as he is our Saviour, Jude 1:25. And the apostle fixes the best note to it, when he calls it 'all wisdom and prudence,' wherein God abounded too: Ephesians 1:8, 'Wherein he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.' All wisdom in contriving and determining the way, prudence in ordering and disposing the means consonant thereunto, wisdom in drawing the platform, and prudence in digging through all impediments, and making even the seeming obstacles serve as steps to the execution. How great was that wisdom that restored us by that logoV, that Word, whereby he had created us, and appointed his Son, who had an holiness exactly to obey him, and a power to bear the weight of whatsoever was necessary, to make up the breach! And this mystery he kept secret in his own breast from the beginning of the world, revealed to none distinctly, but by the gospel, after the incarnation of Christ, that it might evidently appear to be the work only of his wisdom, and therefore called 'hidden wisdom,' 1 Corinthians 2:7; whence the apostle, speaking of this as a mystery kept secret, breaks out into the praise of God for it, as 'The only wise God,' Romans 16:25-27. What religion in the world declares the security of God's rights with man's happiness? What doctrine beside this answers all contradictions, and discovers justice possessing all its rights, and mercy fully answered in all its desires?

Secondly, His power. As the Father was in Christ reconciling the world, Christ was the power of God, as well as the wisdom of God: 1 Corinthians 1:24, 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' The power of God in breaking the heart of the enmity by the death of the cross, and overthrowing all the designs of the evil spirit. The power of God is manifest in sustaining all things after the foundation of the world tottered, more than if he had destroyed this world and made a new one. That man has a mighty power over his own passions, that when he is extremely injured without giving the least occasion, yea, and against multiplied benefits, should study ways of reconciliation with that person, though he knew he should receive new slights from him upon the offers of such kindness; a mightier power would be manifest over himself, if he should part with his

dearest friend, or a beloved son, to expose him to contempt and ignominy, for renewing the amity between him and his ungrateful adversary: such a man would have a mighty power and royalty. *Rex est qui sibi imperat*. Other things show the power of God over the creatures, this is as it were power over himself. If the pardon of one sin, or the sins of a nation, argue the greatness of God's power, Numbers 14:17, the power of God is pleaded by Moses as an argument to pardon the provoking Israelites, 'Let the power of my God be great,'ómuch more does the reconciling a world. Here is a power over his own wrath, deeply provoked by his offending creatures; a power over his own affections and love to his Son; a power over himself after such vast provocations, and a foresight of more, enhanced by ingratitude and slights of his creatures, and studying ways of reconciliation, while the offender was exercising fresher hostilities against God. It is an inconceivable power, and greater than that which is visible in the creation, and will be acknowledged so by those that understand the evil of sin, and the immense provocations offered to the justice of God. What religion in the world gives us any notice of so vast a power in God, as the gospel does in this case?

Thirdly, The wonders of his goodness. How is the gospel an edition of God's heart, as it wrought from eternity! An unfolding, and opening of his bowels which lay secretly yearning! This 'brings life and immortality to light,' 2 Timothy 1:10, which lay locked up in the cabinet of God's purpose, till they were unlocked and brought down to men in the gospel. In this we may see the scheme and model of his thoughts, the method of his counsels, the treaties about man's recovery, all the motions of his goodness, in its descent to earth and ascent to heaven, carrying at last the creature with it, to the wearing an eternal crown upon its head. How did he prepare all things for man's recovery, before man's fall, which was foreseen by him, and decreed to be permitted, providing a medicine before the disease, and a soder before the crack, casting about to reduce rebels to amity, before they had A being wherewith to rebel! Where is that religion, besides, that presents us with such draughts of divine love, that declares its secret resolves and transactions, that tells us of such an immense flood of bounty flowing down upon mankind! The heathens regarded God as severe, though they saw testimonies of his patience, they saw not those springs of kindness bubbling up in his own breast; they imagined them squeezed out by their sacrifices and solicitations, and purchased by their services. Here is the goodness and tender compassions of God making the first motion, laying on one colour after another, till it was brought to perfection. The gospel shows us God contriving redemption by his own wisdom, drawing it with his own hand, working it by his own power.

All this shows the excellency and amiableness of his nature. Honourable to God, a pattern of goodness to men, the highest incentive to a worship, adoration, and service to him, to all those duties which are most fit for a creature toward God, admiration of him, self-humiliation, dependence, ingenuous obedience: such discoveries of God leave men without excuse in all their contradictions to him. He is not represented in the gospel with his standard up, his weapons sharpened, his bow bent, and his arrows prepared, unless against inveterate and wilful unbelievers; but the gospel draws him to our view sheathing his sword, placing his arrows in his quiver, not in his bow, with his arms open, his countenance smiling; means sufficient to make us sink down in self-abomination, and rise up in the choicest affections to God. No religion represents God so admirably, so amiably to man, so worthy of himself, and with greater motives to those duties which become a creature; and therefore this has an excellency above all other religions in

the world.

[2.] It has an excellency above all other religions, in showing the true way of attaining peace with God, and thereupon peace in ourselves. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself;' not in any other methods, not in purifications and washings superstitiously practised by the heathens; not in sacrifices of beasts, though commanded to the Jews; but only as types of the great sacrifice God intended. All other ways of appeasing God are fond and foolish, cannot find a foundation in common and ordinary reason; they disparage God rather than honour him, in such mean and sordid thoughts of him, as though an infinite justice could be bribed by the blood of a beast. All other religions widen the breach, but do not in the least close it. But here we see a God of peace, and a prince of peace embracing each other, and 'the voice of the turtle is heard' in the world. The gospel is the dove bringing an olive-branch of peace, put into its mouth by God. It brings us news of the allay of his wrath, which was due to our sins, and that his sword is blunted by himself in the bowels of his Son, that it might not be sheathed in ours. It shows us a shelter for storms, a light in God's countenance even in the shadow of darkness. Here God draws near to man, that man may have access to him. He makes his Son like to man, that man might be rendered capable of approaching to God. Two natures are joined in one person, that there may be an amiable conjunction of two different parties; he exposes his beloved Son to the strokes of his justice for a time, that he might reassume his life with honour for ever. It is a way that reason cannot disapprove of, since nothing could conduce more to the honour of God, and nothing more establish the peace of the creature. Other religions have framed mediators of their own, deified men, whereby they might have access to God. God in the gospel presents us with a mediator of his own choosing, of his own fitting, of his own ordering; one that he will not refuse, whose intercessions he is pleased with; that he might keep off the darts of divine justice from us, that we might 'draw near through the veil of his flesh,' Hebrews 10:20, that we may look upon God in Christ, without being dazzled by his glory, or scorched by his wrath. Now may devouring fire and combustible stubble meet together; fire without scorching, stubble without consuming. Here misery may approach to glory, because glory condescends to misery. Hereby guilt is removed, which makes us incapable of access to God; and wrath is removed, which hinders our actual access. Here may all that will believe in God through Christ and conform to his laws, walk in the midst of the furnace of God's justice without having an hair of their heads touched, without feeling the smart of that which will be quick in consuming unregenerate men. Since nothing else discovers any peace with God, no doctrine else can make any peace in the conscience. It is the old way gives rest to the soul, Jeremiah 6:16, the way as old as the first promise of a reconciler. All other ways, if rightly considered, rather promote than allay suspicions of God. Conscience has no ground to make any comfortable reflection, without some plain declaration of God's reconcilableness and reconciliation. Conscience can show us our guilt, but nothing in the world evidences the way of our peace but the gospel; no other religion discovers God in treaty about reconciliation.

Herein the Christian religion transcends all others; it glorifies God, and dignifies the creature. Salvation is bestowed upon fallen man, but the honour of all redounds to God, 'that no flesh may glory in his presence.' Here is an admirable temperament of justice and mercy, in the reconciliation of God and the creature: Hosea 2:19, 'I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and judgment, in kindness and mercy.' Judgment in the satisfaction by the surety, an efflux of mercy in requiring

no portion at our hands.

(2.) Second information. If God be the author of reconciliation and redemption, then the knowledge of this, the declaration of the gospel, is an inestimable blessing to a nation. What better news can God send to men? The very declaration of it is a lifting a nation up to heaven: Matthew 11:23, 'And thou, Capernaum, that art exalted to heaven.' The Bibles in our hands are inexpressible blessings, since God has made a large comment upon that first promise which he gave to Adam; God has declared to the world in full, what he gave Adam as it were in a scrip of paper, he has unfolded in his word the mystery, brought it to perfection, and proclaimed it openly, and given us a glass wherein we may see his glory. The discovery of Christ in the flesh was a greater glory belonging to the second temple than what was in the first, notwithstanding all its ornaments and riches. The people wept when they saw the beauty of the second temple inferior to that of the first; and indeed there was wanting in it the propitiatory, the holy fire, Urim and Thummim, the spirit of prophecy, and the ark of the testimony, yet, Haggai 2:9, God tells them, 'the glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former,' though it wanted all those things. The matter of it was not so precious, the condition of the inhabitants was more grievous. The temple was often pillaged, by Antiochus, Pompey, Crassus. There must be some other gift proportionable to the majesty of that God who had promised, as the words following declare, 'I will give peace.' Not a temporal peace, for they never had such cruel wars as after the building of that temple; but a spiritual peace, a peace between God and man, between God's justice and our sins, by the means of the Messiah. He would not adorn the temple with riches; he could if he would, for the gold was his and the silver his, ver. 8. But the declarations of peace which should be wrought in that city, and published in that temple, was the glory of the place. What though a nation should be brought to poverty and disgrace, have the waves of all kinds of afflictions go over their heads, while God keeps up the declarations of a spiritual peace, while he proclaims still the reconciliation he is the author of! That nation is still glorious, though externally miserable. God never employed his thoughts so much about the riches and honour of a nation, the gold and ornaments of the temple, as about the reconciliation of man. While God declares that to a people which is the subject of his thoughts, the delight of his heart, the glory of a nation is preserved, but when once he shuts his mouth, and will speak no more when his voice shall not be heard in our streets, when he shall shake off the dust of his feet against us, then we may write Ichabod upon ourselves, the 'glory is departed,' though wealth and outward glory should stay behind. The proclaiming the everlasting gospel is the fall of Babylon. When the auger comes forth with the everlasting gospel, Revelation 14:6, he is presently followed by another that brings the tidings of Babylon's fall: Revelation 14:8, Babylon is fallen, is fallen.' The removing the everlasting gospel is the rising of Babylon, and makes way for an army of judgments. Desolation follows upon a nation when God's 'soul departs from them,' Jeremiah 6:8 and his soul departs from them when he breaks off any further treaties With men upon the articles of peace in the gospel. The gospel is nothing else but a proclamation of the articles of peace. His thoughts of peace were the cause of his sending Christ, the accomplishment of the reconciliation is the ground of proclaiming it. He sent Christ to effect it, and his Spirit in the gospel to ratify it. It is called by the title of 'the word of reconciliation,' 1 Cor. 5:19, as though nothing else was intended in it, but to make God and man at peace together actually. It is a declaration of his ardent desire to return into amity with us, that he is satisfied by the death of his Son, and can admit us, without any contradiction to his justice, and with a stronger security than at the first creation. What a mercy is it that God should make known his gospel to us, and not to all in the world! If he did not intend to be

reconciled to some in a nation, he would never transmit it from one nation to another. He has made known his Godhead and power to all, Romans 1:20 but not his placability and mercy to all. Men may know by natural light that God is merciful, and yet not know that he has erected a propitiation for the world in Christ, and without this distinct knowledge no man can be saved under the New Testament; and by all the knowledge of God's mercy in the world, they were never able to arrive to this without a special revelation, no more than by the knowledge of the nature of a candle they can arrive to the knowledge of the nature of the sun in the heavens. Is not this a glory, a happiness? What praise does God deserve from us for it!

(a.) Third information. This doctrine acquaints us with the whole concern of faith. It shows,

[1.] What a strong foundation of faith we have. God chose him, called him, counselled him: he is wise, and would not choose a feeble and uncertain reconciler, unable to manage the business committed to him, he is immutable, and in regard of the holiness of his nature, will not and cannot recede from his own choice and approbation, he has done all that he can possibly to show himself placable and pacified. Christ has done all which concerned him, to the high satisfaction and content of God. All the business lies on our side, whether we will join issue with God in it; whether our hearts shall endeavour to run parallel with the counsel of God in it; whether his approbation shall be the joyful measure of ours. What high ground have we to own and accept this pacification; or what pretence can we have to refuse it? If we do not refuse it, God cannot. His act hath been already passed, for Christ is a reconciler of his election. It is his glory and our security, that he is a God that changes not: Malachi 3:6, 'For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.' Which seems to me to be spoken in relation to the messenger of the covenant, ver. 1, and not to the words immediately foregoing, Malachi 3:5. As if God should say, I will punish, for I am unchangeable in my justice; which would infer rather their destruction than their preservation: but I have decreed the sending the messenger of the covenant, and I am unchangeable in this purpose, and in the accomplishing all the fruits of his coming, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. The assurance is stronger, since the decree has been manifested, and the satisfaction accepted by the injured Father. God has provided such a satisfaction to himself, in the death of his Son, as is answerable to the greatness of the creature's guilt, a remedy for the creature's fears. The God who was offended is pacified; the law which cursed the sinner is satisfied, the honour of God, which stood in the way of happiness, is repaired, He sent him when we did not desire him, he sent him when we did not expect him; when there was scarce any faith in the promise of the Messiah left in all the land of Judea, and sent him not to procure a temporal good, but the favour of God, which is the womb of inconceivable happiness; and was so far from dealing with us as enemies when we were in his hands, that he did the utmost he could to lay a foundation of amity, and put the management of it into the hands of the person dearest to him, whom he could only trust. Had God spared any cost to reconcile us, our doubts might be excusable; but since he has discovered a combination of gracious acts about Christ, that his thoughts only run upon this, and had no other intention but the glory of his name in the happiness of the offending creature; there is no room for distrust if we embrace his conditions. The very end of raising him and giving him glory, and therefore of all the actions preceding, was 'that your faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Peter 1:21, that you might believe him to be a God reconciled, and thereupon hope for all blessings from him which he has promised. As crucified, Christ is the object of faith; as exalted, he is the ground of faith. This sufficiency of Christ as a

ground of faith, God hath witnessed in the highest manner possible: 1 John 5:7, 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and those three are one,' i. e. that give an heavenly and divine authority to this truth. The word heaven is not to be taken for the place or local heaven, for many there bear witness to it, innumerable companies of angels, and martyrs, and glorified spirits but we must understand it of an extraordinary testimony. (As Job 20:27, when it is said, 'The heaven shall reveal his iniquity,' i. e. God, by an extraordinary judgment, shall manifest to man, that he was a wicked creature.) 'And these three are one,' not only in their essence, but in their testimony, which gives a greater strength to this witness; as the testimony of a man is stronger, when it is in conjunction with the testimony of others, who are worthy to be credited; and this record is, that faith has a strong foundation, and will have a blessed success; it was the whole purpose of the blessed Trinity to join together in this extraordinary witness in all their acts, that Christ is a full ground of faith in God, so that now a faithful person may highly plead this, Lord, I present thee with a mediator of thy own choice. Thou did choose him for me, before I did choose him for myself; thou did counsel him to undertake this office, before thou did command me to accept him; thou did call him to be a reconciler, before thou did call me to be reconciled; thou did bruise him for me; this is thy only act, and this I plead, and upon this foundation will I rest the weight of my soul. It is a ground for a brace plea; for God would not busy himself about any thing that should have no effect. God would not deceive his people, and feed them with vain hopes in a business of so great a concern; he will not go back from his own appointment, he cannot go back from his own word, his own deed, his own counsel, which he is pleased with, especially since it was not by permission, as Adam's sin was, but by his grace, which makes, in the apostle's judgment, the efficacy of Christ's death stronger for reconciliation, than Adam's offence was for the breach of amity: Romans 5:1a, 'If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many,' i. e. acting all along in it and with it in a way of grace from the first original of his gift, and therefore it abounds, i. e. is more efficacious to the salvation of men, than Adam's was to their condemnation.

[2.] It shows us the nature and necessity of faith. God has appointed Christ a mediator between himself and man. God has testified himself reconciled in this mediator, all his acts about him signify those things. Faith on our parts is nothing else but an act of our souls, answering to those acts on the part of God. As God chose him, commissioned him, accepted him, glorified him, so faith is a full approbation of all the acts of God in this concern. A choice of Christ, an acceptance and glorifying him, putting our concerns into his hands, receiving him as our mediator and king, upholding him, as far as creature-ability reaches, in his office; resting in him, in his precepts by obedience, in his promises by dependence; and by such terms faith is set out in Scripture. As God looks to him as his rest, Isaiah 66:2, so we are to look to him and be saved, Isaiah 14:22. As God looks unto him with all the affections of a God, we should look unto him with all the affections of a creature. A mediator must be accepted by both parties that are at variance, and they must stand to what that mediator does. As when two princes are at difference, and a third interposes to make an agreement between them, they must both consent to accept of that prince for mediator, and both put their Concerns into his hand; he can be no mediator for him that does not accept of him in that relation. God has appointed this mediator, and settled him in this office, because God and man did not stand upon equal terms, God being the sovereign and only offended, man being the offending criminal. God has declared himself fully contented, and has complied with all the conditions of the

first agreement; it only rests now that man will accept of him for those purposes for which God did constitute him, and comply with those conditions which God has settled. This is necessary; God saves no man against his will, and he that does not join issue with God in consenting to this, declares he has no purpose to be saved by him.

There must be some mediator to make God and man meet in agreement, to answer all the ends of God, and restore the fallen creature; God has appointed no other than his Son; if men could find out any other and propose him, God is not bound to accept of him. But what mediator can man appoint to treat with God? Without consent to this person, man is utterly undone, for all the wit of men and angels cannot find out a person fit for so great a business. If it were possible, it is an increase of the crime, and a high presumption for a criminal to stand upon terms, and refuse the person the prince chooses to mediate for him, when there can be no exceptions against him, which shows the necessity of faith in Christ, in whom God has been reconciling the world, and only in him, and the duty of the creature to acquiesce in God's contrivance and constitution. God has taken a full measure of Christ and all his sufferings, and found him complete, therefore our faith should be complete in him. As God has singled him out from angels and men to be an expiatory sacrifice and a great king, no faith suits itself to this act of God in singling Christ out from all other competitors to be a reconciler and Lord, and the righteousness of God from all other righteousness. This faith must not be a naked assent, as God's act about Christ was not a naked assent, but a full, hearty consent; a joy in him, an acceptance of him with all his affections. So must ours be.

[3.] It shows us the true object of faith. Not God in the simplicity of his own being, not Christ alone in his incarnation and death, but 'God in Christ.' As God was in Christ reconciling the world, so God in Christ is the object of faith. God is the ultimate object of faith, Christ the immediate object: John 12:44, 'He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me;' not on me ultimately, his faith is directed to God; as he that believes an ambassador does not only give credit to him, but to the prince that sent him. And to God, not as creator, but as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to God as ordering, to Christ as acting; to God as commissioning, to Christ as commissioned: John 14:1, 'You believe in God, believe also in me;' in God as the author of all good, in me as the mediator and purchaser of all grace; in God as the first author, in Christ as the faithful executor. God is the sun, Christ is the beam; our eye ascends to the sun by the beam, but terminates not in the beam, but in the sun. Faith ascends ultimately to God, as being the head of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:3, and the salutation is first, 'Peace from God the Father,' 1 Corinthians 1:3, the fountain and spring of all that Christ did. In Christ, we see the smiles of God; in Christ, we hear the joyful sound of his bowels, in Christ, we feel the beatings of his heart. The Father is the reconciler, the Son the reconciled, faith is therefore called faith towards God, Heb. vi. 1, and we are said to 'believe in God through Christ,' 1 Peter 1:21, and 'through his name,' Acts 10:43. God is the primary and principal object, Christ the immediate; both must be taken in. He that believes not in the Son, believes not in the Father; he that believes not in the Son as reconciler, believes not in the Father as reconciled. He that believes not in the satisfaction and mediation of Christ, believes not in the Father satisfied, for 'he that honours not the Son, honours not the Father which has sent him, John 5:23, for they are one in the work of redemption, and in all the grace which flows down to us, as well as in nature. As Christ is the Son, equal with the Father, we believe in him as God; as he is mediator, we believe in him as God's servant, furnished by him with authority and ability.

He is the proper object of faith, as being one with the Father. If he were not God, he could not be the object of trust: Jeremiah 17:5, Jeremiah 17:7, 'Cursed is the man that trusts in man; blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord.' And a blessedness is pronounced to those that trust in the king God has set upon Sion, Psalms 2:12, and in the chief corner-stone he has laid in Sion, 1 Peter 2:6. He is the mediums of our faith, as he is God's servant. We believe in God as the author, we believe in Christ as the means. Faith fastens upon Christ as a gift, upon God as the donor. It receives Christ as God's token and gift of transcendent kindness, and from ravishment with this gift, the soul ascends to confidence in the giver. It reads God's heart in Christ, sees the glory of God in the face of Christ, and mounts up to clasp about one who has declared himself in amity. We eye Christ as the expiation, God as the judge; we see Christ upon the cross and in heaven. But we consider by whose authority he is there, for what ends he is there, and both the authority and the ends lead us naturally to God, to place our confidence in him as the rector, the acceptor, and in Christ as mediator. For faith is a grace that comforts the soul; joy and peace comes in by believing, John 15:13. What joy can there be in Christ's actions and passion, unless we regard God the Father as concerned in them? God is a God of all comfort, as being a God of all peace. All Christ's sufferings signify nothing but as they refer to God, and have his approbation and concurrence; so our faith is not right, and signifies nothing, which does not make the whole honour redound to God.

[4.] It shows the acceptableness of faith to God, and the high pleasure he takes in it. Faith is an approbation of God's actions herein, and of the whole scheme; it is a sealing the counterpart, as God's act was a sealing the original deed; it is a testimony to the glory of all those attributes he honoured in the mediation of Christ: as Abraham by his faith 'gave glory to God,' Romans 4:20. Faith does actively glorify God, and passively too, for every one that trusts in Christ is 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' Ephesians 1:12. To his truth and to his power, which were concerned, one in the intention of making good his promise, the other in his ability to perform it; so in believing in God as reconciled through Christ, and that he has taken off the curses of the law, and will bestow an everlasting righteousness, and relying upon him in a way of obedience, as Abraham did in that case, we acknowledge God's veracity, wisdom, holiness, justice, love; and we acknowledge (Christy love, tenderness, and sufficiency. It is an applauding the wisdom of God in his choice. Certainly, that God gives us so many exhortations to be followers of him, to be like him, is delighted to see men have the same sentiments with himself, to be like him in their judgments of things in regard of knowledge, and like him in the practice of things in regard of holiness; he delights to see that his Son's blood was not shed in vain; to perceive himself and his Son glorified by men in laying down their weapons. Every act of faith is a new glory to God; it is 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' God justifies us by this way of reconciliation, and our acceptance of it justifies God from all charge and imputations from the creature, as the approving of John's baptism, Luke 7:29, was a justification of God. Next to the joy God has in Christ, he has a joy in the beginnings of faith: there is 'joy in the presence of the angels,' Luke 15:10. Christ has a joy in the faith and obedience of his people, John 15:11; and when their faith is perfect, they shall at last be 'presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy:' Jude 1:24, 'The presence of his glory;' God will appear more glorious when he comes to see all the purchased and redeemed ones of Christ, that have approved of his gracious and wise contrivance, and given him the honour of his attributes by a believing obedience to his will. 'With exceeding joy;' since the subject of this joy is not determined in the text, it may be understood of the joy of God, of the mediator, of the saints.

'Presented'; God shall receive the presents en egalaliasei, with an exulting joy.

(4.) Fourth information. We see here the strength and sufficiency of Christ for all the concerns of his mediation. God would not have called him out for this work, had he not been able to accomplish it; he would never have laid the government of things, in order to a restoration, upon unable shoulders. God would no more have chosen him, or been pleased with any proposition of it, than he was pleased with sacrifice and burnt offerings. God would not fail of his end; his end was reconciliation; Christ therefore was able to pacify the sharpest wrath. It was not agreeable to God's wisdom to choose an unable or unskilful agent. God was certain of the event; he would never have exposed the human nature, united to the second person, to a task wherein it should have utterly sunk under the justice of God. God had more love to his creature, than to venture the eternal concerns of those he was resolved to save, in a weak bottom, that could not have resisted the sturdiest rocks and most blustering storms. God foresaw the vast number of those sins (though numberless to man) that stood in need of pardon, when he singled out Christ to this charge. It was for 'many offences' he intended the merit of Christ, Romans 5:16, even for as many offences as those for whom he died would be guilty of, and he would not lay them upon the shoulders of one who was not able to bear them. He was every way able, in regard he had the same nature and glory with the Father; he was every way fit, in the affinity he had with both parties, whereby he could reach out his hand to both: the hand of his deity to the Father, that of his humanity to man. As God, he could satisfy for all mankind; as man, he could suffer. Had he not been every way fit and able, the Majesty of heaven, who was desirous of reconciliation, would not have pitched upon him. No creature could satisfy by suffering, because no creature had an infinite dignity in his person to render temporary sufferings of infinite value; nor could any creature present a service as valuable as the offence was provoking. No man can be profitable to God, Job 22:2. Good services among men take not off the sentence of the law in a court of judicature, without a pardoning act of the supreme power. Where was there any creature who had strength enough to bear our sins, and dignity enough to satisfy for them? Our offences were too great a load for a creature's strength, or a creature's suffering, or expiation. Here was the humanity in conjunction with the divinity, to be the sacrifice; and the divinity in conjunction with the humanity, to be the altar for the sanctification of it. The whole method of God's proceedings assures us of the sufficiency of Christ for the work of mediation; had he not been fit, God would never have laid all his honour at stake in the choice of him to it. And the sequel shows that God is fully satisfied with it, since, on the consideration of it, justice forgets the injuries done to the Deity, and treats believers as heirs of heaven instead of rebels.

(5.) Fifth information. It gives an assurance of all spiritual and eternal blessings, since God was in Christ reconciling the world, and was the author of all the methods of it, and the acceptor of the performance. Christ must cease to be a reconciler, before God can cease to be reconciled. God was in Christ from eternity in the resolve of it; he has been in Christ in time in the acting of it; he will be in Christ for rendering the fruits of it fully ripe. Christ is the knot and boud of the reconciliation, and is gone to heaven in our nature to secure it. God is in Christ approving it, the second person is in the humanity ensuring it; his conducting Christ through the world in human infirmities to eternal glory, is an assurance that he will dignify all those that by faith lay hold on him, and lay down their weapons against him. If he be in Christ reconciling the world, he is in Christ wrapping up all other blessings for us; since it is an everlasting gospel, the womb of it is full of

everlasting blessings.

[1.] God's end is not yet perfected. God has not attained his full end; reconciliation was but in order to further blessings. There may be a reconciliation wrought between parties, whereby a party is freed from punishment, without being partaker of a special amity. God did send Christ to make peace, not simply to be at peace with his creature, but to second it with other mercies which the enmity before was a bar unto. It is a reconciliation that teems with many more inexpressible blessings. The riches of his grace, and the glory of his grace, would not be fully displayed by a single peace. The mystery which he proposed in himself, was, that he might gather together all in one, even in cultist, to the full possession of the purchased inheritance, 'to the praise of his glory,' Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 1:14; his glory would not attain its full praise without further blessings at the heels of this. He will rejoice in believers for ever. How can he rejoice in them if they never come to rejoice in themselves; if there be always a defect and indigence in them? The remnants of enmity will drop off, the appearances of anger in his face as a Father will one day for ever vanish, and every frown be smoothed. God is perfectly reconciled, but believers are not yet fully fit for all the fruits of it; but since he has been in Christ laying the foundation in grace, he will be in him rearing the superstructure to glory. God would be at peace with us, that he might bestow the highest kindness upon us. Justice stood in the way, and God would have his justice satisfied, that mercy might flow down without any obstacle. Since, therefore, he has been in Christ contenting his justice, he will be in Christ fully pleasing his mercy. As infinite justice was not contented without the death of Christ, so mercy will not be contented without an efflux of benefits upon the believer. We should not understand God fully appeased, if things stood always at one stay.

[2.] The glory of God is concerned in it. If he be the author of it, he will no less be the guardian of it; the same motives of honour and love which excited him to contrive it, and brought it to this issue, will have the same influence on him to ripen all the fruits of it. As he has the title of 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,' in regard of the whole interest he has in this affair of redemption, so the apostle gives him another title in relation to the same work: Ephesians 1:17, 'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.' He is the Father of glory, as he is the fountain of all the glory which accrues from this work; as well as he is the Father of glory subjectively, in the glory of the divine essence infinitely glorious; and objectively, as all glory is due to him from his creatures. He is the Father of glory, as all the actions of Christ did centre in the honour of the Father; or the Father of glory, as being the author of all those gracious and glorious communications designed to be bestowed by him, as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon his creatures. It is by him, as the Father of glory in Jesus Christ, that a 'spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ' is given, a full and complete knowledge of him, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. If God designs to show himself a Father of glory, as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he shows himself a Father of glory in increasing the knowledge of Christ by a spirit of wisdom in the hearts of his people and acquainting them with the riches intended for them, the crown of his glory would be dim if there were only a knowledge of it, and no possession at last, and full enjoyment of all that which Christ has purchased. How little glory would God get by acquainting them with it, if the knowledge of it should not at last mount up into fruition!

[3.] All that remains to be done in this kind is more feasible, and has less obstacles than what already has been done. The grand obstacle to the fullness of his mercy, in regard of the demands of justice, is quite removed, the merit of Christ has surmounted the demerit of men; and what is

behind is a lighter thing to the poller, wisdom, and mercy of God, than the laying the first stone of our redemption was. Since the delivery of his Son to death, which might have found resistance from the affections of the Father, has been performed, what is there that can be capable of any demur? How is it possible a believer should perish, since Christ has suffered to reconcile infinite justice, by the will of God? How is it possible he should miss of eternal happiness, since for God to give his Son to die for reconciliation, is infinitely more than the justification of him by his blood, and saving him through his life from wrath? Peace is the root of all joy and blessedness, and in the angels' song, good will towards men follows peace on earth. When peace is made, there is no bar to the highest manifestations of good will.

[4.] No enemies can possibly obstruct it. If God were in Christ reconciling the world, who can prevent the execution of his resolution to the full? Since it has been thus far carried on, all the venom of Satan spit out against a Christian, can no more deprive him of what God will do, than it could hinder what God has done. He was baffled in attempting the hindrance of it, though he engaged all the powers of hell in the contest; and was fooled, since the way he took to prevent it did eventually promote it; and in his resolving to be an hinderer, he was, by a reach of infinite wisdom beyond his own wit, made a furtherer of it; and if he could not prevent the foundation, he shall be less able to deface the superstructure; and if the greater sins of unregeneracy did not hinder the influence and application of it, the infirmities after regeneration shall not obstruct the full perfection of it.

(6.) Sixth information. It shows us the unworthiness of man's dealing with God. God cannot do anything higher to sweeten our spirits towards him, he has not another or a dearer Son to give; nothing more can be acted upon the world for the security of the creature. There are no wider channels for the love of God to run in, no higher way to secure his honour from contempt, and his creature from vengeance. He was angry with us, and with good cause; we were children of wrath, and deserved it; God is appeased by the blood of Christ, he delights in the laying aside his anger, he has done his utmost to assure men of it.

Then certainly,

[1.] Our rejecting Christ, and the way of his appointment, is a high contempt of God. It is a slight of God in the glory of his grace, an envying him the honour of the restoration. Adam envied his sovereignty and independence, and every unbeliever envies his wisdom and merciful bowels. Since his heart was set upon this work, that all the counsels of eternity centre in it, a deafness to his proposals is a contradiction to all his counsels, and the great desire of his heart. As faith in Christ redounds to the honour of God, as being an approbation of all God's acts in this affair, so unbelief of Christ redounds to the contempt of God, as slighting all those gracious manifestations of his grace and wisdom. As the murder of a man, and every degree of murder, in the contempt of him who is the image of God, is a dishonour to God in regard of the relation man bears to God in that respect, Genesis 9:6, so every unworthy usage of Christ, every act of unbelief, redounds to the dishonour of the Father, whose ambassador Christ is, and the exact image of his person. If men do not heartily think reconciliation by Christ worth their highest thoughts and entertainments, they reproach God, as if he were busy from eternity about just nothing, or a sleeveless matter, and run through so many stages in his acts about Christ to no purpose. It is a 'making light' of a rich feast of God's providing, Matthew 22:5, it is a self-destroying fury, worse than that of devils. It is a

making all other sins against God more sinful: John 15:22, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin,' their sin had not appeared with so much malice.

[2.] Our jealousies of God. Men are fond of suspicions of God when they are struck down with a sense of their sin, though this despair is not so ordinary as presumption. This is a measuring God by man, and bringing him down to the creature's model; a contracting God's goodness according to the creature's scantiness. Can there be any just reflections upon God, after the manifestation of his earnestness for the reconciliation of man? If the owning God in those acts be a justifying God, Luke 7:29, 'They justified God,' the disowning him is a condemnation of God. As Abraham glorified God when he staggered not at the promise, but clasped it in his arms by faith, so we dishonour God inexpressibly, when we stagger not only at one promise, but at his whole scene of amazing, acts in the founding and carrying of his work in Christ. It is unworthy in any truly humbled soul to imagine God an enemy still, after all his mysterious contrivances for the relief of the creature, and his delight in his Son for answering his purposes.

[3.] Our enmity and disobedience to God, though God be in Christ reconciling the world, as therefore we disparage him by our jealousies of him, we also deal unworthily with him by sinful presumptions. There are terms expected to be performed by us; it is not a lazy belief, an assent to this, accompanied with a love of any one sin (which was the cause of God's anger), that gives men a title to it. As God's love in this, and his acceptance was not a lazy love, &c., neither must our faith. The application of it is not but to such a faith that purifies the heart. For us not to leave the love of sin, when God has quenched his wrath in the blood of Christ, is an unworthy usage of God, and cuts a man off from any interest in this reconciliation. Abraham's faith, whereby he glorified God, appeared eminent in this act of obedience, in a willingness to sacrifice his son. Not to endeavour to please God in a course of obedience, is to keep up our enmity under God's offers of amity. To presume upon his goodness, to act the highest unbelief under pretences of the contrary, to think God will be your friend while you persist in your enmity, is a contradiction to the whole tenor of the gospel. Faith in his promises is never accounted of, without faith in his precepts. As he has been a God in Christ reconciling the world, so he has been commanding in Christ the world to a submission, and it is outrage and high ingratitude not to endeavour to please God, since he has been so careful to please us.

[4.] Omissions of prayer. Has God done so much to render us capable of coming to him, and himself capable to receive us with honour to himself? And is it not very disingenuous and slighting to neglect this privilege, founded upon the counsels of wisdom, and the cost of the blood of Christ? Before, we could with no more comfort approach to God, than a guilty malefactor could to the judge; but since God has laid by his fury in Christ, and discovers an altering glory in the face of Christ, what can we plead for our neglects of his allurements, our seldom approaches to him, or our slight and lazy addresses? He uses his friend unkindly that will not make use of his friendship, and upon urgent occasions desire his assistance. All neglects imply either an inability or unwillingness in God, and both cast dirt upon his reconciling work, since there can be no greater evidences of his power and willingness than he has discovered in the whole working of it. We virtually deny the Father to be the fountain of all grace, when we go not to him; we deny Christ to be the purchaser of all peace, when we go not in his name. God sent Christ to 'consecrate a new and living way for us to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' Hebrews 10:19. By neglects we disparage God's mission, and Christ's consecration, and the liberty he has procured. What

should we have done if we had been to approach to God as a judge upon a tribunal of justice, when we will not draw near to him as a judge upon a mercy-seat, through the reconciliation wrought in Christ?

Well, then, let us consider the danger of slighting this reconciliation. Well may that man deserve doubly the curses of the law, that will not believe and obey after God's demonstrations of the riches of grace; well may he deserve to be crushed in pieces under the insupportable burden of his own guilt, that will still be fond of his treason against a reconciling God. Shall the great king descend from the throne of his majesty to become a reconciler, and after that a solicitor, and feel nothing but heels lifted up (John 13:18) instead of hearts? Such an one is doubly a child of wrath: first, by nature; and after, by a particular refusal to become a friend. The interest of our souls lies at stake; without changing our unworthy courses, wrath will be executed upon us; God has provided no other reconciler, and is resolved not to let his weapons fall by any other motive than the blood of the Redeemer.

(7.) Seventh information. It shows us the way of all religious worship. If God be in Christ reconciling the world, all our recourse to, and dealing with, a reconciling God, must be in and through Christ. As God's motion to us is in Christ, our motions to God must be through the same medium. He is 'the way, the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. 'No man comes to the Father but by me;' as no man has the Father coming to him but by Christ, the way whereby God communicates truth and life to us, the way whereby we must offer up our true and lively services to him. As God is the ultimate object of faith, Christ the medium, so God is the object of worship, Christ the medium. As Christ is equal with God, he is the object of faith, the object of worship; as Christ is God's servant, he is the way whereby we believe, the way whereby we have access to God. The soul must be carried altogether by the consideration of Christ, in presenting petitions in his name; in expecting answers upon the ground of his merit. Ye must regard him as the meritorious cause of our access to the throne of grace, and our welcome at it. How can we go to God as reconciled, but in the name of the reconciler? We cannot come with any boldness upon any other account. It is by the knowledge of the Son we ascend to the knowledge of the Father, by the merit of the Son we have access to the throne of the Father, by the intercession of the Son we have access to communion with the Father; in the name of the Son, we are to ask what we want, and by the merit of the Son we must only expect what we beg. It is as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' that he communicates himself to us, Ephesians 1:8; it is as the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' we must 'bow our knees' to him, Ephesians 3:14, remembering still, that Christ is the band that links God and us together. What confidence can we have in God, if we respect him not as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; for in him only he is the Father of believers, otherwise he is the Father of the whole world, a provoked Father; in Christ a reconciled Father. As the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our praises must be offered to him, 1 Peter 1:3. All acts of worship are only acceptable to the Father through Christ: Hebrews 13:15, 'By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God;' all must have the stamp of this reconciler upon them. It is by his satisfaction we have the privilege to come to the holiest, before the seat of God, with our prayers and services. It is in his blood, the sword, set to prevent our entrance into paradise, has lost both its edge and flame. It is by the blood of Christ only we have this boldness, Hebrews 10:19-20. His blood is our best plea, his flesh our only screen from the wrath of God in all our services. We must, therefore, in all our services rest in his office, propose him as the mediator of our services.

(8.) Eighth information. There is then no mediator, no reconciler, but Christ. God is in Christ reconciling the world. In him, and none but him; in him, exclusively of all others. He is indeed 'the Christ, the Saviour of the world,' John 4:42. By way of excellency! in regard of the danger he saves us from; by way of exclusion, in regard of the sole designation of his person, exclusive of all others. We must believe that Christ is he, the only person designed in the prophecies, promises, and types: John 8:24, 'if you believe not that I am he.' There was none anciently but he; he was set up from eternity, he was the only lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This seed of the woman was only in the promise, only designed by the types; by this band only were the ancient believers united to God; in this Immanuel he was God with them as well as with us. None were courted God's friends before, but by his mediation; none can be since, because God has accepted no other. No ark, but that of God's appointing, could secure Noah and resist the force of the waters. None hereafter, he is 'the same for ever', he is today, as he was before, Hebrews 13:8. The heart of God is fixed upon him, and his resolution concerning the duration of his office unalterable; he has summed up all the dispensations of former ages in him: Ephesians 1:10, 'He has gathered together in one all things in Christ, even in him,' in no others All other things were preparations to him, shadows of him. But the perfection of all was in Christ; and God, who had various ways of communicating himself to men, has summed up his whole will in his Son, and manifested that all his transactions with men did terminate in his Son Christ, Web. 2:1, 2. These are the last days, God will speak by no other.

[1.] None else was ever appointed by God. No other sacrifice was ever substituted in the room of sinners; none else was the centre of the prophecies, the subject of the promises, the truth of the types, no name erected for a shelter for the nations to trust in but this name: Isaiah 42:4, 'The isles shall wait for his law;' Matthew 12:21, 'In his name shall the Gentiles trust.' None else has the title of peacemaker conferred upon him, Ephesians 2:14, which title he has by his dentin on the cross, Colossians 1:20. Those, therefore, that reject this way of mediation, must infallibly perish. He that will have any good by a prince, must go to that minister of state he has settled for that end. God has ordained no other mediator. God has thought none else fit to trust with his concerns, to do his work, restore his honour, receive glory from him. We must acquiesce in God's judgment, and not set up the pride of our reason and will, in contradiction to infinite wisdom. None else was ever honoured by the voice of the Father, testifying him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. None besides him had this testimony, none in conjunction with him, none in subordination to him in the work of mediation; that he might be the first born among many brethren, enjoying all the rights of primogeniture. As God employed no other in the creation, so he employs no other in the restoration of the world.

[2.] None else was ever fit for this. Satisfaction there must be for the honour of God, that the law might be vindicated, justice glorified, holiness illustrated; none but Christ, an infinite person, was able to do all this. Security there must be to the Creator, that the honour of God might not be a lain at a loss. This could not be insured in the hands of a mutable creature; so that by any other mediator we cannot honour God by a suitable satisfaction, nor promise ourselves an unshaken preservation. Without infinite satisfaction, guilt must remain; without infinite power to preserve it entire, guilt would return. This mediator only had an alliance to both parties: to God, whereby he could call him Father; to us, whereby he could call us brethren. That God and man might be joined in one covenant of grace, the mediator of that covenant is God and man in one person. Had he

been only God, he had had no alliance to our nature; bad he been only man, he had had no alliance to the divine nature, and had been an insufficient mediator, Incapable of performing what was requisite for our redemption. In this posture of fitness, there is none else in heaven and earth. Had the mediator been only man, he had been incapable of satisfying; had he been only God, he had been incapable of suffering; but being God and man, he was capable of both. No motive was powerful enough to appease the anger of the Father, but the blood of the cross; and no power strong enough to bear; no person worthy to present sufferings, but only this mediator. It was upon no other person that the Spirit descended like a dove, to furnish his human nature with all ability for the discharge of this trust. He is infinite,' and what can be added to infinite? If infinite be not sufficient to reconcile, finite beings must for ever come short of effecting it for us.

[3.] None else was ever accepted, or designed to be accepted, but this Mediator. No other surety was ever accepted by God for the payment of our debts. All sacrifices 'could not make the comers thereunto perfect,' Hebrews 10:1, could not set them right in the esteem of God, and make a reconciliation with him; they were an image, not the life, and God accepted them as shadows, not as the substance; the repetition of them was a certain evidence of their inability to effect the reconciliation of man, Hebrews 10:2, as the iteration of a medicine daily sheers its inefficacy to cure. The law was not able after our fall, by reason of our disagreement with the terms of it, to bring us near to God. God's justice and our sins stood in the way of amity, therefore God commanded bounds to be set to the people when the law was given, Exodus 19:12, that they should not come near the mount. But the covenant of grace, veiled in the ceremonial law, was laid in the blood of Christ, typified by that blood sprinkled by Moses upon the people, Exodus 24:8, to which the apostle alludes, 'the blood of sprinkling speaks better things than the blood of Abel,' Hebrews 12:24, than the blood of the firstlings, which Abel sprinkled, Genesis 4:4, which was the first eminent type of the death of Christ upon record, which the Spirit of God mentions here as the first sacrifice, though no question Adam did not spend all that time between his fall and the growth of Abel to man's stature, without a sacrifice. Those sacrifices were poor and feeble, unworthy in themselves of the acceptance of God, not able to expiate sin, nor ever intended for propitiation, because they had no intrinsic value in them for such an end. But the blood of Christ, being the blood of the Lamb of God without spot, is a worthy and valuable price for the sins of the world. These, nor our own righteousness, were ever intended to be of worth, or strength, to expiate the sin of the soul and reconcile us to God; Christ is the only peacemaker, the only peace-conveyer; no other righteousness is called the righteousness of God, the righteousness of God's appointment, or the righteousness of God's acceptance. Anything in ourselves is too low and sordid to be joined with him. God has accepted none else, and we must have recourse to none else. Whatsoever we would join with him is unworthy of God's acceptance. None else was set forth to be a propitiation, and no means appointed of enjoyment, but faith in his blood. This blood was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat in heaven, as the blood of sacrifices was in the temple, which stilled justice, refreshed mercy, and revived it towards us.

[4.] None else ever did do that for us which was necessary to our reconciliation with God. None else ever interposed as a shelter between the irresistible wrath of God and our souls. He alone 'bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' Isaiah 53:4; he received into his own bowels that sword which was sharpened and pointed for us; 'by his stripes we are healed;' upon him alone did the scorching wrath of his Father fall for our peace. He trod the wine-press alone, none of the people

were with him; he endured the bruises of his Father, and the reproaches of his enemies, and would not desist till he had settled the foundation of our peace. He bore the punishment of our sins, all our iniquities there considered by God in his person, and he paid what we owed. 'In one body' he reconciled us, Ephesians 1:16; 'his own bode,' says Peter, 1 Peter 2:24. None drew in the same yoke with him, none were partners with him in his sufferings, none sharers with him in his office. He sealed heaven alone, and alone made the entrance to his Father easy. None ever did, none ever could, answer the demands of the law, silence the voice of justice, by removing the burden of our guilt. He only filled up that gap and gulf which was between God and us; why should anything in our hearts carry away the honour of a Mediator from him, since none else removed the miseries we had deserved, and purchased the mercies we wanted? Till God therefore confers the title of peacemaker, and prince of peace, upon any other, own nothing else as a sharer with him in this honour; that would be to contradict God's order, deny his sufficiency, and condemn his kindness, and turn our backs upon the only tower that can hinder us from being crushed by the wrath of God. But, alas! men delight in their worm-eaten, withered righteousness, which they set up in the room of the Mediator; this, the grand cheat of the world, claims a precedence of Christ.

[5.] None else is appointed, or can secure to us the fruits of reconciliation. As God is in Christ reconciling the world, so he is in Christ giving out the fruits of that reconciliation, not imputing our trespasses to us. He is not only the Mediator of reconciliation, to make our peace, but the Mediator of intercession, to preserve it. He only took away our sins by his death, he only can preserve our reconciliation by his life. As he suffered effectually, by the strength of his deity, to make our peace, so he intercedes, in the strength of his merit, to preserve our peace. He did not only take away, but 'abolish and slay the enmity,' Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 2:16. He slew it, to make it incapable of living again, as a dead man is; and if any sin stands up to provoke justice, he sits as 'an advocate' to answer the process, 1 John 2:2. All the gifts of grace, not only in their first purchase, but in their full conveyance and abundant communication, are 'by and through him,' Romans 5:15. By him only we can come to the throne of grace; in this beloved Son only we are accepted for adopted sons, Ephesians 1:6. To none else God gave children for a seed; children to beget, and preserve, and offer up to him at the last day. He rent the veil by his death, opened the holy of holies by his passion, and keeps it open by his intercession, that we may have a communion with God and a fellowship with angels by this only Mediator. Immanuel is a name only belonging to him, Isaiah 7:14; not that this was the name by which only he was called, but that this was his work, to make way for God's dwelling among the sons of men, and communicating to them the richest of his gifts. Not an angel in heaven but has his standing upon the account of Christ as their head; and therefore not a man upon earth can be secure under any other wing, or have the conveyance of grace through any other channel. He is the *prosagwgeuV*, the introducer of us into the inward chambers of the Father's goodness, where our bonds are cancelled, our pardon assured, and our Father, who was angry with us, falls upon our necks and kisses us. Our constant access to the Father is 'by him,' Romans 5:2, Ephesians 3:12, 'access,' *prosagwgh*. He sits in heaven to lead us by the hand to the Father for whatsoever we want, as a prince's favourite brings a man into the presence of a gracious prince. The 'grace of Christ' is put in order by Paul before the 'love of God' and the 'communion of the Holy Ghost' in the benedictions, because it is the only band that knits us to God, and the foundation of every expression of love from the Father, and of every act of communion we have with the Holy Ghost. Whatsoever grace God works in us is 'through Jesus Christ,' Hebrews 13:21; he is therefore 'made to us wisdom and sanctification, as well as

righteousness and redemption,' 1 Corinthians 1:30. God transmits his virtues through Christ; as the heavens, which impregnate all things, transmit their virtues hither by the sun.

Well, then, let us have recourse only to this Mediator; the fire of God's wrath will consume us without this screen. It is the blood of the Lamb of God's appointment which can only secure us from the scorching heat of the wrath to come, typified by the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the posts of the Israelites' doors; not so much to be a mark to the angel, who could have known both the houses and persons of the Israelites from the Egyptians without that sign on the post, as to represent this mediatory blood of the Lamb of God as our only security from destroying fury. Let men make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under falsehood, the false coverings of their own righteousness, and think to shelter themselves from the overflowing scourge, Isaiah 28:15-17. It will be a miserable self-deceit, the hail will sweep away such a refuge, and the waters will overflow such a hiding-place. It is the corner-stone which God lays in Zion that is our only security, because he is only elect, 1 Peter 2:6, chosen by God, and precious in his account, 1 Peter 2:6; which is inserted (as some observe) between those two verses to show the miserable shifts of men to provide shelters for themselves, other mediations and mediators, not regarding the foundation God has laid, all which will end in self-destruction, as they began in self-deceit. All human satisfactions, intercessions of saints, refuge in any other righteousness, are weak hiding-places to preserve us from the overflowing waters of divine vengeance. No sure foundation but the stone God has laid in Zion.

One would think there were not so much need to press this information.; but whosoever will look into the world, and into his own heart, will find it necessary. What the papists do one way, many protestants do another; one sets up mediators without him, others set up mediators within them. The great business Christ urged in the days of his flesh was this, that he was the Messiah, the only person sent of God to redeem. Though men profess Christ is so, yet it is too common to bring in some sharer with him.

(9.) Ninth information. We may here see the incomprehensible love of God, in that he did not deal with us *summo jure*, as a severe law-giver. We are not deeply sensible of it; if we had a due sense of this love, we should have little kindness for sin. It was not a low kind of love, but 'exceeding riches of grace in his kindness towards us in Jesus Christ,' Ephesians 2:7. Grace never appeared in all its royalty but in Christ. A sweet combination of grace in the Father and the Son. Had the Son manifested his love in offering himself, nothing could have been done without the acceptance of the Father; had the Father manifested his love in moving it, nothing could have been done without the Son's undertaking it. The first motion was from the Father, as the fountain of the Trinity; the execution was from the Son, by a free and dutiful acceptance of the offer of the Father. In this work God 'set his heart upon man,' Job 7:17; the glorifying his name in the redemption of man was that which ran in his mind, and had the chiefest place in his heart from eternity. How great also is the love of Christ, since he was the person that the first sin was particularly against, as well as against the Father; it being an affecting of wisdom to be like God, and Christ was the wisdom of God. Every day's mercy is a miracle, but the mercies of our lives are to this of reconciling us by his Son, as a molehill to a mountain, a grain of sand to the whole frame of nature. When by our offence we were fallen under the sentence of the law, and shut up in the hands of justice, and could not satisfy for the offence, God pays a ransom out of the treasures of his own bowels, opens the heart of his dearest Son, and redeems us by the most precious thing he had: here love does come to the top

of its glory, and does perfectly triumph.

[1.] His own love and compassion was the first rise of this reconciliation. This way by Christ was a 'new' as well as a 'living way,' Hebrews 11:20, not known by all the wisdom of man. New to men, new to angels, it could not enter into any of their hearts to conceive of it before it was declared. He purposed in himself, Ephesians 1:9. It lay hid in the womb of his own love. There was none beside him from eternity to put up a request. It was the result of his bowels, before the being of any creature was the effect of his power. Though our justification, sanctification, and eternal blessedness be the fruits of the meritorious death of the Redeemer, yet the first source of all, in his mission and commission, was absolutely from the inconceivable love of God; whatsoever is merited by Christ for us, his first mission was not merited by himself; his personal relation to God rendered him fit for the honour and office of a mediator, but as mediator he did not merit his own sending into the world, because he was settled mediator by God, and sent, too, before he could as mediator merit. Christ did not die to render God compassionate to us, but to open the passage for his bowels to flow down upon us, with the honour of his justice. God's bowels wrought within himself, but the sentence pronounced by justice was a bar to the flowing of them upon man. Christ was sent to remove that by his death, that the mercy which sprang up from eternity in the heart of God might freely flow down to the creature. And when the time came, God looked about and 'saw that there was no man,' none to deprecate his wrath, and therefore 'his own arm brought salvation,' Isaiah 59:16, and 'his own righteousness sustained him,' i. e. his own truth and righteousness engaged in the promises made to the fathers. The satisfaction of Christ does not impair the kindness of God; his pity to us did precede the constitution of Christ. Had there been no compassion, there had been no contrivance, no acceptance of a mediator; but since he had threatened eternal death to sinners, there was need of an honourable reconciliation by death to maintain the honour of God's truth engaged in that sentence, and content his justice, which was obliged to execute the sentence for the honour of his truth. It was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death for us, Hebrews 2:9.

[2.] It is the greatest love that God can show. As Abraham could not skew a greater proof of faith and obedience than by offering his Son, the son of his affections, and his only son, so neither can God show a richer testimony of his affections to us than by making his own Son an oblation for us. How mighty tender was God of our salvation! How valuable was man to him, when he prized him at the rate of his only Son! As high as God did esteem Christ, so highly did he value his own glory in man's reconciliation.

First. His love was more illustrious than if he had pardoned us by his absolute prerogative without a satisfaction. It had been a glorious mercy, but had wanted that enriching circumstance, the death of his Son; in this way he honours his mercy more than our sin had abused it. His mercy had not appeared in such sweetness had not Christ drunk the bitter cup; mercy sung sweetest when justice roared loudest against the Redeemer. Every attribute had a signal elevation in this way of reconciliation, but especially his kindness. We should have been happy had he pardoned us without a satisfaction, but neither his love nor his justice had been wound up to so high a strain. God did not aim only at the praise of his grace, but the praise of the glory of his grace, Ephesians 1:6; he would have his grace appear in the richest attire, and with all the ornaments heaven could clothe it with. This is evident,

First, By the condition of the person. He was his Son. Was it not the victorious triumph of mercy to make his Son a sufferer when we were the sinners, to make his own Son a servant to his justice when we were the debtors? He was his 'only begotten Son,' John 3:16, not merely his own Son, but his only Son; he had but one Son in the world, and that Son he made a sacrifice for the world; he had not another begotten Son in being. He was 'the express image of his person,' one who was equal with God without robbery, or detracting anything from his glory, Php 2:6; an only Son, enjoying the same majesty and perfections in the Deity with the Father; a Son dearer to him than heaven and earth; the Son he solaced himself with from all eternity, Proverbs 8:30, before ever any stone of the world was laid; and if we could suppose numberless worlds created before this, yet all his joy was placed in him. Can there be a greater assurance of the immensity of his love than in sending a Son that lay in his bosom; a Son who never in the least offended him, nor ever could? He always did the things which pleased him; and when he was in the world there was nothing in him that the devil could fasten upon as any resemblance to himself, John 14:30. In this Son was God reconciling the world. The nearer and dearer the Son was to the Father, the greater is the Father's love in pitching upon him to undertake this work. His love bore proportion to the greatness of that Son whom he sent.

Secondly, The condition in which he was sent. He was made lower than angels to stoop to the condition of a servant. To send an only Son out of his bosom to the cross, an innocent Son from glory to ignominy, and not upon a sudden resolve (which might be thought a passion), but by a deliberate counsel, never repenting of it, always glorying in it, even to this day, is a discovery of the most rooted affection. The lower the condition of Christ was, the more wonderful is the kindness of God in sending him in it. If we would walk into the garden and see Christ besmeared with clods of blood, step up to mount Calvary and see him hanging upon the cross, look up to heaven and see the bright sword sheathed in the bowels of the Son of God, see him with his scourged back, his nailed hands, his pierced side, ask then your souls this question, whether here be not bottomless love? whether any affection of God can be more miraculous than this, to give his Son to endure all this for our ransom, the Lord of glory to suffer this for rebellious malefactors? whether this is not greater kindness to you than if he had pardoned you without the sufferings of his only Son?

Secondly, It is a love that cannot be wound up to a higher strain. It is the utmost bound, if I may so speak, of an infinite love: 'God so loved the world,' John 3:16. So, above the conception of any creature; so, that his affection cannot mount an higher pitch. His power could discover itself in laying the foundation of millions of worlds, and his wisdom could shine brighter in the structure of them; but if he should create as many worlds as there are sands and dust upon the face of this, and make every one of them more transcendent in glory than this, than the sun is above a clod of earth or an atom of dust, yet he could not confer a greater love upon it than he has done upon this; than to be, upon their revolt, a God in Christ reconciling those worlds to himself. There is not a choicer mercy than to be in amity with God, nor a more affectionate way of procuring and establishing it, than by giving his only Son to effect it: in giving whom, he contracts to give himself to be our God, and live with us for ever. If God should take the meanest beggar that lives upon common alms, and transform him into an angel, and make him the head of that heavenly host, it would be incomparably a far less love than the gift of his Son for him. A more condescending kindness cannot be conceived, unless the Father himself should become incarnate, and die for

man; but that cannot be supposed. If the fountain of the Trinity, the Judge of all, should take flesh, and suffer, to whom should the offering be made? The rector and judge is to be satisfied, and it is not fit for the judge to make satisfaction to himself; but the Father has given that person next to himself to be our propitiation; most fit, as having the Father, the fountain of the Trinity, to offer the sacrifice of himself unto.

Thirdly, It is a greater love than has yet been shown to angels. The angels in heaven never did partake of such a vast ocean of love, for the Son of God never died for them, though they came under his wing, as a head exalted to that dignity, as a reward of his death. The angels came under him as an exalted head, but not as a crucified Saviour: they have their grace by the will of God, without the death of his Son; we by the will of God, through the death of his Son. What confirmation they have, they have it from Christ, by virtue of his headship over them, not by virtue of any death for them; and therefore they are, in the opinion of several, understood by the 'things in heaven,' which are 'reconciled to God,' Colossians 1:20. What reconciliation is to us, confirmation is to them; yet there is not such an excess of love in their confirmation, as in our reconciliation by the blood of the cross. As the preservation of a life from death is less than the restoring life to one that is dead, the latter argues more of kindness, as well as more of power.

Fourthly, Take a prospect of this love by a review of the condition we were in.

First, Our vileness and corruption. What are we in our being but dust, slight and empty pieces of clay? Is it not wonderful that God, who has angels to attend him, should busy his thoughts about worms; that he, who has the beauty of angels, the most glorious piece of the works of his hands to look upon, should cast his eye upon such noisome dunghills; that he should not rest in the praises of angels, but repair such broken instruments as men are, to bear a part in the concert? If the sun knew its own excellency, it would think it a condescension to bestow a beam upon so dark and miry a body as the earth, that can return to it no recompense, much more is it in God, to look upon such pieces of clay as we are, much more to give out his grace and love to man, who can give him no requital. We would be loath to take a toad into our bosoms, and bestow our friendship upon it. By corruption we are worse than the most venomous toad that creeps upon the ground; yet God entertains thoughts of amity, and establishes it for us in the blood of his Son. We are unworthy of any one thought of unbounded goodness, much more unworthy of a thought of so high a strain. Would not any man think that king distracted, that should send his son to keep company with grooms and scullions, to wear the same livery, to advance them to a better state by his own blood? Nothing but the end fair which he does it, and the love which moved him to it, could excuse him. How much more condescending is God than the greatest prince in the world would be in this act!

Secondly, Impotence. When we lay wallowing in our blood, and it was the time of our weakness, that was the time of his love; when we had 'no eye to pity' us, nor a heart to pity ourselves, then were we the objects of his compassion, Ezekiel 16:4-6, &c. When there was not one solicitor for us among all the holy angels, the peace was broken with them as well as with God, and we were justly hated by those holy spirits upon the Creator's account; when not a man in the whole race of mankind had any thoughts of presenting a petition for recovery; when God looked about, and to his astonishment, 'found none' that had any thoughts of interceding and soliciting a restoration, Isaiah 59:16; when there was not a person in heaven or earth besides himself could save us, 'his

own arm,' without the least auxiliary force, 'brought salvation.' It is the glory of his love, that he was 'found of us when we asked not for him,' Isaiah 65:1. What allurements were there in our nature, unless deformities and demerits could pass for attractives? We had not virtue to merit his love, nor ever shall have power to requite it; both are utterly impossible in a creature. God saw our demerits, it was in his thoughts, otherwise a reconciler had not been appointed; one to merit that for us, which we had forfeited, and never could have recovered. Justice might find cause of punishment in the rebellion of the delinquent, but grace could find no reason but in the pity of our Creator; the amazement of a true believer, when he comes to be seriously sensible of it, does manifest the impossibility of ever thinking of it himself.

Thirdly, Rebellion, which is worse than vileness and impotence. He was a God in Christ reconciling the world, when our enmity to him was as great as our misery; when we had not one spark of love for him, who had a boundless ocean of compassion for us. We had entered a league with Satan, the only enemy God had, rendered ourselves his bond-slaves, and that presently after our creation by his powerful hand; and it was far worse if Adam did know the sin and state of the fallen angels; howsoever his pride in his aspiring thought to be like his Maker was less excusable than that of the devil's, in regard that he was an inferior creature (though the devil's was greater, in regard of his greater knowledge of the excellency of God above him). Pride in a mean person is more odious than in one upon a throne. Then it is that he contrives with his Son, and by the blood of his Son, to redeem rebels; and though he disrelished and loathed the crime, yet he had a tenderness and pity for the malefactor, assured by an oath: Hebrews 7:28, 'The word of the oath, which was since the law, makes the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.' As the word of the oath was after the law the declaration of the oath after the declaration of the law, so in the eternal counsel of God, the constitution of the reconciler supposed a law enacted, and a law violated by transgression. After this, the cry of our sins for vengeance could not alter his resolve of sacrificing his Son, and bringing that vengeance upon the sins which they solicited against the sinner. How easy was it for God to have spurned us into hell, when we lay under his foot without all this expense! One touch of his iron rod would have broke us like a potter's vessel; yet he takes occasion to display his grace, where we give occasion to pour out his wrath. He would inflame us by his love, rather than turn us into ashes by his fury; and reconcile us to himself by the blood of his Son, rather than satisfy justice by our own.

Fifthly, It was a love in the freest manner; without cost to us, but expensive to God. We hear of no strugglings in the heart of God, from the first foundation to the topstone; his affections travel through every stage, without the least relenting; he was in Christ reconciling the world, from one end of his counsel to the other, without any repenting reflections. It cost him the blood of his Son, more expensive than the making millions of worlds. There was no need of any combat in his affections, to make as many worlds as he pleased; but we may wonder (since God represents himself to us often in Scripture according to the manner of men) that there were no pull-backs in his affections to the delivering up of his Son. If there be a conflict in his heart when he is to give up a creature, Hosea 11:8, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? My heart is turned within me,' could we reasonably suppose less in giving up his Son? (though indeed the one was eternal, the other temporary), yet in this case we read of no such turnings of bowels, no such kindlings of repentings together. His soul was free in it, and let the peace cost what it would, he would procure it, though with the greatest charge.

Sixthly, Consider what it was his love designed in this. Not a petty inconsiderable thing, but a 'propitiation for sin,' 1 John 4:10, the non-imputation of guilt, the removing all the bars between him and us, the turning the edge of the sword that was pointed against us, reducing us to an eternal amity. He would draw us out of the condition into which we were fallen, and from a wrath we had merited, to elevate us to an eternal life we had rendered ourselves unworthy of, and exposed his Son to the curses of the law, that the edge of them might be turned from us. And that we might have a free converse with him, he makes the mediator of kin to us, that by reason of the communication of our nature we might with more boldness approach to him. All delightful converse is between those of the same species; we could not have conversed freely with a reconciler of a different nature from us.

Seventhly, This love is perpetual. He was in Christ reconciling the world; he will to the end of the world beseech men to be reconciled to him. Love was the motive, the glory of his grace was the end; what was so from eternity, will be so to eternity. His love is as strong as it was, for infinite receives no diminution; his glory is as dear as it was, for to deny his glory is to deny himself. How great will be the joy of those that accept it i how dismal the torment and sorrow of those that refuse it?

Second use; of comfort. how great may the joy of believing souls be, to be brought by God, and by ways of his own contriving, into actual favour with him, after they had lain in a state of wrath! To have an almighty, infinite, just God at variance with us, cannot but be a matter of sadness; to have a peace struck, and the light of his countenance shine upon us, cannot but beget a transcendent joy; it is in the very notion of it, to the understanding joyful, yea, tidings of great joy, and in the sense and feeling of it triumphant. The publication of it was ushered in with words of comfort in the prophet: Isaiah 40:1-31. I, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak comfortably to Jerusalem; cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' Three words to note the great comfort should be taken in the gospel administration: the matter of it is the ceasing of the war between God and the creature, the pardon of their iniquities upon the satisfaction of Christ, the fruit whereof is received by the believer; the satisfaction of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his person, was great, which is expressed by double; and the fruits of it received by the church are great and double, freedom from the wrath of God, from the tyranny of the devil, and the collation of the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Those words, 'for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins,' cannot be meant of the punishment which they lay under, for that could be no cause of the pardon (as the particle for seems to be causal), neither is it a comfort to think of the greatness of punishment after it is past. But if we consider what follows, Isaiah 40:3, &c., it will appear to be a gospel promise, and the believer 'receives of the Lord's hand double:' either it is meant of Christ, who made the satisfaction, the fruits whereof the believer receives; or of the Father, who spared not his own Son, but exacted of him the punishment of our sins, and gives out to us the fruits of his reconciling death. This is the comfort, that the enmity is slain, the war ceased, an end of sin made, and God beheld with comfort, taking away the power of the devil, who first raised this war between God and man; as it is, Isaiah 40:9-10, 'Behold your God, behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; he shall feed his flock as a shepherd, he shall gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.' All this is the fruit of reconciling grace. God is well pleased with those that are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. As

after the 'sprinkling of the blood of the covenant,' God appeared to the elders of the people in a clear, not a cloudy and stormy heaven, Exodus 24:8, Exodus 24:10 (a cloudy and stormy heaven is a sign of God's anger), and his feet, the instruments of motion, standing in a clear heaven, show that all the passages of his providence to his people, are mercy, truth, and kindness, upon the account of the blood of the covenant of peace. God cannot hate those who accept of this reconciliation. Though God hates the remainders of sin in them, yet it is not with such a hatred as redounds to their persons, because their persons are reconciled to God; they believe and apply the reconciliation made by God in Christ. If God deny the acceptance of such, he denies his own act and deed, he denies himself and his whole contrivance from one end to the other. This would be to publish, that he was mistaken in his first design, that it was a fruitless thing, that there was a defect in his wisdom laying the scene of it, or a defect in Christ who undertook to accomplish it, and that things issued not according to his will. If any accept it upon the terms God offers it, nothing can be charged upon him. God must deny his whole contrivance, his commission to Christ, or find some flaw in the execution of it, before salvation can be denied to such a person; but God has already testified again and again how highly pleasing the whole negotiation of Christ was to him, and therefore it is not possible that God (who cannot be deceived in his foresight of events, to whom nothing is contingent) should delight in this before it was acted, please himself with it after it was acted, and yet dart out the frowns of an enemy upon the acceptors of it, who are called 'sons of peace,' Luke 10:6. No; the proper effect of this is non-imputation of sin, as it is in the text, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;' and reconciliation and justification are one and the same thing in the apostle's doctrine; Romans 5:9, what is called 'justification by his blood,' is called, here, 10, 'reconciliation to God by the death of Christ.' Sincere acceptance of it, with a resolution to obey him, gives an interest in this: Luke 2:14, 'Good will towards men.' Some read it, 'Peace on earth to men of good will,' actively, that bear a good will to Christ, that are upright in heart towards God in Christ. But the psalmist is clear in it, that where there is no guile in the spirit in accepting this righteousness, God will not impute sin, Psalms 32:2, and though a believing person may not be sensible of his happiness, yet his happiness is ensured upon faith, though not testified to the soul. Reconciliation and the sense of it are two distinct things; a name may be written in the book of life, and the eye not clear enough to discern it. The prince may have a favour for a malefactor, and his pardon sealed too, yet the prisoner know it not, and perhaps have tattle hopes of it, but casts himself at the foot of the prince's mercy. How comfortable is it to have this peace, and a sense of it too, in our consciences, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus! Worldly goods are small; corn, wine, and oil are little things, to the light of God's countenance, shining upon the soul, here is the ground of joy and glorying, that God 'exercises loving-kindness.' Jeremiah 9:24, 'Let him that glories, glory in this that he knows me, that I am the Lord which exercises loving-kindness.'

There are several particular comforts arise from hence.

1. The angels, the whole host of heaven, are at peace with the believer. The angels, upon the sin of man, by virtue of their obedience, took part with God, and could not, because of their purity, be friends to a defiled creature; nor because of their affection to God, bear any respect to him to whom the Lord was an enemy. They were placed as a guard to bar man from re-entrance into paradise after his fall, and to 'keep the way of the tree of life,' Genesis 3:24. Our sins broke the alliance between heaven and earth, so that the good angels could have no converse with the

enemies of God; had it not been for this disobedience, they could have had no aversion to man. But since their Lord is satisfied, those obedient spirits cannot be discontented, for this reconciliation ties their hands, and makes all ill intelligence cease between them and believers. The death of Christ expiating our sin, established a good correspondence between the two great parties of the world, angels and men. The monarch being reconciled, the two states of men and angels reassume a mutual commerce. By this they are reduced into one corporation, into one family, and combined under one head: Ephesians 1:10, 'All things which are in heaven and on earth, are gathered together in Christ.' That place, Colossians 1:20, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven,' is understood by some of the reconciliation of things in heaven to (cod, i. e. believers in the promised Messiah, who died before the coming of Christ, showing thereby the extent of the death of Christ which looked backward; by others, of the reconciliation of heavenly spirits unto us, as being a grand state of the world depending upon the universal monarch. Hence the angels rejoice and sing a hymn at the publishing the gospel, Luke 2:13, and rejoice more in it than men do; for they delight in the glory of God, but men delight naturally in their enmity to God. They rejoice at the repentance of a sinner, and his acceptance of this reconciliation. They cannot rejoice at men's reconciliation to God, and be unreconciled themselves. They are 'ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation,' Hebrews 1:14, instruments of God in the deliverance of his church and people, furtherers of the conversion of men as to outward means, as in the example of the eunuch, Acts 8:26; and at last conduct the heirs to the possession of their inheritance 'reserved in the heavens for them,' Luke 16:22. They are ministers of wrath upon the unbelieving world, ministers of good to the believing creature, and guard him with those weapons wherewith they fought against him, from whence we have many invisible assistances. As God did not hate his creatures as creatures (for then he had hated man as made by him, which is inconsistent with the pure goodness of God), but as sinners, so the angels followed their great pattern in the hatred of men; but now they are reconciled to man, because God, to whom they pay an obedience, is reconciled. They are put under the government of Christ as their head, as he is the mediator, and cannot be enemies to us till Christ, as behead, become an enemy to himself as mediator. Their commission for guarding the heavenly paradise against us is cancelled, and should they now obstruct the way, they would be no longer good angels, but impure and disobedient devils. There is one place which some understand of this peace we have with angels: Revelation 1:4-5, 'Peace from him which was, and which is, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness,' &c. The seven spirits are said to be before his throne, as waiting for the commands of God, as the seven angels are said to stand before God, Revelation 8:2. But it is more likely it is meant of the Spirit of God; it is not reasonable to think the salutations of creatures to the church should be mixed with the benedictions of the Deity, with the exclusion of the third person, who is here to be understood, and called seven spirits in regard of the variety of gifts and graces, given out by him to the church, seven being a perfect number; and placed in the midst of this benediction, perhaps because of his procession both from the Father and the Son.

2. Peace with all creatures. If the Lord of the creation be the author of this peace, then no creatures which are under his conduct can be at enmity with a believer. When Adam fell, he did deserve that all creatures should act in hostility against him, as the rebel against the sovereignty of their common creator. But when God enters into a new amity with man, and ceases to be

provoked, he renews the covenant with the beasts, that all creatures shall be serviceable to the reconciled believer: Hosea 2:18, 'In that day I will make a covenant for him with the beasts of the field,' in the day of the evangelical espousals, as he had before promised if they continued in obedience, Leviticus 26:6. Though no formal covenant can be made between God and irrational creatures, yet they shall hurt no more than if they were tied up by a formal covenant, and were honest and valise enough to observe it; as in the first covenant made with Adam, while he stood on terms of peace with God, and owned a subjection to him as his Lord, all creatures were spontaneously to be under his dominion, which right depended upon the observance of the terms of the covenant which was between God and him. This right is renewed by the satisfaction of Christ procuring the restoration of that which Adam forfeited, and disarming nature, which was before armed against man. The corn and the wine shall hear Jezreel, the seed of God, Hosea 2:22. The right to all things presents things to come, 'life, death,' all intermediate things, is restored by Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. The world, universal nature, all is yours for your good, because you are Christ's, who has purchased those things; and Christ is God's, settled by him in this office for the purchase of them, and accepted by God to that end. The right to all creatures is perfect, the possession insured in the head, who has taken livery and seisin of all; and shall be perfect in the members, when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; all shall be in an harmonious combination for the glory of the believer. They do yet often instrumentally afflict them, but not hurt them. They hurt the man, not the Christian; they hurt a believer no more than death can, which, though it kills him, yet without a sting, they hurt us, yet without a curse; they are in the hand of a reconciled Father, who uses their natural enmity against us for our good, as the shepherd does the curishness of the dog to reduce the wandering sheep to the fold. The hurts we seem to feel from them issue in mercy, and are so intended by that reconciled God who guides them; they wound us, and thereby break our imposthumes. The same instrument may convey kindness to a believer, which is a mark of wrath upon an enemy; the same knife, which in the hand of an executioner may cut off the arm of a malefactor, in the hand of a chirurgeon may cut off the gangrened member of a patient; the same knife performs a friend's office to the one and a Wrathful to the other. Since we are not perfect in our services of God, we cannot expect the creatures should be perfect in their services of us; as our obedience is only inchoative here, so the performance of God's promises are here in their blade, not in their full harvest.

3. Access to God is another comfort arising from hence. As God was in Christ reconciling the world, so he is in Christ giving believers access to him. As he was in Christ reconciling our persons, so he is in Christ receiving our prayers. As Christ made satisfaction for us by his death, so he sweetens our services by his merit. As Christ was the means of our reconciliation, so is he the means of our access: Romans 5:1-2, 'By whom also we have access.' The word also intimates this freedom of access to be as great a benefit as justification. Though justification is a transcendent mercy, yet it would not complete the happiness of a creature, without communion with God. Peace was not the thing God ultimately aimed at; it was but the medium. He would be our friend, that there might be sweet interviews between him and a believer. Before, guilt on our side, and justice on God's, stood as bars to our access. Guilty souls cannot converse with a severe judge; a provoking creature and an offended God can have no commerce; but when the guilt is taken away, the distance is removed. Now may an humble believing creature come to a reconciled God, whose own heart put him upon laying the foundation of friendship, without any desires, or so much as expectations of the creature. We could no more before endure the

presence of God than the devil; but by this the bar is taken from us, though not from him. This access is consequent upon this reconciliation. As there was a communion between God and man in innocence, which was broken off by the entrance of the enmity, so upon the restoration of the friendship there is a renewing of a mutual converse: that as God reveals his gracious will to the soul, the soul puts up holy desires to God; that as God descends to us in Christ, we may ascend through Christ to him in fruitful meditations, and take a delightful view and prospect of God. It was not only peace that Christ came to procure, but also good will; not only to slay the enmity, but to raise an entire and intimate friendship. The message the angels proclaimed was made up of the one as well as the other: Luke 2:14, 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men,' eudokia, a good pleasure in men.

(1.) Access with confidence. We go to our Father, who has had the greatest hand in all this affair. Since he is the author of this peace, what ground of dejection? We have God in Christ to receive us, and Christ by God's order to introduce us. It was the purpose of God, and his eternal purpose, that by the faith of Christ, and in him, we should have boldness and access, with confidence, Ephesians 1:12, *parrhsian*. And what higher ground of confidence than the consideration of God's appointing and giving this mediator to us for that end? How can a faithful, holy, true God deny his own act, in denying us when we come in the way of his own appointment? for since he has settled such an high priest over his house, we may well draw near in full assurance of faith, if we come with sincere and true hearts, Hebrews 10:21-22, flying with a deep humility to his throne of grace, with a plerophory of faith, a full sail filled by this wind of love. It is not meant of a personal assurance, or a *certitudo subjecti*, but *objecti*, a full belief of the doctrine of propitiation, and God's setting forth Christ and preparing him to take away sin, which was the cause of the enmity between God and us; for this is but the use the apostle makes of what he had doctrinally in this point delivered in the foregoing part of the chapter. We may go to God with more confidence upon this account than Adam could in innocence. He had access to a God of goodness, we to a God of grace; he could not look upon God as reconcilable if he should sin; God threatening was a bar to that. If he knew anything of God, he knew him to be just and true to his word, from which knowledge did arise those terrors of conscience upon his face, and his endeavouring to run and hide himself from God; but God in this dispensation hath given us other notions of himself than Adam had, therefore we may go with more confidence than he could, and pour out our souls before him: Lamentations 3:24, 'The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him.' The Lord is my reconciled friend, therefore will I hope in him for the mercy I beg.

(2.) Delight and joy in our access. We could not come to him before, no, nor think of him, without a slavish trembling; but now we may think of him, and approach to him with joy and comfort, for he deals not with us as an enemy by a strict justice, but as a friend in a way of an obliging mercy. If Adam had a sense that he might fall, he could not come to God without some dejection; the very possibility of falling would not be without fear attending it. But since God was in Christ reconciling the world, we go to him upon the account of an immutable righteousness, a righteousness he settled as an act of grace to us, and security to his own glory; whereas Adam could approach to him but upon the account of a mutable righteousness, which might be as the grass, standing this day and withered tomorrow. Our access to God is with 'a joy in the hope of the glory of God,' Romans 5:2; and when we take hold of his covenant, this covenant of peace, we have his word that he will make us 'joyful in the house of prayer,' Isaiah 56:6-7; actively joyful, full of delight in his

service, solacing ourselves in a sweet consideration of the infinite grace of a reconciling God, whereby a transcendent delight is raised in the soul, which is a direct delight in God as the object of faith, discovered in Christ and apprehended by spiritual reason and sense; passively joyful, by receiving in his service more of the refreshing waters of life, and being fed with the 'hidden manna' which God communicates in and by Christ to his friends. And beside, though our services are imperfect, God expects not a perfect obedience from us, but from his Son Christ. It is a full assurance of faith he expects from us, and a true heart, not a perfect obedience; his promise gives us joy, though the sense of our imperfections create a sorrow. Though we cannot delight in ourselves, we may in God, in his promise, in his gracious condescension, in the compensation he has from his Son for us, in his acceptation of it, and application of it to our souls. You are, upon believing, God's friends, not only his servants. It is Christ's speech to his disciples: John 15:15, 'Henceforth I call you not servants.' It must not be understood of a freedom from all kind of service, which cannot be conferred upon a creature; (it were injustice in God to free a creature from so righteous and noble a virtue as gratitude to himself; God cannot command a creature not to love him, for he should then command the creature not to love the chief good); but it is a freedom from a bondage and servile fear in duties, and bringing to a filial and more dutiful manner of service, óa service from principles of grace, and encouraged by the views of God's reconciled face. Service is not excluded by admission to this friendship, but perfected to a more delightful garb. Peace opens the way for a delightful and successful trade, which war and enmity locks up.

4. The conquest of Satan is insured by this. When we are at peace with God, the devils themselves are subject to us. When God was in Christ reconciling the world, he was in Christ 'destroying him that had the power of death,' Hebrews 2:14, and bringing Satan under the feet of the Mediator, and the feet of his members. This was the intent of God in the first promise of a Mediator, to destroy him who had infected mankind, and brought death into the world. The bruising his head was the design of Christ's mission, Genesis 3:15, that the great incendiary who had broken the league, and set afoot the rebellion, might feel the greater smart of it. And ever since it is by the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith, that we are only able to 'quench the fiery darts of the devil,' and make his attempts fruitless, Ephesians 6:15-16, by the reconciliation God has wrought and published by the gospel. God, 'as a God of peace,' 'shall tread him under the feet' of believers, Born. 16:20. Unless he had been a God of peace, we had never been delivered from that jailer who held us by the right of God's justice. And since we are delivered, God, as a God of peace, will perfect the victory, and make him cease for ever from bruising the heel of the spiritual seed. As God has given peace in Christ, so he will give the victory in Christ. Peace cannot be perfect till it be undisturbed by invading enemies, and subtle adversaries endeavouring to raise a new enmity. Our Saviour spoiled him of his power upon the cross, and took away the right he had to detain any believer prisoner, by satisfying that justice, and reconciling that God who first ordered their commitment. He answers his accusations as he is an 'advocate' at the right hand of God; and at the last, when death comes to be destroyed, and no more to enter into the world, the whole design of the devil for ever falls to the ground. Since we are at peace with God, while we are here, the devil himself shall serve us; and the messenger of Satan shall be a means to quell the pride of a believing Paul by the sufficiency of the grace of God, while he fills the heart of an unbelieving Judas with poison and treason against his Master.

5. Comfort in all afflictions. It is a cordial to cheer in the hottest services and sharpest difficulties. What can the greatest danger signify, while God remains reconciled to the soul in Christ, and the peace remains unbroken? God thought the promise of it support enough in all the standing punishment Adam was to endure; he therefore made this promise to him before he denounced the punishment after the fall. We may as well digest all crosses with this peace purchased, as Adam could do with this peace promised; God. was then in Christ promising it, God Lath now been in Christ performing it. The peace as designed was offered to the ancient Israelites as a ground of joy and relief under their oppressing calamities, Isa. ix.; Micah 5:5, 'This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.' The peace God has effected in Christ is a more firm matter of joy under oppressions, by how much the comfort of the performance exceeds the joy of the promise, as the joy of harvest does the joy of seed-time. Mercy was manifested in the making the promise truth as well as mercy glorified in the performing. If it were a ground of joy before he wrought it, what a rise is there for a triumphant joy since he has laid an unalterable foundation for it. This was the armour Christ furnished his disciples with against the injuries of the world: John 16:33, 'In me you shall have peace, in the world you shall have tribulation.' This was thought by our Saviour to be a sufficient defence for his weak disciples against all the furies of men and rage of devils, an universal remedy against all discouragements. In Christ, God smiles when the world frowns: 'Cause thy face to shine upon us' is thrice repeated, Psalms 80:3, Psalms 80:7, Psalms 80:19, as the chief confidence of a gracious soul under smart distresses. Reconciliation with God changes the nature of everything that is terrible, dungeons into palaces and tears into cordials. It is a shield against fears, a treasure against poverty, physic against diseases, security against danger, and life against death. Indeed, under sharp afflictions a believing soul may not have a strength of faith to discern God as a father, from God as a judge, sense and carnal reason may dispute against faith and stagger it. If he be reconciled, why then does he make me his mark to shoot at? There may be a fatherly displeasure when there is not a wrathful anger, the satisfaction of justice excludes not the rod of mercy. Justice has no plea against a believer, because it is satisfied; mercy is the only attribute that orders all for a reconciled person. The visiting the transgression of the seed of Christ with a rod was knit together with the continuance of God's kindness to them in the covenant of redemption God made with Christ, Psalms 89:30-33. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world;' it is a less thing for him to be in every affliction, ordering it for good.

6. Comfort in the expectation of all other mercies. If God were in Christ reconciling us to himself, he will be in Christ giving forth all other suitable mercies. If he detains any you seem to want, it is a part of his reconciled wisdom when he sees them not good for you. It is inconsistent with his amity to withhold any you have real need of; it would not be then a much store, as Christ argues, but a much less: Matthew 7:11, 'If you, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, much more your Father which is in heaven.' But consider, they are only good things he has obliged himself to give, and he in the proper judge of what is good, not we ourselves. If, as a God of patience and goodness, he feeds the unclean birds, will he not, as a God of grace and peace in Christ, feed his friends? Will he let them starve while his enemies fatten? He has struck a covenant of amity and friendship, what may not be expected from a sincere and powerful friend, and one who made it his business from eternity to be casting about for the working of this peace? If this, which neither men nor angels could have imagined, be effected by his wisdom and grace, all subsequent blessings are far easier to God than this could be, since in this he has conquered

his own affection to his Son. What can remain unconquered by him, which stands in the way of a believer's happiness? It was a greater act to be in Christ reconciling the world, than to be in Christ giving out the mercies he has purchased. If he has overcome the greatest bank that stopped the tide of mercy, shall little ones hinder the current of it? Justice, and the honour of the law, were the great mountains which stood in the way. Since those are removed by a miraculous wisdom and grace, what pebbles can stop the flood to believing souls? If God be the author of the greatest blessings, will he not be of the least? If he has not spared his best treasure, shall the less be denied? It is the apostle's arguing, Rom. 8:32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' He cannot but be as free in the least as he was in the greatest, there were more arguments to dissuade him from that, than there can be to stop his hands in other things. If anything you desire be refused by God, know it is your Saviour's mind you shall not have it; for God would deny him nothing of his purchase. Oh how little do we live in the sense of those truths; how does our impatience give God the lie, and tell him he is a deadly enemy, notwithstanding his reconciling grace!

7. There will be peace of conscience. If God be reconciled, conscience cannot charge. If God be the author of this peace, conscience, God's deputy, cannot keep up an enmity against us, for that must speak as God speaks. Peace with the viceroys and governors depends upon peace with the prince. The same blood which was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, is sprinkled upon the conscience of the believer. As it procured peace with heaven, it will produce peace in the soul: Hebrews 10:22, 'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.' An evil conscience is an accusing conscience; when sprinkled by this blood, it is an acquitting conscience, not from the facts, but from the guilt of them. Whatsoever has a power to satisfy God, cannot be invalid to satisfy conscience. Where infinite knowledge can raise no objection, a purblind conscience is too weak to find out any. If God has been the contriver of this reconciliation, and accepted it as fully finished, conscience must acquiesce. Adam's conscience flew in his face upon his sin, and did not leave quarrelling till its mouth was stopped with the promise of a reconciler. Guilt sets conscience on fire; when the guilt is quenched, conscience must be at ease. Nothing will satisfy conscience but that which satisfies God, and whatsoever satisfies God must satisfy conscience, for that acts by commission and a derived authority. All other things are too weak to take away the conscience of sin: 'the blood of bulls and goats,' of God's institution, could not do it, Hebrews 10:2, it is the proper effect of this peace, all the waters in the world cannot quench the flame of conscience, till God be reconciled. The foundation of this peace of conscience is laid in peace with God, though present actual comfort may not be enjoyed; the day may be clouded, though the winds be still; there may be no storms, yet no sunshine.

8. Comfort against death. If God be the author of reconciliation by Christ, then death, which was the fruit of that sin which is now removed, can be no dreadful apparition. God was in Christ, and is still, conquering his enemies; and this is one enemy which must fall under his sword, and be made his footstool. As God v, as in Christ reconciling you, he is in death calling for you to enjoy the full-blown felicities of that peace. It is no more than a departure in peace, when God is a God of peace. Old Simeon thought so, Luke 2:29; he speaks, says one, like a merchant that had got all his goods on shipboard, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail and be gone homeward. Death was before a servant of divine justice; since justice is satisfied, it is the messenger of divine mercy. It was a jailer to enclose us in the prison of the grave, it is now a

conductor to the glories of heaven. Where this peace is in maturity, where God's face shines clearly without disguises, veils, and cloudy interruptions, the name death is terrible, but the reconciled soul is beyond the fears of it. It has lost its sting, which was God's justice; Christ satisfying the one, has disarmed the other of what is hurtful. There is a knot between justification (which is termed reconciliation) and glorification; death comes between them, but does not dissolve it: Romans 8:30, 'Whom he justifies, them also he glorifies,' which knot cannot be untied by death, though that between our soul and body is: it sends the body to the grave to endure the sentence against sin denounced in paradise, and the soul to heaven, to enjoy the benefit of the promise.

9. This reconciliation is effectual. It is upon this all the other comforts depend. If God was the author of it, contriving, counselling Christ to effect it, furnishing him for the accomplishment of it, it cannot be a weak and imperfect peace. Infinite wisdom would not have spent innumerable 'thoughts, which cannot be reckoned up' (as the expression is, Psalms 40:5), about a fruitless thing, a peace which might be easily blown away; he would never have sent his Son to shed his blood, and endure his wrath to no purpose, and make his own contrivance to end in a mere chimaera, as though he would be so busy only to deceive his creatures. 'The counsel of the Lord shall stand,' every counsel of his, much more his choicest purpose, to which all his other resolves are as small rivers which run into this great sea, and combine together for the perfecting this counsel; all other thoughts are lines drawn to or from this centre. As all things in heaven and earth are gathered in one, even in Christ, so all the counsels of God gather into this one of Christ and peace in him. This was the great source and pattern of all the rest, Ephesians 1:10-11. Besides, God has received this reconciler into heaven, whereby he has removed all ground of suspicion of his remaining yet unreconciled. If justice had any exception against his sacrifice, it would not have opened heaven's gates to Christ, but have barred, with a flaming sword, Christ's entrance into heaven, as well as Adam's return to paradise. The honourable title of our peace, had not been conferred upon Christ, had an imperfect reconciliation been all the fruit of his blood. By this name he is called, Micah 5:5, Ephesians 2:14, and by that of our righteousness, Jeremiah 33:16. God is the author, and Christ the prince of peace; the reconciliation must be full, and righteous, and effectual, that has such a contriver, such a procurer. We are apt in our unbelieving moods to suspect God; because we have been unfaithful to him, we are jealous he will be unfaithful to us; but he asks the question, 'What could I have done more for my vineyard?' He appeals to men in that case, as if he should say, If men can tell me what I can do more, I will do it, do it to engage them, do it to encourage them. He has contrived it with the choicest wisdom, laid the foundation of it in the richest blood, given the fullest assurances of his sincerity in it, and never refused it to any that desired it; but it has been rejected by many whom his Spirit has solicited. Christ, whose honour lay upon it, would never have assured his disciples of it, after his return from paradise: John 20:21, 'Peace be unto you,' had it been imperfect; a salutation he used, which is not recorded to be used by him in the time of his life.

10. This reconciliation is perpetual, as well as perfect and effectual; it is durable and fixed. It was an eternal redemption obtained: eternal in regard of its efficacy, eternal in regard of application, eternal in regard of the good things procured for us by it. Man nor devils cannot undo it, because of their weakness, nor God because of his faithfulness. It is a 'grace wherein we stand by faith,' Romans 5:1-2, not a tottering, but stable grace. Believers are received into the grace of God's

good will, and God is not a light and unstable friend. All human friendship is perfidiousness in respect of this. The tie is everlasting, and knows no dissolution. His own grace and good will moved him to it, and the same good will in an immutable God will preserve it. Good will made the motion, justice acquiesced in it, but since the death of Christ, the righteousness and mercy of God join hand in hand to keep it entire; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other, mercy and truth have met together,' and congratulated one another for their mutual satisfaction. The mercy of God is as prevalent with him to keep the covenant of peace from being removed, as for the first settlement of it: Isaiah 54:10, 'Neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, says the lord, that has mercy on thee.' Such consultations, such expensive accomplishments of it, cannot be mutable; mercy made it, and mercy perpetuates it. He can no more condemn a believing soul when he looks upon Christ, than he can drown the world against his own promise when he looks on the rainbow. His throne is encompassed with a rainbow, an emblem of a perpetual peace. It was so encircled in Ezekiel's time, Ezekiel 1:28; with the same garb he appeared to John some ages after, Revelation 4:3 and the predominant colour was green, that of an emerald, to note that this peace is always green and flourishing, as fresh in after ages as in the first. God was in Christ reconciling the world, God is in Christ as a priest keeping up that reconciliation. The intercession of Christ, which is a part of his priestly office, was as much in the thoughts of God, for his keeping firm this reconciliation, as the death of Christ was upon his heart to effect it. He confirms his eternal priesthood by an oath, Ps. cx 1, and therefore his intercession for it, otherwise there would be no priestly act for Christ now to perform. Christ by his death quenched the flame of the sword which guarded paradise against us; at his resurrection he sheathed the sword itself; and by his intercession keeps it perpetually in its scabbard, keeps the edge from ever being turned against a believer. Reconciliation is wrought by the death of Christ, and preserved by his merit. Christ's affections remain in his heart to solicit, the Father's affections remain in his heart to grant; Christ has an irrevocable liberty to approach to God to present his reconciling merit. Till, therefore, the unchangeable God change his resolution, and repent of all his counsel, cares, furniture, commission and acceptance of Christ; till Christ's merit become invalid, distasteful, and nauseous to the Father, this peace will stand firm. Christ's merit has been paid, it cannot be unpaid; it has been accepted, it cannot now be refused. If the soul he has redeemed be not safe, Christ can have no satisfaction for all his sufferings. Keep therefore your wills from sin, strive against the motions of it, agree not with it, and the peace will not be broken. As princes enter not into war, but where there is a real affront done, and no satisfaction given, so God breaks not the peace he has made upon every failing. When the will is not engaged, the sin is resisted; but where any give up their wills to sin, and delightfully wear its chains, they are so far from having this reconciliation perpetual, that they never had so much as the least interest in it. It is perpetual to them that embrace it, not by a pretended faith, but a real and obedient faith.

11. The state believers have by this reconciliation is far happier than that Adam had in innocence. It is likely had he persisted in it some time, he might have been confirmed in that state; but how long time he might have lived in that mutable condition, and whether, if he had persisted, he would have enjoyed such a degree of glory, is not upon record. God was in Adam making a covenant of works, he is in Christ making a covenant of peace. Christ came not only to give a simple life or a simple peace, but to give it 'more abundantly,' John 10:10, more abundantly than we had it by creation in innocence. After the fall, we were dead, and Christ restored us to life, but to a more abundant life, not that we had after the fall, for we had none at all, we were dead in trespasses and

sins; but more abundantly than we had in Adam before the fall, a better life than man could challenge by the covenant of works. The second creation must be greater than the first, because the thoughts of God about the first were but a step to a second. In the first creation, mere man was the head, God in him gave out the precepts and promises to his posterity; in the second creation, God is in Christ giving out his covenant. As the means of conveyance are higher, so the things conveyed are more glorious. God would provide a way of peace that should not fail again, the security should be built upon a stronger bottom. The Lord give every one of us an interest in this reconciliation, and the comforts of it!

Third use; of exhortation. Is God in Christ reconciling the world? Then it is fit we should join issue with God, and be in Christ reconciled to him. We must comply with God in this his great ordinance. The consideration of it should work relenting, should work believing. Let the design of God prevail with us. It is in this we shall find expiation of sin, the grace of God, peace of conscience; in a word, whatsoever God as reconciled can give, whatsoever Christ as reconciling has purchased. Better to be the vilest slave in the galleys, the scoff and reproach of men, spurned by every foot, than be unreconciled. It was tender mercy, bowels of mercy, whereby the day-spring from on high has visited us,' Luke 1:8. When we lay wallowing in a miry sink, ready to be crushed by God's righteous hand, then he pitied us; the more disingenuous to refuse his amity. The dignity of the donor renders a gift more valuable than it is in itself; a present from a prince is more prized than that which is bestowed by an ordinary merchant. The gift of Christ and the offer of peace by him is incomprehensible in itself, and receives a value from that God that prepared and offers it. What pleasure can we taste in any earthly comfort, though we had a confluence of all princely delights, if we have no share in a reconciled God by a reconciling mediator, while we will force that God, who is the author of peace, to stand over us with a drawn sword pointed to our breasts? Corn, wine, and oil are little things to the light of God's countenance

1. Something must be done on our parts. Though God be the author of our reconciliation by Christ, yet something is incumbent upon us. If all men were reconciled without any condition on their parts, the apostle might have held his pen, and not have added the other clause, her. 20, after the text, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' there had been no need of that inference. In the text, he speaks of the fundamental reconciliation; in this, of the actual. If all men had been reconciled to God, it had not been sense to say, You are reconciled, therefore be reconciled. It would have been an exhortation to do that which had been already done to their hands. If all men be actually reconciled, how come any to miss of the fruit of it? why is it not applied to all? Because all that are called do not comply with their call, answer not God's command and entreaty. The purchase and application are two distinct things; the purchase was made by Christ alone upon the cross, without any qualification in us; the application is not wrought without something in us concurring with it, though that also is wrought by the grace of God. God has ordained peace for us. But there is a work to be wrought within us for the enjoyment of that peace: Isaiah 26:12, 'Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.' The one is grace in the spring, the other is grace in the vessel; the one is the act of God in Christ, the other is the act of God by his Spirit. Though the fire burn, if I would have warmth I must not run from it, but approach to it.

2. This qualification is faith. As grace in God qualified God (if I may use the expression) for effecting it, so faith in us qualifies us for applying and enjoying it. Though Christ be the purchaser,

vet faith is the means of instating us in it: Romans 5:1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Not a man has peace with God till justified by faith. This inestimable mercy is not conferred but upon men of good will, men that affect it, value it, consent to it. We must lay our hands upon the head of the sacrifice, and own him for ours. This is the band which unites us to Christ as the purchaser, and by him to God as the author of this reconciliation; it gives us a right to this peace, and at the last the comfort of it.

3. The order is, first an acceptance of Christ, then of God in and through him. We must first comply with the means before we can attain the end. Our nearness to God was purchased by the blood of Christ, and is actually conferred by union with Christ: Ephesians 2:13, '~ But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are nnead nigh by the blood of Christ.' faith has recourse first to the atoning blood of Christ, and by that blood to God, Romans 3:25, 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' This blood only quenched the consuming fire of God's wrath. By him we are reconciled, and by him only we can receive the atonement Romans 5:11, 'We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' As God was in Christ reconciling, so we must be in Christ accepting this reconciliation with God. 'You are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Corinthians 3:23. We must first be Christ's by the acceptance of him, as Christ was God's by his calling and mission. As God goes out to us in him, our return must be by him to God. He paid the debts, made an end of sin, removed the wrath which we had merited. God was the judge, Christ the mediator; we must first go to the mediator, to be conducted by him to the judge. We had offended the law-maker, we must first go to him who is the repairer of the honour of the law; we must take the redemption of Christ along with us, the pacifying blood to present it to God, by whose authority we were under wrath. It is that blood only joins us to God, no cement without it. If we are not first by faith in Christ satisfying, we are still but as stubble before God, who is a consuming fire. Christ is the only band of union between us and God. Think not of standing secure by absolute mercy; mercy through Christ only saves us; it breathes in no other air. We must first take hold of the strength of God before we are at peace with him: Isaiah 27:5, 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me;' of Christ, who is as well 'the power of God as the wisdom of God,' 1 Corinthians 1:24, where you have a direction how to gain it by laying hold of his strength, the end to be aimed at in the act, 'that he may make peace with me,' and an assurance to obtain it in that method, 'he shall make peace with me.'

Motives.

1. Here is the highest encouragement and ground of acceptation. There is no room for any hard thoughts of God after so signal a discovery of himself. He is not a God of unquenchable wrath; he is willing his justice should be appeased: he took all the course that was possible for infinite wisdom to invent, for infinite power to effect, for infinite love to propose. What greater security for our blessings, than that he should make his Son a curse, that we might be blessed by him! How should so much love make us change our unworthy opinions of God! Here are the three persons employed in it: the Father contrives it, the Son effects it, the Spirit stands ready to apply it to every believer. A refusal puts a scorn upon all the three persons. As soon as ever Adam sinned, even the same day, Genesis 3:15, God applies this remedy of a Redeemer. He did not let a day slip, for any thing we know, not an hour, before he made it known to him. His heart was in travail, and longed to be delivered of the gracious promise of a Mediator. He armed our first parents with this

cordial, before he subjected them to their standing miseries. What his heart was then, it is the same still. His kindness was desirous to publish the promise, can his truth have less zeal to perform it? His kindness which moved him to assure it, has moved him to effect it, and will move him to apply it to every one that seeks to him for it in and by his beloved Son. His wrath, which we were subject to, is overcome by his love to the mediation of his Son, who has honoured him more than sin had dishonoured him. By accepting this, we own the glory of God, and honour him as much by faith as we have dishonoured him by sin; for thereby we own that satisfaction which was as grateful to him as our sins were hateful. As he honoured himself by the death of his Son, so he honours himself by giving forth the fruits of his death. He delights to honour Christ, and to see him honoured by us: we contribute to God's delight, when we approach to him by faith in his blood. Did God make this provision? Did he contrive an expiatory offering before the world was? And will he not communicate this? Would he provide him never to bestow him? Did he bruise him for nothing, but to keep him up as a jewel in a cabinet, not to give out? To whom should God give him, but to those that desire him? Would any father lay up treasures for his children, and not dispense them, when they are earnest for them in their necessities? Can there be a greater argument than this doctrine, to overcome our rebellion, extinguish our fears, hasten our approach, and add confidence to our desires?

2. The terms required are as low as can be imagined. Nothing can be objected against the conditions he requires, repentance and faith. Can any malefactor expect peace with his arms in his hand? Is it not fit there should be such conditions to justify God, since we were the guilty offenders? Can there be less than to cast away our weapons, bewail our crimes, receive his Son as our Mediator, serve him with newness of life, all which are desirable privileges? It was in his power to appoint what conditions he pleased, because he was the free and sole benefactor; what could be less than the believing and receiving the reconciliation? It was impossible the benefit could be without it: it is no benefit unless it be esteemed so; no reason any should enjoy a benefit, that does not think it a benefit. All the self-love of men could not have framed more reasonable terms. Men would have thought of 'rivers of oil, and thousands of rams,' mere impossibilities, Micah 6:6-7. God requires no more than to lie humbly at his feet, and reach out our hands to receive the assurance he gives. What can be easier? If faith be difficult, it is so, not in regard of itself, but in regard of our natural enmity to God, and the pride of our own wills; it is hard only as 'the law is weak, through the flesh,' Romans 8:3; but nothing could be more reasonable, nothing more easy in itself. An ingenuous amazement at unexpected kindness should make us run more swiftly to embrace God, than ever we ran from him. We should subscribe to his articles. As he is a God to contrive the peace, let him be your God to impose the methods of enjoying it, since he hath given this gift to a brutish world, who he knew would grieve and despise him, yet requires no more at your hands than that you should believe and accept him, which is but a just due to the greatness of the blessing.

3. There is an absolute necessity for this compliance for our happiness. If you have not a peace of God's ordaining, you can have none of your own inventing. There can be no fellowship with God without it. We cannot be happy, because we cannot enjoy God, wherein all the felicity of a creature consists. How can guilt and purity converse together? What society can stubble have with fire, but to its destruction? We cannot see God's face without it; and if the sight of God's face be wanting, felicity is at a distance. The greatest part of hell remains, though there be no positive punishment.

This cannot be without a reconciled face. 'How can two walk together unless they be agreed?' Amos 3:3. What intercourse can there be between a guilty rebel and a frowning judge? between a sinful creature and a provoked Deity? 'If he hide his face, who can behold him?' Job 24:29; but when an agreement is made, there may be mutual endearments. We are enemies to God by birth, God an enemy to us by his law; the enmity will remain on God's part, while enmity remains on ours. Strike up then the treaty with God, since there is a necessity for it, and God has provided all things to that end. Shall not God's love melt you, and our own necessities move you?

4. Wrath is unavoidable without a compliance with God. If we will not enter into these terms of reconciliation, the heart of God, which was before incensed by our sin, cannot but rise with an higher indignation at a resolve to persist in it. Abused love kindles the hottest wrath. What fence can inexcusable guilt have against an equitable justice? When man, after his creation, proved perfidious to God, there commenced a dreadful war, which only can be ended by him who hath put an end to sin, or else it will endure for ever in hell. All must have endured what Christ suffered, had he not stood in their stead; and those that refuse him, as he is proffered by the grace of God, must endure the same for ever. If we will not receive him as a friend, we cannot avoid him as an enemy; his eye will behold us, 'and his hand will reach us, in the thickest coverings of darkness,' Psalms 139:9, Psalms 139:11. Where he is not accepted as the author of reconciliation in his own way, he will be the author of judgment in his own way. If the satisfaction of his justice, which he has provided, be slighted, that Justice will be satisfied upon our own persons. If we deny him his honour by the sufferings of Christ, he will vindicate it by the sufferings of our own persons. The law was in full force against us, whereby God has obliged himself to inflict death upon the sinner, Genesis 2:17. It is his law upon record, that damnation shall be inflicted upon every one that believes not. There is no discovery out of Christ, but of wrath prepared against the day of wrath: the day wherein God and his unreconciled enemies shall meet together, is called a 'day of wrath,' Romans 2:5-6; a day wherein there shall be an appearance of wrath only to such. The angel that has a rainbow about his head, has feet as pillars of fire, Revelation 10:1, to consume them that refuse the peace. Consider, then, we are sunk under infinite guilt, and cannot rise up without an almighty hand, we are defiled with an universal filth, and cannot be cleansed without infinite purity; sin is strong in its accusations, our righteousness imperfect in its defence, and can make no compensation for the wrongs by the other; our duties are bespotted, and are not fit for a pure eye. An eternal weight of wrath is due to all those; there is but one way of escape which God has provided, but one city of refuge whereby we may escape the edge of the revenging sword. The sword of divine justice reaches all that are without this shelter, touches none that are under Christ's wings, but like a consuming fire devours every thing else. We cannot perpetuate the war against him, but to our own sorrow, one spark of wrath will be enough to consume stubble; death will put a period to all treaties.

5. All other ways of reconciliation are insufficient. To pretend to any other ways is an injury to divine wisdom, as though his contrivance were not sufficient for the creature's restoration and support. Divine mercy will clasp no man in its arms with a wrong to any one attribute, nor to the dishonour of Christ. It will therefore never receive any who denies Christ and the efficacy of his priesthood. Men naturally are studious of making God compensation, applauding themselves in their own inventions and satisfactions of their own coining, unwilling to acquiesce in the wisdom and will of God. Two great things God would advance in the world by his grace, is his wisdom and

authority; these are the things men oppose, his wisdom by the pride of reason, his authority by the perversity of will. But consider, do we need reconciliation or no? If we need it not, how came we fiends with God, since we were born enemies? If we do need it, is it not safer to enter into the terms God has proposed, wherewith he is satisfied, than to stand to our false, or, at best, hilt uncertain methods? The safest way is always the choice of wise men. Let us not be fools then in refusing the gospel method, unless we can meet with anything that has as fair a plea to divine revelation. Had we all the angels on our side, and all the men on earth to entreat for us, it would be ineffectual.. God never was in them reconciling the world; this one mediator, whom God has appointed, has done and can do that which neither men upon earth nor angels and saints in heaven can do by their joint intercessions. Place no confidence then in your own humiliations, services, duties, God never was in those reconciling any man; all that is done without faith is but enmity, and that in the best part, your minds, Rom. viii. Whatsoever fair colours they are painted with, they cannot please God. The Scripture settles an impossibility on the head of all of them: Hebrews 11:6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' to gain or keep his favour. Were your righteousness of the highest elevation, it is but a creature, and therefore not the object of trust. Though Adam, while he continued in his natural righteousness, might have entered it as a plea, yet because mutable, it was no fit object of trust for him. But since the fall all pleas of a fleshly corrupted righteousness are overruled in the court of heaven. Absolute mercy, without faith in Christ, cannot save you. As God could not, after the sanction of the law, in regard of his truth, pardon the violations of it without a satisfaction, so since he has settled the way of reconciliation by faith in the blood of Christ, he cannot upon the same score of his truth save any in a way of absolute mercy, especially when that way which he has appointed is refused. As it would be against his truth, against his justice, so also against the honour of his obedient Son; for if he be at peace with one man by absolute mercy, why might he not upon the same terms have reconciled others, and then what need of the sufferings of his only Son to make up the breach? If anything else therefore be chosen as the way of this peace, God at the hour of judgment may remit us to our righteousness, services, carnal confidences, saying, Go to the reconcilers that you have chosen, and see whether they can make your peace, as he did to the Israelites: Judges 10:14, 'Go cry to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you;' a dreadful, but a just speech.

6. God seeks it at our hands, and is willing to receive us. He is not only a God in Christ reconciling the world, but he is a God in his ambassadors entreating: 'As though God himself did beseech you by us,' 2 Corinthians 5:20, after the text. This is the tenor of his proclamation, 'Be you reconciled to God.' If he had not desired it, he would not have spent so many thoughts about it, and been at such expense to effect it. He was not bound to it; for he might have left Adam to sink into the death he had merited, without exposing his Son to a death he had not deserved, and contracted a necessity of, only as our surety; he was no more bound to seek out Adam and make him a promise of redemption than he was bound to make him a creature. He might have raised a new world, and have filled it with new inhabitants. It must be something of a vast concernment to us, that God has been so busy about, and so desirous of our acceptance of. Both God seek to us to receive wealth and worldly honours? No. This therefore must be a thing of higher value. A God seeks to us, who is infinitely more glorious than we are vile; a God who never did us the least wrong, but has borne with many injuries from us; a God who could as easily send us into hell with his breath, as breathe out a kind invitation to us; a God who needs our friendship no more than he fears our enmity; a God no more benefited by it than the sun by darting a beam upon a grain of

sand. Sure that soul never was sensible of the misery his war with God has sunk him into, who refuses to receive the peace he offers, nor can without an Inconceivable shame look God in the face at the last day, after so notorious a rejecting an entreating God. He seeks it this day, perhaps he will not seek it at our hands to-morrow. There is 'a day' wherein we may 'know the things that concern our peace,' Luke 19:41. When the day is over, peace will not return. There is a day v herein he will pour out his wrath upon the unbelieving world. While he is yet a great way off, and his thunders at a distance, he sends an 'embassy of peace,' Luke 14:33. He yet seeks to his sworn enemies, and those that were in league with Satan: You may be in league with me, I have not yet shut the door. Listen, do you not hear God's voice in the gospel? He shuts out none that do not shut out themselves. What a guilt will the refusal amount to, when we are to answer for not only the first publication, but repeated offers? Besides, he is willing to receive us into favour, more willing to embrace us than we to receive him. The eternal motions in his heart which gave birth to this gracious design, are of the same force and strength still; he can never forget them. As the remembrance of the years of the right hand of the Most High is our comfort in times of trouble, so God's remembrance of the years of his own right hand, the workings of his own heart, has the like force to excite him to a reception of us, as they had to commission Christ for us. He never broke his word; and less will he do it at the upshot of all, when his people are almost gathered, the world near its period, and the proclamation of the gospel ready to be taken down and folded up for ever; he will not at the end be worse than he has been all along. Let us be as willing to be at peace with him as he is to be at peace with us. God sets us a pattern, he seeks to us, it is an imitation of God to seek to him.

2. Exhortation. Is God in Christ reconciling the world? Then we must be at enmity with sin. God was in Christ reconciling sinners, not sin. God and sin are irreconcilable enemies, so that where there is a peace with one, there must be a war with the other. Fire and water may sooner agree than God and Sin, than a peace with God and a peace with sin. The traitor may be reconciled to the prince, and the treason as hateful to him as before. This is the best evidence to any that he is actually reconciled, when he hates that which made the first separation. Christ expiated sin, not encouraged it; he died to make your peace, but he died to make you holy: Titus 2:14, 'To purify a people to himself.' The design of God in the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, was 'to destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John 3:8. The chief work of the devil was to enter man in a league with himself and rebellion against God. God aimed at the death of our sins, when he aimed at the life of our souls. The ends of Christ's death cannot be separated; he is no atoner, where he is not a refiner. It is as certain as any word the mouth of God has spoken, that 'there is no peace to the wicked.' A bespotted conscience, and an impure, will keep up the amity with Satan, and enmity with God. He that allows himself in any sin, deprives himself of the benefit of reconciliation. This reconciliation must be mutual; as God lays down his wrath against us, so we must throw down our arms against him. As there was a double enmity, one rooted in nature, another declared by wicked works; or rather, one enmity in its root, and another in its exercise, Colossians 1:21; so there must be an alteration of state, and an alteration of acts. The end of Christ's death was to reconcile God to us, and bring us back to God. We are not therefore linked in a peace with him, unless we be transformed into the image of his Son. How can we expect to be taken into the bosom of God, when we every day wilfully defile our souls! Can familiarity with God be kept up, when daily bars are laid in the way? Why was God in Christ reconciling the world? Because he was as holy as well as a gracious God; and to show his detestation of sin, as well as his affection to the creature. Shall

this encourage any practice against the holiness of God? God is of as pure eyes, and can as little endure to behold iniquity, since the reconciliation, as before. God was sanctified in Christ when he was reconciling the world in him, and he will be sanctified in us if we have interest in this reconciliation. All God's acts about Christ are the highest obligation to be at enmity with that, for which the Son of God was appointed, and made a sacrifice; to receive encouragement from hence to sin more freely, is to act Judas his part with God's grace, and betray it to serve our lusts. Be afraid therefore to offend God, not so much because of his power to hurt you, as because of his love whereby he has obliged you. The peace was broken by the disobedience of Adam; it was restored by the obedience of Christ. But our obedience is necessary to the joyful fruits of it. 'Great peace have they which love thy law,' Psalms 119:165.

3. Be industrious and affectionate in the service of God. Has God been in Christ reconciling the world, manifesting his desire for it and affection to it by such various acts, and shall we put God off with a little service, who has not put us off with a scanty grace? God has done his utmost to engage our affection and encourage us in the choicest services: there could not be an higher way to procure it and deserve it of us. The view of the creatures, and God's goodness in them, raises a common love to God in the more ingenious natural minds. To what heights should our love ascend, who have such steps to mount by? A weak love is less than is due to him who has discovered such an immensity to us. Shall we return not a drop, or but a drop, for an ocean? How much should we think ourselves obliged to a prince who should but stop a torrent of legal penalties deserved by us? God has done this and more. How should we combine all our thoughts and affections together to serve that God acceptably, who has made all his thoughts conspire to reduce us honourably and successfully? 'I am the Lord thy God, which has brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' is the preface to the Decalogue, as an incitement of them to a choice respect to all his precepts.; 'I am the God reconciling you in Christ,' is the tenor of the gospel, and much more an incitement to service, by how much the deliverance in the antitype exceeds that in the type; this being spiritual and eternal, that temporal. If you are actually reconciled, serve God as your friend. As God has given you an higher state, give him a greater honour. Do all things out of love to God as reconciled, without any base ends and sordid designs. God had no other end in being the author of peace but his own glory and your good; have then no other end but God's glory in your own welfare, advancing further to him and enjoying his reconciled favour. Serve him with a delight in him; a dull, slavish spirit becomes not any in his approach to so hearty a friend. Every duty should be performed with a triumph and glory in the God of salvation: Habakkuk 3:18, 'I will joy in the God of my salvation.' God would then delight in us; next to the delight he has in his reconciling Son, he has the choicest delight in his reconciled servants, and services springing up from a sense of his love to them.

4. Let all our approaches to God be begun and attended with a sense of this. God in all his communications to his people acted as a reconciled God; we should eye him so in all our approaches to him. As there is not one mercy, one act of grace, God shows to us, but springs from this restored affection, so not any duty we offer up to God but should rise from a sense of it. Whatsoever is not by and through Christ, is not accepted as a duty. This consideration before all addresses would animate them with all those graces necessary, to be acted in them. It would make us humble to consider what we were, and how freely God reduced us. It would make us believing with an holy boldness. What despondency can there be, when God has given so many

tokens of his heartiness in it? It would make us earnest; it would be a fetching fire from heaven for the inflaming our souls. Earnestness is grounded upon hope; what greater foundation for hope than the consideration that this was God's sole act? Think before every duty of the great love God bears to Christ as mediator, greater than to all men and angels; this will be a ground of confidence. For the love of God to Christ as mediator, was with respect to all that believe in him. Think much of the virtue of Christ's death, wherewith he sprinkled the throne of God, and turned the seat of justice into a throne of grace. It is the best way to receive answers; by pleading this, we mind God of all his engagements. Every act about Christ is an argument fit to be used in prayer. God will never deny his own acts, nor the ends of them, which was to make a way for communicating himself to his creatures. God is only in Christ entertaining us, as well as reconciling us. Let us not lift up an eye to him without faith in him as a God in Christ, and carry this atoning blood in the hands of faith, in every act of communion with him.

5. Look for grace and spiritual strength from God in Christ. The conduct of mercy and grace is unstopped by Christ, to flow freely down to man. This is the foundation of the regeneration of any soul: 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 'All things are become new, and all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' Having spoken of the new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17, he lays down the true cause, God; the foundation, the reconciliation by Christ. All things are of God, all the powerful effects and operations of the gospel in the hearts of men are from God as a reconciler by Christ, not from God as creator. The deep meditation of and closing with the promise of God in and through Christ, brings grace into the heart, not a consideration of God's precepts, but of God's promises. The application of the reconciling love of God in Christ by faith, is attended with a powerful benediction of the Spirit, pulling up the foundations of the enmity on our parts; the Spirit is received by the preaching of the gospel, the meditations of the gospel, the applications of the gospel; the Spirit is conveyed with those, not with the precepts of the law, Galatians 3:5. Men begin at the wrong end, they would rise from obedience to faith, and deal with God as if he were to be appeased and satisfied by them. But begin at faith, a firm assent, a full consent to the gospel and the offers of redemption, and go down, by virtue of that, to obedience; it is by casting ourselves upon God in Christ that we receive vigour for all spiritual obedience. The spirit of holiness is the principle whereby we obey, not the effects of our obedience. Christ is first redemption, then sanctification; God a God of peace, and then a God of grace. We should look upon God as a God of peace, and under that title implore him for increase of habitual grace. As a God of peace, he 'works in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight' Hebrews 13:20-21. Our sanctification depends upon our justification. God promised to be as a dew to his people under the gospel, Hosea 4:5. Dew descends from a clear sky, and grace from a reconciled God. As God in Adam had conveyed a natural righteousness to his posterity, had Adam stood, so God in Christ only conveys a spiritual righteousness to Christ's spiritual offspring.

6. When any rising of enmity is in the soul, go to God in Christ. As God was in Christ reconciling the world, so he is in Christ reconciling a veal after the readmission of guilt through temptation; not that the guilt of the whole mass of sins of a believer returns upon his part, but a particular guilt of that sin he has committed lies upon him, for which he must have a fresh application of reconciling mercy. He must go to God in Christ for this; as the first application was made in and through Christ. so must the second and third, as often as we need it, even in our daily pardons. Christ sits an officer in heaven to this purpose, and God hath constituted him an officer to this end, and is in

him in his intercession accepting it, as well as in his first satisfaction. The Corinthians the apostle writes to, some of them at least, were reconciled, yet he beseeches them to be reconciled to God, i.e. renew their reconciliation upon every new breach, and regain the favour of God which they had forfeited by their sins, for which he had reproved them in the former epistle. This must be sued out every day. What was the foundation of the first peace is the foundation of the renewals of it; the same course you took at the first, will be successful for the second. God was not out of Christ in the first, and he will not be out of Christ whenever there is any need. As God was willing and desirous to make reconciliation by the blood of Christ, when all your sins lay before him with their crimson aggravations, much more will he renew it upon a particular fall. But he may hide his face till you sue out a pardon upon his own proclamation and contrivance; and if it be a presumptuous sin, he may deny you the comfort of this peace a long time perhaps as long as you live. Let not any presume upon this, for it belongs not to any man that lives in a course of known sin, which is inconsistent with a reconciled state.

7. How contented should those that are reconciled be in every condition! The peace of God should bear rule in our hearts, to compose them upon any emergency: Colossians 3:15, this will keep the heart and mind from solicitousness Php 4:6-7, this will make us despise the promises of the world alluring us, and the threatenings of the world to scare us. This peace should be the guard of our souls, and will render us happy when the world may account us most miserable, and therefore should render us contented. If you would not have the riches and honours of the world without it, you may well bear the scorns and reproaches of the world with it. The world could not secure you, if you had a war with God, nor defend you from the arrows of his wrath. But since you have peace with God, you are mounted above the enmities of the world, and your spirits should be guarded by it from any tumultuous passions. If the wrath of God be ceased towards us, we may well bear the strokes of a Father since we are not like to feel his sword as a Judge. How cheerfully may we kiss the afflicting hand of God, when he is at peace with us! Look upon all your mercies too (though they are of a meaner bulk outwardly than others), as flowing from this fountain, which may make you not only contented with them, but highly value them. It gives a sweeter relish to mercy than Adam could have; he had the goodness of God, but not the goodness of a reconciled Father, while he was in innocence. If this makes heaven the sweeter, it should make mercies here more savoury

8. Let us then be reconcilable to others. Not only where we offer, but from whom we receive an injury. God's reconciliation should be our rule in dealing with others. Hard hearts and uncharitable dispositions are unlike to God, who had a heart full of tenderness to them, who will not part with a grain of their right to their brethren, when God parted with his Son to work their peace with him; and had he not been more forward in it than they, they had perished for ever. God sets his own actions to us as a pattern of ours to others: Luke 6:36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful,' if we are irreconcilable to others, we are not imitators of God, but reject the noblest pattern, and discover no sense of the kindness of God to us. Since God has made Christ a propitiation for sin, the apostle makes this inference, that 'if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,' 1 John 4:10-11. Did God send his Son out of his bosom, and veil his glory, to be at peace with us, and entreat us to accept his favour, and shall we be upon every occasion at sword's point with our brother? Such a disposition is against the whole tenor of the gospel, and a keeping up a wolfish and brutish nature against the design of the gospel administration, Isaiah 11:6. Christ came to slay the enmity between God and us, between Jew and Gentile; it is a

crossing the design of God, to preserve enmity between Christian and Christian; it is to keep up the partition wall, and frustrate (what in us lies) the end of Christ's death, which was to demolish it. The peace God wrought was a matter of grace, the peace we owe to our brother is a matter of debt; it is due to the command of God. God first laid the scene of our reconciliation, not assisted by the counsels of others; not sought to by ourselves, but seeking us. Our doing the like to others is an imitation of God, whereas to be implacable in revenge is to partake of the devil's nature.

9. Glorify God for this. Since God sends out such a blessing to us, we should send out loud prayers to him. Heaven smiles upon earth, and earth should bless heaven. Glorify God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though we have all immediately from Christ, yet Christ has all from the Father. He is the propitiation for our sins, but he was appointed by the Father. He came to redeem, but he was sent by God upon that errand. He paid our debts as a surety, but he was accepted by God. He was a mediator to bring us to God, but he was Commissioned by God to that end. What a love did God retain to his creatures, though he abominated their Sins, and in the midst of his indignation against their iniquities had bowels for their persons! How did God forecast for us, when we were 'prisoners in the pit wherein was no water,' Zechariah 9:11, the captives of the mighty, and the prey of the terrible! Isaiah 49:25. When the law of God was against us, and his truth taking part with his law, his wisdom and mercy found a way to preserve his truth, and satisfy the curses of the law, that we might enjoy the blessings of the gospel, when we could not in the least deserve it, unless peevishness and perversity, treachery and disloyalty, weakness and wilfulness could pass for allurements; we had then been inconceivable meriters. Such free and full compassion deserves our thank fullness, though we could not merit his grace. It is not a contracted, half-made, or oppressive peace, It is an extensive, tender, and abundant peace, like a river and a flowing stream, a peace whereby we are borne in his bosom, Isaiah 66:12. How should we adore the depth of that wisdom which found a refuge for us, when heaven and earth were at war with us; adore this goodness, that when we were no sooner born, but we were He objects of a cursing law, the scorn of a malicious devil, our Jesus should be sent to pacify the law, and shame the devil our enemy! Angels glorify him for this peace; should we be outstripped by beings less concerned in it? God is only praised in and through Christ; God and Christ are joined together in the saints' praise: Revelation 5:13, 'Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever;' and so they should be in ours. How beautiful will this whole work appear, when the whole methods of it come to be read in heaven in the original copy, when they shall be seen in the face, in the bosom of God, in fair and plainer characters! To conclude. If all the sparks that ever leapt out of any fire since the creation, and all the drops of rain that have fell upon the world; were so many angelical tongues, their praise would come short of the excess of this love. Let the praise of God for this, be not the business of a day, but the work of our lives, since eternity is too short to admire it.

End.

A Discourse of Mortification

A Discourse of Mortification by Stephen Charnock For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. — Romans 8:13. THE apostle having before spoken of justification by Christ, and shewed the necessity of sanctification, whereby we indeed resemble the holiness of God, which he shews to be wrought by the Spirit of God, which is the band of communion between saints and Christ, who raises them both from sin here and the grave hereafter; and that we are not debtors to the flesh, that we should follow the suggestions of that, but to the Spirit, to observe his inspirations; he then in the text backs his exhortations with a threatening and a promise: a threatening to excite our industry, and a promise to prevent our dejection. You must not imagine you shall be justified without being sanctified; for if you live after the flesh, you shall fall under that eternal death which is due to sin; but if you follow the motions of the Spirit, and endeavour to quench the first sparks of sin, the death of your bodies shall be an entrance into the happy life of your soul.

Flesh. Some, by flesh, understand the state under the law; others, more properly, corrupted nature. Ye shall die, without hopes of a better life. But if you mortify the deeds of the body: the deeds of the body of sin, which is elsewhere called the body of death; the first motions to sin and passionate compliances with sin, which are the springs of corrupt actions. Corrupt nature is called a body here, morally, not physically; it consisting of divers vices, as a body of divers members. 'Ye shall live;' ye shall live more spiritually and comfortably here, and eternally hereafter. In the words we may observe, 1. A threatening: 'If ye live after the flesh, you shall die.'

2. A promise: 'If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' In the promise there is 1, the condition; 2, the reward. In the condition, 1. The act: mortify.

2. The object: the deeds of the body. 1. The cause: the body. 2. The effects : the deeds.

3. The agents: ye and the Spirit. The principal, the Spirit; the less principal, ye; both conjoined in the work: ye cannot do it without the Spirit, and the Spirit will not do it without your concurrence with him, and your industry in following his motions, From the act we may observe,

1. Sin is active in the soul of an unregenerate man. His heart is sin's territory; it is there as in its throne before the Spirit comes. Mortification supposes life before in the mortified. We call not a stone dead, because it never had life. Justification supposeth guilt, sanctification filth, mortification life, preceding those acts.

2. Nothing but the death of sin must content a renewed soul. The sentence is irreversible: die it must. No indulgence to be shown to it, no lighter punishment than death; not the loss of a member, but the loss of its life. The axe must be laid to the root, and the knife must be held to the throat. The devils are restrained by the power of God from many sins, which cannot therefore be said to be mortified. As nothing but the death of Christ would satisfy the justice of God, so nothing but the death of sin must satisfy the justice of the soul.

3. 'Do mortify.' The time present. Whence observe, as sin must have no pardon, so it must have no reprieve. No such mercy must be extended to it, as to give it a moment's breathing. Dangerous enemies must be handled with a quick severity. If we do not presently kill sin, it may suddenly suck out the blood of our soul.

4. 'Do mortify.' It notes a continued act. It must be a quick and an uninterrupted severity. The knife must still stick in the throat of sin, till it falls down perfectly dead. Sin must be kept down though it will rage the more, as a beast with the pangs of death is more desperate. From the object observe,

1. Mortification must be universal; not one deed, but deeds, little and great, must fall under the edge, the brats must be dashed against the wall. Though the main battle be routed, yet the wings of an army may get the victory. There are evil dispositions, depraved habits, corrupt affections; we should not spare a nest of vipers when we find them, being all equally injurious.

2. All actual sins are but the sproutings of original. The body signifies corrupt nature, deeds are the products of it; all the sparks issue from the furnace within; the body gives nourishment to the members, and the members bring supplies to the body. There are outward and inward deeds, acts of the mind, which though not acts of the natural body, yet are acts of the body of sin, Galatians 5:19-20, hatred, envyings, acts which the soul may per. form separate from the body.

3. The greatest object of our revenge is within us. Our enemies are those of our own house, inbred, domestic adversaries; our anger is then a sanctified anger when set against our own sins. Our enemy has got possession of our souls, which makes the work more difficult. An enemy may better be kept out, than cast out when he has got possession. Sin is within us, and is always present with us, Romans 7:21; it lies in ambush for us in the best duties, and starts out upon every occasion when we would do good; it would cut off all correspondencies with heaven; it is in our reason, in our affections; it encamps in us, round about us, and easily besets us, Hebrews 12:1. From the agents, ye, the Spirit, observe,

1. Man must be an agent in this work. We have brought this rebel into our souls, and God would have us make as it were some recompence by endeavouring to cast it out; as in the law, the father was to fling the first stone against a blasphemous son. We must not be neuters in this work, nor lookers-on. It will not be done without, though it cannot be done simply by us: it will not be done without our concurrence, though it cannot be done without a supernatural operation.

2. Ye, all of ye. It is a universal duty for the subject, as well as the object.

(1.) Ye carnal men, there is no precept given to you to sin, and therefore it is not your duty to sin. The life of sin is your misery, and the mortification of sin is your happiness, as well as your duty.

(2.) Ye renewed and justified persons, regeneration doth not privilege sin, or exempt from the mortifying work. Election, and consequently the fruits of it, is to holiness, not from it, Ephesians 2:4. Vocation and sanctification, whereof mortification is the first step, are perspective glasses to see to the top of election. Though ye have mortified, yet still do it.

3. Through the Spirit. (1.) Mortification is not the work of nature; it is a spiritual work. Every man ought to be an agent in it, yet not by his own strength. We must engage in the duel, but it is the strength of the Spirit only can render us victorious. The duty is ours, but the success is from God. Every believer is principium activum, but the Spirit is principium effectivum. We can sin of

ourselves, but not overcome sin by ourselves; we know how to be slaves, but are unable of ourselves to be conquerors. As God made us first free, so he only can restore us to that freedom we have lost, and doth it by his Spirit, which is a Spirit of liberty.

(2.) The difficulty of this work is hereby declared. The difficulty is manifested by the necessity of the Spirit's efficacy. Not all the powers on earth, nor the strength of ordinances, can do it; omnipotency must have the main share in the work. The implantation of grace in the heart is called creation, the perfection of grace is called a victory, both belonging to an almighty power. From the promise, observe,

1. Heaven is a place for conquerors only: Revelation 3:21, 'To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me on my throne.' He that will be sin's friend, cannot be God's favourite. The way to eternal life is through conflicts, inward with sin, outward with the world. There must be a combat before a victory, and a victory before a triumph.

2. The more perfect our mortification, the clearer our assurance of glory. The more sin dies, the more the soul lives. The sounder our lives are, the more sensible we are that we do live. The more the enemy flies, the more certainty of an approaching victory.

3. Mortification is a sure sign of saving grace. It is a sign of the Spirit's indwelling and powerful acting, a sign of an approach to heaven.

Doct. The doctrine to be hence insisted on is this: Mortification of sin is an universal duty, and the work of the Spirit in the soul of a believer, without which there can be no well-grounded expectations of eternal life and happiness.

I do not intend a full discourse of mortification, but in pursuance of a former exhortation of resemblance to the holiness of God, to which this work is necessary. We cannot resemble God till that which is the hindrance to this resemblance be taken away; and as our deformity is pared off, we come nearer to our original pattern. And, therefore, I shall only shew, in short, what this mortification is, and how we may judge of ourselves, whether we are mortified or no, and that without it there can be no hope of heaven.

I. What mortification is.

1. It is a breaking the league we naturally hold with sin. Since we were upon ill terms with God, we have kept a constant correspondence with his enemy; and the union between sin and the soul is as strait as that between the flesh and the bones, or the flesh and the blood, blood being in every part of the flesh, and sin in every part of the soul. In regard of this union, sin is called flesh, because of its incorporation with flesh. The union between sin and the soul is naturally as great as the union between Christ and a believer, and expressed by the similitudes of marriage, Romans 7:1-25; body and members, root and branches, as well as the other. It is political too, as between king and subjects. Sin is therefore said to have dominion, to make laws, whence we read of the law of the members. In regard of this, mortification is expressed by the term of having 'no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,' Ephesians 5:11; a breaking of the conjugal knot. The acquaintance and familiar correspondence with sin are broken off, the communion between sin and the soul is at an end, the common interest wherein they were linked together is divided; Res tuas tibi habeto, the form of the ancient divorce is all the welcome sin hath: Isaiah 30:22,

'Thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence;' or with Ephraim, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' Hosea 14:8. It looks now upon its former favourite as an enemy. Sin's yoke, that was light, is now burdensome; nothing so much desired as the shaking it off; and that is the object of our antipathy, which before had been the object of the choicest favour. In this regard it is called a denying of lust, Titus 2:12; a stopping the ears against the importunities of it, and refusing all commerce and cohabitation with it.

2. A declaration of open hostility. As leagues between princes are not broken but a war ensues, the ways of sin are rejected, the dominion of sin opposed, the throne of sin assaulted. The soul is in arms to chase out this usurper, and free itself from its tyranny; and sin up in arms to reduce its subject to its ancient obedience. And here behold that irreconcilable and tedious war, without a possibility of renewing the ancient friendship, and which ends not but with a total conquest of sin. This hostility begins in a bridling corrupt affections, laying a yoke upon anything that would take part with the enemy. It cuts off all the supplies of sin, stops all the avenues to it; which the apostle expresseth by 'making provision for the flesh,' Romans 13:14, &c.; a turning the stream which fed sin another way. As anger is a degree of murder, and he that hates his brother is a manslayer, so he that hates sin, and proclaims a war against it, hath killed it affectu, though not actu; he hath attained one degree of mortification when his anger against it is irreconcilable, like the anger of those that quarrel about a crown, which cannot be ended but by the death of one of the pretenders.

3. A strong and powerful resistance, by using all the spiritual weapons against sin which the Christian armoury will afford, the list of which magazine we have, Ephesians 6:18, Ephesians 6:14, &c.; at the hearing of the word, setting his sin in the front, that the arrows of God may pierce it to the heart, and the two-edged sword may cut the sinews of it asunder; improving baptism, which is a burial with Christ, to which end the apostle mentions it, Romans 6:2, Romans 6:8; sending up strong cries for the assistance of heaven, as Paul did when he had that thorn in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 12:7; redoubling his messages to heaven for a quick supply. The apostle expresseth this reluctancy against sin by two emphatical words: 1 Corinthians 9:27, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; hupwpiázw, doulagwgéw, 'I keep under.' The word signifies to take hold of or to grip an adversary, as wrestlers do when they would give their antagonist a fall, and lay him flat with the earth; or to beat and pound, as wrestlers anciently did with their plummets of lead; whence a word derived from this in the text, signifies putrified wounds. And the other word, doulagwgeîn, signifies to lead captive; to subject the body to serve God, not lusts; to lead it as a slave, not to endure it as a master; a bringing the affections into order, that they may not contradict and disobey the motions of the Spirit and sanctified reason.

4. A killing of sin, expressed in the text by mortifying or putting to death; and, Colossians 3:5, by nexgwsate, mortify; but the word signifies to reduce to a carcase; that though, like a carcase, it may retain the shape, lineaments, and members that it had living, yet it hath not the life, strength, and motion it had before. And it is called a crucifying, Galatians 5:24, which comprehends all the acts which preceded the crucifying of Christ, which was done with the greatest spite, as much as could be. The same measures, the same proportions, the same eagerness of spirit are observed; a total deafness to the cries and complaints of sin, as that of the Jews to the groans of the Lord of life; a crucifying it, notwithstanding all it would give in exchange. It is called in Scripture by the name of revenge, which ends not without the destruction of the hated person, and sometimes not

with it. Every day there is to be a driving a new nail into the body of death, a breaking some limb or other of it, till it doth expire.

II. The second thing is, how we may judge of our mortification.

1. Negatively.

(1.) All cessation from some particular sin is not a mortification. A non-commission of a particular sin is not an evidence of the mortification of the root of it. Indeed, a man cannot commit all kinds of sin at a time, nor in many years; the commands of sin are contrary, and many masters commanding contrary things cannot be served at one and the same time. Pride commands to lavish, and covetousness to hoard. All sins have their times of reigning in a wicked man, as all graces have their particular seasons of acting according to the opportunities God gives. Hazael abhorred the thoughts of that cruelty the prophet foretold that he should act: 'What, am I a dog?' 2 Kings 8:12-13. Yet that sin lay hid by him as Joash by Jehoiada, hoping for the time to play its part and act Hazael as a slave to it. The cessation of a member from motion at present, is no argument either of the death of the body or the mortification of that member.

[1.] A cessation from one sin maybe but an exchange. It may be a divorce from a sin odious to the world, and an embracing another that hath more specious pretences; as a man may forsake one harlot, and fall in league with another. Some sins do not so much affright the conscience, and those may be entertained when a frowning conscience scares a man from some more abominable. Lusts are divers, Titus 3:3; a man may cast off the service of one master, and list himself in the service of another; he changes his lord without changing his servility. A man cannot be said to be clean because he has risen out of one sink to drench himself in another.

[2.] This cessation may be from some outward gross acts only, not from a want of will to sin, did not some log lie in the way. There may be speculative pride, ambition, covetousness, uncleanness, when they are not externally acted; which is more dangerous, as infectious diseases are when they are hindered by cold from a kindly eruption, and strike inward to the heart, and so prove mortal. The pollutions of the world may be escaped when the pollutions of the heart remain. A man may be a fine, garnished, and swept house, and yet an habitation for seven devils worse than reigned there before. The apostle's command for cleaning reaches to the filthiness of the spirit as well as that of the flesh, 2 Corinthians 7:1. We say of the soul, *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*; so we may of sin. The bias of the soul may run strongly to that sin in affection and pleasure, from the outward acts of which it abstains. It is most dangerous for the house when the fire burns inward. A man may be sooner cured of an outward scald than an inward heat, which, when it comes to a hectic fever, is incurable.

[3.] It may be a cessation from a sin merely because of the alteration of the constitution. Every age hath particular sins which it inclines men to; some sins are more proper to young men, which the apostle calls therefore 'youthful lusts,' 2 Timothy 2:22. Lust reigns in young men, but its empire decays in an old withered body; some plants which grow in hot countries will die in colder climates. Ambition decays in age when strength is wasted, but sprouts up in a young man, who hath hopes to live many years and make a flourish in the world. A present sickness may make an epicure nauseate the dainties which he would before rake even in the sea to procure. There is a cessation from acts of sin, not out of a sense of sin, but a change of the temper of his body.

{4.] A cessation from acts of sin may be forced by some forethoughts of death, some pang of conscience, apprehension of hell, present sense of some Scripture threatening, or some sharp and smarting affliction, some signal judgment of God inflicted upon one or other of the companions in sin, which are all of themselves but a kind of force, they being the scourges wherewith God sometimes lasheth a man from the present act of sin. As a present pain in one part of the body may take away a man's stomach to his food, but when the pain is removed, his appetite returns to him; so while a man is upon the rack, and God accusing him, he takes no pleasure, tastes no sweetness, in sin; but after these horrors are off, he feeds as heartily as before, nay, sometimes hath a greater stomach, as men after a fit of sickness eat more plentifully, to recover the strength which before they lost by the distemper.

[5.] A cessation from acts of sin may be for want of an occasion, for want of time, place, and materials. A man's will is not against sin, but he wants an opportunity. This is not from mortifying grace within, but from a providential operation of God, in withholding the materials necessary for the commission of sin. Who will say the sins of drunkenness, gluttony, and oppression, committed by men on earth, are mortified in them when they are in hell? They want materials, not a nature nor an affection, to commit the same, were they again upon earth. Grace lies idle many times for want of objects to exercise itself about; so doth lust in the heart, like a snake starved with cold, till heated by a temptation. A man's condition in the world is not a sign of this mortification; there may be grasping and ambitious thoughts in a cottage. Prodigality may be in a poor man's wishes, though not in his power; yea, and sometimes there is more prodigality in a poor man's unnecessary expense of a penny, than in another's throwing away a pound.

(2.) Restraints from sin are not mortification of it. Men may be curbed when they are not changed; and there is no man in the world but God doth restrain him from more sins, which he hath a nature to commit, than what he doth actually commit. He often hedgeth up the way with thorns, when he doth not alter the heart by grace, and doth by his providence hinder the execution of the sinful motions, when he doth not root out the wickedness that lies secretly in the nature. It was an act of God's providence to restrain Abimelech: Genesis 20:6, 'I withheld thee from sinning against me.' These restraints are mercies God would have us bless him for, but not evidences of mortifying grace.

[1.] Mortification is always from an inward principle in the heart, restraints from an outward. A restraint is merely a pull back, as a man is hindered from doing a mischief by a stronger power. But mortification is from a strength given, a new mettle put into the soul, both a courage and strength to resist it; there is a 'strength in the inward man,' Ephesians 3:16. In a renewed man, there is something beside bare considerations to withhold him, something of antipathy which heightens and improves those considerations, whereby the soul is glad of them, because the edge and dint of them is against sin; whereas a man barely restrained would fain stop the entrance of such thoughts, or when they are entered, would turn them out of doors again. They are things merely put into him, that have no welcome, neither do they change the will, but put a little stop, to alter the method of proceedings. Mortifying grace finds something in the nature, as there is in the nature of a fountain, to work out the mud when dirt is cast in to infect it.

[2.] True mortification proceeds from an anger with, and a hatred of, sin, whereas restraints are from a fear of the consequents of sin; as a man may love the wine, which is as yet too hot for his

lips. But mortification proceeds from an anger, a desire of revenge. Hence sin is called an abomination to a good man as well as to God; which signifies an intense and well-heated anger. It is not only a passionateness, which upon some disappointment in sin, or a tasting the bitterness of it, may be vented against it, which is short-lived, and quickly allayed, as the sea after a storm; but it is a rooted revenge, which is the sweetest passion, and accomplished by many projects and contrivances. A man tastes a sweetness in giving blow after blow to sin, as before he took a pleasure in, and had friendship with it.

[3.] Mortification is a voluntary, rational work of the soul; restraints are not so. The devil hath nothing of his nature altered, but hath as strong an inclination to sin as ever, though the act he intends is often hindered by God. As in the case of Job, his malice was as great before to do him a mischief; but God puts a bar upon him, and refuses him a licence, Job 1:10. Now if that grace which hinders be no more than what a devil hath, it no more argues a man mortified than the devil's forbearance of sin argues him mortified, and recovering his angelical state.

2. We may judge of our mortification positively.

(1.) When upon a temptation that did usually excite the beloved lust, it doth not stir, it is a sign of a mortified state; as it is a sign of the clearness of a fountain, when after the stirring of the water the mud doth not appear. Peter's sin seems to be self-confidence, but it was a sign of a greater mortification of it, that when Christ pressed him to declare his love in that demand, John 21:15, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' he would not vaunt his love to Christ to be greater than the rest of his brethren's. His answer goes no further than, 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' without adding 'more than these.' As it is with a man that is sick, set the most savoury meat before him, which before he had a value for, if he cannot taste it, and his appetite be not provoked by the sight, it is an argument of the strength of his distemper, and where it is lasting, of his approaching death; so when a man hath a temptation to sin, decked and garnished with all the allurements the devil can dress it with, and he hath no stomach to close with it, it is a sign of a mortified frame. It is a sign of the power of sin, when upon the fair offer it makes, and the alluring baits it lays, the affections to it are presently stirred; it is an evidence of a co-naturality and a mighty agreement between that sin and the heart, when upon every spark it takes fire; it is a sign a man was filled with all unrighteousness, and had not only a few loose corns about him; so on the contrary, when upon the least motion of temptation, that was wont to have the gates open for it, the affections rise against it, and upon the least alarm all run to the walls to defend them and forbid the entrance; it is an evidence of the weakness of that lust that kept before a correspondence with such temptations, and the greater evidence it is when the temptation is high and yet vigorously resisted; as when a spring-tide is high and blown in with the wind, it is an argument of the strength and firmness of the bank to keep it out from entering upon the ground; whereas when a man is carried away by every temptation, as marsh ground is drowned at every tide, it is a sign that there is no mortifying grace at all, but a great friendliness between sin and the heart. None will question the deadness of that tree at the root which doth not bud upon the return of the spring sun; nor need we question the weakness of that corruption which doth not stir upon the presenting a suitable temptation.

(2.) When we meet with few interruptions in duties of worship. The multitude of such diversions, and an easiness to comply with them, is a sign of an unmortified frame; as it is the sign of much weakness in a person, and the strength of his distemper, when he is not able to hold fast anything,

or when the least blow or jog makes him let go his hold. In duty we are to lay fast hold on God, Hebrews 6:18, and join ourselves to the Lord, Isa. Leviticus 3:1-17; it is a weak union when every puff of wind is able to separate us. When the starting of sin in us doth easily turn us from our course, it argues either our credulity to believe its enticements, or our affection to love its allurements; and also the force and strength of sin; as the frequent starting of an enemy from woods and fastnesses to obstruct our passage, is a sign of some strength remaining, and of more than some few scattered troops, rather some well-bodied army. The more there is of a man's self, flesh, unspiritualness in any service, the more there is of an unmortified temper. The sprouting up of such fruits argues much juice and sap at the root, especially when the eruptions of sins are more numerous and vigorous than the resistances of them. But when the heart can run its race in a service with some freedom, and the interruptions from the flesh are few and languishing, it is a sign it hath met with a weakening wound; they are rather gasps of corruption than any strong attempts.

(3.) When we bring forth the fruits of the contrary graces, it is a sign sin is mortified. It is to this end that sin is killed by the Spirit, that fruit may be brought forth to God; the more sweet and full fruit a tree bears, the more evidence there is of the weakness of those suckers which are about the root to hinder its generous productions. Believers are called vines, and olives planted in a fair soil, and God the husbandman, who waters and dresseth, prunes, and cuts off the luxuriant branches that he may have fruit, and 'fruit meet for him,' John 15:1-2. The more fruit is brought forth, the greater sign that the soul is purged, and whatsoever is an enemy to that fruit is cut off and weakened. The more nature doth rise to the exercise of acts proper to it, the more the strength of the disease that oppresses it is wasted. Every exercise of grace is both a discovery of the weakness of sin, and a fresh blow given to it for the wounding of it.

III. The reasons why there can be no expectation of eternal life without mortification, are,

1. An unmortified frame is unsuitable to a state of glory. There must be a meetness for a state of glory before there be an entrance into it, Colossians 1:12. Vessels of glory must be first seasoned with grace. Conformity to Christ is to fit us for heaven. He descended to the grave, and there laid his infirmities, before he ascended into heaven; so our sins must die before our souls can mount. It is very unsuitable for sin's drudges to have a saint's portion. A fleshly state is unfit for a spiritual life. All men are under the power of the devil or under the power of Christ. The world lies én tw ponarw, under the power of the devil, 1 John 5:19, (Camero). He that hath the wicked spirit ruling in him, and not cast out, with all his accomplices, by the Spirit of God, cannot hope to have a friend's privilege, but an enemy's punishment. A fleshly palate cannot relish an heavenly life: Matthew 16:28, 'Thou savourest not the things that be of God.' Where there is no savour of God in this world, but only of what is contrary to God, there cannot be a savour of him in another world. Every vessel must be emptied of its foul water before it can receive that which is clean. No man pours rich wine into old casks.

2. God cannot in any wise delight in an unmortified soul. To delight in such would be to have no delight in himself and his own nature; the less the degrees of our mortification, the less God doth delight in us. He hath no pleasure in wickedness; the more maims, diseases, rottenness any have, the less pleasure there is. Sin is a mire; the more miry we are, the less can God embrace us, Psalms 5:4. It is a plague; the more it spreads, the less will he be conversant with us. The more of

a swinish, viperous, serpentine nature, the less of God's affections. Sin represents us more monstrous in God's eyes than the filthiest things in the world can do in man's. To keep sin alive is to defend it against the will of God, and to challenge the combat with our Maker.

3. Unmortified sin is against the whole design of the gospel and death of Christ, as though the death of Christ were intended to indulge us in sin, and not to redeem us from it. That sin should die, was the end of Christ's death; rather than sin should not die, Christ would die himself. It is an high disesteem of Christ to preserve the life of sin in spite of the death of the Redeemer, and if we defend what he died to conquer, how can we expect to enjoy what he died to purchase? It is a contempt of his death not to look after that mortifying grace, which was the purchase of so deep a passion. The grace of the gospel of God doth more especially teach this lesson, Titus 2:4, 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.' Grace in God was the motive to him not to account the blood of Christ too dear for us, and therefore should teach us not to account the blood of our sins too dear for him. The tenor of the gospel is, that a man without mortification has no interest in Christ, and therefore no right to glory, Psalms 5:4. It is an inseparable character of them that are Christ's, that 'they have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,' i.e., they are Christ's that are under the power of his death, not they that only hold the opinion of his death, or they are Christ's that are truly planted into the likeness of his death, Romans 6:5.

IV. The use; of exhortation.

Let us labour to mortify sin. If we will not be the death of sin, sin will be the death of our souls. Though the allurements of sin may be pleasant, the propositions seemingly fair, yet the end of all is death, Romans 5:21. Death was threatened by God and executed upon Adam; death must be executed upon our sins, in order to the restoration of the eternal life of our souls. Love to everlasting life should provoke us, fear of everlasting death should excite us to this, the two most solemn and fundamental passions that put us upon action. 'Why will you die?' was God's expostulation, Ezekiel 33:11; Why should thou, O my soul, for a short vanishing pleasure, venture an eternal death? should be our expostulation with ourselves. This would be a curing our disease, bringing our soul into that order in part which was broken by the fall; by this the power of that tyrant that first headed and maintained the faction against God would be removed, and the soul recover that liberty and life it lost by disobeying of God. This would conduce to our peace. We have then a sprouting assurance when we are most victorious over our lusts: after every victory, God gives us a taste of the hidden manna, Revelation 2:17. Unmortified lusts do only raise storms and tempests in the soul; less pains are required to the mortification of them than to the satisfaction of them. Sin is a hard taskmaster; there must be a pleasure in destroying so cruel an inmate. Gratitude engages us; God's holiness and justice bruised Christ for us, and shall not we kill sin for him? An infinite love parted with a dear Son, and shall not our shallow finite love part with destroying lusts? We cannot love our sins so much as God loved his Son: he loved him infinitely. If God parted with him for us, shall not we part with our sins for him? He would have us kill it because it hurts us; the very command discovers affection as well as sovereignty, and minds us of it as our privilege as well as our duty. And to engage us to it, he hath sent as great a person to help us as to redeem us, viz, his Spirit; he sent one to merit it, and the other to assist us in it and work it in us, who is to bring back the creature to God by conquering that in it which hath so long detained it captive. And therefore to this purpose,

1. Implore the help of the Spirit. Whenever we set seriously upon this work at any time, let us apply ourselves to the Spirit of God, as one in office to this end, as being a Spirit of holiness not only in his nature but in his operations, Ephesians 1:13, Romans 1:4. The Father and the Son are not so often called holy as the Spirit, who is called the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost, not that he is more holy than the other persons, but in regard of his office to work holiness in the hearts of men. As Jehoshaphat upon the assault from the enemy cried unto God for deliverance, so upon any arming of our corruptions we should cry to the Spirit for assistance; he doth as much delight to be our auxiliary on earth, as Christ doth to be our advocate in heaven. The neglects of application to him are the cause of our miscarriages we are half persuaded to a sin before we beg strength against it.

2. Listen to the convictions of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to convince, by shaking the soul out of its carnal lethargy. As the Spirit gives a strong alarm at the first conversion, whereby the soul sees the strength of its enemy, and the greatness of its danger, its own impotency and inability to contest with it, so upon carrying on the degrees of mortification, there are various alarms to put us upon a holy watchfulness against the projects of sin. Listen to these convictions which come in by the word, which is the ministration of the Spirit, and in respect to the spiritual energy of it is called spirit, John 6:53.

3. Plead the death of Christ. The end of his death was to triumph over sin. As to take away the guilt of sin, he was the righteousness of God; so to take away the dominion of sin, he is the power of God: his expiation of sin, and his condemnation of it, were twisted together in his sacrifice, Romans 8:3. 'For sin,' or a sacrifice for sin, 'condemned sin in the flesh' and the consideration of his death, and the end of it, would inflame us to desire not to be under the power of a condemned malefactor. A consideration of his death, and that sin had its hands imbrued in his blood, would awaken our love to him, and an indignation against his enemy.

4. Let us often think of divine precepts. The frequent meditation on the law of God would excite our endeavours after a principle more conformable to the purity of that law. God's commands establish not men's humours, neither do they gratify men's lusts, but are suited to the holy nature of God, a conformity to which ought to be our aim in mortification.

5. Let us be jealous of our own hearts. Venture not to breathe in corrupt air, for fear of infection. There is a principle in the heart naturally disposed to take fire upon the spark of a temptation. A strict watch in a city hinders foreign correspondence and intestine treachery.

6. Let us often think deeply of the corruption of our natures, how loathsome it is to God, and this will make it loathsome to us. The more it is abominated, the more it is mortified; the supplies of it are cut off, its attempts discovered. When Paul considered his misery by the body of death, it strengthened his resolution of serving God with the law of his mind, Romans 7:24-25, which must needs be accompanied with a strong resistance of the law of his members.

7. Let us bless God for whatsoever mortifying grace we have received, though never so little. When we pay him in praise what we receive of him, it is the way to have more from him. David grew hot against Nabal after he had received his churlish answer, 1 Samuel 25:1-44, and resolved the murder of the whole family, which he had no authority to do; but God prevents him by Abigail's intercession; he blesses God for the success of it, in hindering his intentions. And as God prevented his sin, so, after his thanks. giving, he took away the occasion of his evil resolution, by

calling Nabal, ten days after, into another world, 1 Samuel 25:38; and gives him further occasion of praise, 1 Samuel 25:39. A little strength, owned as the gift of God, shall be backed with more. Praising God for what we receive, as well as praying for what we want, is a means to promote the mortification of our sins in order to eternal life.

Author

Stephen Charnock, who was born in London, in 1642 entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and there was converted. His public ministry began in Southwark, London, after receiving his B.D. from the university. In 1650 he earned a fellowship at New College, Oxford, where he associated with Thomas Goodwin and John Howe. He became chaplain in 1655 to Henry Cromwell, governor of Ireland. He earned his reputation in Dublin, where his preaching without notes greatly impressed his listeners. With the coming of the Restoration, he lost his position and lived in London in semi-retirement until his death. For a short time he was joint pastor with Thomas Watson of the church at Crosby Hall.

Charnock published only one sermon in his lifetime, his greatest works being published after his death. A Discourse of Divine Providence was published in 1680 and followed in 1682 by On the Existence and Attributes of God. His complete works were published in nine volumes in 1815 with a biography prefixed by Edward Parsons. Charnock's style was lofty and sublime. He wrote of God's attributes in a declarative, nonspeculative manner. He set forth the divine attributes as qualities (not impersonal abstractions) observable in God's dealings with men. He was grave without being dull and thorough without being wearisome.

A Discourse of the Cleansing Virtue of Christ's Blood

A Discourse of the Cleansing Virtue of Christ's Blood by Stephen Charnock And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1:7. The apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, puts the saints to whom he writes in mind of the Gospel he had writ, wherein he had declared to them that Word of life which had been with the Father, and was manifested to the world, and which he now declares again, that they might have a fellowship with the apostles in the truth, and not with the false teachers in their errors; and for an incentive, assures them that the fellowship of those that kept the truth as it is in Jesus was with the Father and with the Son: 1 John 1:3, 1 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ: with the Father, as the source and spring of eternal life and happiness; with the Son, as mediator, who has opened the way to us, removed the bars, and given us an access to and a communion with the Father. For by sin we were alienated from God, our sin had caused justice to lock up the gates of paradise, and forbid such guilty and polluted offenders to approach to the pure majesty of God. The apostle, to encourage them to cleave to the gospel, proposes to them a fellowship with God by the means of Jesus Christ, his Son and our Mediator, as the chief happiness and felicity of man, and that which can only afford them a full and complete joy. And afterwards, 1 John 1:5, 1 'This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all;' he prescribes to them the means whereby they may keep up a communion with God, which he infers from the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, who is light: light, in regard of the clearness of his knowledge; light, in regard of his unstained purity, not tainted with the least spot or dust of evil, not having anything unworthy in his nature, nor doing anything unbecoming in his actions. If, therefore, our conversations be in darkness., if we wallow in the mire of any untamed, unmortified lust, what soever our evangelical professions may be, or howsoever we may fancy ourselves entered into a fellowship with the Father by the means of the mediator, it is but a lying imagination; for how can there be a communion between two natures so different, between light and darkness, purity and impurity, heaven and hell, God and the devil? But if our conversation be agreeable to gospel precepts, we have then a fellowship with him: 1 John 1:7, 'if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,' i.e. God has a fellowship with us in affection and delight, and we have a fellowship with God in salvation and happiness; God gives himself to us, and we give ourselves to God. He bestows grace and pardon on us, and we resign up our hearts and affections to him. And this is a certain proof that we are interested in the expiatory virtue of the blood of Christ. Or else those latter words may be a prevention of an objection which might result from the apprehension of the relics of corruption in the best man in this life. Since God is infinitely pure light, without darkness, and we have so much darkness mixed with our best light, we must for ever despair of having any fellowship with God; the infinite distance, by reason of our indwelling corruption, will put us out of all hopes of ever attaining such a sovereign felicity. But this reply is prevented by this clause of the apostle: 'And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' Let not the sense of your daily infirmities animate any desponding fears. If you square your hearts and lives in all sincerity according to the gospel

rule, there is a provision made for your security in the blood of Christ. God will wipe off the guilt of your defects by the virtue of that precious blood which has been shed for your reparation. The apostle here supposes remainders of sin in those that have the privilege of walking with God, and interest in the blessings of the covenant. The blood of Jesus Christ. By this is meant the last act in the tragedy of his life, his blood being the ransom of our souls, the price of our redemption, and the expiation of our sin. The shedding his blood was the highest and most excellent part of his obedience, Php 2:8, His whole life was a continual suffering, but his death was the top and complement of his obedience, for in that he manifested the greatest love to God and the highest charity to man. The expiatory sacrifices under the law were always bloody, death was to be endured for sin, and blood was the life of the creature; the blood or death of Christ is the cause of our justification. His Son. His sonship makes his blood valuable. It is blood, and so agreeable to the law in the penalty; it is the blood of the Son of God, and therefore acceptable to the lawgiver in its value. Though it was the blood of the humanity, yet the merit of it was derived from the divinity. It is not his blood as he was the son of the virgin, but his blood as he was the Son of God, which had this sovereign virtue. It is no wonder, therefore, that it should have such a mighty efficacy to cleanse the believers in it, in all ages of the world, from such vast heaps of guilt, since it is the blood of Christ, who was God; and valuable, not so much for the greatness of the punishment whereby it was shed, as the dignity of the person from whom it flowed. One Son of God weighs more than millions of worlds of angels.

Cleanseth. Cleansing and purging are terms used in Scripture for justifying as well as sanctifying. The apostle interprets washing of both those acts: 1 Corinthians 6:11, 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' The latter words are exegetical of the former; they both are the fruits of the merit of the blood of Christ. The one is the act of the Father as a judge appeased by that blood, the other the act of the Spirit as a sanctifier purchased by that blood. And so the 'washing of us in the blood of Christ,' spoken of Revelation 1:5, is to be understood of justification. Sanctification is expressed, Revelation 1:6, by 'making us kings and priests to God,' giving us royal and holy natures, to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God; and several times the word "chafar", which signifies to expiate, appease, is translated to sanctify, Exodus 29:33, Exodus 29:36, and to cleanse, Exodus 29:37; and a word that signifies cleansing is sometimes put for justifying, as in the third commandment, Exodus 20:7, 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain,' "lo yenakeh", will not cleanse or purge them. But it must be understood of cleansing from guilt, because it refers to the penalty of the law. It is here used in this sense; it is spoken to them that are sanctified and have a fellowship with God, that if they walk in the light, God will impute to them the blood of his Son for their absolution from the guilt of all their infirmities. The blood of Christ cleanseth.

1. It has a virtue to cleanse. It does not actually cleanse all, but only those that believe. Nor does it cleanse them from new sins, but upon renewed acts of faith. There is a sufficiency in it to cleanse all, and there is an efficacy in it to cleanse those that have recourse to it. As when we say a medicine purges such a humour, we understand it of the virtue and quality of the medicine, not that it purges unless it be taken in, or otherwise applied to the distempered person.

2. The blood of Christ cleanseth, not has cleansed, or shall cleanse. This notes a continued act. There is a perpetual pleading of it for us, a continual flowing of it to us. It is a fountain set open for sin, Zechariah 13:1. There is a constant streaming of virtue from this blood, as there is of

corruption from our nature. It was shed but once, it is applied often, and the virtue of it is as durable as the person whose blood it is.

3. The blood of Christ cleanseth. The apostle joins nothing with this blood. It has the sole and the sovereign virtue. There is no need of tainted merits, unbloody sacrifices, and terrifying purgatories. The whole of cleansing is ascribed to this blood, not anything to our own righteousness or works. It admits no partner with it, not the blood of martyrs nor the intercessions of saints.

4. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. It is an universal remedy. Whatsoever has the nature of sin, sins against the law and sins against the gospel. It absolves from the guilt of sin, and shelters from the wrath of God. The distinction of venial and mortal sins has no footing here; no sin but is mortal without it, no sin so venial but needs it. This blood purges not some sort of sins, and leaves the rest to be expiated by a purgatory fire. This expression of the apostle, of all sin, is water enough to quench all the flames of purgatory that Rome has kindled; what sins are not expiated by it are left not to a temporary, but an eternal death; not to a refining, but a consuming fire. So that we see these words are an antidote against fears arising by reason of our infirmities, a cordial against faintings, an encouragement to a holy walk with God. It is a short but a full panegyric of the virtue of the blood of Christ.

1. In regard of the effect, cleansing.

2. In regard of the cause of its efficacy. It is the blood of Jesus, a saviour; the blood of Christ, one appointed, anointed by God to be a Jesus; the blood of the Son of God, of one in a special relation to the Father, as his only begotten, beloved Son.

3. In regard of the extensiveness of it, all sin. No guilt so high but it can master, no stain so deep but it can purge; being the blood of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite virtue, it has as much force to demolish mountains of guilt as level mole-hills of iniquity. The words are a plain doctrine in themselves:

Doct. The blood of Christ has a perpetual virtue, and does actually and perfectly cleanse believers from all guilt. This blood is the expiation of our sin and the unlocking our chains, the price of our liberty and of the purity of our souls. The redemption we have through it is expressly called the forgiveness of sin, Ephesians 1:7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin,' - by a metonymy of the effect for the cause; remission was an act of redemption. When the apostle, Hebrews 10:14, tells, 'That by one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified,' he places this perfection in the remission of sin, Hebrews 10:17-18. He did in the offering himself so transact our affairs, and settle our concerns with God, that there was no need of any other offerings to eke it out or patch it up. As the blood of the typical sacrifices purified from ceremonial, so the blood of the anti-typical offering purifies from moral uncleanness. The Scripture places remission wholly in this blood of the Redeemer. When Christ makes his will and institutes his supper, he commends this as our righteousness: Matthew 26:28, 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,' according to the title and end given it in the prophet, Zechariah 9:11. 'By this blood of the covenant the prisoners are delivered from the pit of corruption, wherein there was no water; no water to quench our thirst, no water to cleanse our souls, but mud and mire to defile them. This was the design of his death, as himself speaks: Luke 24:46-47, 'That repentance and remission of sins

should be preached in his name amongst all nations.' And Peter, in his discourse at Cornelius his house, comprises in this the intent of the whole Scripture: 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins,' Acts 10:43. As this was the justifying blood in the time of the prophets, so it will be the justifying blood to the end of the world. By this blood only the robes of any are made white, Revelation 7:14; by this blood the accuser of the brethren is overcome and cast in his suit, Revelation 12:10-11. The maintaining of justification by this blood seems to be the great contest between the true church and the anti-Christian state.

(1.) The blood of Christ is to be considered morally in this act. The natural end of blood in the veins is a reparation of the substance of the body by a conversion of the blood into it. And the proper use of blood is not to cleanse, for it defiles and bespots anything whereon it is dropped; but morally considered, as the shedding of blood implies loss of life and punishment for a crime, so blood is an expiation of the crime, and a satisfaction to the law for the offence committed against it. As the shedding innocent blood does morally pollute a land, so the shedding the blood of the malefactor and murderer does morally cleanse a land: Numbers 35:33, 'Blood defiles the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it'. Had not this blood of Christ been shed, our sins had not been pardoned, our souls had not been secured, our chains had continued, and our terrors had been increased; the strokes of justice had been felt, and the face of mercy had been veiled; we had wholly been the vassals of the one, and foreigners to the other.

(2.) The cleansing is to be doubly considered. There is a cleansing from guilt, and a cleansing from filth, both are the fruits of this blood: the guilt is removed by remission, the filth by purification. Christ does both: he cleanses us from our guilt as he is our righteousness, from our spot as he is our sanctification; for he is both to us, 1 Cor. 1:8, the one upon the account of his merit, the other by his efficacy, which he exerts by his Spirit. The proper intendment of the blood of Christ was to take off the curse of the law, and free us from our guilt; the washing off our stains is the proper work of the Spirit, upon that account signified to us by water in the prophets. The blood and water flowing from the side of Christ upon the cross were distinct, John 19:34-35, as appears by the great seriousness wherewith John affirms the relation: 'He that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knows that he saith true.' These two liquors flowed from his side distinctly, and do not mingle in their streams; and this seems to be so disposed by the providence of God, to signify that from the death of Christ there flow two sorts of benefits of a different nature, and which ought to be differently considered; viz., sanctification, represented by water destined to washing; and justification, which arises from satisfaction, represented by the blood shed for remission of sin. These both spring up from the death of Christ, yet they belong to two distinct offices of Christ. He justifies us as a surety, a sacrifice by suffering, as a priest by merit; but he sanctifies us as a king, by sending his Spirit to work efficaciously in our hearts. When we consider the blood of Christ, we consider Christ as a sacrifice; and sacrifices were called purifications, *kaqarmata*, not in regard of washing away the filth, but expiating the guilt of sin; yet indeed the justifying virtue of this blood is never exerted without a sanctifying virtue accompanying it. As blood and water flowed out of the side of Christ together, so blood and water flow into the heart of a sinner together. The typical blood of the covenant, when sprinkled by Moses upon the book and people, was mixed with water, Hebrews 9:19-20, to signify that holiness, signified by water, accompanies the application of

propitiation, signified by blood. All the force of sin consisted in condemnation, to which it had subjected men as it was a transgression of the law, and in conjunction therewith it had defiled the soul as it was loathsome, and filthy. Now Christ shed his blood to make an expiation of sin, and sent his Spirit to make a destruction of sin. By virtue of his death there is no condemnation for sin, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:3; by virtue of the grace of his Spirit there is no dominion of sin. Romans 6:4, Romans 6:14.

(3.) This cleansing from guilt may be considered as meritorious or applicative. As the blood of Christ was offered to God, this purification was meritoriously wrought; as particularly pleaded for a person, it is actually wrought; as sprinkled upon the conscience, it is sensibly wrought. The first merits the removal of guilt, the second solicits it, the third ensures it; the one was wrought upon the cross, the other is acted upon his throne, and the third pronounced in the conscience. The first is expressed, Romans 3:26, his blood rendered God propitious; the second, Hebrews 9:12, as he is entered into the holy of holies; the third, Hebrews 9:14, Christ justifies as a sacrifice in a way of merit; and when this is pleaded, God justifies as a judge in a way of authority. Christ laid the foundation of a discharge from all guilt upon the cross, and procures an actual discharge upon the first look of a sincere faith towards him; and when this blood is sprinkled upon the conscience, it 'purgeth it from dead works,' Hebrews 9:14, from the guilt of death we contracted by sinful works, and from the sentence of death which the law pronounced by reason of those works, that thereby we may have a liberty to appear before God, and be fit to serve him. The sprinkling the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary, and the person officiating in it, was the applying of the propitiation made by the sacrifice to those things for the special consecration of them unto God. No blood was sprinkled but the blood of the victim, solemnly offered unto God upon the altar, according to his own appointment; no blood applied to the conscience can cleanse it but the blood of this great sacrifice, which is peculiarly called 'the blood of sprinkling,' as it is the blood of the covenant, Hebrews 12:24. The virtue of it conveyed as sprinkled is from the propitiation it made as shed. A not guilty is entered into the court of God when this blood is pleaded, and a not guilty inscribed upon the roll of conscience when this blood is sprinkled. It appeases God's justice and quenches wrath. As it is pleaded before his tribunal, it silences the accusations of sin; and quells tumults in a wrangling conscience, as it is sprinkled upon the soul.

2. The evidence of this truth well appears;-

(1.) From the credit it had for the expiation and cleansing of guilt, before it was actually shed, and the reliance of believers in all ages on it. The blood of Christ was applied from the foundation of the world, though it was not shed till the fullness of time. They had the benefit of the promise of redemption before the accomplishment of the sacrifice for redemption. The cleansing we have now is upon the account of the blood of Christ already shed; the cleansing they had then was upon the account of the blood of Christ in time to be shed: the one respects it as past, the other as future. We must distinguish the virtue from the work of redemption. The work was appointed in a certain time, but the virtue was not restrained to a certain time, but was communicated to believers from the foundation of the world, as well as extended to the last ages of the world.

Several considerations will clear this.

[I.] The Scripture speaks but of one person designed for this great work. John Baptist speaks of 'the Lamb of God,' pointing to one lamb appointed to 'take away the sins of the world,' John 1:29.

The world is to be understood cronkkwV, for all ages, all times of the world; as the same is meant, 1 John 2:2, 'He is a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins, of the whole world;' and he, and only he, is the propitiation, by once offering of himself. Not for the sins of us only that live in the dregs of time, and the declining age of the world, but of those that went before in all ages of the world, from its youth till his appearance in the flesh and expiring upon the cross. Christ is said to be the one mediator, in the same sense that God is said to be the one God: 1 Timothy 2:5, 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' As there is but one creator of man, so there is but one mediator for men. As God is the God of all that died before Christ came, as well as of those that lived after, so Christ is the mediator of all that died before his coming, as well as of those that saw his day. They had Christ for their mediator, or some other; some other they could not have, because there is but one. They might as well have had another creator besides God, as another mediator besides the man Christ Jesus. In regard of the antiquity of his mediation from the foundation of the world, he is represented, when he walks as mediator in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, with 'hair as white as wool,' a character of age, Revelation 1:14. As God is described so in regard of his eternity, Daniel 7:9. There is but one God from eternity, but one mediator, whose mediation has the same date as the foundation of the world, and runs parallel with it; but one captain of salvation also for many sons, Hebrews 2:10, that were brought to glory. All that were brought to glory were brought into that happy state by this captain of salvation, as made perfect by sufferings; so that either none were brought to glory before the sufferings of Christ, which is not true, or they were brought to glory by virtue of the sufferings of that captain of salvation. If that one captain were not a perfect head of salvation but by shedding his blood, then those that were under his conduct from the beginning of the world could not be perfect, but upon the account of his passion. For they had no perfection but in and by their head; the same way that he was justified for them, they were justified by him.

[2.] This one mediator was set forth ever since the fall of man as the foundation of pardon and recovery. The covenant of grace commencing from the time of the fall of man, the virtue of this blood, which is the blood of the covenant, bore the same date; and, indeed, the blood of the Redeemer, as the way of procuring restoration, was signified in that first promise, which was the first dawning of the covenant of grace after that black night of obscurity the revolt of man had drawn upon the world, Genesis 3:15. The recovery of man from that gulf of misery the head or subtle brains of the serpent had cast them into, is promised there to be by a man (for that must be signified by the seed of the woman), and some great and worthy person able for so great an undertaking, and to be effected by suffering, intimated by bruising his heel, which could not be without something of blood in the case. Satan would not cease, but express his enmity against the dissolver of his works, and the deliverer of his captives. It must also signify a deliverance from that which he was reduced to by the subtilty of the serpent, and that was sin and destruction. It could not be meant of a freedom from a bodily death, because this promise being made before, the pronouncing the sentence of a bodily death, which was not till ver. 19, was a bar to any such thought, for it had been a mockery, a falsity in God to promise Adam a redemption for that, and afterward overturn his promise by threatening that which he had promised before to redeem him from. This bruise, therefore, that the seed of the woman was to receive from the devil, at what time soever it should be inflicted, was to extend in the virtue of it to Adam, and his believing posterity that should come upon and go off the stage of the world before the revolution of that time wherein

it was to be transacted; otherwise, the making of this promise to him, which should not distil any gracious dews upon him, had been to feed him with mere smoke, a thing unbecoming the Creator of the world. Besides, it was declared in types and figures. As the ceremonial uncleanness, which the legal sacrifices were appointed to purge, was an image of the moral impurity which needed expiation, so the blood of beasts, shed for the cleansing of it, was a shadow of that blood which was designed in the fullness of time for the expiation of the other. Nay, there were not only types of it, but plain prophecies concerning it. The righteousness whereby all believers are justified is witnessed in the whole current of Scripture, both by the law and the prophets, to be without the works of the law: 'Even that righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ,' Romans 3:21-22. And therefore when there was a conference between Moses and Elias on the one part, and Christ on the other, the subject of it is not anything but that of his decease, Luke 9:81: the declaration of that being the chief intent of the types of the law, instituted by the ministry of Moses; and of the prophets, whereof Elias was the chief, though not in the publishing of the mediator, yet in the peculiar mark of the favour of God in his translation to heaven. But Isaiah is the plainest and most illustrious in the proclamations of the coming, the design and methods of the Redeemer. And particularly the pardon of sin by virtue of his suffering is discovered: Isaiah 43:24-25, 'Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, then hast wearied me with thine iniquities.' Then it follows, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake.' Christ is said to serve with their sins; and Isaiah 53:1-12 is a comment upon this, showing what kind of servitude it was that the Redeemer endured, and what that weariness was which he sustained for our iniquity, viz. that he was wounded, bruised, and offered up. The whole scope of the chapter proves this, for it is spent in numbering up the benefits of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and gathering a church from all parts of the world, Isaiah 43:5-6, &c., and Isaiah 43:19-20; and in the last part describes the chiefest benefit by the Messiah, viz. propitiation and remission of sin; and to show that pardon was wholly free, he removes all false causes of pardon, human merit, and legal sacrifices: Isaiah 43:22-23, 'Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast not filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices;' and then publishes the merit of the Messiah, serving with, or in their sins, upon which account out of mere grace the sins of men are blotted out, Isaiah 43:24-25; as much as to say, Not thou, O Jacob, by thy duties and offerings hast merited the blotting out of thy sins. That glory is only due to me, who served with thy sins in dying and suffering, and paid the price of redemption, that by this means, without thy merit, thy sins might be wiped out; and, Isaiah 43:27-28, he declares the rejection of the Jewish church, the giving Jacob to a curse and Israel to reproach, for their refusal of this way of redemption.

[8.] Though these promises and prophecies of the expiation and cleansing of sin were something obscure to them, and though they did not exactly know the method how it would be accomplished, yet that sin should be pardoned was fully revealed, and something of the method of it might be known unto them.

First, That sin should be pardoned was fully revealed to them, and their faith had something clear for their support. It was sufficient that he had published a time wherein and a seed whereby Satan's head should be bruised, and afterwards had proclaimed his name in text letters, to be 'a God pardoning iniquities, transgressions, and sins,' Exodus 34:6. How could Jacob without the knowledge of this say at his expiring hour that he had waited for God's salvation? Gen. x59:18; how could David else so earnestly have begged for a purging hyssop? how could he be confident

that there was a grace to make him as white as the unspotted snow, and his bloody soul as pure as unstained wool? Psalms 51:7; how could Manasseh have with so much confidence laid himself at the feet of God in his prison, had he looked upon him only as a revenging and not a pitying God? The promise of God's being their God was often inculcated to them, assuring them thereby that the thing should be done, that nothing of pardon and the fruit of it should be wanting to them, though the manner was not declared in that promise; for the promise of God's being their God included all spiritual blessings, particularly this of cleansing from sin, without which he could not be their God in a way of grace, but their judge in a way of wrath.

Secondly, They might know something of the method and manner of it. The mercy of God was revealed, the pardon of sin assured, and sacrifices instituted among the Jews to keep up their faith in the expectation of this promised expiation; but the manner how, and the merit whereby, was not so clearly drawn out to their view, which is fully opened to us in the gospel, Ephesians 3:5. The types indeed were obscure; it is a hard matter to understand them now since the revelation of the gospel, much harder to spell them out by that moonlight before the sun was risen. Yet the believers then could not be ignorant, but there was some excellent thing wrapped up in them, that they were not appointed for any excellency they had in themselves, or any power to propitiate God and appease his anger, which God's disdainful speaking of them many times, when they rested upon their external sacrifices, might inform them of. They might collect from thence that they all had reference to some richer blood, and were images of some nobler sacrifice, besides what the foundation promise would mind them of, that some great person in our nature was designed for the bruising the serpent's head, by suffering the bruising of his heel by the force of the serpent. They could not read that glorious and comfortable name of God, Exodus 34:6, but that clause, Exodus 34:7, that he would 'by no means clear the guilty,' (which belongs to his name as well as the other of pardoning, and is uttered in the same breath), might startle them, and would seem to be an exception to dash out the comfort of all the foregoing titles. How they could reconcile such distant terms of a God pardoning, and yet not clearing the guilty, without a reflection upon some grand expiatory sacrifice, which might render to justice what was due for their crimes, and draw forth from mercy what was necessary for their misery, I understand not. No doubt but some of them saw something of the Messiah's work wrapped up in the typical sacrifices and ceremonies; for it is not likely that they should all be wholly ignorant of the intendment of them. It is very likely that Job, who was not a Jew, but an Edomite, and, as some think, died that year the Israelites came out of Egypt, had the knowledge of redemption by the Messiah, and why might not the Israelites also have some knowledge of it as early? No question but they had; the place in Job is remarkable: Job 19:25, 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.' Most, both of Protestants and papists, understand it of Christ. The word is "go'el" a Redeemer by right of affinity, as Christ was, being our brother by the assumption of our nature; and he seems to speak not only of one that was a redeemer in act, but a redeemer by office, and his appearance to be in the latter day refers to his incarnation in the latter age of the world, whom himself also should behold with his eyes at the resurrection. It is some extraordinary and remarkable thing that he would have so noted, for Job 19:23-24, he speaks: 'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book, that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock for ever.' He would have it perpetually preserved and marked; and the comfort he took in the consideration of this his Redeemer to be incarnate so possesses him that it is observed that he does not utter such heavy complaints to the end of the book as he had done before. Christ

was as much Job's Redeemer before his incarnation and passion as ours since; yet as to the manner how he was to redeem, the price he was to pay, there was a veil upon him, till it was cleared up by the prophets, upon a nearer approach of the dawning of the fullness of time; for though they had some revelation of the Messiah as a great person, a great priest after the order of Melchisedec, a great king, a special favourite of God, yet how was he to cleanse sin they were ignorant of. As they did not know what new doctrines he would reveal as a prophet, or what kind of kingdom he should have as a monarch, so they did not fully know what kind of sacrifice he should offer as a priest. They had some kind of knowledge, but not a distinct one.

[4.] The ancient patriarchs had faith, and were actually pardoned. They had the same spirit of faith as those had which lived in the times of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:13. Noah is said to be 'a just man, and perfect in his generations,' Genesis 6:9, when he was young and when he was old; but how? 'He found grace in the eyes of the Lord,' ver. 8. He denied his own righteousness, and fled to the grace of God, which could not be exhibited to him but in Christ; for no grace without contented justice. The ground of all the comfort and joy Abraham had was the sight of the appearance of this bleeding Redeemer, though afar off, John 8:56. To what purpose was that sight, without a benefit redounding to him from it? And that great patriarch was justified by faith in him; which the apostle discourses of, Rom. iv.; and hereupon he was called 'the father of the faithful,' as being the first express pattern of justification set down in Scripture. For he was not the father of the faithful by carnal procreation, but upon the account of religion; the father, as he was the teacher by his example, the name of fathers being given to instructors. If he were not therefore cleansed and counted righteous upon the account of his blood, he could not be set forth as a pattern of justification unto others, the pattern being written one way and the copies another. It was the sole promise of the blessed seed which was the cause of his justification, not sacrifices or circumcision. The same righteousness is imputed to the father as is to the children, and the same to the children that was to the father. He and we have the same faith, the same object of faith; and by what we are justified, by the same he was justified. It was the same blessedness he and we have, the same gospel he and we heard, Galatians 3:8. The grace conferred upon David was from Christ: how could his sin else have been remitted, for which no sacrifice was appointed under the law? Psalms 51:16-17, 'Thou desiredst not sacrifice, else would I give it.' Supposing the legal sacrifices were sufficient, without any relation to something else to expiate the sin for which they were appointed, how should those sins of presumption which David was guilty of be expiated, since there was no institution of any legal victim for them? Surely the Israelites were not left destitute of help in this case. And God, by providing no sacrifice for those sins, intimated that there was a nobler sacrifice yet behind. The Messiah as a priest was in David's eye, whom he calls his Lord, though he was to proceed out of his loins, Psalms 110:1, Psalms 110:4. David's Lord by another right than as God, for he does distinguish him from the Father as Lord, and therefore David's Lord by another right, a right of redemption. The Jews had a sufficient account that the sacrifices of the law could not purge sin, in the sacrifice of the red heifer, Numbers 19:2, which could not expiate their sins. If it had a virtue to this purpose, why should the priest who sacrificed her and sprinkled the blood before the tabernacle, and the person that burnt her, and the person that gathered up the ashes, wash their clothes afterwards, and be unclean till the evening, Numbers 19:7-9, who were more likely than the rest to be expiated by it? Their sins were pardoned, but impossible to be so by the blood of bulls and goats, Hebrews 10:4, yet not without the interposition of a bloody sacrifice; for 'without blood there is no remission,' Hebrews 9:22, whereby the apostle proves the necessity of

the sacrifice of Christ. And could sin be pardoned without a sacrifice, the apostle's argument to evince the unpardonableness of the sin against the Holy Ghost, or of those that refused the sacrifice of Christ, would be invalid, for his reason to prove it unpardonable is because there is no more sacrifice for it; all which supposes the necessity of a satisfaction to justice by blood, to open the way to the throne of grace, and put any man into the favour of God. It was this blood, therefore, shed upon the cross, whereby the transgressions under the first testament were purged, and upon the account of which the promised inheritance was received, Hebrews 9:15. Christ could not else have pronounced a blessedness upon faith without the vision of him, as he does, John 20:19, 'Blessed are they that have believed, and have not seen,' meaning those that died in faith in the time of the law. And the apostle is express in it, that Christ 'by that one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Hebrews 10:14, understanding those that were sanctified, or cleansed, or pardoned before the actual offering, as appears by the ground of this his inference, which was the insufficiency of all other sacrifices to take away sin. There was never but one God that justifies, never but one way of justification, and that by faith, as the apostle argues, Rom. 3:80, and therefore but one cause of the justification of all them that went before, because but one object of faith, the blood of the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. In him only all things were gathered and summed up into blessedness, Ephesians 1:12, and men are blessed in him, Psalms 72:17. In his merit, says the Chaldee paraphrase, understanding it of the Messiah.

[5.] And this might well be, on account of the compact between the Father, the Judge, and the Son, the Redeemer. Had he not promised the shedding of his blood, justice had dislodged the sinner from the world. All hopes of regaining paradise had been lost, without it the authority of the law had not been preserved, the sacredness of divine truth had been violated, and the rectitude of his government laid in the dust by an easy indulgence, and passing over the sin. Christ therefore stood up, and promised his soul as a sacrifice for sin. He was before Abraham was: John 8:58, 'Before Abraham was, I am;' I am, I was what I am now, a Mediator; by promise, by constitution, by acceptation; and therefore 'Abraham saw my day, and was glad,' as it is before, John 8:56. I was a Lamb slain, accepted as a Lamb slain, as Mediator, upon credit. His office was of a more ancient date than his incarnation; and he was the same in the function of a Mediator before as he was after his taking our flesh, the same for them in his compact as he was for us in the performance. A man may be freed from prison upon the promise of a surety worthy of credit, though the debt be not actually paid till some time after, according to agreement; and the possession of a purchase may be delivered, though a time afterwards be set for the payment of the price. The payment of the ransom is not of absolute necessity before the deliverance of the captive. Many were delivered from their bonds by God before the payment made by Christ, but not before the payment promised by him. The blood of this sacrifice as shed reaches us though sixteen hundred years since it was poured out; but the blood of this sacrifice promised by the Redeemer, and receiving credit with God, reached Adam four thousand years before it was shed. God imparted the virtue before Christ actually merited, and freed the captive before the ransom was paid; yet upon the account of the promised merit and contracted ransom, natural causes must be before the effect, moral causes may be after the effect. The blood of Christ cleanses not as a natural, but as a moral cause. He was in this respect a 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Revelation 13:8: slain federally, though not actually; imputatively, though not really; sententially in the acceptation of the judge, though not executively in the enduring the passion; and therefore he was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world efficaciously, by whose blood the ancient believers were sprinkled, as well

as those of a later date. And though some refer those words, from the foundation of the world, not to the word slain, but to the writing of the names in the book of life of the Lamb, 'whose names were written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb slain,' it will not much alter the thing. The slaying of the Lamb was agreed, as well as the writing the names in the book; and it will also follow, that no man had any place in the book, but had also an interest in the Lamb slain, and the benefits he enjoyed by virtue of the register were to flow to him through the blood of the covenanting Redeemer, and their names were writ there upon the credit of the Lamb to be slain; for in him was the choice made before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4, and through him were the blessings of pardon given out from the foundation of the world. Had not this Lamb offered himself to be slain, man had been cast into everlasting chains as well as the devils, who had no mediator, no lamb to be slain for them. Well, then, it follows from hence, that the blood of Christ is of a full credit with God. Christ was the same to the patriarchs as to the apostles: Hebrews 13:8, 'He was the same yesterday, today, and forever;' yesterday, to Adam, four thousand years since. Yesterday, in the Hebrew phrase, often signifies all the time past; today, now in the time of his appearance forever, to the generations that follow, not only in regard of his person and deity, but in regard of his office and benefits. It is not meant of his deity, but of his mediation, as will appear by the following verse, where the apostle designs the alienating their judgments from too high an opinion of the ceremonial rites and sacrifices. They never purged sin, but Christ was the cause of the purgation of them under the law as well as under the gospel, though he were not so distinctly known by them as by us. The blood of Christ extended to believers in all ages; he was a seed for Abraham as well as Abraham's seed: Genesis 21:12, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called;' "zera' lecha", a seed for thee, it may be rendered, a seed for thy good, and eternal deliverance; not only a seed out of his loins, but a seed for his benefit. As a flash of lightning out of a cloud in the night enlightens all things both before and behind it, so the righteousness and blood of Christ is imputed not only to men that come after him, but to those that went before him. If the credit of it were so great then, the merit of it is as great now, since the actual effusion of the blood. It is therefore rightly a blood that cleanses from all sin.

(2.) This was the true and sole end of his incarnation and death. All the ends mentioned by the angel Gabriel to Daniel centre in this and refer to it: Daniel 9:24, 'To finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,' and thereby should all the visions and prophecies concerning the Messiah and his work be fulfilled. And to this purpose would 'the Most Holy' be 'anointed,' as the cause and foundation of all that removal of sin mentioned before. All the words which signify sin, and contain in them all sorts of sin, are here expressed, to show the completeness of the design in regard of the subject the Messiah was to remove out of the way. The word translated to finish, "chala'", signifies also to shut up or restrain; and the word translated to make an end, "chatam", signifies to seal up. Sin was to be restrained from ravaging about at pleasure like a devouring monster, or shut up and stopped from being an accuser to condemnation; and sealed up, not for confirmation of sin, but for concealment of it, as things sealed are not to be looked into but by persons authorised thereunto. It is a breach of trust, and an invasion of another's right, to do it. So God is said to cover sin, and Christ here to seal up sin by his blood, and for ever hide it from the face of God, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, or expiate it. Since it was sin only that was the cause of the enmity, and which separated us from communion with God, wherein the happiness of a creature is placed, there was a necessity, for our rescue from misery, to remove our guilt, that that which tore us

might be muzzled, that that which accused us might be silenced, that that which was a bar to our happiness might be demolished, that so the misery we endured might fly from us, and the blessings we wanted might flow down to us. For this cause the Messiah was anointed, and for this end he undertook his employment on earth, to remove the obstacle which hindered our access to God. Hence we find that the covenant of grace, when spoken of in the Old Testament to be fully revealed in the latter days, contains chiefly those promises of 'blotting out transgressions, and remembering sin no more.'

[1.] This is the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The apostle therefore, with a particular emphasis, tells them this is a thing to be known and acknowledged by all that own Christianity: 1 John 3:5, 'And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins.' You know nothing of Christianity if you know not and believe not this, that Christ appeared to take away the guilt of sin by a non-imputation, and to quell the power of sin by a mortification of it; to remove the punishment it had merited, and the corruption it had established in the hearts of men. Sin therefore will perfectly be cleansed both by remission and sanctification, else Christ would fall short of the end of his manifestation. This was the doctrine the apostles were first charged to publish, both as the reason of Christ's suffering and of his resurrection, that 'remission of sins might be preached in his name among all nations,' Luke 24:46-47; remission of sin, as purchased by his death, and assured by his resurrection. The foundation of pardon was in his passion, and the manifestation of the efficacy of his passion was by his resurrection; both of them therefore were to be declared in order to this end. And though Paul was not then present at this first commission (as being one born out of due time, and summoned into the office of apostleship afterward), yet his instructions were of the same nature, and observed by him in the same order: 1 Corinthians 15:3, 'For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,' viz. first, 'How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' Set aside this end, what attractive can there be in a crucified man, one made the derision and reproach of his nation, to cause any to believe in him? Faith particularly pitches upon the death of Christ, and particularly eyes in that passion the intent both of the sender and of him that is sent. The first thing himself published when he exercised his office was this jubilee: Luke 4:18-19, 'The acceptable year of the Lord,' wherein captives were to be delivered, debts to be remitted, and bonds to be cancelled. That was the main end of his coming to die, which, when done, was the sole reason of his advancement; the purging sin, and our sin, was the ground of his glorious sitting at the right hand of God, Hebrews 1:3.

[2.] There could be no other end of his shedding his blood but this. Since his death is called a 'sacrifice,' Ephesians 5:2; a 'propitiation,' 1 John 2:2, Romans 3:25, it can be for no other end but the cleansing of sin; for this was the reason of the institution of sacrifices. Blood shed in a sacrifice way implied blood criminal, and deserving to be shed. Had he come upon the earth in a stately grandeur, to rout armies of men, batter down the walls of cities and demolish empires, the rooting out of tyranny and monsters might have been thought his design. But this was no way for the expiation of sin, but the destruction of the sinner. But coming to shed his blood, to be a sacrifice, to be the reproach of men, and to be God's servant in this office, which he was not by nature, what end can be imagined but somewhat in relation to sin, and that both to the expiation and destruction of it? For dying and shedding his blood for it was not the way to maintain sin, but to abolish it; not a means to render iniquity lovely, but odious. If this were not the issue of his death, it would be useless, his blood would be shed in vain. His death, being a punishment and by way of sacrifice,

must be for some end, it could not be for anything relating to himself, or to merit anything for himself; for, being God, there could be no accession of happiness to him; he needed not to merit anything, because he wanted nothing. All merit is a desert of something which is not at present possessed, but desired to be possessed. He had not, nor could, commit any sin for which he should become a sacrifice. The Deity is incapable of unrighteousness and crime. The punishment was not therefore upon any account of his own. No crime was committed by him in his humanity that might merit the infliction of such a punishment; this was impossible, for whatsoever crime had been committed in his humanity had been the crime of his person, and so had been a spot upon his deity, united in one person with his humanity. Besides, he took human nature to suffer in it; his incarnation had an ought to suffer linked to it, so that his shedding his blood was resolved on before any crime could be committed, if it were to be supposed that in his humanity he were capable of any error or miscarriage. His blood must be shed for some other, and the punishment inflicted upon him which was merited by some other persons. It could not be for the holy angels; they were innocent, and not criminally indebted, and therefore obnoxious to no penalty. It being for the taking away of sin, the word sin excludes the good angels, who never sinned, but always obeyed God, Psalms 103:21; nor could it be for the evil angels, for the Scripture excludes them from any redemption, and binds them for ever in chains of darkness, to bear the punishment in their own persons. Besides that, this punishment could not properly be borne in any other nature specifically distinct from their sinning nature, as it was. It must be for the sin of men, or for nothing. And consequently the death of Christ would be an insignificant thing; but it is utterly inconsistent with the wisdom and holiness of God to appoint, and the wisdom and honour of Christ to agree, to a task for nothing and to no purpose. Now since Christ offered his life to God (which he did not owe upon his own account), a reward was due to him upon the account of justice, which must consist in remitting something which he owed, or imparting something which he wanted. No debt for himself could he be charged with, no indigence could be in his humanity upon his own account, since all happiness was due to that by virtue of its union with the deity; nothing could be bestowed upon him for himself, because he wanted nothing; nothing could be remitted to him, because he owed nothing. Since therefore he so deeply humbled himself, not for himself but for others, and that there was a merit on his part, and consequently a just retribution on God's part due, it was necessary it should be given to some others upon his account, that what they owed might be remitted, and what they wanted might be bestowed. These could be no other than men whom he came to justify, and to whom the debt owing to God might be discounted, upon the account of Christ's payment.

3. This cleansing sin is wrought solely by his own worth, as he is the Son of God. It is therefore said in the text, the blood not only of Jesus Christ, but of the Son of God. The blood of Jesus received its value from his Sonship, the eternal relation he stood in to his Father. Since sin is an infinite evil, as being committed against an infinite God, no mere creature can satisfy for it, nor can all the holy works of all the creatures be a compensation for one act of sin, because the vastest heap of all the holy actions of men and angels would never amount to an infinite goodness, which is necessary for the satisfaction of an infinite wrong. One sin, containing in it an infinite malice, is greater in the rank of evils than all good works heaped together can be in the rank of goods. But this blood was not only the blood of Jesus, a man, but the blood of that person that was the Son of God; of him who was our surety as the Son of God before he was our surety as the Son of man; who interposed as a surety four thousand years before his incarnation and shedding his blood,

though he could not act the part of a surety without his incarnation and shedding his blood. Either we had no surety before he was incarnate, or else the Son of God in his own person was our surety. The shedding his blood was pursuant to that interposition he made as the Son of God in our stead before he was the Son of man; and it was truly the blood of that person who had offered himself to be our surety, and been accepted in that relation, so many ages before a created nature was assumed by him; so that, though his humanity was a creature, and was necessary as a subject wherein the satisfaction was to be performed, yet it added no worth to the satisfaction of itself. The value which his blood had was from his deity, his being the Son of God, in which condition he entered into his relation of a mediator for us. It was the same person that was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person; the same person that upheld all things by the word of his power, who did by himself, in that glorious person, 'purge our sins,' Hebrews 1:3. The priests under the law purged the sins of the people by the sacrifices of beasts; this was an infinitely nobler victim, a beam of brightness streaming from the eternal Father while he was purging our sins in his eclipse; the express image of his person, while he was made a curse upon the cross, upholding all things by the word of his power; while he bowed his head under the weight of his sufferings, he was all this while making an atonement for our sins, whence redounded an inconceivable efficacy to his blood. The nature of man died, but he had another nature as immortal as the person whose brightness he was, that lived to add value to his sufferings. This divine person, by his own strength and in this glorious relation, wrestled with the flames of wrath, and took hold of the tribunal of justice, and by the value of his sufferings, smoothed the face of a frowning God, assuaged the tempests of a provoked justice, and placed before the tribunal of judgment a strong and everlasting righteousness of his own composure, as a veil between the piercing eye of divine holiness and the guilty and filthy state of a sinner. So great a person, one equal with God, was necessary for the restoring his honour and Sanctifying his name; so great a person was necessary for the purging the fallen creature from his guilt and filth.

4. Hence it follows that sin is perfectly cleansed by this blood. Since it expiated the sins of former ages, since it was the end of his coming, since he did what he did by his own worth, sin must be perfectly cleansed, else the end of his coming is not attained, and his worth would appear to be but of a finite value. All cleansing is the fruit of this blood: the cleansing from guilt is wrought immediately by it; the purging from filth is mediately by his Spirit, but as it was the purchase of his blood.

(1.) The blood of Christ does not perfectly cleanse us here from sin, in regard of the sense of it. Some sparks of the fiery law will sometimes flash in our consciences, and the peace of the gospel be put under a veil. The smiles of God's countenance seem to be changed into frowns, and the blood of Christ appears as if it ran low. Evidences may be blurred and guilt revived. Satan may accuse, and conscience knows not how to answer him. The sore may run fresh in the night, and the soul have not only comfort bid from it, but refuse comfort when it stands at the door. There will be startlings of unbelief, distrusts of God, and misty steams from the miry lake of nature. But it has laid a perfect foundation, and the top stone of a full sense and comfort will be laid at last. Peace shall be as an illustrious sunshine without a cloud, a triumphant breaking out of love, without any arrows of wrath sticking fast in the conscience; a sweet calm, without any whisper of a blustering tempest; the guilt of sin shall be for ever wiped out of the conscience, as well as blotted out of God's book. The accuser shall no more accuse us, either to God or ourselves; no new indictment

shall be formed by him at the bar of conscience; nay, conscience itself shall be for ever purged, and sing an uninterrupted requiem, and hymn of peace, shall not hiss the least accusation of a crime. As God's justice shall read nothing for condemnation, so conscience shall read nothing for accusation. The blood of Christ will be perfect in the effects of it. As it rent the veil between God and us, it will rend the veil between conscience and us; no more frowns from the one, nor any more janglings in the other. As Christ said, when he was giving up the ghost, 'It is finished,' viz., the sense and sufferings under a guilty state, it is then a believer may say his fears are finished, when he is breathing forth his soul into the arms of his sacrificed Saviour. Iniquities shall never more appear in their guilty charge to draw blood from the soul of a penitent believer. The soul shall be without fault before the throne of God, Revelation 14:5.

(2.) The blood of Christ does not perfectly cleanse us here from sin, in regard of the stirrings of it. The old serpent will be sometimes stinging us, and sometimes foiling us. The righteous soul will be vexed with corruptions within it, as well as the abominations of others without it. The Canaanite is in the land, and therefore the virtue of the blood of Christ is expressed in our power of wrestling, not yet in the glory of a triumph. It does not here perfectly free us from the remainders of sin, that we may be still sensible that we are fallen creatures, and have every day fresh notices and experiments of its powerful virtue; and that his love might meet with daily valuations in a daily sense of our misery. But this blood shall perfect what it has begun, and the troubled sea of corruption, that sends forth mire and dirt, shall be totally removed. Then shall the soul be as pure as unstained wool, as spotless as the dew from the womb of the morning; no wrinkles upon the face, no bubbleings up of corruption in the soul. The blood of Christ shall still the waves, and expel the filth, and crown the soul with an everlasting victory. 'The spirits of just men' are then 'made perfect,' Hebrews 12:23.

(3.) But the blood of Christ perfectly cleanses us from sin here, in regard of condemnation and punishment. Thus it blots it out of the book of God's justice; it is no more to be remembered in a way of legal and judicial sentence against the sinner. Though the nature of sin does not cease to be sinful, yet the power of sin ceases to be condemning. The sentence of the law is revoked, the right to condemn is removed, and sin is not imputed to them, 1 Cor. 5:19. Where the crime is not imputed, the punishment ought not to be inflicted. It is inconsistent with the righteousness of God to be an appeased, and yet a revenging, judge. When the cause of his anger is removed, the effects of his anger are extinguished. Where there is a cleansing from the guilt, there necessarily follows a removal of the punishment. What is the debt we owe upon sin? Is it not the debt of punishment, which is righteously exacted for the fault committed? When the blood of Christ therefore purifies any from their guilt, it rescues them from the punishment due to that guilt. Herein does the pardon of sin properly consist, in a remission of punishment. The crime cannot be remitted, but only in regard of punishment merited by it. If God should punish a man that is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and pleaded for by the blood of Christ it would be contrary both to his justice and mercy: to his justice, because he has accepted of the satisfaction made by Christ, who paid the debt, and acquitted the criminal, when he bore his sin in his own body upon the tree; it would be contrary to his mercy, for it would be cruelty to adjudge a person to punishment, who is legally discharged, and put into the state of an innocent person, by the imputation of the righteousness of the Redeemer. Though the acts of sin are formally the same that they were, yet the state of a cleansed sinner is not legally the same that it was; for being free

from the charge of the law, he is no longer obnoxious to the severity of the law. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Romans 8:1. No matter left that shall actually condemn, since Christ for sin, or as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, Romans 8:3.

(4.) The effect of this blood shall appear perfect at the last, in the final sentence. It cleanses us initially here, completely hereafter. It cleanses us here in law. Its virtue shall be manifest by a final sentence. 'He that believes not is condemned already,' John 3:18; condemned by the threatening, but not by the pronounced sentence. So he that believes is justified by the plea of this blood, justified in the promise of the gospel, but not yet by public sentence, which is reserved till the last day: 'After death the judgment,' Hebrews 9:27. As Christ was justified after he had presented his blood, was owned to be God's righteous servant by a public declaration in his exaltation, 1 Tim. 2:16, so those that have an interest in this blood have a sentential justification at their dissolution, by God as a judge, and fully complete, when their persons shall be pronounced just, at the reunion of the soul and body at the resurrection. Whence this time is called the 'day of refreshment,' Acts 3:19, when sins shall be blotted out, when God shall no more correct, and conscience shall no more reproach for guilt. Sin is cleansed now, but said to be blotted out then, because then all the parts of salvation shall be complete. Election was an act of eternity, but then it shall be declared, in the separation of them for ever from the rest of the world, to be with him in glory. Redemption was purchased by the death of Christ, offered in the gospel, and conferred upon the believer, but then it will be complete in a deliverance from all enemies, and the last enemy, death. And therefore called the 'day of redemption,' Ephesians 4:30. There shall then be an endless repose from all sorrow within, and trouble without. Sanctification is begun to be wrought here by the Spirit, but sin is not abolished; all earthly affections are not completely put off. So it will be with our justification, as it consists in pardon of sin; sins are blotted out now, but then in a more excellent, full, and visible manner. We need a daily pardon upon daily sin, but then God will absolve us once for all, from all our faults committed in our whole lives, and no more will be committed to need a pardon. There is here a secret grant passed in our consciences; there, a solemn publication of it before men and angels. Here every one receives a pardon in particular, as they come to him. As those under the law had a particular expiation by the means of the sacrifices presented by them, but in the annual day of expiation there was a general propitiation for the sins of the people, and all their iniquities together were carried into the desert, so the pardon that was granted to particular believers shall then resolve into one entire absolution of the whole body; when Christ shall pronounce them all righteous, and present them unblameable, and without spot to his Father. Justification is complete in this world, in regard that the guilt of sin shall never return, and a person counted righteous shall never be counted unrighteous; but not so complete that the sense of sin shall never return. But then neither David's murder shall rise up against him, nor Peter's denial of his master ever stare him in the face. No need of fresh looks upon the brazen serpent for cure, because there shall be no bitings by the fiery ones to grieve and trouble.

(5.) Hence, it cleanses from all sin universally. For since it was the blood of so great a person as the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse us from the greatest as the least. Had it been the blood of a sinful creature, it had been so far from expiation, that it would rather have been for pollution. Had it been the blood of an angel, though holy (supposing they had any to shed), yet it had been the blood of a creature, and therefore incapable of mounting to an infinite value; but since it is the blood of the Son of God, it is both the blood of a holy and of an uncreated and infinite person. Is it

not therefore able to exceed all the bulk of finite sins, and to equal in dignity the infiniteness of the injury in every transgressor? The particle all is but a rational consequent upon the mention of so rich a treasure of blood. The nature of the sins, and the blackness of them, is not regarded, when this blood is set in opposition to them. God only looks what the sinners are, whether they repent and believe. He was 'delivered for our offences,' Romans 4:25, not for some few offences, but for all; and as he was delivered for them, so he is accepted for them. The effect, therefore, of it is a cleansing of all, both the original and additional transgressions; the omissions of that good God has righteously commanded, and the commissions of that evil he has holily prohibited. Men have different sins, according to their various dispositions or constitutions. Every man has his 'own way;' and the iniquity of all those various sins of a different stamp and a contrary nature, in regard of the acts and objects, God has 'made to meet' at the cross of Christ, and 'laid them all upon him,' Isaiah 53:6. The sins of all believing persons, in all parts, in all ages of the world, from the first moment of man's sinning, to the last sin committed on the earth. In regard of this extensive virtue, the scapegoat was a type of him; for though there were not particular sacrifices under the law, appointed for some sins, yet in that anniversary one, all the sins of the people were laid upon the head of that devoted goat, to be carried into the wilderness, Leviticus 16:21, "'awonot", "pish'eyhem", "chato'tam". And the same several words, signifying all sorts of sins, are there used, as God uses, Exodus 34:7, when he proclaims himself a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. And the first sin we read of cleansed by this blood, after it was shed, was the most prodigious wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun, even the murder of the Son of God, Acts 2:36, Acts 2:38. So that, suppose a man were able to pull heaven and earth to pieces, murder all the rest of mankind, destroy the angels, those superlative parts of the creation, he would not contract so monstrous a guilt as those did in the crucifying the Son of God, whose person was infinitely superior to the whole creation. God then hereby gave an experiment of the inestimable value of Christ's blood, and the inexhaustible virtue of it. Well might the apostle say, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'

III. Thing; How Christ's blood cleanses from sin. God the Father does actually and efficiently justify; Christ's blood does meritoriously justify. God the Father is considered as judge, Christ is considered as priest and sacrifice. He was a 'Priest in things pertaining to God,' Hebrews 2:17, 'to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,' He is the 'fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness,' Zechariah 13:1. And 'forgiveness of sin' is a fruit of 'redemption through his blood,' Colossians 1:14. This is done,

1. By taking sin upon himself. God collected all the sins from all parts of the world, in all ages of the world, bound them up together, and 'laid them upon' Christ's shoulders, Isaiah 53:6, alluding to the manner of transferring the sins of the people by Aaron's laying his hands upon the head of the sacrifice; so that, as the scape-goat purged the people, Christ cleanses or justifies men by bearing their iniquities, Isaiah 53:11. Not by bearing the pollution of them inherently, but the guilt of them, or the curse which the sinner had merited; for our sins could no more be transmitted to him, in the filth and defilement of them, than the iniquities of the Israelites could be infused into the scape-goat, but only in their curse and guilt. A beast was not capable of spiritual pollution, because it wanted an intellectual nature; nor Christ, because of the excellency of his person. Christ took our sins upon him, not thereby to become sinful, but to become devoted in a judicial manner, as a curse; and, therefore, his being said to be 'made sin' in one place, 'that we might be

made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Corinthians 5:21, is to be interpreted by Galatians 3:13, wherein he is said to be 'made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law,' i. e. a person exposed to the vengeance of God, to procure impunity for the offenders, that they might be absolved, and treated as if they had never been criminal. He is 'the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world,' John 1:29, airwn: the word signifies to take up, as well as to take away. He took the guilt upon his shoulders, that he might for ever take it away from ours. As we are made righteousness in him, so he was made sin for us. Now we are not righteous before God by an inherent, but by an imputed righteousness, nor was Christ made sin by inherent, but imputed, guilt. The same way that his righteousness is communicated to us, our sin was communicated to him. Righteousness was inherent in him, but imputed to us; sin was inherent in us, but imputed to him. He received our evils to bestow his good, and submitted to our curse to impart to us his blessings; sustained the extremity of that wrath we had deserved, to confer upon us the grace he had purchased. The sin in us, which he was free from, was by divine estimation transferred upon him, as if he were guilty, that the righteousness he has, which we were destitute of, might be transferred upon us, as if we were innocent. He was made sin, as if he had sinned all the sins of men, and we are made righteousness, as if we had not sinned at all.

2. By accounting the righteousness and sufficiency of his sufferings to us. If we stand upon our own bottom, we are lost; our own rags cannot cover us, nor our own imperfections relieve us. 'The whole world lies in wickedness,' 1 John 5:19. God is a consuming fire, and we are combustible matter; the holiness of God, and the soul of the most righteous fallen creature, cannot meet without abhorrence on the part of God, and terror on the part of man. Divine holiness cannot but hate us, divine justice cannot but consume us, if we have no other righteousness than our own imperfect one, to please the one, and be a bar to the other. There is no justification by the law, but upon a perfect righteousness, and we must be justified by the performance of the law, or we can never be justified; for the law of God was not abrogated upon the fall of man: it is the authority of the lawgiver, and not the offence of the malefactor, which does abolish a law; but we cannot perform the law ourselves. Alas! 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' Romans 3:23, of that righteousness which glorifies God; and having once broken the law, we can never be said perfectly to keep it; for if we had grace given us to perform it for the future, it nulls not the breach of it for the time past. Since the law is not abrogated, it must be exactly obeyed, the honour of it must be preserved; it cannot be observed by us, it was Christ only who kept it, and never broke it, and endured the penalty of it for us, not for himself; for the law requires obedience of a creature, but demands not punishment but upon default of obedience. The punishment was not inflicted on him for himself, but for us; the 'Virtue of that must be transferred to us, which cannot be any other way than by imputation, or reckoning it ours, as we are one body with him. Besides, justification cannot be by any thing inherent in us, for we are ungodly before the first instant of justification, Romans 5:5, and sinners and enemies, Romans 5:10. Since there is nothing but unrighteousness in us, a righteousness must be fetched from something without us. If it be without us, it is not inherent in us. What righteousness is in us after justification, cannot be the cause of the justification which preceded that righteousness. The effect never precedes the cause. If the righteousness whereby we are justified be not inherent in us, but in another, how can it be our righteousness, but by some way of counting it to us? God intended Christ's suffering as the way of bearing iniquity for us, and accepted him as one that bore our iniquities, and made this bearing iniquity the ground of the justification of many: Isaiah 53:11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous

servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' In his bearing our iniquities, there was the imputation of our sins; in our justification, there must be the imputation of his suffering. The counting another's righteousness to us is as reasonable and easy to conceive as the counting our sins to another. Without this way of reckoning it to us, we cannot conceive of the intercession of Christ, or what pleas he can use. He is an advocate by virtue of his propitiation, and his righteousness in it, 1 John 2:1-2. The plea, then, must be of this nature: Father, I took flesh by thy order, and suffered death according to thy pleasure; I gave my soul a ransom for many, and the shedding of my blood was a sweet-smelling sacrifice. Thou wouldst have me made a curse to free others from the curse, and to receive wounds, that others might receive health. Let those, therefore, that plead the merit of my suffering, be absolved from their guilt. I have borne their sins, their iniquities thou didst cause to meet on me, condemn them not to bear those iniquities I have borne already. To what purpose did I bear them, if they must bear them too? And to what purpose should they believe in me, if they must sink under the same condemnation with those that refuse me? How this plea can be made without accepting those sufferings for us, and counting the righteousness of them to us, is not to be understood. Some compare this way of imputation to the sun shining upon the wall, through a green or blue glass, whereby the true colour of the wall is indiscernible while the colour communicated by the glass is upon it; yet this colour is not the colour of the wall, but the colour of the glass, and inherent in the glass, only reflected upon the wall; so the righteousness whereby we are justified, and which covers our iniquities from the sight of God, is inherent in Christ, but transferred to us. The ground of this imputation is community of nature. Because he 'took not the nature of angels,' it is not reckoned to them, Hebrews 2:16-17. If he had taken the nature of angels, it could not have been reckoned to us, because he had not been akin to us. Had he taken the nature of angels, it could no more have been imputed to us than the fall of angels can be imputed to us; which cannot be, because we have not an agreement in the same nature with them; and, next to that, the ground of it is his resurrection from the grave. Had he lain in the grave, his righteousness could not have been imputed to us, because it had not been declared sufficient in itself; and the sufficiency of the price, and the accepting it for a ransom, must precede the accounting of it to another for his deliverance. That which is the evidence of the perfection, and agreeableness of it to the judgment of God, is the ground of the imputation of it to us; but his going to the Father, whereof his resurrection was the first step, and his ascension the next, is the convincing argument the Comforter makes use of to persuade men of the fullness and exactness of it, John 16:10.

(1) This cleansing of us by imputing this blood to us, is by virtue of union and communion with him. The apostle before the text speaks of a fellowship with God and Christ, which implies union with Christ, and then the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. What Christ did as a common person, is accepted for us, but the actual imputation of it to us depends upon our becoming one body with him. If we had not had a union with Adam in nature, and been seminally in him, his sin could no more have been imputed to us than the sin of the fallen angels could be counted ours; so if we have not a union with Christ, his righteousness can no more be reckoned to us than the righteousness of the standing angels can be imputed to us. We must therefore be in Christ as really as we were in Adam, though not in the same manner of reality. We were in Adam seminally, we are in Christ legally; yet so that it is counted in the judgment of God as much as if there were a seminal union. Believers are therefore called the seed of Christ, Isaiah 53:10, Psalms 22:30. And they are called Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12; and 'the body of Christ,' 1 Chronicles 12:27. It is, says

one, not numerically, but legally such. If we had been in him seminally, as we were in Adam, righteousness would have been communicated to all descending from him; but God has appointed a higher way of communication by spiritual union. As those who were in Adam by natural propagation are made guilty by his transgression to condemnation, so all that are spiritually united to Christ are cleansed from their many offences to justification, Romans 5:16. As there was a necessity of his union with us in our nature for our redemption, since he could not be the Redeemer of mankind by death, as he was the Son of God, unless he were also the Son of man, so there is a necessity of our union with him in his Spirit. As there could be no expiation without a satisfaction, no satisfaction to be made by Christ, unless there were an imputation of our sins to him; and no imputation can be supposed, unless he were united to us in our nature; so there can be no imputation of anything in him to us, unless there be a strait union, whereby he becomes our head and we his members. What does the apostle mean in that wish of being 'found in Christ,' but this union, whereby we might have a share in his righteousness? Php 3:9. Not his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God communicated through or by faith. And where is our completeness, but in him? Colossians 2:10. As we are reckoned one lump and mass with him, and being joined to him, are counted one spirit with him, 1 Corinthians 6:17. Union with him goes first in order of nature before justification; we are first united to him as our sponsor, and being in him we are counted righteous. This is the apostle's assertion: 1 Corinthians 1:30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness,' &c. And so 'the righteousness of the law,' Romans 8:4, *dikaion tou nomou*, or the just judgment of the law, 'is fulfilled in us,' saith Cocceius. We are judged to have in him a perfect obedience, or we are judged not out of Christ as sinners, but in Christ as his members.

(2.) This union is made by faith, and upon this account we are said to be justified by faith. This is our willingness to receive Christ upon the terms he is offered. Since a mediator is not a mediator of one, but supposes in the notion of it two parties, there must be a consent on both sides. God's consent is manifested by giving, our consent is by receiving, which is a title given to faith, John 1:12; God's consent in appointing and accepting the atonement, and ours in receiving the atonement, which is all one with 'receiving forgiveness of sin,' Romans 5:11. God's consent in the typical administration was evident in appointing sacrifices, and the sending down fire from heaven for consuming them. The sinner's consent was to be signified by laying his hands upon the head of the sacrifice, intimating his union with that sacrifice, and so by the sacrificing of it he was counted as quitted of that guilt for which the sacrifice was offered. We must be as willing to accept of this sacrifice as Christ was to offer this sacrifice, with a willingness of the same kind; but, alas, what creature can mount to a willingness of the same degree! God might have required many sharp conditions of us, many years' troubles and sorrows, but he requires only a willingness of us to receive and acknowledge the depths of his wisdom and grace, and conform to his will in the new covenant. This makes up the marriage knot between the sinner and the Redeemer. By this the soul empties itself and clasps about a Saviour, and then Christ and the believer are counted as one person legally; therefore, Christ dwelling in us, and our having faith, are linked together as if they were the same thing, Ephesians 3:17. By God's acceptance of this blood we are rendered cleansable and justifiable. By our acceptance of it, it is actually imputed to us, and we actually justified. However, when it was shed by Christ, and received as a sweet-smelling sacrifice by God, it made us pardonable; yet actual pardon is not bestowed without believing. His blood avails none but those that he pleads it for, and he pleads it not for those that come to God, but that 'come to

God by him,' Hebrews 7:25, those that plead in his name for the benefits which are the purchase of his blood. Without him, we are combustible matter before a consuming fire, and cannot approach to the throne of God with any success. This faith must go in order before cleansing or justification. The righteousness of God is only 'upon them that believe,' Romans 3:22. 'We have believed that we might be justified,' Galatians 2:16. This faith is not our righteousness, nor is it ever called so, but we have a righteousness by the means of faith. By faith, or through faith, is the language of the apostle: Romans 3:22, Romans 3:25, 'Faith in his blood,' faith reaching out to his blood, embracing his blood, sucking up his propitiating blood and pleading it. Though faith is the eye and hand of the soul, looking up and reaching out to whole Christ as offered in the promise, yet in this act of it to be freed from the guilt of sin, it grasps Christ as a sacrifice, it hangs upon him as paying a price, and takes this blood as a blood shed for the soul, and insists upon the sufficient value of it with God. Faith respects the subject wherein it is as guilty, for it is a grace divesting a man of his own righteousness, and emptying a man of his own strength and sufficiency, and accusing the soul of guilt, and therefore eyes that which stands in direct opposition to this guilt, the free grace of God accepting Christ as a propitiation. It eyes that in craving justification, which God eyes in bestowing it, which is the Redeemer's bearing iniquity, Isaiah 53:11. It has no efficacy of itself, but as it is the band of our union with Christ. The whole virtue of cleansing proceeds from Christ the object. We receive the water with our hands, but the cleansing virtue is not in our hands, but in the water, yet the water cannot cleanse us without our receiving it; our receiving it unites the water to us, and is a means whereby we are cleansed. And therefore it is observed that our justification by faith is always expressed in the passive, not in the active; as we are justified by faith, not that faith justifies us. The efficacy is in Christ's blood, the reception of it in our faith. Though we are justified by faith, yet all our peace, and all those blessings which are bundled up in peace with God, come in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:1. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

IV. The use.

If the blood of Christ has the only and perpetual virtue, and does actually and perfectly cleanse believers from all sin, then it affords us, 1. A use of instruction.

(1) Every man, uninterested by faith in the blood of Christ, is hopeless of a freedom from guilt while he continues in that state. Without faith we are at a distance from God, by contracting in our natural state a guilt that subjected us to the curses of the law, and we remain under that wrath the state of nature put us into, till we are interested by faith in the expiating blood of the Redeemer. All the indictments that our own consciences, and, which is incomprehensibly more, the omniscience of God, can charge upon us, remain in their full force, are unanswerable by us, and we must inevitably sink under them, till the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, cancel the bond and raze out the accusation. The blood of Christ is so far from cleansing an unbeliever from all sin, that it rather binds his sins the faster on him. Unbelief locks the sins on more strongly, so that the violations of the law stick closer to him, and the wrath of God hangs over him. Those that have no communion with Christ, have no interest in the blood of Christ; for they are such as 'have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' to whom John in the text appropriates this privilege of being cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ. Those that slight the blood of Christ, render themselves incapable of cleansing, because no other sacrifice can be offered, no other blood can be presented to God of a value equal to it: 'No more sacrifice remains for sin,'

Hebrews 10:26. There was but one bloody sacrifice appointed for expiation, and there can be no less required of us for the enjoying the benefit of it, than the receiving the atonement, Romans 5:11. It is not consistent with the honour of God to discharge men upon the account of the sufferings of the surety, who will persist in that sin for which the surety suffered, and make use if a Saviour to be freed from suffering, but not freed from offending. It would be contrary to the end of our Saviour's death to sprinkle that blood upon those that tread it under their feet, which was shed for the gathering together the sons of God, John 11:52, to let the despisers of it have an equal share in the benefits of it with those that receive it. It cannot be imagined that God will ever make it a savour of life, as much to them that will not value it, as to those that do.

(2.) No freedom from the guilt of sin is to be expected from mere mercy. The figure of this was notable in the legal economy. The mercy-seat was not to be approached by the high priest without blood, Deuteronomy 9:7. Christ himself, typified by the high priest, expects no mercy for any of his followers, but by the merit of his blood. What reason have any then to expect remission upon the account of mere compassion, without pleading his blood? Mercy is brought to us only by the smoke of this sacrifice. The very title of justification implies not only mercy, but justice, and more justice than mercy; for justification is not upon a bare petition, but a propitiation. To be pardoned indeed implies mercy. Pardon is an act of favour, whereby the criminal is graced and gratified, but to be justified is to be discharged in a legal way, or by way of compensation. A man may be pardoned as a suppliant, but not pronounced righteous but upon the merits of his cause. He that employs mercy, acknowledges guilt, but insists not upon a righteousness. Justification or pardon is not the act of God as Creator, for then it had been mere mercy; nor as a lawgiver, according to the terms of the first covenant, for then no man after his revolted state could be justified; but as a judge, according to the laws of redemption, and that in a way of righteousness and justice, 2 Timothy 4:8. God is not to be sought to for this concern, but in Christ; nor mere mercy implored without the Redeemer's merit, because God does not forgive our sins, or reconcile our persons to himself, but for the propitiating blood of his Son. To expect pardon only upon the account of mercy, is to honour one attribute with the denial of, or overlooking the other. Though God be merciful, yet he is just; his mercy is made known in remission, his justice manifested in justification. Forget not the great demonstration of his justice when you come to plead for mercy. Plead both in the blood of Christ, God is merciful to none out of Christ; he is merciful to none but to whom he is just: merciful to them in regard of themselves, and their own demerits; just and righteous to them in regard of the blood and merit of his Son.

(3.) There is no ground for the merits of the saints, or a cleansing purgatory. The apostle saith not you have a treasure of the merits of the departed saints; or you must expect a purgatory hereafter to cleanse you from all your sins. He mentions only the blood of Christ as fully sufficient and efficacious for this end. To set up other mediations, atonements, satisfactions, is a contempt of the wisdom of God in his ordination of this only one of his Son; of the holiness and justice of God in accepting this, as if God had mistaken himself, when he cheerfully received this as completely satisfactory to him, and answering his ends; as if, notwithstanding his full pleasure with it, it needed some addition from creatures to eke it out to a completeness. It is a dishonour to Christ, accusing him of an imperfect satisfaction, of an insufficient and infirm blood, a stripping it of its infinite value. How can that be infinite which needs a finite thing to strengthen it, and render it efficacious? He that goes to a muddy stream to wash himself, disgraces the pure fountain he has

in his own dwelling. This the Romanists use in the form of absolution: 'Let the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the blessed virgin, and of all the saints, and whatsoever good thou hast done, and whatsoever thou hast sustained, be to thee,' i. e. accounted to thee, or accepted for thee, 'for the remission of thy sins, the increase of thy grace, and the reward of eternal life.' (Cajetan sum. p. 2. The first head, Absolution) Nor is purgatory a small disparagement to the extensive virtue of this cleansing blood. If the blood of Christ cleanses, what interpretation can common reason and sense make of it, but that the person so cleansed is exempted from any punishment for his crime? Is the blood of the Son of God of so weak an efficacy, that it needs a cleansing fire in another world to purge out the relics of guilt left behind by it in this? If there must be such a penal satisfaction, where is the uncontrollable virtue of this blood? If this blood, which is the blood of God, has not a sufficient virtue, what finite fire can lay claim to it? What in reason can be supposed to have it? And if it be perfectly purgative, what need of anything else, that can never deserve the name of satisfaction? Shall that God, who is goodness and righteousness itself, punish a man for that crime which he has remitted upon so great a compensation? If he be pardoned, with what justice can he be punished? If he be punished by the severity of fire, with what mercy, or by what merit, was he pardoned and justified? It is no friendship to the perfection of God's justice to allege that he will punish that which he has remitted, and as little right is done to the perfection of Christ's meritorious blood, to make it of a half validity, a lame propitiation, which requires something to be done or suffered by the sinner to render it complete in the sight of God. With what face could Christ tell sinners that came believingly to him in the world, that their 'faith had saved them,' and they might 'go in peace,' if a purgatory satisfaction were to be exacted of them after this life, and his own passion had been unable to make their peace?

(4.) No mere creature can cleanse from sin. No finite thing can satisfy an infinite justice; no finite thing can remit or purchase the remission of an injury against an infinite being. A finite compensation can bear no proportion to an infinite wrong. If pardon as well as regeneration be a work of omnipotence, as we have lately heard, no creature but is as unable to remove guilt from the soul as it had been unable to remove deformity from the first matter and chaos. A creature can no more cleanse a soul, than it can frame and govern a world, and redeem a captived sinner.

(5.) There is no righteousness of our own, no services we can do, are sufficient for so great a concern. To depend upon any, or all of them, or anything in ourselves, is injurious to the value and worth of this blood; it is injurious also to ourselves; it is like the setting up a paper wall to keep off a dreadful fire, even that consuming one of God's justice. The apostle does more than once complain of the seducers that crept into the Galatian church, and would sow the tares of justification by the law, and their own works, so that they made the death of Christ in vain, Galatians 2:2, and his work of no effect, Galatians 5:4; and tells them there plainly, that the expectation of a justification upon such an account was a falling from grace. If we are justified from our guilt by works, they must be works before faith or after faith; not before faith, for the corruption of nature remaining in its full force, without any amendment, any alteration, or subduing by renewing grace, will check men that understand anything of the woeful and deplorable, the weak and impotent, condition of man by nature, from such a thought; and indeed those that hold justification by works make faith in Christ necessary to the acceptance of those works. Nor do works after faith justify, for then a believer is not justified upon his believing, but upon his working after his believing; so that faith then is not the justifying grace, but a preparation to those works

which justify, which is quite contrary to the strain of the great apostle in his epistles, who ascribes justification to faith in the blood of Christ, and to faith without works. It is by faith we are united to Christ as the great undertaker for us; by that we receive the atonement, and accept of the infinite satisfaction made by the Redeemer to the justice of God. The acceptance of this, and embracing this as done for us, and accepted by God for us, cannot be an act of our works, but of our faith. All works are excluded by the apostle, Romans 4:5-6, without restraining them to the works of the law, as he does sometimes in other places. Faith alone is opposed to works in general, and therefore to all sorts of works; and works after grace he does plainly exclude: Ephesians 2:8, 'By grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: not of works, lest any man should boast.' What works are those? Works after regeneration; for they are those works to which they were 'created in Jesus Christ,' which indeed, saith he, 'God ordained that we should walk in them,' not that we should be saved or justified by them. And so, when he desires not to be 'found in his own righteousness, which is of the law,' Php 3:8-9, can he understand only those works and that righteousness which he had before his conversion to Christ? As though works after faith were not more conformable to the law than works before faith; but let them be works flowing from what principle soever, he renounces them all, accounts them loss for Christ, and places no confidence in them. He did not renounce the privileges of his birth, or strip himself of a love to holy works, but of the opinion of any value they had with God of themselves to justification. Whatsoever might come under the title of his own righteousness he does cast away, as to any dependence on it, or pleading of it before God. And may not his works, after his giving up his name to Christ, be called his own righteousness, as well as those in a state of nature? Though the principle was altered, yet the acts from that principle were his own acts, and his own righteousness. So Abraham was not justified by his works after believing, no more than by those before: Romans 4:3, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' For those words, cited out of Genesis 15:6, were spoken of Abraham, several years after his call and compliance with it by faith, and here singled out as the cause of his justification, without any concomitance of his own works flowing from that faith, or any mixture of them, or consideration of them by God in this justifying act. And David, though he was a great prophet, yet had not so distinct a knowledge of the gospel as those that live in the times of the gospel, yet under that legal administration wherein he was born, and bred, and lived all his days, had no confidence in his own works, not in those which he wrought as God's servant, out of love to him, fear of him, trust in him; he refuses all venturing his soul upon them, before the tribunal of God, when he desires God not to enter into judgment with him: Psalms 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant;' 'Answer me in thy righteousness,' Psalms 143:1, not according to my own. Enter not into judgment with thy servant; though I be thy servant, and mine own conscience tells me I have an upright heart towards thee, yet I dare not enter into a plea with thee upon my service, or stand before thy judgment-seat in the strength of my works; and the reason he renders shows that he understood it of justification, and is inclusive of all men that ever drew breath, for it is as generally expressed as anything can be: 'For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Not an apostle, martyr, prophet, can stand before God when he compares his action with the rule. David was far from any confident sentiment of his own works, or the strength of the blood of legal sacrifices. How often does he aggravate his crimes, and debase the value of his services, and speak of the sacrifices, as unable to render a satisfaction to God! We see the father of the faithful, the greatest type of Christ, and he that seems the most rational among the apostles, disclaiming any justification by their own works, even by those

wrought by them after they were really listed in the service of God. And there is good reason for it.

[1.] No righteousness of man is perfect, and therefore no righteousness of man is justifying. Whatsoever works do justify, must be, in the extent of them, and all the circumstances, fully conformed unto that precept that enjoins them. What man has a righteousness commensurate with the rule of the law, whereby his works are to be tried? Again, every man, the moment before his justification, is ungodly, Romans 4:5. He is in that state just before his justification. If he be justified by his own works, he is then justified by ungodly works, and then a contradiction will follow, that a man is justified by his merit of condemnation, and pronounced righteous upon the account of his unrighteousness. It is as much as to say, a man shall be justified by his sinfulness, and be judged an observer of the law by his transgressing it.

First, The mixture of one sinful act among a multitude of good works, renders a man imperfect, and consequently incapable of justification by them. Suppose a man had only one sin, and all his other works clear without a flaw, the law could not pronounce him righteous, because he fell short of that universal and perpetual rectitude which the law requires in all things: Galatians 3:10, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' If he fails but in one thing, and that but once in his whole life, and that but in the omission of any one circumstance it requires, he sinks under the curse. But since a man never performed in his whole life a duty entirely exact, with what face can he expect a justification from that law, which he never observed with that exactness due to it in any one action that ever he did? Works are debts; unless a debt be fully paid, a man cannot be said to be a righteous person. If a man owes a thousand pound, and pays nine hundred ninety-nine pound nineteen shillings, and pays not that one shilling, which is as much due as the whole, he is unrighteous in withholding that, and the bond may be put in suit against him for that if the creditor please. What man ever paid the full debt of works he owed to God by virtue of the law? How far is any man from paying all the parts of his debt but one only? Suppose we had not only a perfect work, but many perfect works, all perfect works but one the works might justify themselves, but not justify the person that has a stain upon him in the account of the law. But the case is more deplorable for if God will contend with man, he 'cannot answer him one of a thousand,' Job 9:2-3. Some of the Jews interpret it thus: that the arguments and pleas men can bring from their own works, for their defence before his tribunal, are so weak and trifling, that God in scorn would not vouchsafe to give a reply to one plea of theirs among a thousand. But rather it is to be understood, that man cannot render one little reason among a thousand pleas for his own justification, on any one of a thousand of those charges God can bring against him.

Secondly, There is not one act a man does, but there is matter of condemnation in it. As the Scripture excepts every man from doing good, as considered in his natural corruption, Romans 3:12, so it excepts every man from doing any one pure good action: Ecclesiastes 7:20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sins not,' i. e. he does not do any good work without a mixture of sin; and therefore the Scripture pronounces a man's 'own righteousness as filthy rags,' Isaiah 64:6. Righteousness in the whole extent of it, whatsoever he does that is righteous in a way of eminency, is but a filthy rag, it is but a shred, and that filthy too. And to think it is able to purge the soul from sin, is as much as to think to wash away one mud by another. That which is condemning cannot be justifying, that which falls short of the holiness of the law cannot free us from the condemning sentence of the law. But there is nothing that a man does but is

defective, if compared with the law, which requires an exactness of obedience in every act, without any stain. It requires perfection in the person, and perfection in every service; it allows no blemish, nor pronounces a man righteous, where it does not find a completeness both for parts and time. It is so far therefore from justifying, that it must needs condemn. 'For the righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in every one of us,' Romans 8:4. Whatsoever plea we can raise from our own works, will represent us guilty, and that can never be the matter of our absolution, which has sufficient matter of condemnation in it. Tainted work is never able to maintain its standing before the infinite holiness of God.

Thirdly, All the works after grace fall short of the perfection required in them by the law. I do not say they fall altogether short of the perfection required in them by the gospel, i. e. fall short of that integrity and sincerity which is our evangelical perfection; but they fall short of that perfection which is required by the law. There is no grace in any renewed man in this life in that perfect degree it ought to be. Corruption of nature remains in every man, with regeneration of nature. It is true there is a new principle put in, but not so powerful as to abolish that principle which possessed us before, though it does overmaster it. There is a 'flesh lusting against the spirit,' as well as a 'spirit lusting against the flesh,' Galatians 5:17. And Paul, that was renewed as much as any man we ever knew renewed, had a flesh that served the law of sin, with a mind that served the law of God, Romans 7:25. No grace is wrought to its full growth. There is staggering in our faith, and coldness in our love, and hardness in our melting; and therefore it was a good speech of Luther's, We can never be saved, if God does not turn his eyes from our virtues as well as our sins. How can that, the unrighteousness whereof was our burden before the throne of God, be our righteousness before him? How can that heal us, which stands in need of cure, and renders us sick? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Or the highest righteousness out of an unclean newness, and an imperfect regeneration? If our duties after grace be so corrupt that they need something to render them acceptable, and accepted in the sight of God, they can never be of that worth as to render our persons righteous; for that which needs something to make itself valid, can never make any other thing valid. If our duties want a pardon, and something to cover the defects, and wipe off the blemishes of them, they can never, upon any bottom of their own, plead themselves to be a sufficient righteousness for a guilty sinner, guilty in the acting that which is pleaded as a righteousness. No flesh can be justified in the sight of God, and nothing that comes from flesh can be our righteousness. The best man being in part flesh, all his works are in part fleshly. Where the nature is wholly corrupt, the fruit cannot be good; where the nature is in part corrupt, the fruit of the new nature must be tainted by the steams of the old, and therefore is too defective to bottom our happiness upon. And consider but these two things:

First, Men's own consciences cannot but accuse them of coming short of the glory of God, in everything they do. Can any man upon earth say he ever did a perfect action, that he dares venture his soul upon it, in the presence of God? There is no man's conscience but must needs accuse him of sin: 1 John 1:8, 'He that saith he has no sin, has nothing of the truth in him;' and what man's conscience ever bore that testimony to him, that he was perfect in all his works? Does it not rather witness that he has numberless times violated the divine precepts? Who can say he did perfectly exert an act of faith, so entire, fixed, steady, as might suit the divine holiness, or that his love had such an intense flame in any service he presented to God? No man yet, upon serious consideration, did ever judge any one of his works perfect before God. He must have very mean

thoughts of the holiness of God, or be very inconsiderate of his own actions, and not dive into all the matter and circumstances of them, if he so judged. Indeed, Paul says, he knew nothing by himself, i. e. of unfaithfulness in declaring the mysteries of God, as to the matter and substance of them, yet would he not venture his justification upon that bottom, 1 Corinthians 4:4. A self-justification in this would be a self-condemnation: Job 9:20, 'If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.'

Secondly, But, suppose there be no accusations of conscience, durst we stand to God's trial of our works? The omniscience of God pierces further than our knowledge; for 'who can understand the errors of his ways?' Pg. 19:12. If any action might be perfect in our account, shall we therefore think it so in the account of God's unspotted holiness, who is greater than our hearts, and knows more than our hearts? 'Who can stand before so holy a God?' 1 Samuel 6:20. Job, therefore, chap. 9:21, would not know his own soul, though he were perfect, he would not approve or boast of him. self in the presence of God; for he might be ignorant of something in his own spirit which never yet reached his notice, but was not unknown to God, that knew all things; he would despise his life, i. e. overlook all his upright course, and bury it in silence, when he comes to appear before God.

Fourthly, Since, therefore, all our own righteousness is of this hue, it would be contrary to the justice and holiness of God to justify a man for imperfect works. His judgment is always according to truth, Romans 2:2. If he should judge and accept that for a perfect righteousness which is notoriously imperfect in itself, it would imply a defect in the understanding of the judge, whereby he is changed, and judges that to be exact holiness now which he judged not so before. But certainly, if it be an imperfect righteousness, the infinite understanding of God can never imagine it perfect, and the holiness of God would never deceive itself in accepting that as perfect which is not in its own nature so. If imperfect works of grace can justify now, what reason can be rendered for the strictness God required of the first man in the first covenant, and his severe dealing with him upon the transgression of it? The best reason, and most becoming the majesty of God, is the holiness of his nature, which is as infinite now as when he made the first covenant. If that holiness can now content itself with an imperfect righteousness, and pronounce us justified persons without a full conformity to the law, it might take a little further step, and pronounce us righteous without any conformity at all to it. If he could deny his holiness and truth in one thing, he might upon the same account deny it in all, and so lay it aside by degrees till it came to nothing. If we rightly understand the infiniteness of God's holiness, we cannot conceive that anything imperfect can justify us before so exact and strict a tribunal, where sits the omniscience of God to see, the holiness of God to hate, and the justice of God to punish, every defect and deviation from his law..

[2.] The design of God was to justify us in such a way as to strip us of all matter of glorying in ourselves, and therefore it is not by any righteousness of our own. This the apostle in many places asserts, Romans 3:26-27. He justifies by the law of faith, to exclude boasting, which would not have been excluded by the law of works; and Ephesians 2:9, 'Not of works, lest any man should boast.' He had before spoken of salvation or justification by grace, Ephesians 2:5; and to strike men's bands off from resting on anything in themselves, and put our own righteousness out of countenance, he repeats it again, Ephesians 2:8, 'By grace ye are saved, and that not of yourselves; not of works,' because God will have all boasting excluded. The apostle's argument holds as strong against the works of grace as those of nature, the works after the receiving of the

gospel as those of the law; it would else be invalid, for if we were justified by our own works, wrought by us after the grace of redemption communicated to us, it would but little more exclude boasting than the works of Adam wrought by him in the rectitude of his nature, which was the gift of God to him. The natural principle of his actions, as well as the gracious principle of a believer's, were bestowed on them by God. That was an act of God's goodness, this of his grace. And they are our works by grace, as well as the acts of Adam in innocence would have been his works by nature. For though the works of grace are wrought from a principle implanted by the Spirit of God, yet they are not the works of that Spirit, no more than Adam's works could be said to be the works of God, because they were from a principle implanted in him by God. The works would have been Adam's, by the concurrence of God as Creator, and those works are a believer's by the concurrence of God as Redeemer. And if we were justified by them, there would be as well matter of boasting as there would have been in Adam had he stood and been efficiently justified or pronounced righteous upon his innocent works. God hates any glorying before him. The pharisee, therefore, that displayed his righteousness in the temple before God, with some kind of reflection upon his own worth, Luke 18:10-12, with some kind of exaltation of himself and contempt of the publican, went away unjustified, though he did thankfully acknowledge his eminency in morality above the publican to stream to him from the goodness of God. And no good man in Scripture ever pleaded his own works in prayer to God for his justification, though sometimes they have appealed to God concerning their integrity in a particular action. Daniel disowns his own righteousness, Daniel 9:18; and the famous cardinal and champion of the Romish church, upon his deathbed, would rely on the merits of Christ, though he had disputed for the merit of works. So sensible are men of the little matter they have to glory of in themselves, when they are ready to stand before the tribunal of God. God in justification will have the entire glory of his grace to himself; but if any work of ours, though never so gracious, were the cause but in part of our justification, we had whereof to glory. If we divided it between Christ and ourselves, Christ would have but half the glory, and the other half would be due to us. To conclude, no man can be justified but by a covenant of grace, and by the righteousness of God, not his own; since all men have been under the corruption of original sin, no man has arrived to happiness by any righteousness of his own. Every man being a sinner is under the curse of the law, and being accursed by it, cannot be justified by it. The law does not frown and smile upon a man at one and the same time. It proposes no recompense but to those that entirely observe it, and denounces a curse upon those that in the least do violate it; it accuses, does not justify, and fills the conscience with darkness and despair, not with comfort and peace.

6. We are therefore justified by a righteousness imputed to us. 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' It is not inherent in us, but in the veins of Christ; it is not physically or corporally applied to us, but juridical, in a judicial way, and therefore imputed to us, and that for justification. Hence we are said to be justified by his blood, Romans 5:9. If justified by his blood, then meritoriously; the merit of that blood must then be imputed to us, and we upon the account of it pronounced righteous by God, since this blood was never inherent in us. Hence forgiveness of sins and justification is often ascribed unto it, Romans 3:23-25, Colossians 1:14. As our iniquities were charged upon him, so his righteousness is derived to us. Our iniquities were never inherent in him, but imputed to him; so his blood never was inherent in us, but imputed to us for the satisfaction of the law, and so for our justification from the penalty and curse of it. If it were our righteousness that were imputed to us, it would be an imputation of debt, not of grace, Romans

4:4. It cannot be inherent righteousness, because it is a righteousness imputed without works, Romans 4:6; but no inherent righteousness is without works. Again, Romans 4:5, the object of justification is an ungodly person, one that has no righteousness of his own. But since there must be a complete righteousness to justify him, it must be the righteousness of another, for being ungodly, it cannot be his own. It is therefore by the righteousness of one man, Christ: Romans 5:19, 'As we are made sinners by one man's disobedience, so we are made righteous by one man's obedience.' Our being made sinners by one man's disobedience, was no personal act of our own, but a personal act of Adam's; so we are made righteous, not by a personal obedience of our own, but by the perpetual obedience of Christ, which cannot be of advantage to us, unless some way or other counted to us.

Use 2; of comfort. The comfort of a a believer has a strong and lasting foundation in the blood of Christ. All our sins met upon Christ as they did upon the scape-goat, and were carried away with the streams of his blood. A cleansing blood was not the language of the first covenant. It required blood to be poured out in a way of revenge, not to be poured out and applied for the pardon of others. What can relieve us, if this blood, shed by a holy Saviour, and accepted by a righteous judge, cannot? This blood has removed the curse, purchased our liberty, and may therefore calm every believing conscience. What expression can be more stored with comfort than this, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

1. The title is cheering. 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son.' The titles of the blood of God, and the righteousness of God, are enough to answer all objections, and testify a virtue in it as incomprehensible as that of his Godhead, which elevated it to an infinite value. What wounds are so deep that they cannot be healed by the sovereign balsam of so rich a blood? What sins are too great to be expiated, and what diseases too desperate to be cured, by the blood of him that created the world? How great is that blood, that must have more of value, since it is the blood of the Son of God, than all sins can have of guilt, since they are the sins of the sons of men! The blood of Christ is as much above the guilt of our Sins, as the excellency of his person is above the meanness of ours.

2. And who can fathom the comfort that is in the extensiveness of the object? All sin. As we are not limited in the Lord's prayer to pray for the forgiveness of some debts only, and not for others, but pray for the forgiving of trespasses indefinitely, so there is no stint set to the virtue of this cleansing blood. All transgressions to it are like a grain of sand, or the drop of a bucket to the ocean, no more seen or distinguished when it is swallowed up by that mass of waters. It is a 'plenteous redemption,' since it redeems Israel, and all the Israel of God, from all their iniquities, Psalms 130:7-8. His blood can cleanse as many sins as his Godhead can create worlds, and those are numberless; since there is no limits to his power there can be none to his blood. Though our sins have weakened the law, and made it unable to save us, yet they cannot weaken the omnipotent satisfaction of the Redeemer. The multitude of sins in the sinner enhance the vastness of the payment made by the surety. Let not any believing soul be dejected, or any soul that would cordially believe and resign himself up to the conduct of Christ. That blood that has cleansed so many from sin, and from such multitudes of sins, in their several capacities, can cleanse you from all your sins, were they as great as all those jointly that have been cleansed by it from the beginning of the world. For what hindrance is there but that it can do the same in one person that it has done in many? When we look upon the multitude of our sins, our pride and vain imaginations,

our omissions of service, our carelessness in the ways of God, there cannot but be a hanging down the head, till we lift up our eyes to the cross and see all balanced by the blood of the Son of God, which cannot be overtopped by the guilt of a believing person.

3. And does not the word cleanse deserve a particular consideration? What does that note but,

(1.) Perfection. It cleanses their guilt so that it 'shall not be found,' Jeremiah 50:20. What can justice demand more of us, more of our Saviour, than what has been already paid? The everlasting death of a believing sinner cannot be challenged by it, since the blood of a redeeming Saviour has been shed for it. It were injustice to put the creature upon an imperfect satisfaction, since the surety has given a complete one; and injustice to punish him that is no longer guilty of a crime in the judgment of the law of redemption, since by faith he relies upon the blood of the Redeemer. Justice can no more condemn any that are objects of mercy by receiving the blood of the second covenant, than mere mercy can save any one that remains an object of revenging justice under the first covenant. By this means we do not stand before God only as innocent persons, but as those that have fulfilled the law, both as to precept and penalty, Romans 8:4.

(2.) Continuance of justification; the present tense implies a continued act. Christ's blood is never lost and congealed, as the blood of the legal sacrifices. His blood is called a 'new way,' Hebrews 10:19-20, *pros jatoV*; the word rendered new signifies a thing newly slain or sacrificed. His blood is as new and fresh for the work it was appointed to as when it was shed upon the cross, as full of vigour as if it had been shed but this moment; it is a blood that was not drunk up by the earth, but gathered up again into his body to be a living, pleading, cleansing blood in the presence of God for ever. He did not leave his body and blood putrefying in the grave, the sacrifice had then ceased and corrupted, it had not been of everlasting efficacy, as now it is. The justification of a believer stands upon as certain terms as the justification of Christ himself before God. His was upon the account of shedding his blood, ours upon the account of embracing his blood. He was justified by God after his bleeding, Isaiah 1:6, Isaiah 1:8, and brought in triumph, and sending a challenge to any to condemn him, since God had justified him, Isaiah 1:9; which words the apostle alludes to, Romans 8:33-34, to show the unrepeatableness of justification, and applies them to believers, though they were spoken by Christ in his own case. Christ was justified by his resurrection: 1 Tim. in. 16, 'Justified in the Spirit,' which is no other than what Peter expresses by being 'quickened in the Spirit,' 1 Peter 3:18. As Christ was justified by his resurrection from all the sins which met upon him on the cross, and that for ever, so are believers cleansed from all their guilt, and that for ever, by virtue of this blood. The meritorious plea of this blood continuing for ever, is not without the perpetual act of the righteous Judge justifying those for whom it is pleaded.

Hence will follow security at the last judgment. His blood cleanses from all sin here, and his voice shall absolve from all sin hereafter. He that has been a propitiation for your guilt, and an advocate against your accusers, shall never as a judge condemn you for your sins. He does not indeed judge as a priest, but as a king; but his kingly power is but subservient to his priestly office, since he was more solemnly confirmed in that, viz. by an oath, than in the other; and therefore his royal authority shall never ruin any whom his priestly sacrifice has restored to their lost inheritance. Let no believing soul therefore despond, let him draw this blood over his fears to stifle them, as God has done over his sins to cancel them, and drown them in this same ocean into which God has hurled his transgressions.

Use 3; of exhortation. Have recourse only to this blood upon all occasions, since it only is able to cleanse us from all our guilt. We have treasured up wrath, and wounded conscience; nothing can pacify a severe wrath, and calm a tempestuous conscience, but this blood. Had we but the guilt of one sin upon us, we stood in need of an expiation by it as well as if we had ten thousand. Every infinite wrong must have an infinite satisfaction. Entertain no disparaging and little thoughts of this blood, which the Scripture pronounces of so plenteous, unsearchable, and great a virtue. It was God's intent to cleanse sin by it, when he agreed with the Redeemer about shedding his blood: Isaiah 53:11, 'My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' It was set out by him to this end, when it was shed. Zechariah 13:1, 'In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David,' the stronger spirits, and men most according to God's heart, 'and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,' the weaker sort; for all a fountain to fill every private cistern. Make not the covenant of God with his Son in vain; slight not his grace by refusing to drink of his open fountain. The glory of purging iniquity was reserved by God for this blood, it is committed to no other; the blood of bulls and goats never had, never could, have the honour of so great a work. It is the glorious title of his blood to cleanse from all sins, as it is the honourable signification of his name Jesus to save from all sins. We cannot please God more than by coming to him for the pardon of our sins, upon the account of this blood he has so delighted to honour. If we do not, we deny it the glory of its cleansing virtue; we undervalue the efficacy of it, and would have it without any subject to exercise its power on. We need not fear to approach to it, since God has manifested it highly acceptable to him, and available for us. The unsearchable riches of it should more encourage us than the greatness of our guilt discourage our address. Have recourse to it by faith, resting on the power of this blood, as the means appointed by God, and intended by Christ, for the expiation of sin. Faith as accepting Christ as a king does not justify, but faith as accepting Christ as a priest and sacrifice, as shedding his blood, for we must accept him in that office wherein he made the atonement; and that was not as he was a prophet or a king, but as he was a priest and a sacrifice; and therefore it is called, 'faith in his blood,' Romans 3:25, though indeed a faith in his blood is not without receiving him as a king, and submitting to his precepts, as well as relying on his sacrifice. He that receives the blood of Christ, as well as he that names the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity, and avoid those things which break the covenant. Mingle not any thing with his satisfaction; let no muddy waters of your own be mixed with this gospel wine. If we look for a justification by anything else, we forfeit all right of justification by him: Galatians 5:2, 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing;' take it for a certain truth, for I as an apostle speak it, that if you have an opinion that you shall be justified by circumcision, or anything of the law, or of your own works, or would make them partakers with Christ in this matter, Christ shall profit you nothing, you had as good never have had a Christ made known to you, for any virtue you are like to derive from him. As none died with him to expiate your guilt, so he will suffer none to be joined with him in justifying your persons. Christ bears this blood only in his hand, when he pleads for us; we should carry this blood only in our hearts when we plead for ourselves. It is not his blood only as shed does justify, but his blood pleaded in the court of heaven by himself, and pleaded before the throne of God by the believing sinner; without it we have no more plea than the apostate angels have, whom God has cast out of his favour for ever. And since we contract guilt every day, let us daily apply the medicine. The pleas of this blood are renewed according to the necessity of our persons. As often as an Israelite had been bitten by the fiery serpents, he must have looked up to the brazen one, if he would not have been destitute

of a cure; and we, upon every sting of conscience, must look up to him who has been lifted up upon the cross for our remedy. This blood is appointed for sins after conversion, for those, that walk in the light. Since the fountain is open every day, and we contract guilt every day, let not a day pass without fresh applications of this blood upon any defects in our walking with him; since, 'if we walk in the light,' and are industrious to observe the will of God, 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

End

A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

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Part 1 by Stephen Charnock Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1:13. This evangelist so plainly describes the deity of Christ, and in so majestic a style, in the beginning of the chapter, that the accidental view of it in a book lying open by neglect, was instrumental for the conversion of Junius, that eminent light in the church, from his atheism.

We shall take our rise only from John 1:9, 'That was the true light, which lightens every man that comes into the world.' John Baptist, who, John 1:6, &c., was to bear witness of this light, was a light by our Saviour's assertion, 'a burning and a shining light,' John 5:35, but not that 'true light' which was promised, Isaiah 49:6, to be 'a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth.' The sun is the true light in the heavens and of the world; not but that other stars are lights too, but they all receive their light from the sun. Christ is called the true light, by nature and essence, not by grace and participation: 1 John 5:20, 'We know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ,' the natural light and Son of God.

1. True, as opposed to types, which were shadows of this light.
2. True, as opposed to false. Philosophical lights, though esteemed so, are but darkness, and ignes fatui, in comparison of this.
3. True original light, *ratione officii*, illustrating the whole world with his light. Whatsoever is light in heaven or earth, borrows it from the sun; whosoever is enlightened in the world, derives from him 'which lights every man that comes into the world.' Some join coming into the world, to lift, and read it thus, 'He is the light coming into the world, which lights every man.' The Greek is something ambiguous, and it may be referred to light, though not so commodiously. But the translation which we have has been followed in all ages of the church; and is contended for (the other is contended for? editor) only by those who deny the deity of our Saviour, or are somewhat affected to them that do.

How does Christ light every man that comes into the world?

1. Naturally. So Calvin; the world was made by him, and therefore that which is the beauty of the world, the reason of man, was made kindled by him. As all the light the world has had since the creation flows from the sun, so all the knowledge which sparkles in any man is communicated by Christ, even since the creation, as he is the wisdom of God, and as mediator, preserving those broken relics of the fall: Proverbs 20:27, 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord,' lighted and preserved by him. The light of nature, those common notions of fit and just in men's consciences, those honest and honourable principles in the hearts of any, those beams of wisdom in their understanding, though faint, and like sparkles raked up in ashes, are kept alive by his mediatory influence, as a necessary foundation for that, reparation which was intended in his first

interposition.

2. Spiritually. So not only the Socinians, but some very sound, understand it; not that all are actually enlightened, but,

(1.) In regard of power and sufficiency, he has a power to enlighten every man; able to enlighten, not a few, but every man in the world, as the sun does not light every man, though it has a power to do so, and does actually light every man that shuts not his eyes against it.

(2.) Actually, taking it distributive, not collective; that whosoever is enlightened in the world, has it communicated from Christ; as Psalms 145:14, 'The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down;' as many as are upheld and raised, are upheld and raised by God' He does indeed 'shine in darkness,' his light breaks out upon men, but they are not the better for it, because 'the darkness comprehends it not'; as when there is but one schoolmaster in a town, we usually say, he teaches all the boys in the town; not that every individual boy comes to school, but as many as are taught, are taught by him. I embrace the former, because the evangelist seems to begin with his person, as God; his office, as mediator; and then descends to his incarnation; and it is a sense which puts no force upon the words. And I suppose that every man is added, to beat down the proud conceits of the Jews, who regarded the Gentiles with contempt, as not enjoying the privileges conferred upon themselves; but the evangelist declares, that what the Gentiles had in natural light, and what they were to have in spiritual light, did, and was to come from him, who would disperse his beams in all nations, John 1:10. And therefore 'he was in the world,' before his coming in the flesh, in regard of his virtue and efficacy, by the spreading his beams over the world, enlightening men in all ages and places with that common light of nature; he was near to every man; 'in him they lived, and moved, and had their being;' but the world by their natural wisdom knew him not, and glorified him not. 'The world was made by him, yet the world know him not.' Ingratitude has been the constant portion of the mediator, from the world; they knew him not in past ages, knew him not in the present age of his coming in the flesh; they did not acknowledge him with that affection, reverence, and subjection that was due to him.

He aggravates this contempt of Christ,

1. By the general right he had, 'he came to his own,' "Eis ta idia", John 1:11, meaning the world, it being put in the neuter gender. The whole world was his property and his goods, yet they knew not their owner. In this, worse than the ox or ass.

2. By the special privileges conferred on those to whom he first came, and from whom he should have the most welcome reception; implied in these words, 'and his own,' "hoi idioi", in the masculine gender, his own people, that had been his treasure, to whom he had given his law, entrusted with the covenants and oracles of God, these 'received him not.' His own, some say, as being peculiarly committed to him, the angel of the covenant; whereas other nations were committed to angels to receive laws from them. His own flesh and blood, who expected a Messiah, to whom he was particularly sent, as being the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ is most rejected where proffers most kindness. Those of Tyre and Sidon, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, would not have used him so ill as Capernaum and Jerusalem, his own people. He descends to show the loss of them that rejected him, the benefit of those that received him: John 1:12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that

believe on his name.' Where is, 1. The subject: these that received him.

2. The benefit: the dignity of sonship.

3. The manner of conferring this benefit: 'gave them power.'

4. The instrumental cause: 'believe on his name.' Though his own rejected him, they lost a dignity which was conferred upon those that received him: he lost not his pains, for he gathered sons to God out of all parts of the world. 'To as many as received him.' It was not now peculiar to the Jews, who boasted of being Abraham's seed, and to have the covenant entailed upon them to be the people of God. It was now conferred upon those who were before Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, Hosea 2:23. It was nothing but faith on his name that gave men the privilege of being the sons of God, and this was communicated to Gentiles as well as Jews. Power: not a power, but a dignity, as the word properly signifies. Not a power if they would, but a will, for they were born of the will of God. Faith brings men into a special relation to God; which faith is more than an assent and giving credit to God; for to believe on God, to believe on his name, is a phrase peculiar to Scripture. 'To become the sons of God;' some understand this of sonship by adoption, but the following verse gives us light to understand it of a sonship by regeneration. St Paul uses the word adoption, but St John, both in his gospel and epistles, speaks more of the new birth, and sonship by it, than any of the other apostles; 'who were born not of blood,' or 'of bloods.' He removes all other causes of this, which men might imagine, and ascribes it wholly to God. This place is variously interpreted. 'Not of blood.' Not by natural instinct, says one; not by an illustrious stock. The Jews imagined themselves holy by their carnal generation from Abraham in a long train of ancestors. Grace runs not in a blood. It is not often a flower growing upon every ability; 'not many wise, not many mighty.' Not hereditary by a mixture of blood. Natural generation makes men no more regenerate than the rich man in hell was regenerate by Abraham, his natural ancestor, whom he calls 'father Abraham.' Religious parents propagate corruption, not regeneration; carnal generation is by nature, not by grace; by descent from Adam, not by implantation in Christ. Abraham had an Ishmael, and Isaac an Esau: man begets only a mortal body, but grace is the fruit of an incorruptible seed. 'Nor of the will of the flesh.' Not by human election, as Eve judged of Cain that he should be the Messiah, or Isaac of Esau that he should be heir of the promise, as the Jews say. Not by a choice of those things which are necessary, profitable, or delightful to the flesh; not by a will affected to the flesh, or things of the flesh. Not by any sensual appetite, whereby men used to adopt one to bear up their names when they scanted posterity of their own. I would rather conceive it to be meant of the strength of nature, which is called flesh in Scripture; not by legal observances, the ceremonies of the law being called carnal or fleshly ordinances, Hebrews 9:10. It is not a fruit of nature or profession. 'Nor of the will of man.' Calvin takes the will of the flesh and the will of man for one and the same thing, the apostle using two expressions only to fix it more upon the mind. I rather fudge it to be meant thus: not by natural principles, or moral endowments, which are the flower and perfection of man as man. It is not arbitrary, of the will of man, or the result naturally of the most religious education. All the power of regenerate men in the world joined together cannot renew another; all the industry of man, without the influence of the heavens in the sun and rain, cannot produce fruit in the earth, no, nor the moral industry of men grace in the soul; 'but of God,' or the will of God; his own will: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begot he us,' exclusive of all other wills mentioned before. It is the sole efficiency of God; he has the sole hand in it; therefore we are said to be both begotten and born of him, 1 John 5:18. It is so purely God's work, that as to the principle

he is the sole agent; and as to the manifestation of it, he is the principal agent. Not of the will of the flesh, that is only corruption; nor of the will of man, that at best is but moral nature. But whatsoever the meaning of those particular expressions is, the evangelist removes all pretences nature may make to the efficiency of this regeneration, and ascribes it wholly to God.

1. There is a removal of false causes.

2. A position of the true cause.

(1.) The efficient, God.

(2.) The manner, by an act of his will.

Showing thereby, [1.] To necessity in him to renew us, no motive but from himself.

[2.] No merit on our parts. Man cannot merit, say the papists, before grace, no child can merit his own birth, no man grace.

Doct. 1. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself.

It is subjectively in the creature, not efficiently by the creature, neither ourselves nor any other creature, angels, men, ordinances.

Doct. 2. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

Doct. 1. For the first. Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. This is not the birth of a darkened wisdom and an enslaved will. We affect a kind of divinity, and would centre ourselves in our own strength; therefore it is good to be sensible of our own impotency, that God may have the glory of his own grace, and we the comfort of it in a higher principle and higher power than our own. It is not the bare proposal of grace, and the leaving the will to an indifferent posture, balanced between good and evil, undetermined to the one or the other, to incline and determine itself which way seems best to it. Not one will, in the whole rank of believers, left to themselves. The evangelist excepts not one man among them; for as many as received Christ, as many as believed, were the sons of God, who were born; which believers, every one that had this faith as the means, and this sonship as the privilege, were born not of the will of the flesh nor the will of man. For the proof of this in general,

1. God challenges this work as his own, excluding the creature from any share as a cause: Ezekiel 36:25-27, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, I will cleanse you, I will give you a new heart, I will put a new spirit into you, I will take away the heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh, I will put my Spirit into you.' Here I will no less than seven times. Nothing is allowed to man in the production of this work in the least; all that is done by him is the walking in God's statutes by virtue of this principle. The sanctifying principle, the actual sanctification, the reception of it by the creature, the removal of all the obstructions of it, the principle maintaining it, are not in the least here attributed to the will of man. God appropriates all to himself. He does not say he would be man's assistant, as many men do, who tell us only of the assistance of the gospel, as if God in the gospel expected the first motions of the will of man to give him a rise for the acting of his grace. You see here he gives not an inch to the creature. To ascribe the first work, in any part, to the will of man, is to deprive God of half his due, to make him but a partner with his creature. The least of

it cannot be transferred to man but the right of God will be diminished, and the creature go shares with his Creator. Are we not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing? and are we sufficient to part stakes with God in this divine work? What partner was the creature with God in creation? It is the Father's traction alone, without the hand of free-will. 'None can come, except the Father, which has sent me, draw them,' John 6:44. The mission of the Mediator, and the traction of the creature, are by the same hand. Our Saviour could not have come unless the Father had sent him, nor can man come to Christ unless the Father draw him. What is that which is drawn? The will. The will, then, is not the agent; it does not draw itself.

2. The titles given to regeneration evidence it. It is a creation. What creature can give itself a being? It is a putting in a law and a new heart. What matter can infuse a soul into itself? It is a new birth. What man did ever beget himself? It is an opening the heart. What man can do this, who neither has the key, nor is acquainted with the wards? Not a man knows the heart; it is deceitful above all things, who can know it?

3. The conveyance of original corruption does in part evidence it. We have no more interest of our wills in regeneration, than we had in corruption. This was first received by the will of Adam, our first head, thence transmitted to us without any actual consent of our wills in the first transmission; that is conveyed to us from the second Adam, without any actual consent of our wills in the first infusion. Yet though the wills of Adam's posterity are mere passive in the first conveyance of the corrupt habit from him by generation, yet afterwards they are active in the approbations of it, and production of the fruits of it. So the will is merely passive in the first conveyance of the grace of regeneration, though afterwards it is pleased with it, and brings forth fruit meet for it.

4. Scripture represents man exceeding weak, and unable to do any thing spiritually good. 'So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Romans 8:8. He concludes it by his so then, as an infallible consequence, from what he had discoursed before. If, as being in the flesh, they cannot please God, therefore not in that which is the highest pleasure to God, a framing themselves to a likeness to him. The very desire and endeavour of the creature after this, is some pleasure to God, to see a creature struggling after holiness; but they that are in the flesh cannot please him. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was said of our Saviour. So may we better say, Can any good thing come out of the flesh, the enslaved, possessed will of man? If it be free since it was captivated by sin, who set it free? Nothing can, but 'the law of the Spirit of life,' Romans 8:2. To be 'sinners,' and to be 'without strength,' is one and the same thing in the apostle's judgment: Romans 5:6, Romans 5:8, 'While we were yet without strength;' afterwards, 'while we were yet sinners;' he does not say, We are without great strength, but without strength, such an impotence as is in a dead man. Not like a man in a swoon, but a man in a grave. God only is almighty, and man all impotency; God only is all-sufficient, and man all-indigent. It is impossible we can have a strength of our own, since our first father was feeble, and conveyed his weakness to us; by the same reason that it is impossible we can have a righteousness of our own, since our first father sinned: Isaiah 43:26-27, 'Declare, that thou may be justified. Thy first father has sinned.'

5. This weakness is universal. Sin has made its sickly impressions in every faculty. The mind is dark, Ephesians 4:18, he cannot know, 1 Corinthians 2:14, there is a stoniness in the heart, he cannot bend, Zechariah 7:12; there is enmity in the will, he cannot be subject, Romans 8:7. As to faith, he cannot believe, John 12:8-9. As to the Spirit, the worker of faith, he cannot receive; that is,

of himself, John 14:17; acknowledge Christ he cannot, 1 Corinthians 12:3. As to practice, he cannot bring forth fruit, John 15:4. The unrighteousness introduced by Adam poured a poison into every faculty, and dispossessed it of its strength, as well as of its beauty: what else could be expected from any deadly wound but weakness as well as defilement? The understanding conceives only such thoughts as are pleasing to the law of sin; the memory is employed in preserving the dictates and decrees of it; the imagination full of fancies imprinted by it; the will wholly submitting to its authority; conscience standing with fingers in its mouth, for the most part not to speak against it; the whole man yielding itself and every member to the commands of it, and undertaking nothing but by its motions, Romans 6:19.

6. To evince it, there is not one regenerate man but in his first conversion is chiefly sensible of his own insufficiency; and universal consent is a great argument of the truth of a proposition; it is a ground of the belief of a deity, it being the sentiment of all nations. I do not speak of disputes about it from the pride of reason, but of the inward experience of it in any heart. What more frequent in the mouths of those that have some preparations to it by conviction, than I cannot repent, I cannot believe, I find my heart rotten, and base, and unable to any thing that is good! There have been instances of those that would elevate the power of man, and freedom of will in spiritual things, who have been confuted in their reasonings, and acknowledged themselves so, when God has come to work savingly upon them. Indeed, this poverty of spirit, or sense of our own emptiness, insufficiency, and indigence, is the first gospel grace wrought in the soul, and stands in the head of all those noble qualifications in our Saviours sermon, as fitting men for the kingdom of God: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Matthew 5:3. And God in the whole progress of this work keeps believers in a sensibleness of their own weakness, thereby to preserve them in a continual dependence on him; and therefore sometimes withdraws his Spirit from them, and lets them fall, that they may adhere more closely to him, and less confide in themselves.

2. What kind of impotency or insufficiency is there in the soul to be the cause of this work?

Ans. 1. It is not a physical weakness for want of faculties. Understanding we have, but not a spiritual light in it to direct us; will we have, but no freedom to choose that which is spiritually good. Though since the fall we have such a free will left, which pertains to the essential nature of man, yet we have lost that liberty which belongs to the perfection of human nature, which was to exercise acts spiritually good and acceptable to God! Had the faculties been lost, Adam had not been capable of a promise or command, and consequently of ever sinning after. In Adam, by creation we were possessed of it. In Adam, by his corruption, we were stripped of it; we have not lost the physical but the moral nature of these faculties; not the faculties themselves, but the moral goodness of them. As the elementary heat is left in a carcass, which yet is unfit to exercise any animal action for want of a soul to enliven it; so, though the faculties remain after this spiritual death, we are unfit to exert any spiritual action for want of grace to quicken them. If man wanted faculties, this want would excuse him in his most extravagant actions: no creature is bound to that which is simply impossible; nay, without those faculties, he could not act as a rational creature, and so were utterly incapable of sinning. Sin has untuned the strings, but did not unstring the soul; the faculties were still left, but in such a disorder, that the wit and will of man can no more tune them, than the strings of an untuned lute can dispose themselves for harmony without a musician's hand.

2. Neither is it a weakness arising from the greatness of the object above the faculty. As when an object is unmeet for a man, because he has no power in him to comply with it; as to understand the essence of God; this the highest creature in its own nature cannot do, because God dwells in inaccessible light; and it is utterly impossible for any thing but God to comprehend God. If man were required to become an angel, or to rise up and kiss the sun in the firmament; these were impossible things, because man wanted a faculty in his primitive nature for such acts: so if God had commanded Adam to fly without giving him wings, or to speak without giving him a tongue, he had not been guilty of sin in not doing it, because it was not disobedience, for disobedience is only in what a man has a faculty to do; but to love God, praise him, depend upon him, was in the power of man's original nature, for they were not above those faculties God endued him with, but very correspondent and suitable to him. The objects proposed are in themselves intelligible, credible, capable to be comprehended.

3. Neither is it a weakness arising from the insufficiency of external revelation. The means of regeneration are clearly revealed in the gospel, the sound is gone into all the earth, Romans 10:18, and the word of the Lord is an apprehensible object; it is 'near us, even in our mouths,' Romans 10:8; 'the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,' Psalms 19:8. If the object were hid, the weakness lay not on the part of man, but on the insufficiency of revelation; as if any thing were revealed to man in an unknown tongue, there were an insufficiency in the means of revelation.

But, 4, it is a moral weakness. The disability lies chiefly in the will, John 5:40; what is there, 'You will not come to me,' is, John 5:44, 'How can you believe?' You cannot, because you will not. Carnal lusts prepossess the heart, and make their party in the will against the things of God; so that inward propensities to embrace sin, are as great as the outward temptations to allure to it, whereby the soul is carried down the stream with a wilful violence. In this respect he is called dead, though the death be not of the same nature with a natural death; for such a one has not the natural faculty to raise himself, but this is an impotency arising from a voluntary obstinacy; yet the iniquity of a man binds him no less powerfully under this spiritual captivity, than a natural death and insensibility keeps men in the grave; and those fetters of perversity they can no more knock off, than a dead man can raise himself from the grave. By reason of those bands they are called prisoners, Isaiah 13:7, and cannot be delivered without the powerful voice of Christ commanding and enabling them to go forth: Isaiah 49:9, 'That thou must say to the prisoner, Go forth.' The apostle lays the whole fault of men's not receiving the truth upon their wills: 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 'They received not the love of the truth;' they heard it, they knew it, but they loved not that which courted them. It is not seated in any defect of the will, as it is a power of the soul; for then God, who created it, would be charged with it, and might as well charge beasts to become men, as men to become gracious. Man, as a creature, had a power to believe and love God; to resist temptations, avoid sin, and live according to nature; but man, as corrupted by a habit derived to him from his first parents, and increased by a custom in sin, cannot believe, cannot love God, cannot bring himself into a good frame; as a musician cannot play a lesson when he has the gout in his fingers. When the eyes are full of adultery, when the heart is full of evil habits, it 'cannot cease to sin,' it cannot be gracious, 2 Peter 2:14.

Now, these habits are either innate, or contracted and increased.

(1.) Innate. By nature we have a habit of corruption, fundamental of all other that grow up in us. Man made a covenant with sin, contracted a marriage with it; by virtue of this covenant sin had a full power over him. What the apostle speaks of the marriage between man and the law, Romans 7:1-4, is applicable to this case. Sin as a husband, by way of covenant, has a powerful dominion over the will, and binds it as long as sin lives; and the will has no power to free itself, unless a higher power make a divorce, or by the death of the husband. This is the cause of man's obstinacy against any return to God, the will is held in the cords of sin, Proverbs 5:22. The habit has obtained an absolute sovereignty over it: Hosea 5:4, 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God.' Why? 'For the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them,' that is, in their hearts. This adulterous or idolatrous habit holds their wills in chains, and acts them as a man possessed by the devil is acted according to the pleasure of the devil. The devil speaks in them, moves in them, and does what he pleases by them. And which binds the will faster, this habit is not in a natural man by way of a tyranny, but a voluntary sovereignty on the part of the will, the will is pleased and tickled with it. As a woman (to use the similitude of the Holy Ghost in that place) is so overruled by her affections to other lovers that she cannot think of returning to her former husband, but her unlawful love plays all its pranks, and rises with that force against all arguments from honesty and credit, that it keeps her still in the chains of an unlawful lust, so this is not a habit which does oppress nature, or force it against its will, but by its incorporation, and becoming one with our nature, has quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first framed it. It is a law of sin, which having razed out the purity of the law of nature, commands in a greater measure in the stead of it. Hence it is as natural to man, in his lapsed state, to have perverse dispositions against God, as it is essential to him to be rational. And the chariot of that weak remaining reason left us, is overturned by our distempered passions; and the nobler part of man is subject to the rule of these, which bear down the authority both of reason and God too. That one sin of the angels, howsoever complicated we know not, taking place as a habit in them, has bound them for ever from rising to do any good, or disentangling themselves from it, and may perhaps be meant by those 'chains of darkness' wherein they are reserved and held to the judgment of the great day, having no will to shake them off, though they have light enough to see the torment appointed for them.

(2.) New contracted and increased habits upon this foundation. Custom turns sin more into another nature, and completes the first natural disorder. An unrenewed man daily contracts a greater impotency, by adding strength to this habit, and putting power into the hands of sin to exercise its tyranny, and increasing our headstrong natures in their unruliness. It is as impossible of ourselves to shake off the fetters of custom, as to suppress the unruliness of nature: Jeremiah 13:23, 'Can an Ethiopian change his skin? or a leopard his spots? then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' The prophet speaks not here of what they were by nature, but what they were by custom; contracting thereby such a habit of evil, that, like a chronic disease could not be cured by any ordinary means. But may he not accustom himself to do good? No, it is as impossible as for an Ethiopian to change his skin. Those habits draw a man to delight, and therefore to a necessity, of sinning. The pleasure of the heart, joined with the sovereignty of sin, are two such strong cords as cannot be untwisted or cut by the soul itself, no, not without an overruling grace. It was a simple wound in Adam, but such as all nature could not cure, much less when we have added a world of putrefaction to it. The stronger the habit, the greater the impotency. If we could not raze out the stamp of mere nature upon our wills, how can we raze out

the deeper impressions made by the addition of custom? If Adam, who committed but one sin, and that in a moment, did not seek to regain his lost integrity, how can any other man, who by a multitude of sinful acts has made his habit of a giant-like stature, completed many parts of wickedness, and scoffed at the rebukes of conscience?

Let us now see wherein this weakness of our wills to renew ourselves does appear.

1. In a total moral unfitness for this work. Grace being said to make us meet for our Master's use, it implies an utter unfitness for God's use of ourselves before grace. There is a passive capability, a stump left in nature, but no fitness for any activity in nature, no fitness in nature for receiving grace, before grace; there is nothing in us naturally which does suit or correspond with that which is good in the sight of God. That which is natural is found more or less in all men; but the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration, finds nothing in the nature of man to comply with the main design of it. There is indeed some compliance of moral nature with the moral precepts in the gospel, upon which account it has been commended by some heathens; but nothing to answer the main intendment of it, which is faith, the top grace in regeneration. This has nothing to commend itself to mere nature, nor finds an internal principle in man that is pleased with it, as other graces do, as love, meekness, patience, &c. For faith strips a man of all his own glory, brings himself from himself to live dependently upon another, and makes him act for another, not for himself; and therefore meets not with any one principle in man to show it countenance: 'No good thing dwells in the flesh,' Romans 7:18. There may be some motions lighting there, as a fly upon a man's face; but they have no settled abode, and spring not up from nature. If the apostle, who was renewed, found an unfitness in himself to do that which was good, how great is that unfitness in a mere natural will, which is wholly under the power of the flesh, and has no principle in it correspondent to spiritual truth, to renew itself! If this regeneration had any foundation in nature, it would be then in most men that hear the gospel, because there is not a general contradiction in men to those things which are natural; but since there is no good thing dwells in any flesh, how can it be fit of itself to be raised into a conformity to God, which is the highest pitch of the creature's excellency? The Scripture represents us not as earth, which is fit to suck in showers from heaven; but as stones, which are only moistened in the superficies by the rain, but answers not the intendment of it. Adamants are unfit to receive impressions; and the best natural heart is no better, like a stone, cold and hard. The soul with its faculties is like a bird with its wings, but clogged with lime and clay, unfit to fly. A barren wilderness is absolutely unfit to make a pleasant and fruitful garden. There is a contractedness of the heart till God enlarge and open it, and that in the best nature. Acts 16:14, Lydia, it is said, worshipped God; there was religion in her, yet the Lord opened her heart for the gospel. Can anything be more indisposed than a fountain that is always bubbling up poison? So is the heart of man, Genesis 6:5. The least imagination rising up in the heart is evil, and can be no better, since the heart itself is a mass of venom. If the renewed natures find so much indisposition in the progress of sanctification, though their sails be filled with grace, how great must it be where corrupt nature only sits at the stern! As when Satan came to tempt our Saviour he found nothing in him, no touchwood in his nature to take fire by a temptation, so when the Spirit comes, he finds no tinder in man to receive readily any spark of grace. This unfitness is in the best mere nature, that seems to have but a drop of corruption: a drop of water is as unfit to ascend as a greater quantity.

2. There is not only an unfitness, but an unwillingness. A senseless sluggishness and drowsiness of soul, loath to be moved. No man does readily hold out his arms to embrace the tenders of the

gospel. What folding of the arms! yet a little more slumber, a little more sin. Man is a mere darkness before his effectual calling: 'Who has called us out of darkness,' 1 Peter 2:9. His understanding is darkened; the will cannot embrace a thing offered, unless it have powerful arguments to persuade it of the goodness of that thing which is offered; which arguments are modelled in the understanding, but that being darkened, has wrong notions of divine things, therefore cannot represent them to the will to be pursued and followed. Adam's running away from God to hide himself, after the loss of his original righteousness, discovers how unwilling man is to implore God's favour. How deplored is the condition of man by sin! since we find not one prayer put up by Adam, nor can we suppose any till the promise of recovery was made, though he was sensible of his nakedness, and haunted by his conscience: 'I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself,' Genesis 3:10. He had no mind, no heart, to turn suppliant unto God; he runs from God, and when God finds him out, instead of begging pardon by humble prayer, he stands upon his justification, accuses God to be the cause by giving him the woman, by whose persuasion he was induced to sin. What glass will better discover the good will of nature to God than the first motions after the fall!

3. There is not only an unfitness and unwillingness, but an affection to something contrary to the gospel. The nature of outward objects is such, that they attract the sensitive appetite, corrupted by sin, to prefer them before that which is more excellent; the heart is forestalled by an inordinate love of the world, and a pleasure in unrighteousness: 2 Thessalonians 2:12, they 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' ("Eudochesantes"), a singular pleasure. Where the heart and the devil agree so well, what liking can there be to God or his will? Where the amity between sin and the soul is so great, that sin is self, and self is sin, how can so delightful a friend be discarded, to receive one he thinks his enemy! This weakness arises from a love to something different or contrary to what is proposed. When a man is so tied to that object which he loves that he minds not that contrary object which is revealed by a fit light, as a man that has his eyes or his heart fixed upon a fair picture, cannot observe many things that occur about him; or if he does consider it, he is taken so much with the things he loves, that he seems to hate the other; that though he does count it good, yet compared with what he loved before, he apprehends it as evil, and judges it evil, merely by the error of his mind,—a practical, affected, and voluntary ignorance. So though a man may sometimes judge that there is a goodness in the gospel and the things proposed, yet his affection to other pleasures, which he prefers before the gospel, causes him to shake off any thoughts of compliance with it. Now, all natural men in the irons of sin are not weary but in love with their fetters, and prize their slavery as if it were the most glorious liberty.

4. There is not only unfitness, and unwillingness, and a contrary affection to the gospel, but according to the degrees of this affection to other things, there is a strong aversion and enmity to the tenders of the gospel. This enmity is more or less in the heart of every unrenewed man; though in some it is more restrained and kept down by education, yet it will appear more or less upon the approaches of grace, which is contrary to nature. As a spark as well as a flame will burn, though one has less heat than the other, there is the same nature, the same seminal principles in all. The carnal mind, let it be never so well flourished by education, is enmity to God; and therefore 'unable,' because unwilling, 'to be subject to the law,' Romans 8:7. By nature he is of the devil's party, and has no mind the castle of his heart should ever come into the hands of the right owner. It is in every faculty. Not one part of the soul will make a mutiny within against sin, or take part with

God when he comes to lay siege to it; when he 'stretches out his hands,' he meets with a 'rebellious and gainsaying people,' Romans 10:21. It can converse with anything but God, look with delight upon anything but that which is the only true object of delight. It can have no desire to have that law written in his heart whose characters he hates. All the expressions in the Scripture denoting the work of grace, import man's distaste of it; it is to deny self, crucify the flesh. What man has not an aversion to deny what is dearest to him, his self; to crucify what is incorporated with him, his Isaac, his flesh? The bent of a natural heart, and the design of the gospel, which is to lay man as low as the dust, can never agree. A corrupt heart, and the propositions of grace, meet together as fire and water, with hissing. The language of man, at the proposals of the gospel, is much like that of the devils, 'What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?' Luke 4:34.

5. This aversion proceeds on to a resistance. No rebels were ever stouter against their prince than an unrenewed soul against the Spirit of God: not a moment without arms in his hand; he acts in defence of sin, and resistance of grace, and combats with the Spirit as his deadly enemy: 'You always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you,' Acts 7:51. The animosity runs in the whole blood of nature; neither the breathings of love, nor the thunderings of threatenings, are listened unto. All natural men are hewed out of one quarry of stone. The highest rock and the hardest adamant may be dissolved with less pains than the heart of man; they all, like a stone, resist the force of the hammer, and fly back upon it. All the faculties are full of this resistance: the mind, with stout reasoning, gives a repulse to grace; the imagination harbours foolish conceits of it; in the heart, hardness and refusing to hear; in the affections, disgust and displeasure with God's ways, disaffection to his interest; the heart is locked, and will not of itself shoot one bolt to let the King of glory enter. What party is like to be made for God, by bare nature thus possessed? Nature indeed does what it can, though it cannot do what it would; for though it resist the outward means and inward motions, yet it cannot efficaciously resist the determining grace of God, any more than the matter of the creation could resist the all-powerful voice of God commanding it to receive this or that form, or Lazarus resist the receiving that life Christ conveyed to him by his mighty word. God finds a contradiction in our wills, and we are not regenerate because our will has consented to the persuasions of grace; for that it does not do of itself; but the grace of God disarms our will of all that is capable to make resistance, and determines it to accept and rejoice in what is offered. Nature of itself is of an unyielding temper, and removes not one scale from the eye, nor any splinter from the stone in the heart; for how can we be the authors of that which we most resist and labour to destroy?

6. Add to all this, the power of Satan in every natural man, whose interest lies in enfeebling the creature. The devil, since his first impression upon Adam, has had the universal possession of nature, unless any natural man free himself from the rank of the children of disobedience: Ephesians 2:2, 'The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience;' where the same word "enengein" is used for the acting of Satan, and likewise for the acting of sin, in Romans 7:5. as it is for the acting of the Spirit, Php 2:13. In whom he works as a spirit as powerfully according to his created strength, as the Holy Ghost works in the children of obedience. As the Spirit fills the soul with gracious habits to move freely in God's ways, so Satan fills the soul (as much as in him lies) with sinful habits, as so many chains to keep it under his own dominion. He cannot indeed work immediately upon the will, but he uses all the skill and power that he has to keep men captive for

the performance of his own pleasure: 2 Timothy 2:26, 'Who are taken captive by him at his will,' or for his will, "Eis to ekeinou thelema". It is in that place a dreadful judgment which God gives some men up to for opposing the gospel, taking away his restraints, both from the devil and their own hearts, but more or less he works in every one that opposes the gospel, which every unrenewed man under the preaching of the gospel does, he is the strong man that keeps the palace, Luke 11:21. Can the will of man make a surrender of it, at God's demand, in spite of his governor? What power have we to throw off these shackles he loads us with? We are as weak in his hand as birds in a fowler's. What will have we, since we are his willing slaves? The darkness of nature is never like by its own free motion to disagree with the prince of darkness, without an overpowering grace, able to contest with the lord as well as the slave; for by the fall he is become prince of the lower creation, and holds it in chains too strong for weakness to break. How great, then, is man's inability! How unreasonable is it to think that the will of man possessed with such unfitness, unwillingness, affection to other things, aversion to the gospel, resistance of it, and in the devil's net, can of itself do anything towards its recovery, from that it counts no disease; or to turn to that which it accounts its burden? If unspotted and sound nature did not preserve Adam in innocence, how can filthy and craze nature recover us from corruption? If it did not keep him alive when he was living, how can it convey life to us when we have not a spark of spiritual life in us? Man was planted a 'noble vine,' but turned himself into 'a degenerate plant;' nothing that has decayed can by its own strength recover itself, because it has lost that strength whereby it could only preserve itself.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for grace.
2. He cannot produce it.
3. He cannot co-operate with God in the first work.
4. He cannot preserve it.
5. He cannot actuate it.

1. Man cannot prepare himself for the new birth.

I shall premise a few things for the better understanding of this,

(1.) Man has a subjective capacity for grace above any other creature in the inferior world; and this is a kind of natural preparation which other creatures have not. A capacity in regard of the powers of the soul, though not in respect of the present disposition of them. A stone or a beast are not capable of habits of grace, no more than of habits of sin, because they want rational natures, which are the proper seats of both. Our Saviour did not raise trees or stones to life, though he had the same power to do that as he had to raise stones to be children to Abraham; but he raised them that had bodies prepared, in part, for a receptacle of a soul. As there is a more immediate subjective capacity in a man newly dead for the reception of life upon a new infusion of the soul, because he has all the members already formed, which is not in one whose body is mouldered into dust, and has not one member organised fit for the acting of a rational soul. These faculties have a spring of natural motion in them, therefore are capable of divine grace to make that motion regular; as the wheels of a clock out of order retain their substance and their motion if their weights be wound up, but a false motion unless the disorder of the spring be mended. Man has an

understanding to know, and, when it is enlightened, to know God's law; a will to move and run, and, when enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commandments; so that he stands in an immediate capacity to receive the life of grace upon the breath and touch of God, which a stone does not, not the most sparkling jewel any more than the meanest pebble; for in this it is necessary rational faculties should be put as a foundation of spiritual motion. Though the soul be thus capable as a subject to receive the grace of God, yet it is not therefore capable, as an agent, to prepare itself for it or produce it; as a piece of marble is potentially capable of being the king's statue, but not to prepare itself by hewing off its superfluous parts, or to raise itself into such a figure. If there were not a rational nature, there were nothing immediately to be wrought upon. If there be not a wise agent and an omnipotent hand, there were nothing to work upon it.

(2.) Besides this passive capacity, there are more immediate preparations. The soul, as rational, is capable to receive the truths of God; but as the heart is stony, it is incapable to receive the impressions of those truths. A stone, as it is a corporeal substance, is capable to receive the drops of rain in its cavities; but because of its hardness is incapable to suck it in, and be moistened inwardly thereby, unless it be softened. Wax has a capacity to receive the impression of the seal, but it must be made pliable by some external agent to that purpose. The soul must be beaten down by conviction before it be raised up by regeneration; there must be some apprehensions of the necessity of it. Yet sometimes the work of regeneration follows so close upon the heels of these precious preparations, that both must be acknowledged to be the work of one and the same hand. Paul on the sudden was struck down. and in a moment there is both an acknowledgement of the authority of Christ, and a submission to his will, when he said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts 9:6. The preparation of the subject is necessary, but this preparation may be at the same time with the conveyance of the divine nature: as a warm seal may both prepare the hard wax, and convey the image to it, by one and the same touch.

(3.) Though some things which man may do by common grace may be said in some sort to be preparations, yet they are not formally so, as that there is an absolute causal connection between such preparations and regeneration. They are not *causae dispositivae* of grace, not disposing causes of grace. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, not of action from the soul. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the first infusion of the divine nature. Mary Magdalene was far from the one, yet received the other. If there were anything in the subject that was the cause of it, the most tender and softest dispositions would be wrought upon, and the most intelligent men would soonest receive the gospel. Though we see them sometimes renewed, yet many times the roughest tempers are seized upon by grace; and the most unlikely soils for fructifying God plants his grace in, wherein there could be no preparations before. It is not with grace as it is with fire, which gives as much heat to a stone as to a piece of wood; but the wood is sooner heated than the stone, because it is naturally disposed, by the softness and porousness of its parts, to receive the heat. Moral nature seems to be a preparation for grace; if it be so, it is not a cause howsoever of grace, for then the most moral person would be soonest gracious, and more eminently gracious after his renewal, and none of the rubbish and dregs of the world would ever be made fit for the heavenly building. There seems to be a fitness in morality for the receiving special grace, because the violence and tumultuousness of sin is in some measure appeased, the flame and sparks of it allayed, and the body of death lies more quiet in them, and the principles cherished by them bear some testimony to the holiness of the precepts. But though it seems to set

men at a greater nearness to the kingdom of God, yet with all its own strength it cannot bring the kingdom of God into the heart, unless the Spirit opens the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man further from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent, which is the crown of the gospel: to imputed, as standing upon a righteousness of their own, and conceiving no need of any other; to inherent, as acting their seeming holiness neither upon gospel principles, nor for gospel ends, but in self-reflections and self-applauses. What may seem preparations to us in matters of moral life, may in the root be much distant and vastly asunder from grace; as a divine of our own illustrates it, two mountains whose tops seem near together may in the bottom be many miles asunder. The foundation of that which looks like a preparation may be laid in the very gall of bitterness; as Simon Magus desiring the gift of the Holy Ghost, but from the covetousness of his heart. Other operations upon the soul which seem to be nearer preparations, as convictions, do not infer grace; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not sown by any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit; the increase depends upon God.

(4.) There is no meritorious connection between any preparation in the creature and regeneration. The Pelagian opinion was, that by a generous love of virtue we might deserve the grace of God, and the farther assistance of the Spirit, we first (say they) put our hearts into the hands of God, that God may incline them which way he please; and by thus making our wills depend on God, we merit help from God, and make ourselves worthy of him. Whether this be the opinion of any now, I know not. This is to assert, that man gives first to God, and then God to man in way of requital. What son can merit to be born? What desert before being? Nothing can be pre-existent in the son which merits generation by the father. The fair hand of moral nature more induce God to confer on man the state of grace, than the deed of conveyance of a manor, fairly drawn, can dispose the lord to pass it away. In what part of Scripture has God indulged mere nature with any promise of adding grace upon the improvements of natural abilities? Whatsoever conditional promise there is, supposes some grace superior to nature in the subject as the condition of it. We do not find that God has made himself a debtor to any preparation of the creature. But there is no obligation on God by anything that may look like a preparation in man. For,

[1.] If man can lay any obligation on God, it must be by some act in all parts his own, for which he is not in the least obliged to God. Thinking is the lowest step in the ladder of preparation. It is the first act of the creature in any rational production, yet this the apostle does remove from man, as in every part of it his own act: 2 Corinthians 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' The word signifies reasoning. No rational act can be done without reasoning; this is not purely our own. We have no sufficiency of ourselves, as of ourselves, originally and radically of ourselves, as if we were the author of that sufficiency, either naturally or meritoriously. And Calvin observes that the word is not "autarkeia" but "hikanotes", not a self-ability, but an aptitude or fitness to any gracious thought. How can we oblige him by any act, since, in every part of it, it is from him, not from ourselves? For as thinking is the first requisite, so it is perpetually requisite to the progress of any rational act, so that every thought in any act, and the whole progress, wherein there must be a whole flood of thoughts, is from the sufficiency of God. We cannot oblige God after grace, much less before, for when grace is given there must be constant effluxes of grace from God to maintain it; and the acts of grace in us are but a second grace of God. How can we then oblige him by that which is not ours, either in the

original or improvement? If when a man has given to another a rich gift he must also give him power to preserve it, and wisdom to improve it, the person cannot be said by his improvement of it to oblige the first donor. What has any man that he has not received? 1 Corinthians 4:7. The apostle excludes everything in us from the name of a donation to God. If there be no one thing but is received from God, then no preparation to grace but is received from him. The obligation then lies upon the receiver, not upon the donor. But may we not oblige God by the improvement of such a gift? The apostle includes everything, challenges him to name any one thing which was not received, which will contain improvements as well as preparations. If we have power to improve it, wisdom to improve it, hearts and opportunities to improve it, all these are by way of reception from God.

[2.] If man can lay any obligation upon God, it must be by some pure, spotless act. This cannot be; no pure act can spring from man. God has taken an exact survey of the whole world in its dark and fallen state, and could not, among those multitudes of acts which spring from the will of man find one piece of beauty, one particle of the divine image, for he has pronounced this sentence upon them, with repetition, too, as his infallible judgment: 'There is none righteous no, not one: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one,' Romans 3:10-12. The most refined nature derived from Adam was never found without fault, a pure virtue is a terra incognita. The productions of nature are always evil. If not one action be fully good in the nature of man, what meritoriousness can there be in any preparation of nature for the grace of God? Can the clearest virtue that ever was since Adam oblige God to pardon its own defects, that is, the defects of that very act of virtue? Much less can it challenge a higher degree of grace to be transmitted to it.

[3.] If any preparation were our own, and were pure, yet being natural, how could it oblige God to give a supernatural grace? If there be anything of meritoriousness, it is only something of the same kind with the work in a greater degree, but there is no proportion between natural acts and supernatural grace. There is no one scripture, or one example, declaring grace to be given as a reward to mere nature, or any act of nature. God indeed, out of his infinite righteousness, and equity, and goodness, has rewarded some moral acts with some worldly advantages, or the withdrawing some judgments threatened, as Ahab's reprieve from judgment upon his humiliation, 1 Kings 21:27, 1 Kings 21:29; and the temporary pardon to Nineveh, upon their submission to the prophet's threatenings, Jonah 3:8-10. But what obligation lies upon God to reward men doing thus with super-additions of grace? for there is no proportion between such a moral act and so excellent a reward. Are may as well say that a coal by glowing and sparkling may merit to become a star; or that the orderly laying the wood and sacrifice upon the altar might merit the descent of fire from heaven to kindle it.

[4.] If there was any obligation on God, by any preparations of nature, then such acts would be always followed with renewing grace. There would be an obligation on God's righteousness to bestow it. And if it should be denied, the creature might accuse God of a failure in justice, because he gave not what was due. God sure would observe that rule of justice which he prescribes to man, not to detain the wages of a hireling, no, not for a night. Were grace a debt upon the works of nature, God were then obliged not only to pay it, but pay it speedily, it being exact righteousness so to do. But we see the contrary. Publicans and harlots are raised and beautified, while pharisees lie buried in the ruins of nature. These preparations are many times without perfection. The pangs

of conviction resolve sometimes into a return to the old vomit, and make no progress in a state of life and grace. The apostle's rule will hold true in the whole compass of the work, Romans 6:11, 'If it be of works, then it is no more grace.' So much as is ascribed to any work or preparation by the creature, so much is taken from the glory of grace, and would make God not the author, but assistant, and that too by obligation, not by grace.

[5.] From this it follows, that man does not prepare himself by any act of his will, without the grace of God. What preparation can he make, who is so powerfully possessed by corrupted habits, which have got so great an empire over him, struck their roots to the very bottom of his soul, entrenched themselves in the works of custom, that if he goes about to pull up one, his arm shakes and his heart faints? How strongly do these rooted habits resist the power of grace! How much more easily do they resist the weakness of nature in confederacy with them! What is said of the remnant of Jacob as a 'dew from the Lord,' as 'the showers upon the grass,' that it 'tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men,' Micah 5:7, may be said of the grace of God, it waits not for the preparations and dispositions of the creature, but prevents them. It is a pure gift; though we are active with it, yet we are wholly indisposed for it. We can no more prepare ourselves to shine as stars in the world, than a dunghill can to shine as a sun in heaven. What preparations does God wait for in the heart of an infarct when he sanctifies it? If 'without Christ we can do nothing,' John 15:5, then no preparations without Christ; for they are something, and very considerable too. There is no foundation to think there should be any preparation in the creature, as of the creature.

First, The first promise of redemption and regeneration intimates no such thing in man to either of them: Genesis 3:15, 'I will put enmity,' &c. The putting enmity into man against Satan is promised by God as his own work. There was a friendship struck up, a confederacy made, the devil entertained as a counsellor; God would now break this league, he only puts enmity into the heart against Satan: 'It shall bruise thy head,' &c. The bruising the serpent's head is wholly the act of Christ. It, not the man or the woman, but the promised seed. As there were no preparations in the creature to that which Christ acted in the flesh, so there are no preparations in that creature for what Christ is to do in his Spirit. He bruised Satan in his flesh upon the cross without any preparations in the creature; and so he bruises Satan in the heart, by his Spirit, without any preparations on the creature's part. For anything I see, had man in the state of innocence been sensible that his dependency, as to any good, and motion to good, ought to be upon God, and he to have waited upon God for his change and confirmation, he might have stood; but when he would practically assert the liberty of his own will in a way of indifference to good and evil, he fell. And by the way, those that assert the freedom of their own will naturally, without the grace of God, either common or special, seem to me to justify Adam's first affected independence of God.

Secondly, God is as much in the new creation as he was in the old. Not only the creation of the matter, but the preparation of it to receive the form, was from God; neither the matter, nor any part of it, prepared itself. If nothing prepared itself to be a creature, how can anything prepare itself to be a gracious creature, since to be a new creature is more than to be a creature; and every preparation to be a new creature is more than any preparation to be a creature? The new creation differs, I must confess, from the old creation; but it is such a difference which makes it rather harder than easier.

First, The object of the old creation was nothing, the object of the new is something; but a thing that has no more active disposition to receive a new form, than nothing had.

Secondly, The object of the first creation was a simple and pure privation; the object of the second is a contrary form, which resists the work of God: there was only an action of creation in the first, there is an action of destruction in the second, the destruction of the old form and the creation of a new. Is it likely that any nature would voluntarily prepare itself for its own destruction? God in the first creation found no disposition in the subject to entertain a form, here he finds a contrary disposition to resist the form.

Thirdly, What preparation had any of those we read of in Scripture from themselves? What disposition had Paul, when he was struck down with a heart fuller of actual enmity than he had at his birth? Did the apostles expect any call from their nets, or set themselves in a readiness before they heard that call? A voice from Christ was attended with a divine touch or power upon their hearts; both the preparation and the motion itself took birth together. And what preparations are there in Scripture, but are attributed unto God? If a conviction be thorough and full, and consequently a preparation, it must refer to that Spirit which our Saviour asserts to be the principal cause of it, John 16:8-9, 'When he is come,' that is, the Comforter, 'he will reprove the world of sin.' It is laid wholly upon this, as the end of the almighty Spirit's coming, whereby it is not likely men would be convinced without him. Is there any desire or prayer for it? Even this, if true, is from the Holy Ghost; 'no man can call Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Corinthians 12:3. Did any of those our Saviour cured of bodily infirmities, prepare themselves for that cure? Neither can any man prepare himself for his spiritual cure.

Fourthly, What thing in all the records of nature ever prepared itself for a change? All preparations in matter for receiving any form arise not from the matter itself, but from some other active principle, or the new form in part introduced, which by degrees expels the old; as in water, when heat comes in the place of cold, the preparation is not from the water, but from the new quality introducing itself. The grace of God is to the soul as form is to matter. The body is formed in the womb, for the reception of the soul, but not by the embryo, but by the formative virtue of the parent, fashioning the parts of the body to make it a fit lodging for the soul; or, as some think, the soul itself, as the bee, fashions its own cell; but howsoever it is not from itself. The preparations of Lazarus to rise were from the voice of Christ, not from the stinking body of Lazarus. The nature of all is alike. That one lute is better prepared for an harmonious touch, is from the musician's skill, not any art of its own. If one man of the same nature with another be endued with rich morals, it is from the common grace of God exciting natural light, and the common notions of fit and just; as the reason one vine of the same kind brings forth more generous fruit than another, is from the stronger influence of the sun. All nature assents to this truth, that nothing does prepare itself for a change.

Fifthly, If man did prepare himself for grace, it would be a disparagement to God, it would violate the sovereignty of God. It would be derogatory to the majesty of God to have his grace depend upon the conditions and previous preparations in the creature; it would lay the foundations of grace in a man's self, and impose a necessity in God to come in with further grace, and make his actions dependent upon the actings of the creature. The beginning of faith would be from us, and the supplement from God; the work of grace would be of him that 'wills and runs,' and not 'of God

that shows mercy,' Romans 9:16. It would change the whole tenor of the Scripture, and make conversion not God's drawing of us, but our traction of God; for he that does dispose himself to grace, is in some sort the cause of that grace, as he that does dispose the subject for such a form is in a sort the cause of that form. If the preparations were from the will of man, man would begin the noblest work that ever was wrought, and God would be made no more than an attendant upon the creature's motion; whereas the very beginning in the will, as well as the perfection, is ascribed to God: Php 2:13, 'God works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' God's good pleasure is the original cause of this work upon the will, not the will's good pleasure. The work then depending on God's good pleasure, excludes any dependency on the will of man; it is therefore called a creation, to show God's independence upon anything as to this work.

Sixthly, Where should this preparation begin? in what part of the soul? Shall it begin in the understanding? That has lost the reins whereby it governed the lower parts of the soul. Nothing is more discomposed in its acts than that faculty. It is well compared to a charioteer or coachman fallen from his box, and his feet entangled in the reins of the horses, which hurry him about. The sensitive appetite, like a wild horse, has got the bit between his teeth, runs about, and draws the understanding after it. Indeed a charioteer that has lost the government of his horses endeavours to remedy that violence; he cries out, makes all resistance, has a will to help himself; but the understanding is so far from resisting, that it takes pleasure in the disorder of the passions; it prompts the will to follow them, and this is properly to be a servant to sin. Shall it begin in the appetite? How can that incline to range itself to the order of reason? It has no reason itself; it submits not to the laws of reason; it has got the mastery of it, and has prescription for its dominion, of a long standing, ever since the fall. The dominion of sin is in the understanding, will, appetite, whence all of them are called flesh, so that all the motions of the soul depending upon them, the slavery must needs be voluntary. Therefore neither the understanding conceives, nor the will wills, nor the appetite desires, anything against themselves; how, then, should the will, which is captivated by a corrupt understanding and disorderly affections, recover itself, when it must necessarily be under the guidance of one of these jailers? Suppose the understanding were illuminated, are those evil habits in the will corrected barely by the illumination of the understanding? If they are corrected, why does not the will always follow the dictate of the understanding? But, alas! those evil habits determine the will to evil, as good habits determine it to good; for it is the nature of habits to incline the faculties to those things which are suitable to the nature of those habits; therefore as long as it remains under the command of those evil inclinations, it is impossible it should pass from evil to good. But that the will has evil inclinations, appears by the Scripture calling the whole man flesh; else corruption would not be universally seated in the soul, but only accidental in the will, from the darkness of the understanding. But certainly, as Adam in innocence had an habitual holy disposition in his will, so man, in his fall, has a corrupt inclination in his will, an habitual quality, whereby he drinks iniquity like water, Job 15:16. What power of the will can take those cords off, which hold it prisoner, whereby it must be prepared for a free motion? To evidence this further, we shall consider, 1. That man does not naturally, neither can, understand the new birth.

2. He cannot desire it. Understanding and desire are necessary preparations to any rational change a creature can make in itself.

1. Man cannot understand it. This is necessary to a change. Whatsoever is done by the will, must be done by the impulse of some other faculty. Sensitive appetite cannot instruct the will to this work. Sense is not capable of reason, much less of religion, though it be the portal to both. The will can never be moved to any good thing, unless the mind propound it as good and amiable. The act of thinking must precede the act of believing, for we cannot believe without thinking of what we believe. It is less to think than understand. If we cannot, then, do that which is less in the preparation, we cannot do that which is greater, especially when it is impossible to will without thinking; and thinking is a necessary means to willing. He that cannot prepare himself for a good thought, how can he prepare himself for a gracious habit? What ability have we to the act of faith, when we have no ability to any thought of faith? We cannot by the strength of nature understand it, if we consider,

(1.) The first blot caused by sin was upon the understanding. Man was first deceived by the sophistical reasonings of the serpent. The first effect of sin was to spread a thick darkness upon Adam's understanding. Though the whole house, and every beam of it, fell together, yet this faculty was first unfastened, and brought all the rest to ruin. As soon as ever he ceased from glorifying God as God, a darkness was brought upon his foolish heart: Romans 1:21, 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,' where the apostle describes the state of man in corrupt nature after his fall. Folly first in the heart to desire the forbidden fruit, and then darkness came upon the understanding. Their "dialogismoi", their reasonings, became empty and contradictory; their primitive light departed, and darkness, as a privation, took place. What true motion can there be in the will, when there was so thick an obscurity in the understanding? Where there is but a false knowledge in the mind, there can be no true motion in the will. There must then be a restoration of this light, before there can be any preparation to a good act of the will. Adam recovered not this light by his own strength, no, nor by the outward declaration of the gospel in the promise; for no outward object proposed to the understanding confers any power upon the faculty. How can it then be recovered by our strength, since we have rather added to the scales than diminished them? For,

(2.) There is a darkness transmitted from him to the understanding of every man by nature. The light is darkened in the heaven of the soul, the more spiritual part of the mind, Isaiah 5:30, as the prophet speaks in another case. Our understandings are so closed up with the thick slime of sin, that we cannot see the beauty of gospel truths; 'darkness comprehends not the light,' John 1:5. Though the light of the sun did shine a thousand times brighter than it does, and strike upon the face and eyelids of a man with the greatest glory, yet if there be a spot upon the apple of his eye, if he scants a seeing faculty, he can apprehend nothing of it. Hence the apostle prays for the illumination of the understanding of the Ephesians, Ephesians 1:17-18, and that they might have 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.' And our Saviour tells them that they 'must be taught of God,' John 6:45, by an internal teaching of the Spirit, as well as by himself in an oral instruction. What a thick cloud was upon Nicodemus his mind, when he discoursed with him about regeneration, who was the ablest teacher to illustrate it to his fancy and understanding! It is not such a darkness as if he might understand the mysteries of heaven, if he would exert the strength of his own reason. This would be only as a man shutting his eyes who had a visive faculty; but it is such a darkness as cannot be expelled by flesh and blood, or anything arising from

it: 'Flesh and blood,' says our Saviour to Peter, 'has not revealed it unto thee, but my, Father which is in heaven,' Matthew 16:17. Flesh and blood includes everything in opposition to God. Our Saviour had externally owned himself, in the face of the Jews, to be the Messiah, the Son of God; but besides this, there was an inward illumination granted to Peter, for the apprehending and embracing so great a truth. There is not only a darkness upon the minds of those who have no outward revelation of the will of God in Christ, but upon those who are in the midst of the sunbeams: Deuteronomy 29:1-29, 'Yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' They wanted not the beams. No people in the world had the ordinances of God besides them; but they wanted an organ fitted to receive and use them, which was not in their power, but is mentioned as the gift of God. God promises to make his people to know his ways. What needs that, if they could know them without him? We have indeed the light of the gospel, we have also a faculty, but without an eye disposed for the light, Ye enjoy no benefit by it. Now who ever heard that darkness could prepare itself for its own expulsion? It cannot comprehend the light, much less prepare for the reception of it. Now who ever heard of one born blind, in a capacity to prepare himself for sight? We are blind in naturals, much more in spirituals. The most polished reasons among the heathens, both for knowledge in naturals and prudence in civil affairs, coated, and with all their wisdom knew not God.

(3.) There is an unsuitableness and a contrariety in the mind of man to the gospel, which is the instrument of regeneration. There is a mighty distance between the spiritual object and the natural faculty. The understanding, though never so well furnished with natural stuff, is but natural, and flesh; the object is supernatural and spiritual; therefore the richest mere nature can no more attain to the knowledge of spiritual things, than the clearest sense can attain to the knowledge of rational. Though every man 'by nature has the things contained in the law,' Romans 2:14-15, yet no man has by nature the things contained in the gospel. The gospel has not the same advantage in the hearts of men as the law has, for it finds nothing of kin to it. Though a natural heart has some broken pieces of the law of God deposited in it, yet there is not the least syllable of Christ or regeneration written in the mind by the hand of nature. The understanding therefore naturally cannot prepare itself for the reception of the gospel, because it has not any principle in it which suits the doctrine of it. It seems a ridiculous thing to the wisest carnalist, who receives not the things of God, because, out of the pride of natural wisdom, he counts them foolishness, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Hence not many wise are renewed in their minds. Had the gospel truth been as agreeable to reason as the other common notions imprinted in man, it would have been preserved in the world longer than it was, since, without question, Adam did communicate to his posterity the notion of a redeemer, which did soon die among them, because not consonant to that reason they had derived by nature from Adam. It was a knowledge given to Adam by revelation, not imprinted in his nature by creation. Besides, there is a contrariety in the mind to the truth of the gospel. As we say of liberty, so of enmity. Though it be formally in the will, yet it is radically in the understanding. The mind is the seat of those hostile principles which act the will against God, Romans 8:7. The mind of man regards the things of God as unpleasant, and an intolerable yoke and hard bridle. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon a man that has sore eyes, he will turn away from it, or shut his eyes against it; for though he understands the worth of it, yet it has a quality offensive to him. So is the gospel to those notions settled in the distempered mind. Men give not credit to the declarations of the gospel; 'Who has believed our report?' has been the voice of God's messengers in all ages, Isaiah 53:1. No man, unless known by all never to

speak truth, but is more believed than the God of infallible and unerring truth! What principles, then, are there in the understanding to prepare it for the reception of that which is so contrary to its ancient inmates?

(4.) Besides this, the natural levity of the understanding does incapacitate it to prepare itself. It is with the understanding as with a line, the farther it is stretched out the weaker and more wavering it is. So is the understanding, being at a distance from God. How do vain thoughts intrude into the mind! No man can keep a door locked against them. We feel them rushing upon us while we endeavour to avoid them. We are confounded and overwhelmed by them, and drawn to things against our own resolutions. Man has not the command of his own heart, so much as to think steadily of a divine object. How can he then prepare his own heart, when he cannot without grace fix in any holy meditation which is necessary for the renewal of it, since nothing is more discomposed in its acts than the mind of man, which is always dancing about, like cork in the water, or feathers in the air? Whence should come any preparation to good orders but by some supernatural ballast, to establish it from fluctuating? This disease every man is sensible of, and whatsoever disease is inherent in nature cannot be cured by any preparations by that nature which is wholly overgrown with it.

(5.) Hence it follows that a natural mind has no right notion of grace. To the right notion of a thing is required suitableness, pleasure, and a fixedness of the mind upon it. A natural mind wants all these. How can it then prepare itself for that which it has no knowledge of? And without knowledge it cannot commend it to the will. The apostle asserts a plain cannot in this business: 1 Corinthians 2:14, 'He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Being destitute of the Spirit, they cannot discern the things of the Spirit. Sense can discern things sensibly, not rationally. Reason can discern things rationally, but not spiritually. The light whereby a natural man judges of the things of the gospel is a star-light or a moonlight, which gives not a distinct view of the object. The evil disposition must be removed from the mind, before the object be entertained according to its worth. As if any natural object have such excellent qualities in it, that if it be embraced it will draw the will and affections after it; yet if the mind be ill-disposed, and does not judge of the object according to the merit of it, it will refuse it. Offer a man gold who understands not the worth of gold, it will not allure him. Man with his eyes is spiritually blind, and with his ears is spiritually deaf. So God calls the Gentiles, which were to be brought to Christ for a restitution of their eyes: Isaiah 43:8, 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.' Such can no more judge of the excellency of spiritual things than a blind man can have regular conceptions of colours, or a deaf man of the excellency of music. If 'no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Corinthians 12:8; if no man can have a magnificent conception and speech of Christ, but by the Spirit giving him both that conception and utterance, he cannot have a notion of the formation of Christ in the heart without the gift and impression of the same hand. What preparations, then, can arise from nature, when the mind can have no conception of Christ but by the Spirit of God?

Well, then, to conclude this. What preparations can there be in nature, since we cannot understand the things of God, when yet we have more clearness in our understanding to see them than we have force in our wills to love them and embrace them? It is in the understanding that the common notions, which are the grounds of knowledge, are deposited. There is less of ignorance in our understanding than of enmity in our will. The eye can see further than the arm can reach. If

therefore we cannot think or understand, by all that help of common notions, without the grace of God, how can we then prepare our wills for it, to comply with it, and renew that faculty which is chiefly possessed with a contrariety to it?

2. As we cannot understand it, so we cannot naturally desire it. What is not spiritually discerned cannot spiritually be desired. Not but that according to those unformed conceptions which men have of it by common grace, there may be some weak velleities, but they are wishings without a will, not desires according to the value of the thing. Mercy first breathed on our first parents, before they breathed after that. The first motion came from God. So soon were they turned obstinate enemies against their Creator, without any thoughts of turning supplicants, though they had not lost the conceptions of their late integrity. which if they had, they had been wholly insensible, without any trouble of conscience. What desires can we naturally, then, have for it, who have far weaker conceptions of that happiness than they had immediately after they lost it? We cannot desire what we do not apprehend. A beast cannot desire to be a man, because he has no conceptions of the excellency of the human nature above his own. No nature can ever affect that which is contrary to it. Do flesh can ever desire its own crucifixion. If we seek, we shall find; if we ask, we shall receive, but who first touches the heart to seek or to ask? If we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, how can we think so good a thought as a desire of regeneration? To say, then, we can desire the new creation of ourselves, without some kind of grace, is to assert another doctrine than what the apostle Paul asserted to those already regenerate. The first will, which is the necessary spring of all actions, is wrought by God, Php 2:13. The frame of man's will and desire stands to another point: John 8:44, 'The lusts of your father you will do.' The best renewed man 'knows not what to pray for as he ought,' without the instruction of the Spirit, Romans 8:26. We cannot give our hearts a lift to heaven, or breathe out an unutterable groan, without the help of an infinite Spirit. The root of man's affections groves downward, not upward. What breathings can be expected in a soul choked up with sin? There was no motion of the church till 'the hand of her beloved was put in by the hole of the door,' and made a motion in her bowels, Song of Solomon 5:4. The church owed no obligation to her free will and her own predispositions. There is not a smoke in the heart to heaven without a spark first from heaven; not a step till God enlarges the heart. Velleities are from common grace, under the preaching, of the word, fervent and saving desires are from special grace, by the hand of the Spirit. So that there are no preparations from nature to this, since both our apprehensions of it and desires of it spring not out of that stock. The second main thing is this, As man cannot prepare himself for it, so he does not produce and work it in himself. This is evident from the former. If he cannot make any preparation, which is the less, he cannot cause any actual production of it, which is the greater. But to evidence it more, let us spend some time in this. As it does not depend upon the will of man in the preparation, so neither in the production.

I shall evidence it, first, by arguments drawn from the consideration of God.

If this work depended upon the will of man, as the first cause in the production, it would deprive God,

1. Of his sovereign independence. If man's will were the first cause of regeneration, God would not be the supreme independent cause in the noblest of his works. This work is nobler than creation in respect of the price paid for it. The world was made without the death of anything to purchase the

creation of it. But the divine image is not restored without the death of the Son of God, every line in this new image being drawn with his blood. Is there anything happens in the world but by the conduct and efficacy of his providence? Do all the motions of the heavens, the productions of creatures, the universal events of nature, depend upon the will, power, and wisdom of God? And shall the soul, the most excellent of the lover creatures, bearing the characters of God's wisdom and goodness upon it (the acts of the soul in the way of religion, being the noblest acts it can produce), be left wholly to itself in the production and management of these? Shall God, the supreme cause in everything else, be an inferior and secondary cause in this affair? It is 'not he that plants, nor he that waters, but God that gives the increase,' 1 Corinthians 3:7. God is the first cause, upon whom man depends in all kind of actions, much more in supernatural actions, chiefly in the understanding and will, upon which faculties no creature can have any intrinsic influence to cause them to exercise their vital acts. If the will of man were the first cause, God would be an attendant to the creature in the noblest works. God would not then be the first mover, but man. The will willing would then be the cause of God's working, not God's working the cause of the will's willing and choice. God's working would be consequent upon the will, and so the effect of the will's free motion. Man would then be the *dispositiva causa* in relation to God. It would make God the second cause, and represent him expecting the beck, and the preparations of man, before he did exert any act. It would make God to will that which man wills, and make God to will that which man may reject. It would follow that God concurs not to regeneration by way of sovereignty, but by way of concomitance. It would not be a victorious but a precarious grace, which is against the whole tenor of the Scripture, which represents God as holding in his hands the first links of all second causes: Romans 11:36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' He is the first governor of all the wills and powers of the creatures, the first cause of all motions. He orders all, without being ordered by any. Now this is below the majesty of God, to be conducted in his motion by the will of the creature, to have the purposes of his goodness brought into act by an uncertain and slippery cause. How can it be conceived that God should put his hand to the more ignoble works of nature, and turn over the noblest work of the new creation to the airy will of the creature. To conclude; God must either be precedent in his operation to the act of the will, or follow it. If precedent, we have what we would, if subsequent, then God is a mere attendant upon the motions of the creature, and a servant to wait upon man. This is to advance free will to the throne of God and depress God to the footstool of will; this is to deify the creature, by placing the crown of the sovereign independence of God on the head of free will.

2. It puts a blot upon the wisdom of God. If God expects the determination of the will of man, whether he shall act or no, then God is disposed by the will of man to the intention of his end. But it is very inconsistent with that unfathomable and unerring wisdom, to have the attainment of his end depend upon an agent wherein nothing is wrapped up but folly and madness, Ecclesiastes 9:3. This is to make his power depend upon weakness, and his gracious ends towards his creature hang upon the extravagancies of one distracted, which no wise man would be guilty of. Is God in all things else a God of power and wisdom, working all things in number, weight, and measure, springing up every motion in the lower world, by an unblameable counsel? And shall he leave the forming of the image of his Son, wherein his wisdom is most seen, to the slight irregular will of man, which has neither weight nor measure in itself? This would make the immutable counsel of God depend upon the mutability of the creature; which would be inconsistent with the wisdom of man, who chooses the firmest means he can for the conduct of his designs; for if man wills this

day, then God wills, if man reject it the next day, then he rejects that which God wills. So God's will must be at uncertainty, according to the will of man. How shall his counsel stand upon so tottering a bottom? How shall he do all his pleasure if it were a mere dependent upon the pleasure of the creature, contrary to what he is pleased positively to assert: Isaiah 46:10, 'My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure.' The apostle does couch these into arguments together: Ephesians 1:11, 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will;' he argues (1) from the power of God, 'who works all things', whereby our own works, and power, are excluded, and God asserted to be the supreme cause of everything, in an efficacious and energetical manner, as the word "energein" signifies. (2.) From his wisdom, 'according to the counsel of his own will,' wisely and justly, and therefore not according to ours, wherein there is nothing but folly and evil. This excludes all our own wills in the first work. Now, to assert that this beautiful image were brought forth upon the stage of the heart by the will of man, as the first cause, would destroy God's prerogative, and represent his operations under the conduct of our own counsel and will, not of his own. Certainly if there be a secret and wise Spirit of providence, running through the whole world to preserve his honour in his works, as certainly there is, the most honourable declaration of them in the heart cannot be thought to be left to the conduct of wild and hare-brained nature.

3. If the will of man were the prime cause of regeneration, it would deprive God of his foreknowledge and prescience; it would make that foreknowledge, which is certain and infallible, merely contingent. For if the will of man were wholly left to its own determination, the motions of the will were doubtful and uncertain, till the will does determine itself; and so God's knowledge of them would be uncertain, for it is clear, that from a thing wholly uncertain, there cannot arise a certain knowledge. Therefore, God could not be said certainly to foreknow the conversion of man, if the efficacy of grace depended upon so contingent a cause as the liberty of man's will; for then it might not be, as well as be; the will might not embrace it, and so the knowledge of God be but merely conjectural,—a knowledge unworthy of a deity, which must be supposed to be omniscient; a knowledge depending upon a peradventure, or at best, it is but a very likely it will be so. This would be a debasing the deity to an opinionative knowledge, which could not be certain, because depending upon so undetermined and wavering a cause. God cannot know this or that man's regeneration from eternity but he must see it infallibly in himself willing it, or in the causes of it, irresistibly producing it. But if the efficacy of grace depends upon the will, then God does not certainly determine the regeneration of man. And for God to foreknow that which he himself has not determined, and when nothing in the creature, nor anything in the circumstances, does determine it, is to make God see that (as one says) which neither in the creature nor in himself is to be seen.

Obj. Some may object, How does God come to foreknow sin, for that depends upon the liberty of the will?

Ans. It would be too long to inquire into this, I shall only at present say this, it is certain God does foresee every sin, otherwise the evil acts of men could not be predicted. Our Saviour could not then have foreknown what the scribes and priests would do to him, as he does foretell: Matthew 16:21, 'Christ began to tell them how many things he was to suffer of the chief priests and scribes.' And since God cannot fail in his predictions, but they will certainly come to pass, the hearts of the Jews could do no other thing, supposing the prediction, than what Christ does here foretell, for their wicked wills would certainly determine themselves that way. And God, by a concurrence of

causes which he had linked together in his hand, orders things so, that meeting with the corruption in their wills, their wills determine themselves to such actions there foretold; yet is not God therefore the author of sin. For sin being no positive thing, cannot have an efficient, but a deficient cause; and God determines the withdrawing of his common grace, and the ordering of such and such circumstances, and so did foresee how a free creature, with that corruption in his heart, would determine himself in such occasions, when involved in such circumstances. But now in the work of regeneration, outward circumstances cannot cause any determination of the will, because those outward circumstances of grace meet with nothing in the heart full of corruption, to take part with them, which outward circumstances of sin do. Therefore since there can be no foresight of God in this case, depending upon the concurrence of outward circumstances, unless there were something in the heart which did suit them, the determination of the will cannot proceed from them, but from God himself, willing and determining the will by a positive influx of his grace. The determination of the will to sin comes from within, from its natural corruption concurring with such occasions, which, joining together, determine the will to it. Therefore God foresees what a free creature will do; but there being no principle in the will by nature to correspond with any gracious external circumstances, it cannot determine itself to grace, because it wants a principle of determination within itself, the corrupt habits determining it quite otherwise. Sin proceeds not so much from the liberty as the captivity of the will; and God knowing the corrupt frame, can foresee what man in such a frame will do upon occasion; as we may easily resolve that an habitual drunkard will be drunk when he has sensual objects placed before him.

4. Another consideration is this: to make the will of man the efficient of his regeneration, is to make the truth of God a great uncertainty.

(1.) First, In the covenant he made with Christ. If his having a seed depended upon the will of man, the promise of God to give him a seed might be null and void; for at least it must be granted possible, that not one man under heaven would have accepted of his terms; and then his coming to save had been in vain, because there was a possibility that not one man would have embraced the salvation offered. Since the number of rejecters of him is greater than the number of receivers, it is likely the less number, if left to their own wills, would have followed the greater, since the prevalence of evil examples above good ones is every day evident. It had not been, then, 'the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,' Isaiah 53:10-11, but the pleasure of man shall prosper in the hand of the will of man. The great resolve of God, the priesthood of Christ, the design of drawing a generation of persons out of the world to praise him, had hung upon a mere haphazard and a maybe, if it had depended only on man's will; and God should have waited the leisure of free will, to see whether the most glorious design that ever was laid should prosper, and whether he should have been a God of truth, or a liar to his Son. Though our Saviour had laid the foundation of our redemption in his own most precious blood, yet he must have depended on our will for the fruits of his purchase; it had been a great uncertainty whether he had seen one grain of fruit for all his expense. He might have been a king without one subject, or the destruction of one potent enemy he came to conquer, not one sin subdued, not one devil cast out of any son. This might have been; for though by God he was made a king, yet according to the other assertion, it depended on the will of man whether he should have one subject to own his authority; and, if so, God had been very unwise to enter into covenant with him, and Christ very unwise to come upon such grand uncertainties at the best, when it was a question whether any one person should have

enjoyed the fruits of his death. How can it enter into any man's heart, that so great a contrivance as the sending of Christ to be the means of salvation, with such great promises to see the fruits of his death in a seed to serve him, should depend in the main fruits and effects of it on any thing undetermined by the will of God; that so great a weight should hang upon so thin a thread as the will of man?

(2.) In the promises he makes to men. How could God promise that so absolutely as he does, Ezekiel 36:26, 'A new heart will I give you,' if this work did depend upon the will of man, which might frustrate the truth of God in his promise? And when God knew there was no principle in their hearts that could rise higher than to shame and confusion, not to so excellent a work as regeneration, as is intimated, Ezekiel 36:32, 'Not for your sakes do I do this: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel,' what reason was there for God to depress them to confusion, if they had had power to renew themselves? If this promise of God depended not upon any thing in them in the first making, it could not depend upon any thing in them in the full performance of it. We must either make God a liar, or unwise, or remove any efficiency in the will of man as the first cause. What blasphemy would it be to say, that God was so unwise as to promise that which depended upon the power of another, whether it should be wrought or no; that God could not be certainly true to his word, unless freewill assisted him!

5. It despoils God of his worship, in those two great parts of it, prayer and praise.

(1.) Prayer. With what face can any solicit God for that grace, which he conceives to be in his own power to have when he will? It is a mocking of him to desire that strength of him, which he has given us already, inherent in our nature. If it were the work of our wills, it would require only the excitation of them, not any application to God. Who begs for what he has? Who desires an alms that has thousands in his purse? As prayer would be a vain thing in any man that should deny a providence overruling the affairs of the world, so it would be as vain a thing to call upon God for grace, if the whole affair of regeneration were left to the conduct of man's will. The end of God's making promises of a new hearts and a new spirit, is to be inquired after to do it for us, Ezekiel 36:26, Ezekiel 36:37. The natural consequent, then, of asserting the power of our own wills, is not to call upon God, but direct our desires to another cause, to solicit our own wills, not God. It would not be, then, according to the language of the church, 'Turn thou us, O Lord, and we shall be turned;' 'Draw me, and I will run after thee,' Lamentations 5:21, Song of Solomon 1:4, but, I will turn to thee, and then shalt thou be turned to me; I will run after thee, and draw thee to myself. The royal authority, and power of God, and his glory in granting, is the foundation of prayer; therefore the Lord's prayer is concluded with this, as an argument to move God to grant what is asked, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory;' that is, thou art rich and powerful, and hast all sorts of blessings to bestow. With what face can any one go to God with these words in his mouth, when he ascribes the kingdom, power, and glory, in so great a work, to his own will? We can never pray in confidence to God for it, for all confidence is wrought by a consideration of the will of him we pray to, to accomplish what we desire, and of his power to effect it. What confidence, then, can we have in his will particularly to work it for us, if we conceive he has left it to our hands, as the proper work of our own wills? This was the ground of our Saviour's supplications, with strong cryings and tears, that 'God was able to save him,' Hebrews 5:7 : able naturally, in respect of his power, able morally, in respect of his truth to his promise. If God were careless in this concern, and had cast off all from his own hands, on the hand of free will, God might well say to and man,

as he did to Moses, 'Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward,' Exodus 14:15. Why cry you to me? You may do it yourselves. Go forward with your own wills. The natural language of man to God would not be, Lord, let thy kingdom come, thy will be done, give me a new heart; but, I will have thy kingdom come, I will have thy will be done, I will procure myself a new heart, I will change my heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

(2.) Praise. It does deprive God of this part of his worship also, praise even for his greatest blessings. If our own wills did produce this work, the greatest cause of glorying would be, not in God, but in ourselves. We have as little ground to praise God, if it be our own work, as we have to pray to him for it. All that can be said is, that we have ground to praise him for the means of regeneration; and this is no more ground than they have that are not regenerate under the enjoyment of the same means. If a man could give himself a natural being without God, he could be his own creator, his own foundation; so if he could give himself a spiritual being without the grace of God, he would be a god to himself; for in this case he would really do more to his conversion than God. If God offer grace equally to all, and the pliability of one man's will to receive it above another were from himself, he would then owe an obligation to himself, but no more to God than the other that rejected it owes. The apostle, by asking the question, 'Who Has made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou did not receive?' 1 Corinthians 4:7 (though it be meant of a difference of gifts, yet it is argumentum a minori), clearly implies, that what difference there was between them and others, was not of their own planting, nor grew up from the stock of nature. But if regeneration be wrought by a man's own will, it is not God that makes the difference, therefore the glory does not belong to him. He is the author of a general call, therefore the glory of that pertains to him, it is true; but yet as much from the damned that have lived under the gospel, as from the glorified saints in heaven, because the special entertainment of this call was not from the efficacy of God's grace, but the liberty of man's will; for, according to this assertion, the love of God would be equal both to the damned and saved, and would not shine with a fairer lustre in heaven than it does in hell. The apostle wishes the Philippians to 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling,' and encourages them by this argument, because God is the author of all that good which they do. If the determination of the will, then, is from itself, is it not a brave ground to glory in ourselves? How shall any man give God the glory of his salvation? If it be said, God did enlighten their understandings by the preaching of the gospel, this is an illumination common to all; and the reason some believe and others not, is not from the gift of God, but from themselves; how can we give God a peculiar praise for that wherein there is no difference between the best and the worst of men? But the apostle says, God gives us to will, that is, the operation of our will, and not only the illumination of the understanding; therefore, that our wills do terminate in that which is good, we hold of God; the apostle does not say, God has given us power to will, but produced the will in us, and that of his good pleasure. If, therefore, God work no more in one than in another, there is no place for God's good pleasure, because there is no difference. Let us see with what kind of language the praise of God would be clothed, according to the doctrine of free will. A renewed man may say thus: Lord, I give thee thanks, that thou hast conferred upon me a supernatural grace; but thou did also give as much grace to my neighbour, but I added something to that which thou did supernaturally give me; and though I received no more than he did receive from thee, yet I did more than he, since he remains in his sin, and I am regenerate; therefore I have no more obligation to thee and the grace, than he that believes not; for, Lord, thou did not make me differ from the other, because he had equal gifts with me; but I made myself to differ, because I

superadded my own velle to thy divine assistance. How much of the glory of God would be pared off by such a half-witted praise as this! How low would be the acclamations of glorified saints in heaven! What foundation of pride in the creature, contrary to the intendment of the gospel, which is chiefly to humble man, if man were the cause of the most excellent work in himself! It would write vanity in a great measure upon that excellent exhortation of the apostle, 'Let him that glories, glory in the Lord,' 1 Corinthians 1:31, since there would be a bottom for flesh to glory in his presence, contrary to the design of God in his works, 1 Corinthians 1:29, which is, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.'

Arg. 2. The second sort of arguments is drawn from the nature and state of man.

1. In creation. Man did not create himself; to be a new creature is more than to be a creature. As man contributed nothing to nature, so neither can he contribute anything to grace, any more than a passive capacity in respect of faculties, which yet are the gift of God to him, nothing of his own acquisition. The soul, though framed with all its faculties, is as little able to engrave the image of God upon itself, as the body of Adam, formed with all its parts and members, was able to infuse a living soul into itself; there is no reason therefore to attribute our creation to God, and regeneration, the glory and excellency of a creature, to ourselves. I know such similitudes ought not to be strained too high; yet when this doctrine agrees with other parts of Scripture, we may form an argument from this metaphor of creation whereby regeneration is expressed in Scripture. It is confessed by most, if not all, that no creature, not an angel, can be an instrument in the very act of creation of another thing, much less the chief efficient of its own creation, for creation is an act of omnipotence, and an incommunicable property of the Deity, not to be delegated to any creature. The creation of man, in a state of such perfection as to be endued with the image of God, was a greater work than simply the creation of his body or the essential faculties of his soul, yea, greater than the creation of the whole world, because the attributes of God did more lively appear in him, and particularly his holiness. The restoration then of this righteousness to man, after it is lost, is a greater work than the first creation of his body and soul, it being the same thing with the conferring at first his original rectitude upon him. If man therefore could create this in his own soul after it is lost, he would do a greater work than simply the creation of a world. Surely there is as much power and wisdom required to the new creating righteousness in the heart, after it is perished, as there was in the placing it there at first; and then it will follow that none can new create it but an infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. If man therefore can create it in itself, he must have a wisdom, power, and holiness equal to that of God his first creator, for what could not be done by any creature at the first conferring it, but it was necessary that it should be a work of infinite power, cannot be done by a less power now, because the work is every whit as great; and no less power is requisite to a second creation of a thing after it is perished, than was necessary to the first creation of it, since this power of creation cannot be derived to any creature. As when life is gone from a fly, and the body of it dried and shrivelled up, all will grant that the restoring life to this fly must be done by an omnipotent power. The case is the same with us by nature, spiritual life, upon the fall, was wholly fled, no good thing dwells in our flesh, Romans 7:18, not one thing spiritually good, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, wholly flesh in every part of it. If the making a living fly or worm is above the power of nature, much more the creating of so glorious a fabric as grace in the soul. Man might as well have implanted the divine image in his soul at first, as restore it after it was lost. To ascribe such a power to man to raise himself is a greater power than Adam

had by creation, because to restore a man's self from death to life is greater than to preserve the vital principle he has already, and act naturally from it.

2. In the state of innocence. Let us consider man in that, and it will appear he is unable to renew himself. If man did not keep himself up, with so great a stock of natural rectitude in paradise, how can he recover himself and that stock after it is lost? 'Man in his best estate is vanity; all Adam is all vanity.' In the estate of pure nature, he is vanity in respect of his mutability, much more vanity then in his fallen state, from the experience of which Adam rightly called his second son Abel, vanity, Hebel, the word used here. How soon did the breath of the serpent melt the impression upon him! And if he did not by his innocent will preserve that purity which he had received, how can he by his corrupt will recover that purity which he has lost? If Adam had had a will to preserve, he might have stood, but in losing his will he lost his power; if he did not maintain his will in his rectitude, nor (as some say) could not without the grace of God, how can he, by the mere force of his own will, restore that lost rectitude to himself? If an universal integrity stood in need of grace to preserve it, an universal depravation stands in need of a more vigorous force than that of our will to eject it. If Adam, who had no disorders in nature to rectify, did not stand by his own will, it is not likely that we, who have strong habits to conquer, can be restored by the strength of our own wills. What nature did not do when it was sound, it is not likely to do a greater thing when it is wounded. We cannot now have more power than Adam had in innocence; but he was not then endued with a power to regenerate himself if he should fall, but death was pronounced, both spiritual and eternal. If temptations corrupted him, and if he, being in a good condition, did not maintain himself in it, but pass from a good condition to a bad, how can we, by the only liberty of our will, pass into a good one? Are temptations less powerful now than before? Is the devil less vigilant to take all occasions to subvert us? Suppose our wills were not so evil as they are, would it not be more easy for the enemy to draw the will to himself, when it is unresolved between two parts, when the guide of it is so easy clouded, than it was to draw Adam's will to evil from that good to which he might readily have determined himself? Adam had the greatest advantages human nature, in a natural way, was capable of; he was created with a fullness of reason. But how long do we converse with sense, which fastens upon temptations, before we come to a use of reason! After we are come to some smatterings of reason, and a growth in it, as we think, what whisperings and impulses to sin do we feel! What an easiness to embrace incentives, a deafness to contrary admonitions! What languishing, velleities, and palsy desires at best, for that which is good; a mighty mist and darkness upon our understandings, irresolution in our wills? How can we with all these fetters be able of ourselves to put ourselves into a better state, and act against nature, which is impossible any creature can do but by a superior power!

8. Consider man also in the state of corruption.

(1.) If the will of man by nature were the cause of regeneration, it would follow that corruption were a cause of regeneration. 'The imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually,' Genesis 6:6. That which is evil, therefore, cannot be the cause of that which is man's greatest happiness. All actions are according to those innate qualities and habits which the agent has; all corrupted things act no otherwise than corruptly, because every act has no more in it than what the principle, which is the spring of the action, conveys to it. If the heart, then, be wicked, it cannot do anything but what is wicked, and a wicked act can never be the foundation of regeneration. If a corrupt man, as corrupt, can be the cause of regeneration, then he can act graciously, not only

without a gracious habit, but by and from a corrupt habit. If the acts are corrupt, the product of them must be corrupt, for man, in renewing himself, must act either as corrupt or good. If as good, then he was renewed before he set about the renewing himself. The question will then be the same, How came he by that restoration to goodness? If as corrupt, then corruption is the spring of the noblest happiness of the creature. It would then follow that a man can perform acts of life before he lives; that vital acts may be exerted by dead principles; that sanctification can grow up from an unsanctified root; and that the will, with its old corruption, can be the cause of its elevation to another state, and that the old creature can perform a new creature's act before it be a new creature. Then a carnal mind, while it is carnal, may be subject to the law of God, which the Scriptures say it cannot be, Romans 8:7. Then those that are in the flesh may please God in an high manner, by the renewing themselves. This would be more strange than if we should see a crab-tree bring forth pomegranates; a corrupt tree would then bring forth good fruit, and that the highest fruit, contrary to our Saviour's assertion, Matthew 7:18. It would follow that the stony heart would be the cause of the fleshly, and so an effect would rise from a cause quite contrary to it, and the complying principle in man be wrought by the resisting principle. It is as much as if the fire should cool, and the water burn, by their own innate qualities. If the will of man corrupted be the cause of principles of grace, then the old creature brings forth the new. The image of the devil is the cause of producing the divine nature, and hell the cause of an heavenly principle. It would follow that an act of one kind can be produced by an habit of a contrary nature, and that a man can act graciously before he be gracious. Before grace, no action is essentially good, because there wants a gracious principle, whence it must receive its denomination as good. One act, then, of corrupted man, or a multitude of acts, cannot be the cause of grace, because they all centre in that denomination of evil. How the acts of the will, whereof not one can be called good till the will has a good principle, can produce so noble a work and habit as grace is, is not easily intelligible. Our being engrafted into the good olive tree is contrary to nature, Romans 11:24. Nature cannot naturally contribute to that which is opposite to it. We are wild by nature, our new implantation is contrary to nature. A good nature, therefore, cannot be the natural effect of a wild nature.

(2.) Since corruption, the power of man is mighty weak in naturals and morals, much more certainly in spirituals.

[1.] In naturals. No natural body that lies under a grievous disease can repair itself by its own power without some external assistance. A wounded member must be beholding to oils and plants for a cure. No man can cast out a disease when he will. He may be sick when he will, by eating that which is contrary to nature; but the cure does not depend upon his will, but upon physic. Outward medicines must recover that which he lost by his own wilfulness. The will indeed is *conditio sine qua non*; there must be a will to use the means, or a man must be forced to use them, as we deal with madmen and children which are unwilling to take physic. But who ever heard of a man that could cure himself by his own will without the application of medicines? How can the soul then be restored to its vital integrity, by its own force? How can it change its own temper without some superior power operating upon nature? 'Man is like a wild ass's colt,' Job 11:12. What wild creature ever tamed itself? If any say that the will of man, by the use of outward ordinances, can cure itself, it is answered, Those ordinances are operative, not in a physical but moral way, and therefore such an efficiency as is in plants and drugs cannot be expected from them. There must be an operation of our own wills to make them efficacious. But what shall cure

the will where the disease principally lies, and the love of the disease is seated? Who shall remove the beloved inclination from the will? Can nature cast out nature, or Satan cast out Satan? What can make us willing? When we are made willing, the cure is half wrought, as, when a madman is willing to be cured of his infirmity, you can hardly count him any longer mad. The evil principles in the will will never aim at their own destruction. If this work of regeneration were only the curing of a man that were sick or wounded, it could not be done by the power of man's will, but by the application of some external medicine, though nature did concur with it. But it is not a sickness but a death, therefore cannot come under the influence of the will of man in the first work. Shall a man have more power to cure his soul of mortal sins, than to cure his body of mortal wounds?

[2.] In morals. Whence comes that intemperance, incontinence, luxury, which overflows mankind, who are carried to those things which impair health, even in meats and drinks, against the reluctance of reason, whose will is led not by reason but appetite, and choose not like men but beasts, under the notion of pleasant and lustful? Is not this from the will conducted by appetite? The temperance and continence opposite to this is not in Scripture counted part of the extraction of nature, but the gift of God: 1 Corinthians 7:7, 'But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that,' speaking of continence. That which is God's gift is not merely the fruit of human will; for in the apostle's language they seem to be opposed, viz., to be from God, and from ourselves; to be God's gift, and yet our own. In Ephesians 2:8 there is a plain antithesis, 'Not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' It is the same expression of that moral virtue of continence as it is of the divine grace of faith; 'it is the gift of God.' We are nothing in morals without God, no more than a beam is when the sun is clouded or withdraws its light. Shall we, then, allow a greater power to man in spiritual things than the Scripture does in morals? Shall the one be the gift of God, and the greater the acquisition of nature? Cannot the clay form itself into a vessel of moral honour? Shall it, then, be able to form itself into a vessel of grace? If we are not intrinsically sufficient of ourselves to exercise a moral act, since our natures are so overgrown with corruption, we are less sufficient of ourselves to exercise a supernatural act without a divine motion. Can anything assume an higher nature than what it originally has? Man has assumed a lower nature than that wherein he was created, which no creature besides him in this lower world has. Since he has brutified himself, and cannot moralise himself without common grace, how can he advance himself into a participation of the divine nature without special grace? How can man, so habitually evil, ascend up to an higher nature?

[3.] In this corrupt state of man, any one sin beloved will hold a man down from coming to God. It is impossible for a man, wedded in his heart to his riches, and bemired in earthly confidences, to enter into a renewed gospel state. 'How hard is it,' says our Saviour, 'for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!' Mark 10:24-25. This one corruption commanding in the heart, will hinder any resurrection by the power of nature, for on man's part Christ pronounces it impossible for such an one to enter into the kingdom of God, Mark 10:27, that is, into a gospel-state; and that upon the score of this single sin, which only appeared at this time in that young man. The like he pronounces of another sin, that of ambition: John 5:44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' That one fancy of the Jews, of a temporal conquering Messiah, did so possess their brains, that it barred the door against all the power of our Saviour's miracles; and the bare objective proposal of him, though unanswerable by reason, could not remove this rooted fancy. One sin in the will, has more power than any imagination in the

fancy. When Adam disfigured his nature by one sin, he had no strength to recover himself, though his righteousness was but very lately fled from him. We need not question his recovery of it, had it been in the power of his will to will it, and the power of his nature to regain it. If one sin, then, in the will, is a bar against the power of nature, what are all those lusts which swarm in the heart of man, and swell up this lake of natural venom in the soul? If one fetter stakes down a man to an impotency and impossibility, how great is man's weakness under all those fetters which every day he loads himself with! One string about a bird's leg will keep it from flying away, much more many.

Arg. 3. Another sort of considerations, is from the state of man under the gospel.

1. If regeneration depended on the will of man, what is the reason more do not receive the gospel than are seen by us to receive it? If the faculty of believing were given to all, then all would believe upon the promulgation of the gospel, because the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation,' Romans 1:16. If it be the power of God in the outward preaching of it, then all would believe. If all do not believe, then some other secret power attends it, which makes it efficacious in one, not in another; it is 'to them that are saved' only, 'the power of God,' 1 Corinthians 1:18; to others, though of great reason, foolishness. If the strength of arguments be the cause in one, what is the reason those arguments have not force upon another? What is that which makes the difference? All men have reason; and what is common reason does conduct all men more or less. If men could open the eyes of their mind to understand the excellency of gospel proposals, what is the reason that among those great multitudes to whom it is preached, so few in all ages have embraced it, though the things proposed are in themselves desirable, and suit so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural desire of man for happiness! When it was preached by the apostles! it was edged with miracles, attended with a remarkable holiness, yet they complained that few received their report. When in that age, and succeeding ages, men have been so far from receiving it, that they have scoffed at it, persecuted with all their fury the professors of it. It has been thus despised, not only by the meanest and blindest sort of people, but by men of the most elevated understanding among the heathen philosophers, that could pierce into the depths of nature; and by the Jews too, who had the Messiah promised to them, expected him about that time, had so many prophecies deciphering him, which all met with their accomplishment in his person; who were also amazed at the miracles he wrought in his life, and those which accompanied his death. Does not all this show the natural blindness of man, that there is need of some higher power to open his eyes, besides the objective proposal, that he may acknowledge the excellency of those things which are presented to him? Do we not find men ready to acknowledge reason upon other accounts, to be wrought into warm affections by pathetical speeches? Why are they not as ready in this, if it were in the power of their own understandings and wills? Do we not find the wills of men averse from it, though in their consciences they approve of the doctrines of it? What is the reason a man is renewed at one time, and not before, when he has heard the same arguments inculcated many a time? Many drops would not work it before, and one drop works it not in an instant. Is it from the power of reason in man? What reason is there, then, that he should be mastered by one reason now, who was not mastered by the same reason, and many more as strong, formerly? Whence comes that light into the mind? What is the reason such a man was not regenerate before, when he has in some fits meditated upon former arguments, and afterwards one effects it, by a secret insinuation, without any previous meditation, and a sudden turn of the will is wrought? Can this be supposed to be from the will principally? Rather from some divine

spirit spreading itself over the soul, and opening the passages of it which were before shut. That place, Matthew 11:21, where our Saviour speaks of the Tyrians and Sidonians, if the gospel had been preached to them, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, does not prove the power of man to renew himself, but that they would have testified some outward humiliation, as Ahab did at the threatening of Elijah; or rather, Christ exaggerates the hardness of the Jews' hearts in comparing them with the Tyrians in a hyperbolical manner of expression; as we do when we reproach a man for unmercifulness, we say, Had I entreated a Turk or barbarian as much, I should have bent him; not that we commend the humanity of the Turks, but aggravate the cruelty of those we have to do with. The proposal of an object is not sufficient without the inspiration of a will, whereby that concupiscence which masters that faculty may be overpowered.

2. If regeneration were the fruit of man's will, what is the reason that men convinced by the preaching of the gospel, and under great terrors too, find themselves unable to turn to God? What is the reason they are not presently renewed? Would they be torn with such horrors, and bear about them such racks in their consciences? Would they fill heaven and earth with complaints, were it in their own power to make themselves such as God commands them to be? If this were found in the more ignorant sort of people, the reason then might be charged upon their want of knowledge; but men of great wits and insight are filled with those complaints when God begins to rebuke them. And such as have a great deal of grace, as David, when God charges sin upon him: Psalms 51:10, 'Create in me a clean heart; renew in me a right spirit;' why should they solicit God for renewing grace, were it in the power of their own hand? Would any that fear God, as David did, mock him at such a rate, as to desire that of him which they are able to do without him? Were there a natural power in man to turn himself, why did not Judas, after his conscience lashed him, go to his Master's knees to desire pardon, rather than to the gibbet? He had long experience of the merciful disposition of his Master; had not grace given him to incline his will to such an act; yet Peter was turned after his denial of his Master, was there anything more by nature in him than in Judas? Or did Peter do that by the strength of his own will, which Judas did not do? No, the Scripture assures us, it was from the prevalence of Christ's prayer, a secret influence from Christ's look, stirring up that grace that was already in his heart; he might else have gone out cursing his Master as long as he had lived: 'No man can come to me, except the Father draw him,' says our Saviour; though he be convinced, there must be the Father's traction as well as conviction to complete the work. All drawing implies a resistance, or at least a heaviness and indisposition in the thing so drawn, to come of itself. There is much difference between the proposal of the object, and the cause of our entertaining it. The object is the final cause which puts us upon motion; the object moves the will as an end, but it gives no power to move. If a man hear of an alms to be distributed at such a place, and he knows he stands in need of it, and has a desire to go to receive it, this knowledge of the necessity of it will not give him legs to go, if he be lame and unable to go; and he that does go to receive the alms, the desire to receive the alms puts him upon motion; but the intention of receiving the alms was not the efficient cause of that motion. If he had not had strength in him from some other cause than the alms, he could never have gone. Our motion to God must proceed from some higher cause than barely the proposal of the object, and a conviction by it.

4. Argument is drawn from the condition of the regenerate themselves. They are not able to rid themselves of the remainders of sin, much less can natural men of the body of sin. From the impotency after grace, we may rationally conclude a greater weakness in a natural man that has

not one spark of grace within, to be blown up from any breathing of grace from without. The flesh lusts against the spirit in a regenerate man; how peaceably does it enjoy its dominion in a natural man, where there is no spirit to control it, and lust against it? Regenerate men 'cannot do the good they would,' and they 'do the evil which they hate,' Romans 7:16, Romans 7:19, though they have a law of grace in their mind, set up in contradiction to the law of sin in their members. How can a natural man then, do so good a thing as the renewal of himself, and the destruction of his sin, who has no will to the one nor hatred of the other, who has the law of sin flourishing in him, and delights to read the characters of it and perform the wills of the flesh! If there be such an inability in a renewed man, who has a relish of God and the goodness of the law, who has sin in part mortified, and cast out of the mind, to the members and suburbs, how much greater must the inability and resistance be when there is nothing but opposing flesh! What need the apostle issue out such heavy complaints: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Romans 7:24, if he had power in his own hands to free himself from this oppressing sin? If Paul, a living tree in God's garden, having both the root and sap of grace, be so wretched, so weak and unable to free himself from those suckers, how wretched then is a dead rotten stake, which has no spiritual root! How can he free himself from a total spiritual death, when this great apostle could not free himself from a partial spiritual death by all that stock of grace already received? If a good man finds it so laborious a task to engage against the relics of nature, and manage an open hostility against the wounded force of his sensual appetite, much more is it a difficult task for a natural man to row against the stream of unbroken nature, when the natural resistance is in its full strength, and the bent of nature standing point-blank against God. If a well-built and well-rigged ship, with her sails spread, can only lie floating upon the waves, and make no way till a fresh wind fills the sails, surely the rough timber that lies upon the ground can never fit and frame itself into a stately vessel.

5. It is against the whole order which God has set in the world, for any thing to be the cause of itself, or of a higher rank of being than what it has by nature. No effect is nobler than its cause; grace is more noble than nature. A seal cannot convey any other image than what is stamped upon itself, and no further than its own dimensions; neither can nature stamp anything of grace upon the soul, because it has no such image engraver on it by God. Nature, though never so perfect in its own kind, can never produce a thing of higher perfection than itself; a plant can never produce a beast, nor a beast a man, nor a man an angel. No natural quality can be changed in any subject by itself, but by the introduction of some other quality superior to it. The fire can never freeze while it is fire; water cannot part with its coldness without some superior acting upon it; and can those that are naturally bad ever become spiritually good but by an almighty power? No nature can exceed its own bounds, because nothing can exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever a natural man does is but natural, and can never amount to grace, without a change of nature and addition of a divine virtue. If any thing could rise above its own sphere, it would be stronger than itself. Nothing can ever make itself something; the best apostle counts himself no better,—2 Corinthians 12:11, 'I am nothing,'—and entitles grace the sole benefactor of all his spiritual good, 1 Corinthians 15:10. What thing ever gave itself its own shape? Every piece of art is brought into figure by the workman, not by itself. Conformity to Christ is a fruit of the election of God, not first of the choice of our own wills. Romans 8:29, 'Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The first link of the chain in the providential and in the gracious administration is in the hands of God. Hence in Scripture the gracious works in the soul run in the

passive for the most part: 'Ye are justified, ye are sanctified;' not you justify or sanctify yourselves; though sanctification and purging and working out salvation is ascribed to them that have received grace and life, as acting afterwards for such ends, and producing such effects by the strength of grace received from God, and grace accompanying that first grace in its acts. As we have proved that man by his own strength cannot renew himself, let us see whether he can do it by his additional capacities.

1. Man, by the help of instituted privileges, does not produce this work of regeneration in himself, without a supernatural grace attending them. Ordinances cannot renew a man, but the arm of God, which does manage them, edges them into efficacy, as the arm that wields the sword gives the blow. Means are the showers of heaven, but they can no more make the heart fruitful till some gracious principles be put in, than the beams of the sun, the dews of heaven, and the water pots of the clouds, can make a barren ground bring forth flowers, without a change of the nature of the soil, and new roots planted in it. All the spectacles in the world cannot cure a man's eyes, he must have a visible faculty to make use of them. Our faculty must be cured before we can exercise it about objects or use means proper to that faculty. All persuasions will not prevail with a dead man; the fairest discourses, the most undeniable arguments, the most moving rhetoric will not stir or affect him, till God take away the stone from the grave and raise him to life. The report of the prophets will do no good without the revelation of God's arm, Isaiah 53:1, because all those things do not work in a physical way, as drugs and plasters, which attain their end without any active concurrence of the patient, but in a moral way; the will therefore and nature must first be charged before those can do any good. You can never by all your teachings teach a sheep to provide for winter, as an ant does, because it has no such instinct in its nature. If any thing were like to work upon a man, the most stupendous miracles were most likely to produce such an effect upon the reasons of men; yet those supernatural demonstrations without a man only cannot make him believe a truth. Miracles are a demonstration to the eye as well as preaching to the ear; though they be confessed to be above the strength of nature, yet all the spectators of them are not believers: John 12:37, 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not.' Many of those that saw our Saviour's works did not believe his doctrine; nay, they irrationally ascribed them to the devil, when they could find no reason in the nature of them to charge them upon such a score. The raising Lazarus from the dead was as high a miracle as ever was wrought yet, though many of them believed, yet others did not, but accused him to the pharisees, who thereupon more vigorously took counsel to put him to death, John 11:45-47, John 11:53, though they acknowledged that he did many miracles. They had reason as well as others; the miracles were undeniable, as being acted before many witnesses; the natural force of them upon all reasons was equal, the considerations arising from them unanswerable. There were evil habits in the will, not removed by grace, which resisted the unanswerable reason of the miracles. What made the difference between them and those that believed? Why did not the wills of the enemies follow the undeniable reason, as well as the wills of others? Miracles may astonish men, but cannot convert them without a divine touch upon the heart. 1 Kings 18:39, the people were astonished by that wonderful miracle of fire falling from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, and licking up the water in the trench; and some reverential resolutions were produced in them: they fell upon their faces and said, 'The Lord he is God;' they showed their zeal in taking Baal's prophets, and helping, or at least suffering, Elijah to slay them; yet those people revolted to idolatry, and continued so till their captivity. The easiness of faith upon the apparition and

instruction of one risen from the dead was the opinion of one of the damned: Luke 16:30, 'If one went to them from the dead, they will repent;' but this opinion was contradicted by Abraham, Luke 16:31, who positively asserts, 'If they did not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' If their wills were obstinate against the means God had appointed for their conversion, the same wills so corrupted would be as obstinate against the highest sort of miracles. If that, then, which is above the hand of nature to act, and bears the character of omnipotence upon the breasts of it, does not work upon men's hearts and wills of themselves, surely nature itself cannot turn the heart to God. The two great dispensations of God are law and gospel; neither of these can of themselves work this.

(1.) The law. The law will instruct, not heal. It acquaints us with our duty, not our remedy; it irritates sin, not allays it; it exasperates our venom, but does not tame it; though it shows man his miserable condition, yet a man by it does not gain one drop of repentance. It tells us what we should do, but corrects not the enmity of our nature whereby we may do it. The apostle takes notice of the enmity of man to the law: Romans 5:6-7, 'Yet enemies', 'yet sinners.' That yet may refer to what he had spoken of the law in the chapter before. Though men had had so much time from the fall to recover themselves, and had so many advantages by the law and the ceremonies of it, yet all those years spent from the foundation of the world had produced no other effect than the weakening of them; as creatures that are wounded, by their strugglings waste their own strength. Yet sinners, till this time sinners, whereby the load of sin which lay upon the world was made more heavy by the continual addition made to those heaps. The offence did rather abound by the law than was diminished: Romans 5:20, 'The law was given that sin might abound.' Though it made a clear discovery of the will of God, yet it rather aggravated sin; it added no power to perform that will. The motions of sin were exasperated by it, *ex accidenti*, and brought forth fruit unto death; all the means by the law for the repressing of sin did rather inflame it. Sin could not be overcome by it, because the law was 'weak through the flesh;' that is, had not so much power as sin had; it was like a little water put upon fire, which did rather enrage than quell it: Romans 7:8-9, 'Sin revived' when the law came, it had a new life, and the apostle found himself utterly unable to overpower it. There were, Romans 7:5, 'motions of sin,' "*pathemata*", not only a power in sin, but an enraged power, which adds to the strength of a person, 'sin slew him: taking occasion by the commandment,' Romans 7:10, and a dead man is wholly at the disposing of his conquerors. The law was 'holy,' it had an impression of God's holiness upon it, Romans 7:12-14, there was also equity and convenience in it, it was 'just and good,' and though these were considerations enough to spur men on to rid themselves of this tyrant sin, yet they could not, they had not strength enough to do it; though it was holy, just, and good, yet it was not strong enough to rescue them; and the reason of it, the apostle lays upon the difference in the nature of both: ver. 14, 'We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;' there was an enmity in his nature to it, and therefore he must lie under the power of it till a mighty deliverer stepped in to conquer it. Do we find any better effect of the ceremonial law, which was the gospel in a mask, and which was the instrument of all the regenerations among the Jews? How few do we find renewed among them under that means which they enjoyed solely, and no other nation in the world partners with them in it! How frequent were their revolts, and rebellions, and idolatries, inconsistent with regeneration, we may read in Joshua and Judges. The inefficaciousness of means appears evidently in that nation which had greater advantages than any in the world besides; the covenants, sacrifices, oracles of God, warnings by prophets, yet so frequently overgrown with idolatry from the time of

their coming out of Egypt to the Babylonish captivity; and ten tribes wholly cashiered for it.

(2.) The gospel. Though the veil of ceremonies be taken off from it, and it appears open faced, yet till the veil be taken off the understandings of men, it will produce little fruit among them, 2 Corinthians 3:14. The gospel is plain, but only to him that understands, Proverbs 8:9, as the sun is clear, but only to him that has an eye to see it. The gospel itself cannot remove the blindness from the mind. The proposal of the object works no alteration in the faculty, without some acting on the faculty itself. The beams of the sun shining upon a blind man make no alteration in him. The Jews, to whom the gospel was preached by our Saviour himself, could not believe, because God blinded their eyes, &c., John 12:39-40. There must be a supernatural power, besides the proposal of the object, to take away this blindness and hardness which is the obstruction to the work of the gospel. Though the Son of God is come, and the gospel be preached, yet the understanding whereby we know is given us by him: 1 John 5:20, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;' the light of the gospel shines upon all, but all have not an eye given them to see it, and a will given them to embrace it. The mere doctrine of it does not regenerate any man; some have tasted of the heavenly gift, that is, have had some understanding of Christ, who is the heavenly gift, the Son given to us, Isaiah 9:6, and are partakers of some common illumination of the Holy Ghost, yet are not regenerate. Was not the gospel preached to the Jews, even by the mouth of our Saviour whom they crucified? And was it not preached to the Gentiles by the mouths of those apostles whom they persecuted? Were there not proposals that suited the natural desires of men for happiness, yet did not many that seemed to receive it, receive it not in the love of it? If God himself should appear to us in the likeness of a man, and preach to us as he did to Adam, if he did not overpower our hearts with an inward grace, he would do us no good at all by his declarations. We do not read of any work immediately upon Adam at the promulgation of the gospel by God himself, though it appears that afterwards there was, by his instructing his sons to sacrifice, and his expectations of a Messiah. But we certainly know that our Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, declared the gospel in his own person, and found no success but where he touched the heart inwardly by the grace of his Spirit. All mere outward declarations are but suasions, and mere suasion cannot change and cure a disease or habit in nature. You may exhort an Ethiopian to turn himself white, or a lame man to go; but the most pathetical exhortations cannot procure such an effect without a greater power than that of the tongue to cure nature; you may as well think to raise a dead man by blowing in his mouth with a pair of bellows. Judas had enjoyed the best means that ever were, yet went out of the world unrenewed; and the thief upon the cross, who never perhaps was in any good company in his life till he came to the cross, nor ever heard Christ speak before, was renewed by the grace of God in the last hour.

2. Neither can a man renew himself by all his moral works, before faith. Our calling is not according to our works, but 'according to God's own purpose and grace,' 2 Timothy 1:9. Paul, before his conversion, was 'blameless as to the righteousness of the law,' Php 3:6, yet this was loss; a bar rather to regeneration, than a means to further it. For all this legal comeliness he ranks himself, before his conversion, in the number of the dead: Ephesians 2:5, 'When we were dead in sins;' not you, but we, putting himself into the register of the dead. Whatsoever works a man can morally do before faith, cannot be the cause of spiritual life; they are not vital operations; if they were, they were then the effects of life, not the cause; the Scripture makes them the effects of

grace: 'created to good works,' Ephesians 2:10. What is an effect cannot be the cause. The best works before grace are but a refined sensuality, they arise from self-love, centre in self-satisfaction, are therefore works of a different strain from those of grace, which are referred to a higher end, and to God's well-pleasing. In all works before grace there is no resignation of the soul to God in obedience; no self-denial of what stands in opposition to God in the heart; no clear view of the evil of sin; no sound humiliation under the corruption of nature; no inward purification of the heart, but only a diligence in an external polishing. All those acts cannot produce an habit of a different kind from them. Let a man be stilted up with the highest natural excellency; let him be taller by the head and shoulders than all his neighbours in morality, those no more confer life upon him than the setting a statue upon an high pinnacle, near the beams of the sun, inspires it with a principle of motion. The increasing the perfection of one species can never mount the thing so increased to the perfection of another species. If you could vastly increase the heat of fire, you could never make it ascend to the perfection of a star. If you could increase mere moral works to the highest pitch they are capable of, they can never make you gracious, because grace is another species, and the nature of them must be changed to make them of another kind. All the moral actions in the world will never make our hearts, of themselves, of another kind than moral. Works make not the heart good, but a good heart makes the works good. It is not our walking in God's statutes materially, which procures us a new heart, but a new heart is in order before walking in God's statutes, Ezekiel 36:27. Our regeneration is no more wrought by works of our own than our justification. The rule of the apostle will hold good in this, as well as in the other: Romans 11:6, 'If it be of grace, it is not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;' and faith is 'the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast,' Ephesians 2:9. And the apostle, Titus 3:5, opposes the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost' to 'works of righteousness.' He excludes works from being the cause of salvation; and would they not be the cause of salvation, if they were the cause of the necessary condition of salvation?

Prop. 3. As man cannot prepare himself to this work, nor produce it, so he cannot co-operate with God in the first production of it. We are no more co-workers with God in the first regeneration, than we were joint purchasers with Christ in redemption. The conversion of the will to God is a voluntary act; but the regeneration of the will, or the planting new habits in the will, whereby it is enabled to turn to God, is without any concurrence of the will. Therefore, say some, we are active in *primo actu*, but not in *primo actus*; or we are active in *actu exercito*, but not in *actu signato*. Some say, the habit of faith is never created separate from an act, as the trees at the creation of the world were created with ripe fruit on them; but the tree, with the power of bearing fruit, and the fruit itself, were created at one and the same time by God. Yet though the habit be not separate at first from the act, yet there is no co-operation of the creature to the infusion of that habit, but there is to the act immediately flowing from that habit; for either that act of grace is voluntary or involuntary. If involuntary, it is not a gracious act; if voluntary, it must needs be; since the tone of the will is changed, then the creature concurs in that act; for the act of believing and repenting is the act of the creature. It is not God that repents and believes in us; but we repent and believe by virtue of that power which God has given us. In the first act, therefore, there is a concurrence of the creature; otherwise the creature could not be said to repent and believe, but something in the creature, without or against the will of the creature. But in the first power of believing and repenting, God is the sole agent. Jesus Christ is the sun that heals our natures, Malachi 4:2; the rain that moistens our hearts: Psalms 72:6, 'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.'

What co-operation is there in the earth with the sun to the production of flowers, but by the softness it has received from the rain? It would else be parched up, and its fruits wither. The Holy Ghost does by his own power make us good trees; but we afterwards, by virtue of that power, work together with him, in bringing forth good fruit. Yet this is also a subordinate, not a co-ordinate working; rather a sub-operation than a co-operation.

1. The state wherein man is at his first renewal excludes any co-working with God. The description the apostle gives of a state of nature excludes all co-operation of the creature in the first renewal: Titus 3:3, 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And Ephesians 2:2-3, 'Among whom we all had our conversations in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' Every man is naturally taken up in the fulfilling the desires of the flesh; not only the Gentiles, to whom Paul writes, but himself; for he puts himself and the rest of the Jews in the number. In the second verse it was 'ye walked;' in Ephesians 2:3, it is 'we all;' and in Titus 3:3, 'we ourselves.' We who had the oracles of God, that had greater privileges than others, were carried out with as strong an impetus naturally, till grace stopped the tide, and after stopping, turned it against nature. When the mind was thus prepossessed, and the will made the lusts of the flesh its work and trade, there was no likelihood of any co-operation with God in fulfilling his desires, till the bent of the heart was changed from the flesh and its principles. The heart is stone before grace. No stone can co-operate with any that would turn it into flesh, since it has no seed, causes, or principles of any fleshly nature in it. Since we are overwhelmed by the rubbish of our corrupted estate, we can no more co-operate to the removal of it, than a man buried under the ruins of a fallen house can contribute to the removal of that great weight that lies upon him. Neither would a man in that state help such a work, because his lusts are pleasures; he serves his lusts, which are pleasures as well as lusts, and therefore served with delight. There is naturally in man a greater resistance against the work of grace, than there is in the natural coldness of water against the heat of the fire, which yet penetrates into all parts of the water.

2. Regeneration is a new principle. What operation can there be before a principle of action? All co-operation supposes some principle of working; as *actus secundus* supposes *actum primum*. But a man, before his first regeneration, is blind in his mind, perverse in his will, rebellious in his affections, unable to know the truth, unable to do good, dead in sin. If he does co-operate with God before the habit be settled, then we can act before we have a power to act. We can please God in taking his part, and joining issue with him, before we have a gracious principle; which is contrary to the Scripture, which tells us we are first begotten of God before we can keep ourselves, or exert one act for the bettering ourselves: 1 John 5:18, 'He that is begotten of God keeps himself.' The preservation of ourselves, and every act tending thereto, follows the infusion of the first principle. And the apostle Paul implies, that God works in us to will before we work: Php 2:12-13, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God works in you both to will and to do,' &c. The apostle supposes not any operation in them before, because he supposes not their working without God's giving them a will, the act of volition. The working of the creature supposes some divine work first upon the will. Did the dust of the ground, whereof Adam's body was formed, co-work with God in figuring it into a body? or does the body contribute any more than a passive receptivity to the infusion of the rational soul? Lazarus did not concur with Christ till his powerful voice infused life and strength into him. His rising and walking was from a power

conveyed, wherein Christ did work; but there was no co-working in him in the conveyance of that power. We do not say that a man co-works with the sun in enlightening a room, because he opens the shuts which barred out the light; the opening whereof is no cause of the sun's shining, but a *conditio sine qua non*. But do we so much in the first renewal? It is God alone who darts his beams, and opens our hearts too, to admit it: Acts 16:14, it is said, 'the Lord opened Lydia's heart.' The will cannot concur in the actual infusion of a gracious principle, because it has no spark in itself by nature, suitable to that principle which is bringing it into the soul itself. The shining of God into the soul is compared to the chasing away that darkness which at the first creation was over the face of the deep: 2 Corinthians 4:6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' What co-working was there in that darkness to remove itself, but a necessity upon it to obey the command of God who had the sovereign power over his own works? If the creature did co-work with God at first, it could no more be said to be dead than a man asleep may be said to be dead; and grace were only an awakening, not an enlivening.

3. If there were any co-working of the will with God in the first infusion of grace, God would not be so much the author of grace as he is of nature in any other creature. The creature would share with him in the first principle of its action, which no creature in the world can be said to do. It would rather be a concourse of God than a creation; but all the terms whereby God sets forth himself in the work of regeneration import more than a bare concourse or a co-operation with the creature: 'I will take away the heart of stone; I will write my law in their hearts; I will put my Spirit into them,' are loftier expressions than are used to signify a co-working only. He appropriates the whole work to himself, without interesting the creature in any active concurrence, any more than at his creation.

4. If the will of man did co-work with God in regeneration, it would then share part of the glory of God. The whole glory would not belong to God, which he challenges to himself in Scripture. He were then but an half Saviour, an half new creator. We should be in joint commission with him, by the power of our own wills, in the first motion. If creation and resurrection are acts of an almighty power, man co-operating with him in the very act of creation and resurrection would partake with God's almighty power, and in some sort be co-equal with him, and a joint partner with God in a work which required almighty power for the effecting it. Surely since the same power which raised Christ from the dead works first in every believer for his spiritual resurrection, he contributes no more to it than the body of Christ in the grave did to its resurrection, which was a work not of his humanity, but divinity. Plucking out of the power of Satan is an effect of the power of grace, and God's gift, 2 Timothy 2:25, 2 Timothy 2:20. God first 'gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.' A slave, whose hands and feet are laden with fetters, can contribute nothing to his deliverance but a will and desire to be delivered; nor that, if he be in love with his fetters, which is the case of every one of us by nature, who are as fond to be in the devil's custody as he is to have us. What co-operation can there be in this ease? Whatsoever is an act of mercy, and an act of truth in God, he is to have the sole praise of; it does not in any sort belong to the creature. The psalmist emphatically excludes man from it: Psalms 115:1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not to us, but unto the name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.' Not unto us, twice repeated, but to thy name give glory. Do believers beg of God the giving glory to himself, and not unto them; and will they contradict their prayers, by sharing the praise with God? This is expressed

for deliverances. Much less does any praise and glory belong to the creature for the most excellent deliverance of all, from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

5. How can men co-work with God in the first regeneration, when they must needs acknowledge that in the progress of it they are oftener hinderers than furtherers of it? If God did not work more strongly in us than the best of us do in ourselves, and breathe a willingness into our wills, after regeneration, we should come short of salvation for all the first stock. How often do the best complain of their disability! Is it not frequent in the mouths of Christians in all ages as well as of Paul: Romans 7:18, 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not'? How easily are our purposes shaken, and our strength staggers! Can we then co-operate with God, when we have no purpose, no strength? Let every man's experience speak for himself, how apt he is to check the motions of the Spirit; to let our Saviour stand and knock, and not open. What strugglings of the body of death! What indispositions in an holy course! Is there not often a kind of rustiness of soul, cold damps in spiritual duties? What faint hands in any holy work! What ebbs and floods, ups and downs in his heart! What feeble knees in his walk! What hung-down heads in laying hold of Christ in repeated acts of faith! What frequent returns of spiritual lethargies! And all this after habitual grace. If our co-operations with God after grace received, are but a remove from non-acting, next neighbours to no working at all, we must conclude it to be worse with man before grace was settled in the soul, and that there was no active concurrence with it in any manner of acting; otherwise there would be as much co-operation before the implantation of habitual grace as after, which is hard to be imagined, that a man should be no stronger with grace received than under the want of it.

Prop. 4. Man by his own strength cannot actuate grace after it is received. To what purpose did the saints of old pray to quicken them, if they stood not in as much need of exciting grace from God as of renewing grace: Psalms 80:18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name;' Psalms 119:25, Psalms 119:27 and many places in that psalm. The new creature is little better than an infant in the best, and cannot go unless God bear it in his arms, as he speaks of Ephraim, Hosea 11:1, Hosea 11:3. They cannot move unless led by the Spirit. The child has a principle of motion in it, but cannot go without the assistance of the nurse; nor the soul, without the assistance of God, actuate that principle of grace. Habitual grace is the instrument, not the principal agent. A sword, though it has an edge, cuts nothing till it be moved by some strong arm. The first principle of the motion of grace resides in God. Purification in its progress is attributed to faith as an instrument, but to God as a principal agent. It is said, Acts 15:8-9, 'God gave them the Holy Ghost, as he did to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' Yet the will of man concurs in this actuating of faith, as a subordinate cause: 1 John 3:3, a man is said to 'purify himself by hope.' A well-rigged soul, with its habit of grace spread, as well as a ship with its sails, must wait the leisure of the wind before it move. Paul acknowledges his acting for the service of God to be not from himself principally: 1 Corinthians 15:10, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' It was the grace of God used me as an instrument; the glory must not stick to my fingers; it was the grace of God with me, affording strength and help to that grace which was in me. If this concurrence of God be necessary in all natural actions, it is much more in the spiritual frame of the soul to keep it up, and to keep it acting. It is not we that work to will and to do, but God works to will and to do. It is to be considered that the apostle writes to them that are in a state of grace, exhorting them to a progress in salvation depending upon God, who worlds the after will

and the alter doing, as well as the first will and compliance with the grace of God. Do we not find renewed men not able, with all the grace they have, to quicken themselves sometimes in duty? What is the reason they lie spiritless before God, often with breathings, sighs, and groans for quickening, and it is far from them? They stir themselves up, meditate, summon up all the powerful considerations they can, yet find themselves empty of a spiritual vigour. Surely there is some principal power wanting to spirit their grace, and make them leap in duty; some invisible strength has withdrawn itself, which did before conduct and breathe upon them, and fill their souls with a divine fire. They find it not in the power of the hand of their own will to actuate and quicken the grace they have, much less is it in the power of any man's hand to renew himself. The work of grace is not only a traction at the first, but a continual traction, as conservation is a continual creation: 'Draw me, and we will run after thee,' Song of Solomon 1:4. The church there speaks it as regenerate, desiring a continual traction from God, as the first ground of her race after Christ. Life she had, for she promises to run; yet this race she could not begin nor continue, without traction from God.

Prop. 5. Man cannot by the power of his own will preserve grace in himself. Our Saviour's prayer to his Father, John 17:11, John 17:15, to 'keep them,' imports, that they were too weak to keep themselves: 'Unless the Lord keep the city, in vain does the watchman wake,' Psalms 127:1. Unless God preserve the soul, all the watchfulness of habitual grace will be to little purpose. All creatures, if God hide his face, are troubled, Psalms 104:29, much more the new creature, whose strength does more necessarily depend upon God, because of its powerful opposites. Were it not for the assisting grace of God, the unruly lusts in our hearts would soon bear down habitual grace in the best. How many temptations are prevented which we cannot foresee! How many corruptions are restrained, which the best grace cannot fully conquer! How is the tide and torrent of these waters beaten back, which otherwise would go over our heads! The poor will of Adam preserved him not against a temptation, when he had no indwelling corruption to betray him; nor did the will of the angels, who had no temptation, keep them from forsaking their habitation. How can any renewed man, alive with all his grace, merely by the strength of his own will, keep himself from sinking down in the lake of his old corruption? He that would ask the fallen angels in the midst of their torments, what was the reason of their fall, would receive no other answer but that their strength was unsuccessful, because it depended upon their own will. The knowledge of the gospel and evangelical impressions are never like to keep up without the Holy Ghost: 2 Timothy 1:14, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost,' not by thine own strength. It we cannot keep a form of sound words, which, as it is knowledge, is more agreeable to the natural appetite of man, without the Holy Ghost, much less can we preserve grace in us, which is more stomached by corrupt nature. Neither are good frames like to be preserved in us without God's keeping: 1 Chronicles 29:18, 'keep this in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.' Our hearts will not let any good motion sink into them, unless God give a pondus to his own motion. If, then, regenerate men are unable of themselves to actuate and preserve grace received, much more inability is there in a natural man to gain that which he has not a spark of in his own nature, but an enmity to.

Quest. But, do you divest man of all power, all freedom of will? Is he able to do nothing in order to regeneration?

Ans. We do not divest man of all power; therefore, before we consider what power belongs to man, we may consider,

(1.) Man simply in his fall. So man lost all his natural ability by his first sin, and was the meritorious cause of his losing supernatural grace, which God by a judicial act removed from him, and in this state man had no ability unto anything morally good. Nothing was due to Adam but the state of the devils, who have no affection to anything morally good, but always do that which is in its own nature evil, and always sin with evil intentions. Adam would have been thus, had the threatening, according to the tenor of it, been executed; there had been no common affections, no more light in his understanding than what might have served for his torment, as wicked men, after death, are deprived in a judicial way of that light in their minds, those velleities and good motions which sometime hovered in them, those affections which were here exercised now and then towards God. The sentence given against Adam is then pronounced against them, and they laid under the final execution of it, which was to die the death: Genesis 2:17, 'Thou shalt surely die,' a death of all morality, all affections to anything that has the resemblance of goodness. It might be a prediction of what would be in course, as well as what would be inflicted in way of judicial recompense. None of these things can be looked for in Adam, or any of his posterity, as fallen; not a grain of life, or anything tending that way, was due to him, but only death.

(2.) Man is to be considered as respited from the present suffering this sentence by the intervention of Christ; whereby he is put into another way of probation. So those common notions in our understandings, and common motions in our wills and affections, so far as they have anything of moral goodness, are a new gift to our natures by virtue of the mediation of Christ. In which sense he may be said to 'taste death for every man,' Hebrews 2:9, and be 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' By virtue of which promised death, some sparks of moral goodness are preserved in man. Thus his 'life was the light of men;' and he is 'The light that lightens every man that comes into the world,' which sets the candle of the Lord in the spirit of man a-burning and sparkling, John 1:9, and upholds all things by his mediatory as well as divine power, Hebrews 1:3, which else would have sunk into the abyss. By virtue of this mediation, some power is given back to man, as a new donation, yet not so much as that he is able by it to regenerate himself; and whatsoever power man has, is originally from this cause, and grows not up from the stock of nature, but from common grace. Which common grace is either,

[1.] More general, to all men. Whereby those divine sparks in their understandings, and whatsoever is morally praiseworthy in them, is kept up by the grace of God, which was the cause that Christ tasted death for every man: Hebrews 2:9, 'That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man;' whereby the apostle seems to intimate, that by this grace, and this death of Christ, any remainders of that honour and glory wherewith God crowned man at first are kept upon his head; as will appear, if you consider the eighth Psalm, whence the apostle cites the words which are the ground of his discourse of the death of Christ.

[2.] More particular common grace, to men under the preaching of the gospel. Which grace men 'turn into wantonness' or lasciviousness, Jude 1:4. Grace they had, or the gospel of grace, but the wantonness of their nature prevailed against the intimations of grace to them. Besides this common grace, there is a more special grace to the regenerate, the more peculiar fruit of Christ's mediation and death for them. All this, and whatsoever else you can conceive that has but a face

of comeliness in man, is not the birth of fallen nature abstracted from this mediation. Therefore when the Gentiles are said to 'do by nature the things contained in the law,' it is not to be understood of nature merely as fallen, for that could do no such thing; but of nature in this new state of probation, by the interposition of Christ the mediator, whose powerful word upheld all things, and kept up those broken fragments of the two tables of law, though dark and obscure. And considering God's design of setting forth the gospel to the world, there was a necessity of those relics, both in the understanding, and affections, and desire for happiness, to render men capable of receiving the gospel, and those inexcusable that would reject it. So that by this mediation of Christ, the state of mankind is different since the fall from that of the evil angels or devils. For man has, just, a power of doing that which is in its own nature good; secondly, a power of doing good with a good intention; not indeed supremely for the glory of God, but for the good of his country, the good of his neighbours, the good of the world, which was necessary for the soldering together human societies, so that sometimes even in sins man has good intentions. Whereas the devil does always that which in its own nature is evil, and always sins with evil intentions. Without this mediation, every man had been as very a slave to sin as the devil; though he be naturally a slave to sin, yet not in that full measure the devil is, unless left in a judicial manner by God upon high provocations.

There is then a liberty of will in man; and some power there is left in man. And here I shall show, 1. What kind of liberty this is.

2. That there is some liberty in man.

3. How far the power of man by common grace does extend.

Quest. First, what kind of liberty this is.

Ans. 1. The essential liberty of the will remains. Liberty is of the essence of the will, and cannot be taken away without extinction of the nature of man; it is free from compulsion, otherwise it were a not-will, which liberty does not consist in a choice of good or evil. For even under this depravation it cannot choose evil qua malum, as such. It can choose nothing but what appears to it under the notion of good; though it many times embraces that which is materially evil, yet the formal consideration upon which it embraces it is as good, either in reality or in appearance; as the sight in every colour sees light. And when it is carried out to that which is really evil, and only apparently good, it is by force of those habits in the understanding, which make it give a false judgment; or, by the power of the sensitive appetite, which hurries it on to the object proposed, but always it respects in its motion everything as good, either an honest, pleasant, or profitable good.

Ans. 2. Though the essential liberty of the will remains, yet the rectitude whereby it might have been free only to that which was really good is lost. Man by creation had a freedom of will to choose that which was really good, yet had a mutability, and could choose evil; and by choosing evil rather than good, sank his posterity into this depraved liberty which now remains. Though since the fall man is preserved in his natural freedom, and cannot be forced, yet he has not a power to will well, because that righteous principle whereby he did will well is departed from him; yet because the essential freedom due to his nature remains, whatsoever he wills he wills freely, so that though something the will wills may be materially good, yet it wills that good in an ill manner, for being overcome naturally by sin man can do nothing but according to that law which

sin, as a master that has conquered him, imposes upon him: 2 Peter 2:19, 'They themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' And of all men in a state of nature, though under common grace, the apostle pronounces, Romans 3:11, that 'there is none that seeks after God;' that is, in any thing they do, though never so good, they seek not God but themselves. 'There is no fear of God,' no respect to God 'before their eyes,' Romans 3:18, whence it comes to pass, that by reason of this dominion of sin nothing can be done well. Hence man is said to be dead; not that the life which does constitute the nature of the soul is taken away, but that which renders it fit for performing actions pleasing to God; for such a life does consist, not in the nature of the soul or will, but in that habitual integrity which was in man by creation. As the body when it is dead does not cease to be a body, but ceases to be animated, by the separation of the soul from it, so the soul may be truly said to be dead, though the power of the soul be not taken away. If the spiritual rectitude in that power which did constitute it spiritually living be departed, by the removal of this righteousness, the will is not free to spiritual things, though it be to natural. It is 'free among the dead,' as the psalmist speaks of himself; Psalms 88:5; free to dead works, not to living; to this or that dead work, to any work within the verge of sinning, as a bird in a large cage may skip this way and that way by its natural spontaneous motion, but still within the cage.

Ans. 3. Therefore, though man has lost this liberty to good, he retains a freedom to the commission of sin, under the necessity of sinning. This freedom is a power of choice and election of a thing, which differs from that spontaneity which is in beasts, who act by instinct, without any reasoning in the case, because they want a reasoning power. Though man be under a necessity of sinning, yet it is not a necessity of constraint, but a necessity of immutability, which is consistent with liberty, though the other be not. A creature may be unchangeably carried to good or evil, and yet be free in both: to good, as the angels and glorified saints cannot will to sin, because their wills are immutably determined to good. They cannot but praise and love God, yet they freely do both, and our Saviour did freely do that good which he could not but do by reason of his hypostatical union, otherwise he could not have merited, for all merit requires the concurrence of the will. To evil; the devils cannot will to do good, because their wills are unchangeably determined to evil, yet they sin as freely as if there were no immutable necessity upon them. So man cannot but naturally sin in all that he does yet he is not constrained to sin, but sins as freely and voluntarily as if there were no necessity upon his nature to corruption,—as freely as if God had not foreseen that he would do so. Man sins with as great a pleasure as if he were wholly independent upon the providence of God, and the more a man is delighted with sin, the greater freedom there is in it. Hence the Scripture lays sin upon the choice of man: Isaiah 66:3-4, 'They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations.' They have their own ways, that is, ways proper to corrupt man; but they chose them and delighted in them. Man is voluntary under his depravation, free in his aversion from God, a free necessity, a delightful immutability. The will cannot be compelled to will that which it would not, or not to will that which it would. Then sin arises from a settled habit, the freer is a man in his sin; and though he cannot act otherwise than according to that habit, yet his actions are most voluntary, because he is the cause of that habit which he acquired by evil acts, and by succeeding acts testifies his approbation of it.

2. That there is some liberty in man, some power in man. Not indeed such a power as the Jews thought man had naturally, of exercising himself about anything that God should reveal, without

the infusion of a new power, to enable him to act that which God required by supernatural revelation. Some power and liberty must be allowed,

(1.) To clear the justice of God. No just man will punish another for not doing that which was simply and physically impossible; and 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' It is a good speech of Austin, If there were not the grace of God, how could the world be saved? If there were not free will, how could the world be judged? If man were divested of all kind of liberty, he might have some excuse for himself; but since the Scripture pronounces men without excuse, Romans 1:20, some power must be granted to clear the equity of God's justice. No man sins in that which he is under an inevitable constraint to do, and so would be unjustly punished. It does not appear that God does condemn any man simply for not being regenerate, but for not using the means appointed to such an end, for not avoiding those sins which hindered his regeneration, and which might have been avoided by him if he would, though indeed every unregenerate man will be condemned. The pouring out the wrath of God upon man is principally for those sins which they might have refrained, and had sufficient reason against: Ephesians 5:6, for 'because of these things,' that is, for those gross sins which they might have avoided, mentioned Ephesians 5:5, 'comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,' "apeithias"; men that would not be persuaded, which obstinacy was in their will. As these are the causes of God's wrath, so these will be alleged as the principal reasons of the last sentence. And our Saviour in his last judgment does not charge men with their unregeneracy, but with their omissions of what they might have done, and that easily; and commissions which they might have avoided, Matthew 25:41-43, with their not feeding his members when they were hungry, &c., which were things as much in their power as anything in the world. And the reason Christ renders of the sentence passed upon men, to depart from him, was their working of iniquity: Matthew 7:23, 'Depart from me, you that work iniquity,' that work it voluntarily, and work that you might have forborne. Though unregeneracy does exclude a man from heaven, as a condition without which a man cannot come there, yet nothing of this is mentioned in the last sentence. If man had a firm will to turn to God, and had not then a power conferred upon him to turn, I know not what to say; but man has no will to turn, yea, he has no will to do those things which he might do. Supposing man has a power to avoid such and such sins, he is justly punished for not making use of that power. Nay, supposing he had no power to avoid them, yet if his will be set to that sin he is justly condemned, not for want of power, but for the delight his will took in it. From which delight in it, it may be gathered that if he had had a power to have shunned it, he would not have shunned it. If a man be assaulted by murderers that will cut his throat, if he will not use his power against them, but take a pleasure in having his throat cut, is not this man a self-murderer, both in the judgment of God and man? Let me use another illustration, since the end of all our preaching should be to humble man and clear God. If a man be cast out of an high tower, and be pleased with his fall, would he not be justly worthy of it, and to be neglected by men, not because he did not help himself in his fall, for that was not in his own power, but because he was mightily pleased and contented with his fall, and with such a pleasure, that if he had been able to have helped himself he would not? So though man be fallen in Adam, yet when he comes to discern between good and evil, he commits the evil with pleasure. So that supposing he had no power to avoid sins, yet he is worthy of punishment because he does it delightfully. Whence it may be concluded, if he had had power to avoid it, he would not, because his will is so malignant.

(2.) Without some liberty in the will, free from necessity of compulsion, man would not be capable of sin, nor of moral goodness. No human law does impute that for a vice, or a virtue, to which a man is carried by constraint, without any power to avoid. Where anything is done without a will, it is not an human action. Beasts therefore are not capable of sin, because they want reason and will. If man had not liberty of will, he would be as a beast, which has only a spontaneous power of motion without reason. Sin could not be charged upon man, as God does all along: Psalms 95:10, 'It is a people that do err in their hearts;' and Psalms 119:21, 'Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.' It had been no error in them, if they had not done it voluntarily. The erring from God's commandments arises from pride of heart, they had not else deserved a rebuke. Who would chide a clock for going wrong, which has no voluntary motion? Man without a liberty of will could not be the author of his own actions, and sin could no more be imputed to him, than the irregular motion of a watch can be imputed to the watch itself, but rather to the workman or governor of it. Without a voluntary power, man would be as all engine, moved only with springs, and human laws, which punish any crime, would be as ridiculous as Xerxes' whipping the sea, because it would not stop its tide. Neither were any praise due to man for any moral virtue, no more than praise is due to a lifeless picture for being so beautiful, or to the limner's pencil for making it so: the praise is due to the artist, not to the instrument.

(3.) Without some liberty and power of motion in the will, all the reason of man, and those notions in the understanding, left by the virtue of Christ's mediatory interposition, would be to no purpose. The reason why men do err is because they do not take right ways of judging according to those means they have: 'Ye err,' says our Saviour, 'not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God,' Matthew 22:29. They have a faculty of judgment, and means whereby to judge, which would prevent errors. There is therefore some suitable power in man to follow the judgment of reason, if he will. He would be in vain endowed with that power of reasoning, if there were not a power of motion in some measure suitable to that reason. The authority of judging in the understanding would be wholly insignificant; all debates about any object proposed would be to no end, if the will had not a liberty to follow that judgment. How can God make appeals to men as he does, if they had not a power of judging that they ought to have done otherwise, and might have done otherwise than they did? Though man has not a sufficient light left in his nature for salvation, yet he has such a light of reason in him to which he might be more faithful in his motions than he is, otherwise the apostle could not have argued from that light the heathens had to their conviction, as he does, Romans 1:19-21, &c., and manifests their unfaithfulness to that truth which God had manifested to them, and manifested in them in their nature. Most sins do arise from the neglect of being guided by that light which is in men.

(4.) The glory of God's wisdom in the government of the world would not have been so conspicuous, if some liberty had not been allowed to the will. It is no great matter to keep in order an inanimate thing, as a clock that must obey a necessity; God would have been but like a good clock-keeper only, as ones says. But how much does it make for the wisdom of God, to make the free motions of his creature, the various humours in the will of man, centre at last in his own glory, contrary to the will and design of the creature, that they have their natural motions, their voluntary motions, and God superintends over them, and moves them according to his own will regularly, according to their nature, without crossing them? 'The determinate counsel of God,' in the death of our Saviour, and the free will of Pilate and the Jews, meet in the same point: God acting wisely,

graciously, justly; their wills acting freely and naturally, reduced, without injury to their nature, to the due point of God's will.

Quest. 3. The third question, How far does the power of man by common grace extend?

Ans. As in a body deprived of the soul there is some power of growth left in the hair and nails, so some power is left in the soul, though it be spiritually dead. As a regenerate man by special grace has a power of doing that which is spiritually good, so a natural man by common grace has a power of doing things morally good, if he will. God keeps the key of regenerating grace in his own hands, and unlocks what hearts he pleases, and brings in a vital spirit into whom he pleases; but there is by common grace an ability in men to do more than they do, but that they harbour, cherish, and increase those vicious inclinations in their own souls. But let it be remembered that this power is not to be abstracted from God's common grace, as the power of a renewed man after grace is not to be abstracted from special grace, nor the natural powers of motion to the actual motion, not to be abstracted from God's general providential concurrence.

(1.) Man has a power by common grace to avoid many sins: I say, a power by common grace; for sometime, upon the neglecting the conduct of natural light, God pulls up the sluice of his restraining grace, lets out the torrent of their natural corruption upon them, which forcibly hurries them to all kind of wickedness; as it is said, Romans 7:24, 'Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; for this cause God gave them up to vile affections.' Therefore, and for this cause, that is, for going contrary to that natural light they had, God let the lusts of their own hearts, which he had restrained, have their full swing against them. In this case sin can no more be avoided, than a man can stop a torrent.

Again; though a man, as he is in a state of nature, cannot but do evil, yet he is not necessitated to this or that kind of sin, but he may avoid this or that pro hic and nunc in particular, though he cannot in general; as a man who has the liberty of walking where he pleases in a prison, he may choose whether he will come into this or that walk within the liberty of the prison; but let him move which way he will, he is a prisoner still.

Quest. If it be said, if a man has power to avoid this or that sin, why may he not avoid all?

Ans. I answer, If he had power to avoid all, he would be restored to the state of Adam. But the reason is this, the power to avoid this or that particular sin arises from a particular cause, the natural subjection of appetite to reason, the lightness of temptation; or if the temptation be more vehement, the stirring up reason and pressing considerations against it; but the power to shun all sin depends upon the subordination of the faculties one to another, in the due order of their creation, and an universal subjection of them to God. Though a man, by a careful watch, may withstand a particular temptation, yet as long as he is alienated from God, and has corrupt habits in him, which are prone to sinful acts, he will one time or other, by some sudden temptation, be carried out according to his natural inclination, before he is able to premeditate, and set reason on work. And sometimes the motions to sin come in such troops, that he cannot stir up his force against all, so that while he is combating against one, another comes behind and surprises him. As another Romanist illustrates it, a vessel has three holes to leak at; a man with two hands may stop two of them, which he will, but the third will remain open of necessity. None will say that the devil can avoid all sin in general, and become holy for the future, because his will is determined to

sin, but this or that individual act of sin he may; for he may choose whether he will assault this man or that with such a temptation, or whether at this time or another. As if two commands were given to the good angels, and it be left to their wills whether they will do that or the other, though they cannot but do good, because their wills are so determined, yet they have a liberty to choose which command they will at present follow. And the reason of this is this: there is no physical necessity upon a man to this or that sin, as there is that the fire should burn. Lusters only offer themselves; they have no force upon a man, but be his own will; they have no authority from God to compel him; then God should be the author of sin. Satan can give no commission to them to break open our hearts; and though he be a strong adversary, he cannot break them open. If the door be open, it is our own act. Is there any necessity upon a man to run into this or that infectious company, or drink brimful cups, till he has drowned both his reason and sentiments of morality? Has he not power to quell many incentives to sin? Show me that man in the world that, upon serious consideration, would say, it is utterly impossible for him to avoid this or that particular sin when he is tempted to it. What men do in this case, they do willing, though a strong temptation may be the first motive of it. It is said, Hosea 5:11, 'Ephraim willingly walked after the commandment,' though the first motive to it was the command of their prince Jeroboam. To evidence this, let me do it by some queries, which may both satisfy that we divest not man of all power, and prevent the ill use men may make of this doctrine, to encourage sluggishness.

1. Cannot you avoid this or that foreseen occasion of sin? Cannot he that knows how prone he is to overthrow his reason when the wine sparkles in the glass, avoid coming within the sight of it? What force is there upon his legs to go, or his hands to take the cup? Can we not starve those affections we have to this or that particular sin, by neglecting the means to feed them? If a man stood by with a drawn sword to stab you if you went into such a place, could you not forbear going in? What is the reason? Fear. And why might not a natural fear of God, heightened by consideration, be of as much force with you as the fear of man, unless atheism has swallowed up all sentiments of a Deity? Do you not rather wish for opportunities, and court a temptation? put you heads out of the window, with Sisera's mother; why is the chariot of the devil so long a coming? It is said, Proverbs 21:10, 'The soul of the wicked desires evil.'

2. Have you not a power to avoid gross sins? Is there any force upon men, to open, sensual sins? Have they not a power to abstain from fleshly lusts? Has not the will a commanding power over the members? What hinders it from exercising that power? The members are not forced, but they are 'yielded up' by consent of the will to sin, Romans 6:19. Had not Achan as much natural power to forbear taking the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, as the rest of that vast number of the Israelites? Not one of their hands touched any of the spoil. Had he not as much power as any of them to have restrained his hands, though he could not quench his covetousness? The law of nature tells us, we ought not to do that to another which we would not have done to ourselves. Have we not as much power to observe this as the Gentiles, who did by nature the things contained in the law? Why may not a man's will command his tongue to speak that which is true, as well as that which is false? Is there not power to control it from speaking blasphemy, and belching out cursed oaths? Cannot you command the hand to forbear striking another wrongfully? Has not a murderer power to keep his sword in his scabbard, as well as to sheath it in his neighbour's bowels? Can any man say, that there was one gross sin in the whole course of his life, but he had a power to avoid it if he would? Forbearance of gross sin consists in a naked omission

and a not acting, which is far more easy than a positive acting, and every man has a power to suspend his own act.

3. Did you never resist a temptation to a particular sin? Why may you not then resist it afterward if you will, since the same common grace attends you? If the will be disengaged one moment from a sin under a great temptation, why not another moment from sin, under a less temptation? No temptation can overpower your strength, unless the will freely shake hands with it: Acts 5:3, 'Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?' His meaning is not, why Satan has done it, for Ananias could not render a reason of that; but why did thou suffer Satan to fill thy heart? If you have given a cheek to Satan before, is it not as easy to say again, 'Get thee behind me, Satan'?

4. Have you not power to shun many inward sins? Man, where he has least power, yet he has some, viz. over his thoughts. We cannot, indeed, hinder the first risings and motions of them, which will steam up from the corrupt fumes and lake whether he will or no; but cannot we hinder the progress of them? Is there not a power to check the delight in them if we will, or divert our thoughts another way, not listen to their suggestions, and hold no inward converse with them? Though you cannot hinder their intrusion, may you not hinder their lodging? 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?' Jeremiah 4:14. Sure we have a power by common grace to forbear any conference with the motions of flesh and blood.

5. When you do sin, had you not many assistances against it, which if you had hearkened to, you might have avoided it? Were there not previous dissuasions from that inward monitor, conscience? When sin has been enticing you on one hand, and conscience warning you on the other, have you not more willingly listened unto the pleasant reasoning of sin, than the wholesome admonitions of conscience? Can you not as well listen to what conscience as to what sin does propose? But have you not wilfully scorned its judgment? Have you not raged against it with a confidence in sin (which is the case of the foolish sinner, Proverbs 14:16, 'The fool rages, and is confident'), and would 'not consider any of the ways of God' it minded you of, Job 34:27, and gave no more regard to its sober dictates, or its louder pressings, than you have to the barking of little curs in the street? Why could you not, with those assistances, have avoided that particular act of sin? The fault was clearly in your wills. Can you not rather choose a cup of wine, than a cup of poison? clear streams, than muddy waters? Besides those assistances, you might have had more, if under the batteries of temptation you had sought to heaven for them. Might you not, then, have avoided this or that sin, when you had such assistances, and might have had more?

6. Have you not avoided sin upon less accounts and considerations? The heathen philosopher could observe, that men may live better than they do. The wrestlers and champions in the Olympic games lived most temperately and continently during that time, to be more fit for the gaining the prize. May not rational considerations do as much, if excited in your minds, as an ambitious desire of honour and affection to victory did in them? Had not Saul a power to withdraw his hand from the unrighteous persecution of David before, as well as when he was sensible of David's kindness in sparing his life when he might have killed him? A drunkard under the disease and pain caused by his sin, can forbear his cups; does his disease confer any power upon him more than he had before? No; why could he not then have forborne his drunken revellings? Can men be restrained from some sins by the eye of a man, the presence of a child? What power do their eyes confer upon them? They only excite that which they had before. Cannot men forbear a sinful act for a

sum of money if it were proffered them or in the presence of a king, who is said to 'scatter away evil with his eyes,' Proverbs 20:8, or in a visible and imminent danger? If a gibbet or a stake were set before men, that they should be immediately executed if they did not forbear such a sinful action, or if they did not go to hear a sermon; can any be so foolish, to think that the glister of gold, the penalty of the law, the sight of a gibbet, should confer a power upon you which you were not before possessed with? It is not then the want of power to avoid sin, but the want of will.

7. Why does conscience check any man after the commission of sin, if it were not in his power to avoid it? All those actions which fall under the cognisance and check of conscience, are actions in our own power, and within the verge of our wills. For the pain of conscience is of another kind than that pain or grief which is raised by those accidents we could not avoid. It arises from the liberty of the will, and galls the soul when it considers, that that which it has done was in its power to be done otherwise. This is the common language of men upon the regrets of conscience: I might have done otherwise, I was warned by my friends; I slighted their warnings, I had resolutions to the contrary, but I stifled them. All men have laid the fault upon themselves, and what is universal consent has a truth in it; the consciences of all men would not gall them for that which they had no power to decline. Indeed, if men were necessitated to sin, they could not be tormented in hell, for the torment there is conscience acting rationally, and reflecting upon them for their wilfulness in the world. If man had not a power to refuse sin, conscience would have no ground for any such reflections to rack and torment them. And it is observable, that natural men, somewhat awakened upon a deathbed, are not so racked by their consciences simply for not being regenerate, as for not avoiding those sins which were hindrances, and not using those means which were appointments of God for such an end, because those were in their power; but they wilfully embraced the one, and as wilfully refused the other.

Prop. 2. Man has a power, by common grace, to do many more good actions (actions materially good) than he does. Evangelical works we cannot do without union to Christ, so himself says, 'Without me you can do nothing,' John 15:5; nothing according to the order of the gospel, nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably, because no such fruits can arise, where faith, the root of such works, is wanting. Though man be much crippled in regard of morals, yet he is not wholly dead to them, as he is to spirituals. A man may 'break off his sins by (moral) righteousness, and his iniquity by showing mercy to the poor;' by taking off the yoke of oppression, and restoring of what he has rifled, which counsel Daniel gives to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 4:27. Though a sick man cannot do all the acts of a sound man till he be perfectly cured, yet he has some power of acting some things like a sound man, remaining with his disease. The young man in the Gospel (yet out of Christ) morally kept the law; so may men under the gospel keep the outward and material part of the precept. There are not only some common notions left since the fall, but also some seeds of moral righteousness in the nature of man. The Gentiles did not only, by nature, in part restored, know the things written in the law, but they did by nature do them, Rom. id. 14; upon this stock they bore many excellent fruits. What patience, chastity, contempt of the pleasures of the world! What affections to their country, and bowels of compassion to men in misery! And what devotion in the external worship of their gods, according to their light, were exemplary in them, though only under the conduct of nature! And these works, though they were not according to the exactness of the law, and failed also in the manner of them, and could not please God for want of faith, yet so far as they were agreeable to the law of nature, and in regard of the materiality of them, were not

offensive to God. This moral righteousness of theirs was only external, and rather an image of righteousness than a true one. Abimelech had a natural integrity, which God acknowledges to be in him, and did arise from his moral nature, though he also appropriates to himself the restraint of Abimelech, and his concurrence with an approbation of that moral integrity: Genesis 20:6, 'I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her;' "lo netaticha", I gave thee not up to touch her. If men did nourish a moral integrity, which they might do, God would concur with them to preserve them from many crimes. If those which were only under the guidance of natural light had so much power to do many moral acts by a common grace, is man's power less under the gospel, whereby they have an addition of a greater light to this natural? If man was able to do so much by the light of nature, there can be no inability brought upon him under the light of the gospel, unless men, by their sluggishness and obstinacy, provoke God judicially to deprive them of that power, and withdraw his hand from them, and so give them up to all kind of wickedness, as it is the dreadful case of many in these days. Man may keep the law of nature better than he does, and for not keeping that he is condemned.

Prop. 3. Men have a power to attend upon the outward means God has appointed for regeneration. Though man cannot renew himself, yet he has a natural power to attend upon the means God has afforded. Though a man has not power to cure his own disease or heal his wound, yet he has power to advise with others, and use the best medicines for his recovery. There is not an outward duty a renewed man does, but a natural man has power externally to do it; though what is essentially good in all parts, cannot be done without special grace, yet what is externally good may be done by the assistance of common grace. Have you not passions, fear, love, desire, grief? Why cannot you exercise them about other objects than ordinarily they are employed about? Why can you not make hell the object of your fears, and heaven the object of your desire? Why might not Esau have wept for his sins, as well as for the loss of the blessing? Might he not have changed the object if he would? Why may we not exercise our inward affections more in our attendance on God? Is not a little excuse sufficient to put off from duty, a great excuse not sufficient to keep you from committing sin? Great business must be laid aside for sin, not the least laid aside for God. Every little thing is a lion in the way then. Do you not many times rack your minds to invent pleas for neglect of duty? Why can you not set them on work to consider reasons to move you to service? Have we not power to be more serious in the use of means than we are? We can be so when some affliction presses us, or conscience gnaws us. Neither of these furnishes us with a new power. Conscience is like the law, acquaints us with our duty, but gives us no strength. The charge God brines against Ephraim was, that he 'would not frame his doings to turn towards God,' Hosea 5:4; he would entertain no thoughts, not one action that had the least prospect towards repentance, he would use no means for that end, or have a look that way. If a man will not do what is in his power, it is a sign he will not be renewed. Can he pretend to a desire to live, who will not eat, and endeavour to prevent foreseen dangers? Or can he pretend to a desire to build, that will not use materials when he may?

There are two great means: hearing the word, and prayer.

(1.) Hearing the word. Have not men power to go to hear the word, to hear a sermon, as well as to see a play? Have they any shackles upon their feet, that they cannot carry them to a place of worship as well as to a place of vanity and sin? Can you not as well read the Scripture as a

romance? Has not the will a despotic power over the members of the body? How came Herod to have more natural power to hear the word, and to hear it 'with pleasure,' Mark 6:20, than other men have? May you not strive against diversions, resist carnal affection, rouse up your souls from their laziness, and endeavour to close with the word? How smilingly would God look upon such endeavours? If men do not, it is out of a natural sluggishness and enmity of will, not for want of power if they would. Men do not what they might. Certainly he does no more desire regeneration who neglects and despises the great instrument of it, than he can be said to desire his own preservation, who neglects medicines proper for the cure of his disease.

(2.) Prayer. I do not mean a spiritual prayer, which is by the special assistance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but of a natural prayer by common instinct; such a one as the apostle puts Simon Magus upon, who he knew was destitute of any air of the Spirit to breathe out, as being 'in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity,' Acts 8:22-23, yet supposes him to have a power in some manner to express his desires to God; or such a power that was common in heathens, upon any distress to run to their altars, and fill their temples with cries to their gods. You cannot pray in the Holy Ghost, but you may send up natural and rational cries to God. Did not Jonah's mariners cry every man to his god? Have you not as much power to cry to the true God as the heathens to false ones? There is the natural prayer of those mariners, as well as the natural integrity of Abimelech, which was not a new-covenant integrity. Can you not be as devout as the publican, and cry, with more seriousness of affection than generally men do, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'? When men are upon a death-bed, ready to take their leave of the world, they can then cry. It is not their death-bed inspires them with power, more than they had before, but they have more mind, and see a greater necessity of crying to God. They have more power in the time of their health, by how much the habit of sin wanted that strength which has been acquired by a continuance of acts till the time of their sickness; for the fewer sins have been committed, the less is the power impaired. Though God has kept other things in his hand, yet he has given us a power of begging, we will use it as a means to obtain them. Can you not kneel down before God, and implore his assistance? Can you not acknowledge before him that it is impossible for you to change yourself, but that your eyes are upon his grace; that you cannot attain by your own strength a spiritual heart; that you will seek nowhere else for it but from his hand; and that you will not be at rest till he has put in his hand and dropped upon your hearts? Can you not thus cry out, Oh that I were a renewed person! as well as cry out, Oh that I were rich and honourable in the world! Had Paul a new tongue when he cried out, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Was it not the same member wherein he had breathed out threatenings against the disciples?

Prop. 4. Man has a power to exercise consideration. He has seminals of jus and aequum, and a power of judging according to them: Luke 12:57 'Yea, why even of yourselves judge you not what is right?' Our Saviour checks them for not making use of their natural power; in the searching their own consciences, and judging their own acts, as well as they did in discerning the face of the sky, and what weather would follow. There is a power of consideration in a rebellious heart; for God acknowledges it in a rebellious nation: Ezekiel 12:3, 'It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.'

1. Can you not reflect upon yourselves? Every man has a reflexive faculty; otherwise he is not a man. Reflection is the peculiar privilege of a rational creature, without which he is not rational. The Pharisees could reflect upon themselves, and say, 'Are we blind also?' John 9:40. Can you not

then take a survey of your past lives; cast up the accounts of your souls, as well as your books? Can you not view your particular crimes, with the aggravations attending them? Yea, you can, if you would. Can you not look back upon the means you have neglected, the love you have slighted, and the light you have shut your eyes against? As long as a man has reason, he may use his reason in these things as well as in others. Why may he not reflect upon himself in spiritual concerns, as well as civil affairs in the world? Cannot he, by comparing the face of his soul with the glass of the word, understand his own state, and by self-reflection come to an understanding of his own lost condition and weakness?

2. Can you not consider the word? Cannot your reasons be employed about the objects the word offers, as well as the objects the world offers? Though you cannot act spiritually in the duties of religion, can you not act rationally in them, as men? Are you endued with a rational soul, to consider the proposals of worldly affairs and concerns, and can you not exercise the same power in considering the proposal made to you by the gospel? The gospel is not only spiritual, but rational. As long as you have a thinking faculty, can you not consider what the reasonable meaning of it is? Though you have not a spiritual taste, you have a rational understanding; why may it not be busied about one object as well as another? The natural repentance of the Ninevites at Jonah's preaching, implied the consideration of his threatening sermon. Why is there not a power in you to think of what is proposed to you out of the word, as well as you can think of what you read of a mathematical or philosophical book, or some history? The power is the same in both, the faculty the same. As the object proposed adds no power to the faculty, so it takes away no power the faculty already has. Surely man is not such a block or stone, but he may turn these things over and over, press them upon his own soul, which may make way for the sensibleness of his state, and putting the will out of its sinful indifference. What any natural man has done, that may all under the same means do, if they will. Why may not the veriest wretch among us humble himself at the hearing of the word, as well as wicked Ahab? 1 Kings 21:27, 1 Kings 21:29, 'When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes. Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?' He discovered an external humiliation, after the consideration of the threatening denounced by the prophet.

3. Can you not cherish, by consideration, those motions which are put into you? There is not a man but the Spirit strives with, one time or other, Genesis 6:3. Has not man a power to approve any good counsel given him, if he will? Have you not had some supernatural motions lifting you up towards God, and pressing obligations upon you, to walk more circumspectly? Why might you not have cherished them, as well as smothered them? Why could you not have considered the tendency of them, as well as have considered how to divert and drown them, by engaging in some sensual dust? Was the power of consideration lost? No; you could not then have cast about in your minds, by what means you should be rid of them, or how you should resist them. Have you not wilfully rejected them, even when consideration has been revived at a sermon? And yet you did industriously let that good motion die for want of blowing up the spark, by following on the consideration which was raised upon its feet. When you have 'begun well, who did hinder you' from a further obedience? 'This persuasion comes not of him that calls you,' Galatians 5:7-8. There was no necessity upon you, to fortify yourselves in your corrupted habits against the attempts of the Spirit. Could you not as well have fallen down before the throne of grace, to have begged grace to second them, as kicked at them, and spurned them away? Was it want of power

to do otherwise? or was it not rather your own obstinate wilfulness? Since I appeal to you, whether your own consciences have not tugged at you, and spurred you on at such seasons, why could you not then beg of God, that such a good motion might not have departed out of your coasts? Because a man cannot renew himself, therefore to lie down in sluggishness is not the design of this doctrine.

4. Can you not consider those notions you have be natural light? Man has a conscience which minds him of moral good, and pulls him from evil. No man can deprive himself of these. It will check in those things wherein others commend us, and commend us in those things wherein others accuse us. May we not observe the motions of conscience within us? May we not consider the charge it brings against us for any act committed, so as to avoid the like for the future; and the excusations of conscience, in commending us, so as to do the like acts for the future? As we have a law without us, which we may consider, so we have a conscience within us, which witnesses to the equity of the law, accusing us for what we do contrary to it, and excusing us for what we do in observance of it, Romans 2:15; and this in man's corrupt state. Cannot man then observe the dictates of conscience? Can he not find out the sense of this law in his mind, though it be much blurred? Cannot he act like a man, in following the dictates of this rational principle, as well as like a beast follow the allurements of sense? No rational principle in man puts him upon evil, but upon moral good; whatsoever draws him from good, or puts him upon evil, are principles common to him with one brute or other, profit, pleasure, honour, all which are found in some beast or other. Why may not a man then consider the rational reports of his own conscience, as well as the brutish whisperings of sense? But does not man endeavour to shuffle off his conscience, and is mighty jolly when it keeps silence, or when he can stop its mouth with an excuse? Do not men wilfully choke the sentiments of it, and keep the truth deposited in their souls, in unrighteousness, Romans 1:18; and like the scorner, 'hear not its rebukes,' Proverbs 13:1? Whatsoever man has by the relics of natural light, he may think of. He knows by nature there is a God; he knows something of his attributes, and of his law; may not those be his morning thoughts? Is he not stirred up sometimes to contemplate on them? May he not do it at other times, since this common grace is always with him, and leaves him not till he leaves valuing and embracing its divine assistances? Let it be remembered, that in all this which man may do, the power is to be ascribed to common grace through a mediator, keeping up by his interposition the pillars of the earth, and preserving some relics of natural light, and the seeds of moral righteousness in man, not in the least to be ascribed to bare nature; and that man's corrupt will, stuffed with sinful habits, is the cause he makes no use of this power.

Quest. 2. If we have not an ability to renew ourselves, why does God command us to do so? And why does God make promises to men if they will turn? Is not this a cruelty? as if a man should command another to run a race, and promise to reward him if he did, and yet bind him with fetters that he cannot run? Both the command would be unjust and the promise ridiculous.

Ans. In general. God may command, and his command does not signify a present ability in man.

(1.) He may command, because we have faculties suited to the command in respect of their substance. For the death of a sinner was not a physical death, but a moral. Man lost not his faculties, but the rectitude of them; he lost the purity of his sight, the integrity of his will, but not the understanding and will itself.

(2.) God's command does not signify a present moral ability to perform it. God's command, which acquaints us with our present duty, is no argument of a present power; for if a command signified more than the duty man owes, it signified more than a command in its own nature could signify. God's command to us to renew ourselves implies no more an ability inherent in the creature to do so than Christ's voice to putrefying Lazarus, 'Lazarus arise, come forth,' John 11:43, implied a power in Lazarus to raise himself, or his speech to the palsied cripple, 'Arise, take up thy bed,' implied a power in himself to do it himself before a supernatural conveyance of it. Do not men exhort every day to sobriety those that have contracted a profound habit of drunkenness and lust, that philosophy does acknowledge it is not possible for them to abstain from; yet no man accuses those that exhort them of impertinence, nor those that chastise them of injustice. God's commands are not the measures of our strength, but the rule of our duty, and do not teach us what we are, but what we should be. But to clear this more particularly:

God may command, though man has not a present moral ability to renew himself. For

[1.] First, Man once had a power to do whatsoever God would command him; he had a power to cleave to God. He had not else, in justice, been capable of any such injunction; there had been ground of a complaint and charge against God, if man had been created defective in any of those abilities necessary for his obedience to this command. The command is just; God would not else have imposed it, because of his righteousness, and every man's conscience testifies that it is highly just he should honour God, love God, and cleave to God. If it were just, then man was capable to perform this command, for man, as a rational creature, is capable of a law, and cannot be governed otherwise; and no law could be given so proper for him as to stand right to his Creator. Since, therefore, the law was just in itself, and since God did justly impose it, man was certainly created by God in a capacity to observe it. No question but God, who furnished other creatures with an ability to attain their several ends, and perform the orders God had set them in at the creation, was no less indulgent to man. He that was not deficient to the lower creatures would not be deficient to the noblest of his sublunary works. He would have been worse in his rank, without a sufficient stock, than other creatures were in theirs. There would not have been a physical goodness and perfection suitable to his station in the world, and his excellency above other creatures. How could God then have pronounced him good, among the rest of his works, if there had been in his creation a natural inability to answer the end of his creation? If God had created man in such a state that he could not do righteously, and yet commanded him to do righteously, and, because he did not, punish him, he would have been unjust; as if a man should command another to reach a thing too high for him, and that when his hands were tied behind him, and because he did not, beat him. This would have been the case had not man had power at first to do righteously. Had man preserved himself in that created state, no just command of God (and it was impossible any unjust command should have proceeded from infinite righteousness) would have been too hard and too high for him.

[2.] God did not deprive man of this ability. Man was not stripped of his original righteousness by God, for man had lost it before ever God spake to him, or passed any sentence upon him after his fall: Genesis 3:10, 'I was naked.' If God had taken it away without any offence of Adam, he might have expostulated the case. It had been alike unjust, as if God had never given him power at first to observe the command he enjoined him. It would have been unreasonable to require that of man which God himself had made impossible. But God did not take away man's original righteousness.

If God had taken it away before man's fall, then man was unrighteous before he fell, and God, taking it away from him while he was perfect, had made him, of an holy and righteous man, unholy and profane; as he that deprives a malefactor of his sight, for his demerit, makes him of seeing blind. If God took it away after he spake to Adam in the garden, it would then follow that Adam was righteous after his fall till God deprived him of it, and so was innocent while he was sinful, and strong while he was weak. God did not take it away from him before, but had told him that the loss of it would be the natural consequent of his eating the forbidden fruit, Genesis 2:17, nor after for after we find only temporal punishments threatened. God indeed did judicially deny him the restoration of it, which, as a governor and a judge, he might justly do, resolving to govern him in another manner than before. So that it would be an unjust imputation on God to say, God cut off man's legs, and then commanded him to run, and come to him. What if God did foresee that man would fall; was God therefore the cause of his fall? God's prescience, though it is infallible, is not the cause of a thing, no more than our foreknowledge that the sun will rise to-morrow morning is a cause of rising of it.

[3.] Therefore, since God did not deprive man of it, it follows that man lost it himself, and not barely lost it, but cast it away. He did voluntarily by an inordinate intention of will, cast away this original perfection, and fell a-hunting after his own 'inventions', Ecclesiastes 7:29. He did not stick to that command God had given him, nor implore God's assistance of him, as by His natural ability he might have done. He consulted not with his command upon the temptation, but was very willing to cast off that righteousness wherewith God had endowed him, for an affected godhead. Man readily swallowed the bait; he did not debate the business with Eve, 'She gave to her husband with her, and he did eat,' Genesis 3:6. So that the fault was wholly in himself, and his present state voluntarily contracted, for though the devil tempted him, yet he had no power to force him. He was easily overcome by him, for it was not a repeated temptation, but a surrender at the first parley.

[4.] Therefore God's right of commanding, and man's obligation of returning and cleaving to God, remains firm. God's right still remains. God gave him a portion to manage, though man prodigally spent it. God may challenge his own. Cannot a master justly challenge that commodity he sent his servant with money to buy, though he spent it in drunkenness and gaming? God gave Adam a sufficient stock; he trifled it away. Must God's right suffer for his folly, and man's crime deprive God of his power to command? The obligation to God is natural, therefore indelible; the corruption of the creature cannot render this first obligation void. Righteousness is a debt the creature, as a rational creature, owes to God, and cannot refuse the payment of it without a crime. Who deprived him of the power of paying? Himself. Should this voluntary embezzlement prejudice God's right of exacting that which the creature cannot be excused from? A debtor, who cannot pay, remains under the obligation of paying. The receipt of a sum of money brings him into the relation of a debtor, and not his ability to pay what he has received. Such a doctrine would free all men who were unable to pay from being debtors, though the sums they owed were never so vast. That judge would be unjust that would excuse a prodigal debtor, because he could not pay when sued by his creditor. No doubt but the devils are bound to serve God, and love him, though by their revolt they have lost the will to obey him. If, because we have no present power, our obligation to turn to God and obey him ceased, there would be no sin in the world, and consequently no judgments. Who will say, that if a prince had such rebellious subjects that there were little hopes to reclaim them, he should be therefore bound not to command them to return to their duty and

obedience? If it be reasonable in a prince, whose rights are limited, shall it not be reasonable in God to exact it, who has an unbounded right over his creature? Either God must keep up his law or abrogate it, or, which is all one, let it lie in the dust. His holiness obliges him to keep up his law; to abrogate it, therefore, would be against his holiness. To declare a willingness that his creature should not love him, should not obey him, would be to declare that which is unjust, because love is a just debt to an amiable object and the chief good, and obedience to a sovereign Lord. Must God change his holiness because man has changed his estate? The obligation of man remaining perpetual, the right of God to demand remains perpetual too, notwithstanding the creature's casting himself into an insolvent condition. If man still owes this duty to God, why may not God exact his right of man? Much more may God call for a right use of those means and gifts he has, as a benefactor, bestowed upon man since his fall. No man will deny this right to God upon serious thoughts. These new gifts and means were given him not only for himself, but for his Lord, to improve for his glory. God may justly require the right use of those moral principles and evangelical means for the ends for which he appointed them.

[5.] It will appear more reasonable, because God demands no more, nay not so much as he required of Adam in innocence. It is but obedientia reintegrata, a return in part to that perfect boldness which was inherent in man, and to that obedience in part which was in a great measure due to God. As when a prince demands the return of rebels, he demands a restoration of that subjection which they paid him before. God required a perfect obedience in the first covenant, he requires not so much in the second, so that for want of it a creature shall be cast off; but a sincere obedience is required, though not in degree perfect. Adam had a fundamental power in him to perform that obedience which is required, in faith and repentance, the two great parts of regeneration. Faith is nothing but an embracing and accepting of Christ the mediator. Adam had a power of believing and accepting Christ for his head, had he been proposed to him in paradise, as the mediator of consistency and confirmation, and the vinculum of holding him for ever close to God. Had not Adam a power to accept him under this notion, as well as the good angels have accepted him for their head, and worship him as mediator; that is, pay him an obedience as mediator when he comes into the world, Hebrews 1:6. Had he not a fundamental power to grieve, though since sin was extraneous to a state of innocence, he could not have exercised that grief for himself, repentance being extraneous to obedience, and unmeet for him in a sinless state? Suppose God had commanded him to grieve for the sins of the fallen angels, Adam having this passion in his nature, might have done it. He might have known what sin was in them, and might have grieved for the dishonour of God by them; even as our Saviour did grieve for the sins of others, Mark 3:5, who knew no sin himself. And in grieving for his own sin, there was only a change of the object.

[6.] It is yet more reasonable if we consider, that every natural man thinks he has a power to renew himself, and turn to God when he will practically, though not all of them notionally. What reason then has man to quarrel with God, and accuse him of demanding that which he thinks he can give to God, and will not at present, but take his own time to do it, when he sees it fit? This practical opinion runs in the reins of every natural man under the gospel, as well as in the heathens, which appears by the general wilful delays of men about their eternal concerns, by their vows and resolutions upon the blows of conscience of reforming their lives, and becoming new men without having recourse to the grace of God, or taking any notice of him in their resolves. This I think is a

clear case. 'Yet a little more sleep,' says a man, that thinks he can rise time enough when he will, and despatch his business in a moment, Proverbs 6:10. With what face can man accuse God of not giving him power, when he thinks he has power enough himself? or be angry with God for demanding his debt, when he thinks himself in a solvent condition? No man will blame another for requiring that of his servant, which his servant boasts he has power in himself to do. The Israelites thought so when they said, Exodus 24:3, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do,' without any applications to the grace of God to enable them. All men are like Israel in this; only the regenerate are most sensible of their own impotence, and scarce any man else.

[7.] From all this it follows, that God is not bound to give grace to any; and where he does bestow it, it is an act of his sovereign pleasure. If God has given man power, and never took it away, but it was cast away by man, therefore God's right is not prejudiced, but he may justly demand of man what once he gave him power to do, especially since it is less than what man at first owed him; and when man thinks he has power to pay him, it will evidently follow, that God is not bound to give any new power. If God were bound to give a new power to accept of the gospel, he were then unjust not to confer it; if he be not bound, it is of mere grace that he bestows it. God proposes pardon to all upon such conditions, but he is not bound to give the condition to any; he commands all to renew their obedience to him, but he is not bound to renew any one person. He gives the command to turn, as a lawgiver and governor; he gives the grace to some to turn, as a benefactor. It is grace therefore, not debt. When God confers it, it is an act of his compassionate mercy; when he denies it, it is an act of his just sovereignty. He may, if he please, 'suffer all nations to walk in their own ways,' Acts 14:16. Yet if he please to propose the means of grace to any, the very knowledge of those mysteries of heaven is a peculiar gift, as well as the outward proposal: Matthew 13:11, 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' If we improve reason to the highest, God is not obliged to give us grace, no more than if a beast improved sense to the highest, he were bound to give him reason. Though if there could be a man found in any age of the world, who did improve reason to the utmost of his power, I would not doubt God's giving him the addition of supernatural grace, out of the largeness of his bounty, though still there is no obligation upon God, because man does no more than his duty. And that God does not give grace to all to whom the means are offered, and yet does command them to turn, and promise to receive them;—

(1.) It does not entrench upon his sincerity in his proposals. His proposals are serious, though he knows man will not receive them without an over-powering grace; and though he be resolved not to give the assistance of his grace to every one under those means, but leave them to the liberty of their own wills. The gospel is to be considered as a command ordering men to believe, or as a promise alluring men to be renewed, by representing to them the happiness of such a state. Consider it as a command, God is serious in it, though he resolve not to give grace to all to whom the precept comes, for under this consideration of a command it is a declaration of man's duty, and a demonstration of God's sovereign authority. Does God's resolution of not giving grace weaken the obligation of man to his duty, or diminish God's authority, or give ground to man to charge him with insincerity? Consider it as a promise, does it hinder God's seriousness in it if he resolves not to give the condition of it to all? It is sufficient to show God's seriousness in it, to declare, that if men will be regenerate, it will be very pleasing to him; that he will make good to them what he has promised, that if they be renewed, he will make good every tittle of the promise

to them; and if they will seek, and ask, and knock, he will not be wanting to them to assist them.

(2.) It does not disparage his wisdom to command that to man which he knows man will not do without his grace, and so make promises to man upon the doing it. If man indeed had not a faculty naturally fitted for the object, it might entrench upon God's wisdom to make commands and promises to such a creature as it would be to command a beast to speak. But man has a faculty to understand and will, which makes him a man; and there is a disposition in the understanding and will which consists in an inclination determined to good or evil, which makes us not to be men, but good or bad men, whereby we are distinguished from one another, as by reason and will we are from plants and beasts. Now the commands and exhortations are suitable to our nature, and respect not our reason as good or bad, but simply as reason. These commands presuppose in us a faculty of understanding and will, and a suitableness between the command and the faculty of a reasonable creature. This is the reason why God has given to us his law and gospel, his commands, not because we are good or bad men, but because we are men endued with reason, which other creatures want, and therefore are not capable of government by a command. Our blessed Lord and Saviour did not exhort infants, though he blessed them, because they were not arrived to the use of reason, yet he exhorted the Jews, many of whose wills he knew were not determined to good, and whom he told that they would die in their sins. And though God had told them, Jeremiah 13:1-27, that they could no more change themselves than an Ethiopian could his skin, yet he expostulates with them why they 'would not be made clean;' Jeremiah 13:27 'O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' Because, though they had an ill disposition in their judgment, yet their judgment remained, whereby to discern of exhortations if they would. To present a concert of music to a deaf man that cannot hear the greatest sound were absurd, because sounds are the object of hearing; but commands and exhortations are the object, not of this or that good constitution of reason, but of reason itself.

(3.) Neither does it disagree with his justice. It is so far from being unjust for God to demand what men are obliged to do, though he knows that they will not do it, that God would be unjust to himself if he did not demand it, if he let men trample upon his rights without demanding restitution of them. If a prince sets forth edicts to rebels to return, and promise them pardon upon their returning, though he knows they are rebelliously bent, that they will not entertain a thought of coming again under his sceptre, but will still be in arms, and draw down his wrath upon them, will not all interpret this to be an act of clemency and goodness in the prince? Neither is God an acceptor of persons, because he does not give grace unto all; for may he not do with his own what he please without injustice? Those to whom we give alms have reason to thank us; those to whom we give not an alms have no reason to complain; we have gratified the one, but we have done no wrong to the other. We are all by nature criminals, deserving death; should God leave us in that deplorable estate wherein he found us, can we accuse him of injustice? Those that by grace are snatched out of the pit, have reason to acknowledge it an admirable favour, as indeed it is; those that are destitute of grace, and by their own wilful rejection left to sink to the bottom, cannot impute their unhappiness to him; for he left them not without witness; he presented them the word, exhorted them to hearken to him; but, instead of paying their duty, they fiercely rejected him, abhorred his exhortations, and gave themselves over to sin and vice. If a man proclaim by a crier that such that can bring such a mark shall receive such an alms, he sends this private mark to some, they come and receive an alms. Had he not power to do what he pleased with his own, to send his

distinguishing token to whom he pleased? What injustice is done to the other, to whom he sends not this mark?

We have shown that God may command. Let us see why God does command, when he knows man has no power to renew himself?

1. The first reason is, To make us sensible of our impotency. The design of God is not to signify our power to perform it, but sensibly to affect us with our inability, that we may be the better prepared for a remedy; as the moral law was given with such terrifying marks, to make men despair in themselves, and the ceremonial law annexed to it, to give some glimpse of a Mediator in whom they might have strength. And therefore when the Israelites were so affected, Deuteronomy 18:16-18, as to desire not to hear the voice of the Lord in that manner, nor to see that great fire any more which attended the law, that they might not die, he commends them for it: Deuteronomy 18:17, 'They have well spoken that which they have spoken.' God is highly pleased with this sense of their own inability to answer the terms of the first covenant, since it makes them fly for help and supply to the prophet of the second covenant. The cabalists therefore say, that the law was given to take away the venom of the serpent; that is, not that we should fulfil the law, but that we might learn how far we were swerved from the duty we owed to God, and how unable to gain the happiness we had lost. A conceit of self-sufficiency secretly lurks in every one of us; we should think ourselves gods to ourselves if we saw not the picture of our own weakness in the spirituality of the command. Therefore, though we cannot ourselves perform this command of regeneration, it is necessary it should be directed to us, to make us abject in our eyes, and strip us of all confidence in the flesh, which is the first step toward a being endued with the Spirit; to make us hang down our proud plumes, and sink into that despair in ourselves, which is necessary to the superstructure of a saving faith. It is necessary the law should be commanded, to make sin appear exceeding sinful, to give us a true prospect of ourselves in the glass of the command: the rectitude of it shows us our crookedness; the holiness of it, our impurity; the justice of it, our unrighteousness; the goodness of it, our wickedness; and the spirituality of it, our carnality and fleshliness. God does not command us (though we have no power) to upbraid and triumph over us, but to lay us low, and humble us.

2. To make us sensible of the grace of God, and urge us to have recourse to it. It is necessary that man should understand the perfection of divine righteousness, and what the condition of man was before the fall, that thereby he may understand the necessity of the remedy, and be more willing to come under God's wing than Adam has to keep under it; but without a sense of his own weakness man would never come to God. God commands us, not that he expects we should renew ourselves, for he knows we cannot; but that being acquainted with our feeble frame, we should implore his grace to turn us, and have recourse to him, who delights to be sought unto and depended upon by his creature. That this command of renewing ourselves, and returning to our due obedience, is given to this end, is evident by the promise of the gospel, which did accompany the command, both to encourage and direct men where to find assistance for the performance of what the first covenant exacts, and the second accepts. Therefore, with the commands of the law, there is the promise of a great prophet to teach them, an ordaining typical sacrifices to relieve them, and the gospel, under the mask of the ceremonial law, attended the fiery and impossible commands of the moral. God might have exacted his right without making any promise, it had been summum just; but God exacts not his right now, but with a promise; where there is jus in one,

and remissio juris in the other. And very frequently in the Scripture, where the command is given to show us our duty, yet a promise is joined to it, to show that though obedience be our duty, yet sanctification is God's work, as Leviticus 20:8, 'Ye shall keep my statutes and do them;' whereupon it immediately follows, 'I am the Lord which sanctify you.' The precept is to acquaint us with our duty; the promise, to acquaint us with the sight of a gracious ability; the precept minds us of our debt, the promise minds us of the means to pay it: what is required in the precept is encouraged in the promise. Every precept, being a part of the law, is to 'shut us up' to faith, and to 'bring us to Christ,' Galatians 3:23-24. God makes us amends; that as he requires of us what we lost by another's fault, he has provided us a remedy by another's righteousness, which we never performed; and by his own Spirit, which we never purchased, if we will but seek it. If God did work it in us without commanding us to work it ourselves, we could not have a foundation to make such sensible acknowledgements of his grace and omnipotent kindness. It is our work as a due debt; it is God's work as a fruit of his grace; Isaiah 26:12, 'Thou hast wrought all our works in us.' The promise, therefore, of a new heart and a new spirit, is made indefinitely; none are aimed in it, nor any excluded, that will but seek it. And supposing they are predictions rather than promises, yet they run in the nature of a promise: they are to be pleaded, for God 'will be inquired after concerning them;' and the fulfilling of them to the soul is as pleadable as the fulfilling other prophecies to the church; the grounds of the plea are the same in both, the truth of God: Ezekiel 36:37, 'Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;' which may reasonably be concluded to respect the whole antecedent promising discourse of God.

3. These commands and exhortations are of use to clear the justice of God upon obstinate sinners. God is a judge, and judges by law; commands therefore are necessary, because a rational creature is only governable by law. If God were not a lawgiver, he could not be a judge; his judicial proceedings depend upon his legislative power. Men being to be judged by their works, must have some law as the rule of those works; and his law is no more than the first law in innocence, that is, to return to obedience and righteousness. These commands and exhortations are the whips and scourges of perverse consciences, whereby they are galled while they obey not the motions of them, and render them inexcusable and unworthy of mercy in despising the conditions God requires of them, and make the case of Sodom 'more tolerable in the day of judgment' than the condition of such men, Matthew 11:24. We are apt to bring an unreasonable charge against God of cruelty and injustice, as though his punishments did not consist with righteousness. God therefore shows us our duty, and demands it of us, and it is confessed by us to be our duty; man is therefore deservedly punished, because he does wilfully cherish the old nature in him, the fountain of all sin; he has the truth, and he holds it in possession, but in unrighteousness, therefore the wrath of God is justly revealed from heaven against that unrighteousness of his, Romans 1:18. God calls sinners, though he knows they will not renew themselves, as men send servants to demand the possession of a piece of ground, though they know it will not be delivered to them; but they do it that they may more conveniently bring their action against such a person that will not surrender. So upon God's command to men to be renewed, his justice is more apparent upon their refusal; as he sent Moses to Pharaoh, though he knew before that Pharaoh would not hearken to him. This punishment is only accidental to the gospel, it becomes the savour of death per per accidens, because of the unbelief of those that reject it; the gospel is designed for the salvation of men, not for their condemnation. If the

corruption of man produces condemnation to himself, must God abstain from doing good to the world? There is not a man but abuses the light of the sun which shines upon him, and the mercies God gives him, and thereby brings wrath upon himself, and God knows they will do so; would we have God, therefore, to put out the light of the sun, and divest the earth of its fruitfulness? Shall God lay aside his right of commanding, and take away the preaching of the gospel, and so excellent a thing as the happy revelation of his gracious promises and exhortations, because many men by their wilfulness bring the just wrath of God upon them for their refusal? Will any man accuse our blessed Lord and Saviour, when he comes to judgment, that he did them wrong to come and die for mankind, and cause the news and ends of his death to be published, and exhort sinners thereupon to believe in him? Surely men's consciences shall be full of convictions of their own wilfulness, and the equity of God's justice thereupon.

4. The commands and exhortations are of use to bring men to God, according to the nature of rational creatures, and also to keep them with God. Man not having lost his reason, though he has lost his rectitude, cannot be drawn to God in a rational way but by cords proper to man; for he is a creature governable only by laws, and therefore must have laws suited to his nature; and commands and exhortations are so, for the weakness brought upon men to answer them is by their own defection. God does not bring men to him by instinct, as he brought the beasts to Adam, or the creatures into Noah's ark; such a conversion would not be reasonable, nor spiritual, nor agreeable to God, no more than the obedience of the beasts to Noah. God therefore draws men by commands, and promises, and exhortations thereupon convenient to the nature of man, accommodated to the rational capacity of the creature; for man being created after the image of God, ought to be conducted and governed after another manner than other creatures. The grace of God therefore working suitably to the nature of man, cannot be conceived by us in any other way than in this of commands and exhortations. And when men are renewed, the commands for perfect regeneration are still incumbent upon them (though they cannot attain it in this life), to stir up their hearts to an exercise of that gracious ability they have to walk in the ways of holiness, and to that end to a reliance on the grace of God. The promises are given to them to inflame them to a love of holiness, and to show them where their chief strength lies; this appears plainly to be the intent of the Spirit of God in that command and promise, Php 2:12-13, 'Work out your own salvation; for it is God that works in you to will and to do.' He writes to those already regenerate, Work out your salvation, use your gracious power, and be encouraged by the assistance God gives you. Use your own power as if there were no grace to help you in the performance; depend upon the grace of God which works in you both to will and to do, as if you had no power at all of any motion in yourselves. So that to sum up the whole of this later discourse, the impotence of man does not excuse him.

1. Because the commands of the gospel are not difficult in themselves to be believed and obeyed. If we were commanded things that were impossible in their own nature, as to shoot an arrow as high as the sun, or leap up to the top of the highest mountain at one start, the very command carries its excuse with it in the impossibility of the thing enjoined. But the precept of regeneration and restoring to righteousness is easy to be comprehended, it is backed with clear and manifest reason, and proposed with a promise of happiness which is very suitable to the natural appetite of our souls. To command a thing simply impossible is not congruous to the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God; it would not be justice, but cruelty. No wise man will invite another man by

any promises to do that which is simply impossible; no just judge will punish a man for not observing such a precept; no righteous and merciful person would impose such a command. But these commands of the gospel are not impossible in their own nature, but in regard of our perversity and contumacy. The command of righteousness was possible when first given, and impossible since by our own folly; impossible in our voluntary corrupted nature, and by reason of our voluntarily cherished corruption. The change is not in the nature of the law, but in the nature of the creature; and what is impossible to nature is possible to grace, and grace may be sought for the performance of them.

2. Because we have a foundation in our natures for such commands, therefore man's weakness does not excuse him. It had been unjust for God to have commanded Adam in innocence to fly, and give him no wings; this had been above Adam's natural power, he could not have done it, though he would fain have obeyed God, because his nature was destitute of all force for such a command. It would be strange if God should invite the trees or beasts to repent, because they have no foundation in their nature to entertain commands and invitations to obedience and repentance; for trees have no sense, and beasts have no reason to discern the difference between good and evil. If God did command a man that never had eyes to contemplate the sun, man might wonder, since such a man never had organs for such an action. But God addresses himself to men that have senses open to objects, and understandings to know, and wills to move, affections to embrace objects. These understandings are open to anything but that which God does command, their wills can will anything but that which God does propose. The command is proportioned to the natural faculty, and the natural faculty proportioned to the excellency of the command. We have affections, as love and desire. In the command of loving God and loving our neighbour, there is only a change of the object of our affections required; the faculties are not weak by nature, but by the viciousness of nature, which is of our own introduction. It is strange, therefore, that we should excuse ourselves, and pretend we are not to be blamed, because God's command is impossible to be observed, when the defect lies not in the want of a natural foundation, but in our own giving up ourselves to the flesh and the love of it, and in a wilful refusal of applying our faculties to their proper objects, when we can employ those faculties with all vehemence about those things which have no commerce with the gospel.

3. Because the means God gives are not simply insufficient in themselves. God does afford men beams of light, he makes clear discoveries, as it is, Romans 1:19, 'He has showed it to them, "efanero", 'it is manifest in them. He displays in their hearts some motions of his Spirit, produces some velleities. The standing of the world under the cries of so many hideous sins, is a daily sermon of God's kindness and patience in bearing up the pillars of it, and is a standing exhortation to repentance; as Romans 2:4, 'The forbearance, long-suffering, and goodness of God leads to repentance.' The object is intelligible: 'The word is near us, in our mouths, in our hearts;' it is apprehensible in itself, Romans 10:6-7. The revelation is as plain as the surface of the heavens, Psalms 19:1-3, applied to the preaching of the gospel. Romans 10:18. That men are not renewed, and turned to God, is not for want of a sufficient external revelation, but from the hardness of the heart; not from any insufficiency of the means, but the depravity and wickedness of the soul to whom those means are offered. The commands and means of the gospel are no more weak in themselves than the law was, but weak through the flesh, by reason of the inherent corruption man has fastened in himself, Romans 8:3. Would not the hundredth part of any revelation of some

worldly object, connatural to man's corrupt heart, be sufficient in itself to put him upon motion to it, and embraces of it? The insufficiency does both not lie in the external means, for the gospel is an act of mercy and grace; the call is an act of kindness. It is clear to man that God offers; it is clear that God will accept, if man will embrace his counsel; and shall this be said to be insufficient, because man will reject it?

4. Because this impotence in man is rather a wilfulness than a simple weakness, therefore man's pretended weakness does not excuse him from the command. It is not a weakness arising from a necessity of nature, but an enmity of will, whereby some other apparent good is beloved above God, and some creature preferred before him. There is a double impotence, *merae infirmitatis*, which is a want of power in the hand, when there is a readiness in the will to perform, or *malignitatis*, which is seated in the will and affections, whereby though a man has a power to perform, yet he cannot because he will not: he will abhor any return to God, and will not be whetted by his promise to any endeavour. A simple impotency deserves pity, for it is a rational excuse, but an obstinate perversity is so far from an excuse that it is an aggravation. The deeper the habit of obstinacy, the more inexcusable the person. What a ridiculous excuse would this be, to say to God, (1.) that I ought not to be obliged to restore myself to righteousness, and obey the command of the gospel, because I am of so perverse a disposition that I will not obey, and will not be restored; or (2.) that God is bound to restore to him that will to obey and renew himself, otherwise he is guilty of no crime. The first would be ridiculous, and both impious. What hinders any man from being regenerate under the call of the gospel, but a moral weakness, which consists in an imperious inclination to evil, and a rooted indisposition in corrupt reason and will to believe and repent? And here the Scripture lays it upon the hardness of the heart, Romans 2:5, and a rebellious walking after our own thoughts: Isaiah 65:2, 'I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walk in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.' We are impotent and cannot, because we are rebellious and will not. For since man has an understanding capable to weigh arguments on both sides, and see the advantage of the good proposed, and the disadvantage of the evil tempting, if he does the evil, and refuses the good, is not the fault clearly in his will? And when by a custom in sin we ripen the power of our evil habits, we contract an impossibility of doing the good required, and casting out the evil forbidden. This does in no sort excuse us, because it is an inability contracted by ourselves. God himself threatens punishment to the Israelites, when he confesses that they could not attain to innocence: Hosea 8:5, 'My anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocence?' "lo yuchlu"; how long can they not? Purity or innocence. They had raised such an habit in them, by casting off voluntarily the thing that is good, Hosea 5:3, that they could not divest themselves of it, which was so far from excusing them that it sharpened the anger of God against them.

5. This weakness does not excuse from obedience to this command, because God denies no man strength to perform what he commands, if he seek it at his hands. No man can plead that he would have been regenerate, and turned to God, and could not, for though we have not power to renew ourselves, yet God is ready to confer power upon us if we seek it. Where did God ever deny any man sufficient strength, that did wait upon him in serious and humble supplications, and conscientiously used the means to procure it. A man cannot indeed merit grace, or dispose himself for it, so that it must by a natural necessity come into his soul, as a form does into matter upon dispositions to it. But if a man will do what he can do, if he will put no obstacle to grace, by a

course of sin, would not God, out of his infinite bounty to his creatures, and out of that general love whereby he would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, give him special grace? Has not our Saviour made a promise in his first sermon to the multitude, that God 'will give good things to them that ask him,' with a much more than men give good gifts to their children, Matthew 7:11. They were not only his disciples that he preached that sermon to, but the multitude, comparing it with Matthew 5:1, and Matthew 7:28. Has not God declared, that he 'delights not in the death of a sinner,' Ezekiel 33:11, and does he not out of his infinite goodness condescend to beseech us to be reconciled to him? Will not the same infinite goodness bow itself down to form a new image in them that use the means to be reconciled and conformed to him, as much as they can? Has not our blessed Saviour already given a testimony of his affection to such endeavours, in loving the young man for his outward observation of the law, Mark 10:21, who wanted but one thing only to pass him into a gracious state, the refusal whereof barred him of it? And shall not he have a choicer affection to those that strive to observe the rules he has left in his gospel? Will he not be pleased with such motions in his creatures towards their own happiness? Will he not further that wherein he delights? Think not therefore to justify yourselves at the bar of God for your sloth, because you are too weak to renew yourselves. It will not help you then. The question will then be asked, Did you ever seriously beg it, as for your lives? Did God ever desert you when you would fight against sin, when you set yourselves seriously and dependently on him for grace? God gives us talents, but by our sloth we embezzle them. It is upon that score Christ lays it, Matthew 25:26, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant.' God has not promised to furnish you with more talents, when you improve not the talents you have already; non-improvement of them cuts off all pleas men may make against God upon the account of their impotence. As there never was a renewed man, but acknowledged his regeneration as a fruit of God's grace, so there was never any man that can say, he did use his greatest industry in trading with the talents God entrusted him with, and God refused him the supply of his special grace. If you have not a new heart and a heart of flesh, ask your own hearts whether ever you did seriously inquire of God to do it for you. God never fails them that diligently seek him. For the use of this:

1. For information.

(1.) See the strange misery of man by his fall. We cannot be the authors of strength to our own souls, since we are despoiled of that vital principle which constituted us spiritually living in the first creation. How are we sunk many degrees below other creatures, who always have, and still do answer the ends of their creation, when we, wretched we, have lost both the will and power to answer the end of ours? We can understand, will, move, but not as man in innocence could. In ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, can bring forth nothing spiritually good and acceptable to God; a mere composition of enmity to good and propensity to evil, of weakness and wickedness, of hell and death; a fardel of impotence and conceitedness, perversity and inability, every way miserable unless infinite compassion relieve us. We have no more freedom than a chained galley slave till Christ redeem us; no more strength than a putrefied carcass till Christ raise us, an unlamented hardness, an unregarded obstinacy, an insensible palsy spread over every part, a dreadful cannot and will not triumphing in the whole soul. The heart turned into pleasure with its own wounds and chains is an amazing misery both to good men and angels, because it is so great, and yet unbewailed to see a man endued with a soul so rare, even with its crack, that the heathens thought it to be a particle of God; an understanding that can peer into

heaven, fathom the earth by contemplative inquisitions, yet cannot strike up a spark of enlightened reason about everlasting happiness; that that reason, which understands a worldly interest, should be so blind, so weak, about a heavenly bliss! A short-sighted mind, that cannot cast a look so high as to spiritual things, nor rise up in one holy thought without the grace of God; a perverse will, that cannot commission one spiritual desire; a weak arm, that cannot strengthen itself to grasp and hold one spiritual gift; a dry wilderness, that cannot issue out a tear till God open the fountain of the great deep of grace to flow in upon it; a hard heart, that relents not under afflictions on earth, nor could under the flames of hell without grace! What a woeful thing is it to be miserable, and have no strength to be happy! to look into a law, and behold it wholly spiritual, and to reflect upon our souls, and behold them wholly carnal! Romans 7:14, to find a command of regeneration in the judgment of our own consciences, just for God to impose, good for us to receive, and an utter inability to square ourselves according to it!

(2.) See the vast power of sin. It is this that has cast its infectious roots so deep in our souls, that it is impossible for us to pluck up this degenerate plant. The first defection from God was of that nature, that it did per se, of itself, produce an inability in us, as sickness does in a body, or disjoining a member does weakness in a man; otherwise man, after he had sinned, had been found in strength, and had had a power to do good, till God by punishment had taken away that power, and inflicted a contrary weakness, which would be very absurd to affirm. Adam threw off the royal robe of righteousness; and in all those ages which are run out since, man could not find by all the inquiries of nature how to put it on again without a supernatural strength. This sin that has taken hold of us, keeps us down, that we cannot lift up our heads to divine knowledge, or reach out our hands to perform any divine precept, it is this has emptied us of our treasure, stripped us of our strength, made us as poor as Job upon the dunghill, and as feeble as the cripple at the pool; and which is worse than this, has not only deprived us of our health and strength to cure ourselves, but of our will to be healed by another; and possessed us with such a frenzy that we are friends to our madness, and enemies to those that would deliver us from it; we are all possessed with a legion of devils, that makes us cry out against Christ before we be turned to him, Mark 5:7. It is this first poison diffusing itself in the heart of Adam has made us all by nature a generation of vipers, and infected our very tongues, that we cannot, being evil, speak that which is good, that is, perfectly and spiritually good, as it is Matthew 12:34, 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things?' and poisoned our souls at the very root, that not one grape of grace can grow upon the thorn of nature. All the coin of our actions bears the impression of the evil treasure in our hearts, Luke 6:43-45.

(3.) We may from hence see the groundlessness of any conceits rising in us, of the power and freedom of our own wills to anything spiritually good. This conceit reigns in most men's hearts naturally; it is a legacy left to our natures by the will of Adam. The not submitting our wills to the will of God, in a way of humble waiting upon him, is the source of the misery of mankind; such imaginations will creep up in our hearts, that our understandings can aspire to all knowledge, our wills spring up in grace, as naturally as a clear fountain in pure waters. The cause of such conceits is the ignorance both of the depth and largeness of the wound original sin has made in all our faculties. Paul, while a pharisee, without question was of this mind, and cried up the liberty of the will as much as he cried down the truth of the Christian religion; he was 'alive without the law once,' Romans 7:9. But when he takes out the lesson of the sinfulness of natural concupiscence,

Romans 7:7, the experience of his slavery, and being sold under sin, grew up with the notion of the extent of original corruption, and he found himself a mere dead man, as may be observed in several passages in Rom. vii. Every man is born with this conceit, since we find the only peculiar nation God had in the world asserting it in the whole body of them, in the face of God, Exodus 24:8. When Moses told them all the words and judgments of the Lord, all the people answered with one voice, 'All the words which the Lord has said will we do;' and Exodus 24:7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.' Not one man among them duly sensible of natural slavery, nor making any application to God for grace to keep them; but as confident of the strength of their mutable wills as if they had as much power as the first man in innocence. This vain confidence has its bitter root in the imagination of all Israel; and that it may not appear to be a sudden and rash passion, they assert it again more solemnly upon second thoughts: Exodus 24:7, 'All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.'

[1.] It is a high piece of pride. To boast of a great estate, when a man has not a farthing in his purse, is very ridiculous, or for a slave to brag of liberty, with his chains upon his hands and feet. What a vain self-reflection is it when we are bound naturally in our sins, as a slave in his shackles, with Satan's padlock upon us, till the Son make us free indeed! John 8:36. It is the very moth of pride which ate out the beauty of Adam's garment who, whilst he would stand upon his own bottom, laid the scene of his own ruin; he affected to be his own conductor, and proved his own cut-throat; and aspiring to an independence on God, fell down into the dungeon of slavery to, and dependency upon, Satan. It is a pride like that of Adam, an invasion of God's property, an affecting to be that by ourselves which we can only be by Christ; it is an arrogance like that of the Babel builders, to think by this slime of nature to raise up a spiritual building as high as heaven. We sin over again more formally the sin of Adam, by affecting an equality with God.

[2.] It is a disparagement to God. It is an unquestionable idolatry, and never yet practised, to set up any creature as the author of the temporal good of the whole world. Is it not more to set up many thousands of free wills as the authors of the spiritual good of the creature, to make every man's will an idol? Is the robbing God of the glory of his grace less criminal than the divesting him of the glory of his outward work? Or are the works of grace in the soul more inconsiderable than those of nature? It disparages God's grace; it makes his grace subsequent, not preventing; it makes the highest spiritual work to be the seed of man, not the seed of God. If this conceit takes place in your hearts, God is like to be without much praise from his creature. Peter will be no more beholden to God than Judas, Paul no more than Simon Magus; both had the outward revelation, and so both owe a praise to God; but what further debt of praise did Paul owe to God, if his regeneration sprang forth into being by the power of his own will, without any further contribution from God than an objective proposal? It takes off the crown of glory from the head of Christ; for though it will be acknowledged that he bruised the head of the common serpent by the power of his death, yet the destruction of the works of the serpent in our hearts, which is our immediate happiness, was wrought by the seed of free will. It would be strange that the apostle Paul should be so over-seen, to give such praise to the grace of God manifested to him, if he had not been particularly beholden to that for the turning of his heart. By this God is beholden much to the creature's will, in being a great cause of keeping up the interest of God in the world, which had no footing, notwithstanding his revelation, without the compliance of man's will, untouched by any supernatural grace. Such a conceit of man's power seems to envy God the glory of his whole grace. And such a bitter root of

this, I doubt, may be one secret cause that we are so heart-tied and tongue-tied in the praises of God for his grace.

[3.] It takes away a great part of the glory of the Spirit's work in the world. Was his convincing the world of sin and righteousness only external by the objective proposals of the word, and fitting the apostles for the propagation of that convictive revelation? Was he to stand only as a spectator to behold which way the motion of free will would cast the balance? Is he to preserve grace in the heart? and is there not more need of his creating it there, than preserving it after? Is there more danger of the devil's quenching the flame kindled in the soul, than there was of its first touch upon the heart? Is he a Spirit of grace only to propose it, not to work it? The Spirit makes no verbal proposal of it, that is by man; if an inward proposal barely by applying it to the understanding, has not man as much power to do that, as to work it in his will? How can it be a well of water springing up to eternal life, if it works nothing efficaciously upon the heart? This secret pride and conceit in the heart may be a cause we make so few applications to the Spirit of God, taking little notice of him in our attempts.

[4.] It puts a bar to all evangelical duties. It makes us cleave to ourselves rather than to God, and presume upon our own strength rather than rely upon his. The heathens (as Seneca) asserted, that it was a silly thing for a man to desire that of heaven which he had power to do without it. Why should we go to him for renewing grace, when it is in our own power to renew ourselves? May it not be said to us, as it was in another case, 'Why trouble you the master?' As long as we think we can spin a righteousness out of our own bowels, we will never go to Christ for a robe of his weaving, though never so rich. And while we think we can rear a stately spiritual building by our own skill, we shall never desire the art of another workman. Our Saviour would have nothing to do with his fullness, if He stood in no need of it; and what need had we of it, if we could despatch this great business of grace ourselves? This secret imagination in the heart is one cause of the neglect of duties, especially prayer, or of a slowness and coldness in it.

[5.] This conceit endangers a man's destruction, by encouraging a delay of using the means necessary to this work in God's ordinary course. What sensualist would not delay using means for repentance, who conceits he can repent when he will, and that to will is in his own power? This makes men think they have a key to unlock heaven at their pleasure, and have the command of the treasures of grace; and therefore are afraid to attend upon evangelical means, for fear they should be put upon serious reflections too soon. The common sentiments of men are a sad evidence of this; you shall hear many acknowledge their weakness in other things, but not in this; they cannot leave such a course of sin, they cannot pray with so much affection, yet their hearts are right, they can repent and believe when they will, that is in their own power; which makes them sluggish and careless at the calls of God. But what a folly this is, let Solomon witness, who sets the fool's cap upon such confidence; 'He that trusts in his own heart is a fool,' Proverbs 28:26; it is to trust in a weathercock that is mutable with every wind of temptation. To depend upon our wills, is to depend upon the oldest and the most certain bankrupt in the world, that broke as soon as it was set up, many ages since, and never recovered itself. Who told you, therefore, that you can melt the stone within you at your pleasure? that you can cast the strong man out of your wills without a stronger than he? But suppose the grounds were rational, and that you had a power to cure yourselves; the consequent is very irrational, for that cause to delay it; for what man in his wits would endure a wound or deformity many years, because he can heal or beautify himself at

his pleasure in a moment? Take heed therefore of such fancies of your own power to regenerate yourselves, and upon that account to neglect that which you have power to do; but imitate Ephraim with all speed, notwithstanding your cheating imagination, and cry out, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,' Jeremiah 31:18.

(4.) It informs us, that regeneration is not wrought merely by moral suasion, or only by exhortations; then it would principally be the work of the will of man. Our Saviour had a will to preach to all in Jerusalem, but he had not a will to quicken all: John 5:21, 'the Son quickens whom he will;' so that it depended upon his inward operation, not only upon his outward exhortations. It is true there is a suasion in the ear by the word, but the persuasion is in the heart by grace; the suasion in the word may cause some rational reflections as a moral cause, but no spiritual motion towards God as a physical cause. Men are not disputed or exhorted, but created into grace; the proposal of a good by the understanding is not always embraced by the will, unless it be a good suitable and connatural to those habits in the will. Where, therefore, there is no suitable habit planted in the will, rational reflections in the mind and conscience are not like to prevail much.

[1.] If it were only by suasion and exhortation, the most eloquent preaching were like to do most good. Whereas it never was God's method to found conversion upon the 'words of man's wisdom,' though 'enticing' in themselves, but upon the 'demonstration and power of the Spirit,' 1 Corinthians 2:4. The most eloquent preaching would then most fill the gospel nets. And the reports of that rhetorical prophet Isaiah would have been soon believed, which were not so, because 'the arm of the Lord was not (always) revealed with them,' Isaiah 53:1. If any words, as words, were like to have an edge to cut deep into the soul, they must be the words of our Saviour; since 'never man' (even in the judgment of some of his enemies) 'spoke as he spake.' But though 'his lips were full of grace,' Psalms 14:2, most of his hearers' hearts were empty of it under his ministry; not the eloquence and pressing reasons of Christ, nor the wrath of God revealed from heaven, can reclaim the heart of man, without the power of grace. The Pharisees were prouder under Christ's melting bowels, and the Jews harder under God's wrathful blows, Isaiah 1:5; neither hearing nor feeling will prevail upon hardened souls.

[2.] What bare exhortations can work upon a dead man? Can a well composed oration, setting out all the advantages of life and health raise a dead man, or cure a diseased body? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun, and prevail as much. No man ever yet imagined, that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life; no more can the urging a man, spiritually dead, with eloquent motives, ever make him to open his eyes and stand upon his feet. Did our Saviour come out of his grave, or could he ever have done it, by mere suasion, without the power of God to raise him? Ephesians 1:19-20. The working of mighty power is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion does not confer a strength, but suppose it in a man, for he is only persuaded to use the power which he has already.

[3.] Does not daily experience testify the contrary? Have you never discoursed with some profane, loose fellow, so pressingly, that he seemed to be planet-struck at every reasoning, shaken out of his excuses for his sinful course, yet not shaken out of his sin; that you might as soon have persuaded the tide at full sea to retreat, or a lion to change his nature, as have overcome him by all your arguments. Have you not seen many at a stand in sin, by the force of some convincing reasons, return again to their vomit? Have not many tears at command in anything that concerns

themselves, the loss of some estate, or some dear friend, but in the things of God, in his dishonours, as dry as the parched earth? That you may almost as soon extract water out of a rock, as repentance for sin out of their stony hearts. So that it is not the faint breath of man, or the rational considerations of the mind are able to do this work, without the mighty pleadings and powerful operations of that great Paraclete or Advocate, the Spirit, to alter the temper of the soul.

[4.] There is no likelihood that any man in the world would be renewed, if it were only by moral suasion. Satan's logic would be stronger than God's; his arguments would more suit our imagined interest, and our real enmity against God; his persuasions would find more kindred in the principles of our minds and habits of our wills to take fire by him, than the suasive allurements of God, which will meet with nothing in our hearts but contrariety to them. The deceitfulness of sin within us, and the subtilty of Satan without us, both being active as well as persuading adversaries, would fix us in our rebellion, without a contrary power, as well active as exhortative, and God would do no more towards our restoration than Satan does towards our destruction, since the devil can only propose to us, not by any physical touch incline our wills. We are wholly inclined to him in our own natures, in love with the knife that cuts our throats, and too fond of our shackles ever to knock them off. The will is so enamoured with its corrupt habit, that were this work left barely to self will, and no other power employed in it than exhortative, not one person were every likely to come unto God.

[5.] If it were wrought by suasion, the will would have the whole praise of the work. For suasion or exhortation is nothing else but the proposing arguments to the understanding, but the motion, according to those arguments, is wholly from the will, which has a power to receive them or refuse them. God, indeed, would be the first speaker, but not the first agent; God would be only the assisting cause, as all moral causes are, he would only assist the motion of the will, not cause it. The motion of the will is a physical act; if, then, the physical act be from the will, and God only the moral cause, the will will be the greater sharer in the work, for moral causes are in vain without a physical effect in those things they work morally upon: as all the reasoning of one man with another will be to little purpose, if there be not a physical motion of the will of that person to comply with the other's reasonings. If, therefore, the reasoning part be only from God, and physical motion from man, the most debauched wretch, under the preaching of the gospel, is as much beholden to God as the highest believer, who had both the same suasions and exhortations; for though the suasion was from God, the persuasion was from their own wills. God only made the revelation, and was afterwards a spectator, not an actor.

(5.) Information. We may draw a conclusion hence whereby to judge of the truth of doctrines. Man cannot renew himself. Whatsoever doctrine does depress and humble man and advance the glory of God, is true, it answers the main design of the gospel, which all centres in this, that man is to be laid low, and God to be exalted as the chief cause. It pulls man from his own bottom, and transfers all the glory man would challenge into the hands of God; it lays man in the dust at God's footstool. That doctrine which crosses the main design of the gospel, and encourages pride in man, is not a spark from heaven: 'No flesh must glory in God's presence,' 1 Corinthians 1:29. The doctrine of justification by works is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument as a thunderbolt: Romans 3:27, 'Where is boasting then? it is excluded by faith;' that is, by the doctrine of the gospel, boasting would be introduced by ascribing regeneration to nature as much as it is excluded by denying justification by works; the doctrine of the gospel would contradict itself, to

usher in boasting with one hand whilst it thrust it out with the other. Our Saviour gave this rule long ago, that the glorifying God is the evidence of truth in persons: 'He that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true,' John 7:18. By the same reason also in things and doctrines, and indeed, Christ speaks it in relation to his doctrine, as appears, John 7:16-17. All truth gives God the pre-eminence in all gracious works; the first creation, the progress and top-stone, are the works of this great Bezaliel, this mighty artificer, both the first draught and the last line. To confound nature and grace together, is to join the creature in commission with God, and make them co-heirs in the glory which is only due to the only wise and almighty Creator.

Use 2 is for exhortation. 1. To the regenerate. If this doctrine be true,

1. Then ascribe nothing to flesh. (1.) Not to yourselves. No more praise is due to us than to gold for being melted by the fire and wrought by the workman into a vessel of honour; it is due to the skill of the artificer, not to the vessel itself. When the reparation of human nature was to be wrought by the gospel, when the crooked should be made straight, and the rough places plain, then should flesh be as grass, when the Spirit of the Lord should blow upon it; yea, the people, those that are God's peculiar ones, by reason of privileges, are grass, Isaiah 40:4, Isaiah 40:6-7, they should be nothing in themselves, that God might be all in all: the Spirit of God blows upon all their self-confidences. If God be the God of all grace, what share have our wills in it then? He calls, he opens the heart, he strengthens, he perfects; all the grace we have is his 'treasure,' 1 Peter 5:10. He first delivers from Egypt; preserves in the desert; conducts to a footing in Canaan. Grace triumphs in the whole work, from Dan to Beersheba, from the beginning of the work to the end. What glory can belong to us? We will, it is true, but God gives that will; we work, but God bestows and stands by that power to work; what have we then to do with the praise? It is 'in his light we see light,' Psalms 36:9. The rays whereby we have a glimpse of him are not darted from us to him, but from him to us. The light in the air springs not from itself, but from some other body enlightening it; how can any good be ascribed to us, where there is nothing but insufficiency and defect? It is to belie the Lord, to entitle a work of omnipotence to so infirm a cause, it is worse than the pharisee, who, in the midst of his boasts of his own moral righteousness, thought a tribute of praise due to God: 'Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,' Luke 18:11. Shall we entitle God the author of our beings, and ourselves the creators of our spiritual beings? Is it less to have an elevation of our faculties, and an animation of them by a new virtue, than to have simply the faculties themselves? If the creature be unable of itself to move without a dependence on God in way of common providence, much more unable is it to move without dependence on God in a way of supernatural vitality. The glory of the act is as little due to man as the glory of the first habit.

Now, 1, review yourselves, consider what you were before regeneration, what after it; and then, how can you ascribe anything to yourselves?

(1.) What you were before regeneration. Was not sin as deeply rooted in you as any other, which made you as incapable to raise yourselves as the most wicked man in the world? Were you not prisoners in chains, captives under locks and bolts, when grace first set up its standard for your recovery? How thick was the darkness of your minds? how stout the perversity of your wills? how impetuous the violence of your sinful affections? Did they not all conspire together to make as stout a resistance against the work of the gospel as any others? Can you then say, that because God saw you more inclinable to grace than another, that he drew you? You were created; did you

bring clay enough to compose the least particle of flesh about you? You are new created; what part of the new man was formed by your direction? Did you bring grace enough of yourselves to form one holy thought, or send out one holy desire? Did your own will single you out of that multitude of degenerate men of better natures than yours, left still in their own nothingness? Was it nothing but your own will that planted you in the nursery of the invisible church, that made you capable of a divine union? Were not other men's reasons as strong as yours? the means they enjoyed greater? their moral disposition sweeter? What was the reason their wills did not bend themselves as well as yours? What is the reason they did not hold out their hands to catch this all-necessary grace? Did this noble birth cost none any pains but yourselves? Was this goodly fabric reared by your own wills? Look on it; methinks it is a piece too comely and noble for human skill.

(2.) What are you since your regeneration? What, do you find no rebellion of the law in your members against the law of the mind? Are there not powerful allurements of the flesh? Are your thoughts always flying up to God, and hovering about him? Are you always nimble in your praise of him? or not rather lifeless many times under the breathings of the Spirit? Why are you thus? Did you first by your own force begin this noble conquest of sin? And can you not by the same power make a better progress? Did you breathe a life into yourselves when you had not a spark, and can you not blow up this spark into a greater liveliness? Surely then this work was not at first the birth of your own wills. Do you not yet find some scale and thick matter upon your understandings that you cannot pick off? some darkness in your minds, as there is some in the air after it is enlightened? Are there not obstructions in your wills? no shackles upon the executive power? Can you not remove that darkness with that great light you have? nor unlock those fetters by the strength of your habitual grace? Can then the first powerful entrance of it, the fall of the first scale from the understanding, be judged to be the work of your own hands? or the first teeming of your wills with grace to be the effect of your power? View yourselves well in both states, and you will find no ground whereon to build so much injustice towards God, and pride in yourselves, but must needs acknowledge that God and not yourselves have wrought all your works in you, Isaiah 26:12, not only your temporal advantages, which the church there means, but your spiritual, and much more spiritual than temporal. To stave off any ascribing to yourselves, consider,

[2.] He that ascribes it to his own will has great reason to question whether he be regenerate or no. He may well doubt whether he understands or feels what it is, since those in Scripture who have been most experimented in it, and therefore are the most competent judges, have most highly magnified the grace of God, and most deeply vilified themselves; they have given the glory of it so entirely to God that they have not let a grain of it stick to their own fingers. Thus David often, 'Thou hast quickened me.' The apostle Paul owns his effectual call to be owing to the 'grace of God,' Galatians 1:15, and to an abundant 'grace in Christ,' 1 Timothy 1:14; he was a persecutor, but his faith and love was from the abundance of the grace of God, and that in Christ too, not from any thing in nature. Peter is not behind him in the admiration of it: 1 Peter 1:8, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again.' And it is that the church in the times of the gospel prophesied of: Ps. 100:8, 'It is he that has made us, not we ourselves;' made us his people, as it follows, 'We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,' 'not we ourselves.' Whenever the naughtiness of their hearts has been ready to launch out to self-praise, they have turned the tide quickly to the grace of God. When Paul had owned

grace as the cause of his spiritual being, 1 Corinthians 15:10, and began to speak of his labouring more abundantly than they, he flies back in haste, as one that had gone beyond his line, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;' another, 'Yet not I;' Galatians 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.' There is no mention of any in Scripture that ever in this case did sacrifice to their own net.

[3.] If a man be regenerate, such a boasting of himself is very dangerous. Though it may not rifle you of the new nature, yet by the just judgment of God, it may cloud the comfort of it. If such a man be renewed, this pride is but a prologue of some dark veil to be drawn between him and the light of God's countenance, between him and the sight of his own grace. A swelling up in pride presages a sinking down in desertion. If God be not owned by you to be the God of all grace in you, he will not own himself to be the God of all comfort to you. Grace follows humility, and some shrewd shock attends spiritual pride, it is such an idolatrous robbing God of his glory (whereof he is most jealous), and giving it to another, that he will not let it pass without a remark. The clouding of your grace will be the fruit of the smothering of his glory. For since the main intendment of the gospel is to humble, God will humble you if any grace be in you. If the Spirit of grace has breathed upon your souls to renew you, he will blow upon your grass to consume it, Isaiah 40:7, he will pull down those proud thoughts and strong holds, and cause your vain confidences to wither and come to nothing. Ascribe it not therefore to yourselves; be not so presumptuous, as, while you allow God to be the author of the being and motion of a little fly, to cry up your own wills as the chief cause of grace, a work more excellent than the material world.

2. Ascribe nothing to instruments, either men or means. It is not of the will of man, not another's will. Without the efficacious working of the Spirit, the gospel itself is but as a dead letter, the Spirit only quickens it. It is not outward teaching and blowing which of itself will kindle these sparks; an instrument cannot act without the strength of an agent to manage it; the chisel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artifices moving it. It is not the breath of man, and a few words out of his mouth, can produce so great a work as the new creation; this might be a reason why God chose so weak an instrument as man to preach the gospel, to evidence that the great work was not from the weakness of man but the power of God.

Exhortation 2. Let us be humbled under our own natural impotence and inability, and keep up this humiliation. There is danger of the pharisee's pride climbing up into the heart, even after regeneration. Renewed men have instructions to humility above other men; their sin may strike them low, because it is the growth of their own nature; their grace may keep them low, because it is no plant of their own setting; sin, because it is originally theirs; grace, because it is originally none of theirs; it is no beam of their own understanding, no stream from the fountain of their own will. If we think believingly and fruitfully of Christ at any time, we cannot but think of our own weakness, nothing in him but minds us of it; our weakness to obey the law was the cause of his coming; our weakness to satisfy God was the cause of his dying; our inability to repair and support ourselves was the cause of his fullness. His death minds us of our impotence to redeem ourselves, his grace minds us of our impotence to renew ourselves. The more we grow up in the new birth, the more deeply sensible shall we be of our impotence. Oh, let this text be written in our hearts, 'Not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.'

3. Resolve nothing in your own strength. The power to believe and be renewed is a power 'given,' not inbred, Php 1:29; our strength is deposited, not in the cracked cabinet of our own wills, but in the treasures of Christ. Our purposes are weak without grace to strengthen them, our resolutions vanishing without grace to establish them. If we should be left to the sails of our own faculties, without the breath of the Spirit to fill them, we should lie wind-bound. The will can never in this life be so firm but the allurements of the great tempter will make inroads upon us and upset us, without the special grace of God to establish and strengthen us. As we are not to do anything for our own glory, so we are not to do anything in our own strength. As we must not be our own end, so we must not be our own principle; the power the best have is but derived, the stream must know it is but a stream still. The actual exercise of Paul's ability grew from strength in another hand, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me,' Php 2:14; all things by him, nothing by himself. When the Israelites went out with God, no sons of Anak, no walls of Jericho, nor chariots of iron could stand before them. When they trusted in themselves, nothing could be resisted by them. The devil was certainly none of the lowest rank of angels; he had a great clearness of gifts, yet he falls for cleaving to his own will and strength, not to the grace of God. And Adam, in depending upon himself, lost himself and his posterity. For us to undertake the government of ourselves is like a ship without a pilot, to be dashed soon against a rock. To lean on our own wisdom and will, is to lean on broken reeds, deceitful supports; self-confidence is the worm of grace, conceit of a spiritual fullness in ourselves is the way to an emptiness of spiritual comfort. Self-will and self-wisdom are the great idols of the soul, and some little images of them are in the hearts of the best men, which they are ready sometimes to fall down before and worship; they would oppose temptations themselves, do duties themselves by the strength of habitual grace, without regard to the strength of God, the great support of it.

4. Therefore live dependently upon God. Do you not find how apt you are to stagger at every temptation; how weak your wills are to good; how easily your purposes are broken, the thoughts of God few and distracted, your motions heavy in divine ways? Is there not, then, need of a constant looking unto God, as they did upon the brazen serpent, for the healing of our natures, while the wound remains imperfectly cured? All bodies on the earth, though they have a principle of motion in themselves, yet dependently upon the heavenly bodies. If the motions of the heavens should cease, that all motions in the earth would cease too is the opinion of philosophers. Without dependence on the grace of God and fullness of Christ, we sink into weakness and impotency, as a beam expires into dusiness upon the clouding of the sun. It is God only can be a 'dew to Israel,' Hosea 14:5. Think not of bringing forth the after-fruits of grace without his influence, no more than you could plant in yourselves the first root of grace without his power: the same breath of the Spirit must blow the fire up as well as kindle it. As by our own wills we should never turn to God, so without the continuance of efficacious grace we should quickly start from God. 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him,' Colossians 2:6. You received him by faith, walk in him by faith. This is the reason of the different thrivings of one Christian above another, under the same means. One endeavours to act upon his own bottom; the other clings to the vine. Christ knew the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Father; we come to know and do the things of God by lying in the bosom of the Son. All natural effects, if taken off from the influence of their own cause, by which they live and increase, lose their power and die. The soul separate from God, by non-exercise of faith, loses its strength, become stiff and inactive. How often do we return to our wonted coldness, bring forth lazy fruits, creep like snails in the ways of God, without the spur of quickening grace!

And we want it because we do not seek it; for though we be armed with the whole armour of God, helmet, shield, breastplate, yet prayer and supplication must be added as a mark of our necessary dependence: Ephesians 6:18, 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication.' Then will the Spirit endue us with a fresh vigour, confirm our languishing wills, restrain the flames of natural corruption, and excite the fear and faith of God in the heart.

2. The second branch of the exhortation, to those yet in a natural condition.

1. Endeavour to be sensible of your natural impotence. Be deeply humbled at the feet of God, strip yourselves (as much as in you lies) of the conceitedness of reason and pride of will. Every man is born with high conceits of himself and his own power; it being a natural evil, should cost us the deeper humiliations. Consider yourselves by nature under the dominion of sin, the demerit of wrath, the curse of the law, the hatred of God, and a feebleness to help yourselves in this wretched condition. View yourselves often in the glass of the law, bring the spiritual word and the carnal heart together, and behold the beauty of the one and deformity of the other; let all the nasty corners of the heart come under the examination of that purity, and then let the carnal mind hang down at the thoughts of your inability to frame yourselves according to a spiritual law. The view of our natural condition cannot work regeneration in us, but it is some kind of preparation towards it. 'The law is a schoolmaster to drive to Christ,' Galatians 3:24. It works not this grace, but it fires a man out of himself, shows him how much he differs from the holiness of God, and is an occasion for casting about and looking after some remedy, whereby he may be made like to God, and of earnest crying for the showers of grace. Be sensible also of your contrariety to the grace of God, our wilfulness against it is worse than our emptiness of it. God 'will teach the humble his ways,' Psalms 25:9. those that are sensible of their own insufficiency to guide themselves.

2. Make use of the power you have. Man (as has been shewn) has some power by those restored relics of nature. There is no plea therefore to lie snorting upon a bed of sluggishness. We must not expect a divine assistance will fly to us from heaven while we play the sluggards. Though God does rouse up some on the sudden, before and previous act of their wills, yet we must not expect God will use the same methods to all. Our own power must be stirred up and exerted as much as may be. To be faithful in a little is the way to be made ruler over much. Though the top of nature cannot merit grace, yet if nature struggles to come to the top it may find an invisible hand helping it up step by step. The damnation of most men will not be for the fault of their first parents, but for the abuse of their own power, the perverseness of their wills, and neglect of what they might have done towards the seeking of God. Though Moses had a promise of victory over Amalek, yet Joshua must fight, and the Israelites stand to their arms. God saves not men in ways encouraging their laziness. 'The sluggard desires and has nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat,' Proverbs 8:4. The sluggard has nothing but lazy wishes, not active endeavours. If it be not worth the having, why do you desire it? If it be worth the desiring, why not worth the seeking?

(1.) Avoid those sins you have power to avoid. Every sin, though never so little, does increase our weakness, as every wound does the distemper of the body. It makes us weigh down towards the centre of sin. Every grain cast into the scale makes it the more unable to rise. As a virtue which is risen to that height that it cannot degenerate into vice is most worthy of praise, so the vice that possesses the soul so deeply as to incapacitate it to the doing good, being contracted by ourselves, is the more worthy of wrath.

(2.) Use the means appointed by God. Though we are torches which cannot light ourselves, yet we may bring ourselves to the word, which may both melt and kindle us. Though the giving rain and the increasing the fruits of the earth be from God, yet no man ever held ploughing, and sowing, and pruning unnecessary. The work of grace is the work of the Spirit, who is a 'wind which blows where it lists,' John 3:8. But may we not wait for those gales? May we not spread our sails and watch for the successful breathings? How do you know but whilst you are waiting upon God in an humble posture, God may unlock your hearts, and pour in the treasures of his grace? Acts 10:44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' If you will not harden your hearts today, God may soften your hearts today: Hebrews 3:16, 'Today, if you will hear his voice.' These are the times wherein God parleys with the soul, and inclines it to the happy surrender. Though the power is God's, as the water is the fountain's, yet he has appointed the channels of his ordinances through which to convey it: 'Ministers by whom you believed,' 1 Corinthians 3:5. The gospel begets instrumentally, God principally 1 Corinthians 4:15. God calls by the gospel, 2 Thessalonians 2:14. As God is the governor of the world, yet it is by instruments and second causes, which he clasps together to bring about his own designs. He that does not use these means may fear that God will never work savingly upon him, for it is an utter refusing any acceptance of this grace, or anything tending to it. This is to be peremptory, never to do ourselves any good, or receive any from God. In despising the means, you despise the goodness of God. As God gave up the heathens to themselves, because they were 'unthankful,' Romans 1:21, for that light of nature and means which they had, so if we use the means of the gospel with thankfulness to God, God may give himself up to us. But by neglect of them we take the larger strides to destruction, and the same dreadful sentence may be pronounced against us as against them in Ezekiel 24:13, 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee means whereby thou might have been purged, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more; but in thy filthiness thou shalt die.' The using the means afforded by God has a common illumination, and a 'taste of the heavenly gift' attending it, Hebrews 6:4.

[1.] Use the means fervently, with as much ardour as you set upon anything of worldly concern; do it with all your might, since the eternal blessedness of your soul depends upon it: Ecclesiastes 9:10, 'Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.' Stir up your souls to hear and meditate, as David does to bless: Psalms 103:1-2, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.' Employ all your faculties in this useful work; bring your hearts as near to the word as you can, screw up your affections to what you meditate upon, check your hearts when they begin to rove. Consider your own particular case in anything you hear; and let the word be as a delightful picture in the view of your minds continually; let every evangelical object excite your inbred affections.

[2.] Use the means dependently. Objective proposals are not useless, because God has ordained them; though they are not always successful, unless God does influence them. The means do not work naturally, as a plaster cures a wound, or a hatchet cleaves wood; nor necessarily, as fire burns; for then they should produce the same effects in all, as fire does in combustible matter; but as God pleases to accompany them with his grace, and edge them with efficacy, they must be used with an eye to God, building with one hand, and wrestling with God with the other. Men speed best in ordinances as they strive in prayer. There are promises to plead before you come to hear: Exodus 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and bless thee.'

The promise was made to the whole nation of Israel, the visible church, therefore pleadable by every one of them; and fix it upon your hearts, that as the death of Christ only takes away the guilt of sin, so the grace of Christ only takes away the life of sin, and the death of nature.

[3.] Pray earnestly. Entreat God to send his grace; beg of him to issue out a divine force, and a quickening power, to enlighten your minds, incline your wills. Lie at his feet, groan, wait till this work be wrought in your soul. How do you know, but while you are looking up to God, God may come down to you? Can a man be wounded, and not cry for plasters? Can he be shipwrecked and not cry out for some vessel to relieve him? Let such a voice frequently issue from you, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Is there no balm for a wounded soul, no hope for a distressed sinner, no city of refuge for one pursued by wrath and vengeance? Do you pray for daily bread? Why do you not for special grace? Are there no rational pleas you can urge? Is there not a fullness of arguments in the word? Why do you not then use those arguments God has put into your hands? Why do you not spread his own word before him? Put him in mind how his thoughts were busy about the work of redemption, and that the regeneration you desire of him was the great end of that, and a thing pleasing to him? Why do you not reason with God, to what purpose he sent his Spirit into the world, but to do this work in the hearts of men which you are now soliciting him for; and that you come not to beg any alms of him, but what he freely offers himself? You may daily read such arguments in the word, where a revelation is made of them; you may daily plead them: if you do not, it is not your cannot, but your will not. Cry out of the blind eyes you cannot upscale, the iron sinew you cannot bend, the false heart that will not go right, and the fallen nature which cannot reach so high as a holy thought. Surely God will not be deaf to the natural prayers of his rational creatures put up to him with a natural integrity, no more than he is to the cries of animals, to the voice of the lion seeking for his prey, into whose mouth he puts, by his providence, what may satisfy it. God gives the Spirit to them that ask him; not to the idle, lazy, and peevish resister of him and his grace. If you have power to regenerate yourselves, why do you not do it? If you have not, why do you not seek it? Is the way of heaven shut to you; or rather, do you not shut your own hearts against it? Have you sought it earnestly, and can you say God denies it you? No man can say so; there is a promise for it: James 4:8, 'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you;' he speaks it to sinners, as it follows, 'Cleanse your hands, you sinners.' You can pray for other mercies, why not principally for this particular determination of your wills to God, above all other things? Lord, give me to will and to do. Never leave off praying till God has crowned your petitions with success; and be encouraged to seek to him, whose great business in the world was to destroy the works of the devil, whose principal work was the spiritual death of man. If you have such earnest desires in your souls, that you would rather have it than the whole world, and esteem it above all worldly wealth or honours, be of good comfort, some of the rubbish of nature is removed; the steams of such desires shall be welcome to God, and the Spirit's commission shall be renewed to breathe further upon your souls. Desire as vehement as hunger and thirst shall be satisfied, if our blessed Saviour's promise be true, who never deceived any, or broke his word: Matthew 5:6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' A fullness attends a sense of emptiness, accompanied with hungering desires. But I am afraid few people put up their petitions to God for it; that I may say, as Daniel of his nation, 'all this evil' of unrighteousness and sin is 'come upon us' by our depraved natures; 'yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth,' Daniel 9:13.

[4.] Nourish every motion and desire you find in your hearts towards it. Have you not sometimes motions to go to the throne of grace, and beg renewing grace of God? Do you not find such tugs and pulls in your consciences? Is there not something within you spurs you on? Kick not against it, nor resist it, no, nor smother any spark of an honest desire in your hearts; be constant observers of lessons, your natural consciences, or whatever any other principle set you. Natural notions are not so blotted, but they remain legible; would men be more inward with themselves, than abroad with the objects of sense, which draw their minds from pondering that decalogue written in their souls. There is not the most wicked man under the gospel, but has sometimes more bright irradiations in his conscience than at other times, but they are damped by a noisome sensuality; he has some velleities and heavings, some strugglings against the solicitations of unrighteousness, some assents upon the presenting of virtue; for as grace is not always so powerful in a good man as to stifle temptation, so neither is corruption so powerful in a wicked man as always to beat back those motions to good which rise up in his soul, whether he will or no. As the law of the mind is not always so sovereign in a gracious man, but that it is affronted by the law of the members, so neither is the law of the members so absolute in a wicked man, but that it is somewhat checked by the law of nature in the mind. Are there not upon hearing the word, or reflecting upon yourselves, some wishings, some inward velleities which partake of reason, and the nature of that faculty which represents the necessity of it to you? As there is some kind of weak knowledge left in us since the fall, there is also something of a weak desire. Cannot these desires be improved and represented to God? Why is not the grace of God fulfilled in you? Because you persevere not in these desires, you quench the sparks of the Spirit, and willingly give admission to Satan to chase them out. Shut not your eyes then against any light, either without or within you, which may provoke God to withdraw this grace from you. How do you know but, upon using the means, praying earnestly, observing inward motions, God may give you an actual regeneration? The neglect of these is a just reason for God to refuse you any further gift; and may take off all things which you may think to bring against him in your own defence. The use of them has been beneficial to many, and no example can ever be brought, that God has condemned any that conscientiously used the means of salvation. Therefore I say again, if any man use the means, pray earnestly for this grace, observe the motions of the Spirit in him, he will not want a superadded grace from an infinitely good, tender, and merciful God.

End of part 1 of A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration. A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration

Part II by Stephen Charnock Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John 1:13.

Two doctrines were raised from these words.

1. That man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. This I have despatched, and now proceed to the 2nd Doct. God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration.

It is subjectively in the creature, efficiently from God. Ezekiel's dry bones met not together of their own accord, Ezekiel 37:5-6, or by chance, but were gathered by God, and inspired with life; and not only the last act of life, but the whole formation of them in every part, he does particularly own as the act of his own power. And doing every part of it by degrees, they should know, by that

admirable work upon them, that he was God: 'I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin; and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.' This work does as much discover the glory of his deity, and speaks him God in a more illustrious manner than the creation of the world. We know him to be the Lord Jehovah by his creation of the world; but a clearer knowledge of him in his power is added by his regeneration of the soul. The sinews, flesh, skin, all the preparations to grace, are from God, as all the preparations of that mass of clay for the breath of life in Adam were from the power of God, as well as the living soul itself. Most do understand it of the recovery of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon; but certainly it has a higher import, and respects the time of the gospel, and the renewing of life in the soul of all the Israel of God. (1.) Because the prophecy extends further than the two tribes captivated in Babylon; for, Ezekiel 37:11, the bones are said to be 'the whole house of Israel,' who despaired of ever seeing and good, complaining that their bones were dried: Ezekiel 37:11, 'Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.' Which could not be rationally the complaint of the Jews, who had a promise that, after seventy years' captivity, they should return, and therefore their case was not so desperate. (2.) Because, Ezekiel 37:14, he speaks of 'putting his Spirit into them;' meaning thereby that work he had spoken of in the former chapter, Ezekiel 36:7, which certainly, being a covenant of grace, respected the times of the gospel. If it be said that it is meant of forming the church, it must also be meant of forming every member of it, since the least member of Adam was formed by God, as well as the whole body. Certainly, if renewed men, after some great falls, having still the root of habitual grace in them, cry to God, out of a sense of their own insufficiency, for the creating a clean heart, as David does, Psalms 51:10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;' if he then, who had this root remaining, and had some sparks which presently were blown up upon Nathan's speech to him, cries out for a new creation, what need has he then of an almighty breath who has not any warm ashes of grace or any one string of a spiritual root in his soul! Whatsoever, therefore, is holy, good, and spiritual in us, we owe to the new-creating grace of God. All graces are his "charismata", his free donatives, over and above his common largeness to nature, a present from his infinite liberality.

I shall show, I. That God is the efficient.

II. That it is necessary he should be so.

III. From what principles in God it flows.

IV. How God does it.

V. The use of it.

I. That God is the efficient.

(1.) In the first promise, Genesis 3:15, 'I will put enmity,' &c. In which promise is included the whole work of redemption, and new creating man under another head, with another nature, which should not comply with the designs of Satan, or gratify the great enemy of God and mankind by unravelling the work of God, and subjecting himself to misery. It was necessary to our happiness that the league between Satan and us should be broken, that we should turn to God, hate the works of the devil, and join with the interest which Satan endeavoured to overthrow. And God promises that he would do it; he challenges it as his own work: 'I will put enmity;' he leaves it not to men or

angels to begin hostility. Every one, therefore, that is at a true variance with Satan is 'God's workmanship, created in Christ,' by a second creation, as well as he was created to a natural life in Adam by the first creation, and 'created to good works, that he may walk in them', Ephesians 2:10. That is, is fashioned by God to walk in ways contrary to those of Satan, which is the greatest enmity we can express to the devil, who envied God a service from the holiness of Adam's nature. And Satan having made that conquest, and gained man to be his friend, it is not easy to conceive how any lower power could unfasten this knot, and set them at variance, since the devil had both wit enough to humour man and strength enough to keep him.

(2.) In the times of the gospel. No less than seven times I will he does affix to his promise of the covenant, as has been observed before, Ezekiel 36:25-27. What seed was left to keep up the name of God among the Jews was of his begetting: Romans 9:29, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed,' cited out of Isaiah 1:9. Their standing was not their act, but God's: and 1 Kings 19:18, 'I have left me seven thousand, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal.' Others were left to themselves; these were signally wrought upon by his grace. Others are but instruments; God is the principal agent in all the seed of the church scattered in the whole earth: Hosea 2:23, 'I will sow her to me in the earth,' alluding to the name Jezreel, which signifies the seed of God. If ever the sons of Japheth 'dwell in the tents of Shem,' it must be by God's 'persuasion,' Genesis 9:27. The word rendered enlarge signifies to allure. The Spirit of grace is of God's effusion, Zechariah 12:10; it is God's pouring out a Spirit of grace on them before their looking up to God. (Where, by the way, observe a signal testimony of the deity of Christ; 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;' he that pours upon them the Spirit of grace is he whom they pierced, which was the Lord Jehovah, Zechariah 12:8; for where in your Bibles Lord is written in great letters, the Hebrew word there is Jehovah; the highest name of God is here attributed to Christ.) And even in the last times he will still be the only agent in it. When God speaks of the Jews' dispersion, under which they are at this day, he owns this work upon their hearts at last to be an act of his own power and of covenant mercy: Deuteronomy 30:6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart,' &c., which some of the Jews understand of the time of the Messiah. God will challenge this work as his own right to the end of the world.

2. Christ appropriates it to God, and acknowledges it to depend only upon his will. Had any other cause been in conjunction with God, our Saviour would not have deprived it of its due praise, nor with so much thankfulness and amazement admired the gracious pleasure of his Father as he did,—Matthew 11:25, 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,'—at that time, after he had been discoursing of the judgments upon them for their refusal of the gospel, worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. It was God's pleasure not to reveal it to them, and God's justice to punish them for refusal, because they wilfully refused it. The outward teaching was to all in the ministry of Christ, the inward revelation only to few according to the good pleasure of God. Christ was the outward teacher, but God the inward inspirer. That others are not renewed by him is not because he cannot, for he is Lord of heaven and earth, but because he will renew some and not others. Our Saviour refers it here only to the good pleasure of God; he had erred much in ascribing it to God, if he had had the assistance of any other cause. Why this part of the clay he had created was formed into the body of Adam and not another, had no other cause but his pleasure; why this part

of corrupted Adam is formed into a temple, a divine image, and not another, can be ascribed to no other but the same cause. He that formed Adam in the earthly paradise, forms every believer in the church, the spiritual paradise, and neither has a co-worker nor motive without himself.

3. The Scripture everywhere appropriates it to God. They are therefore called his saints, Psalms 34:9, as being sanctified by him as well as belonging to him, 'his people,' 'the branch of his planting', 'the work of his hands,' peculiarly his, as being created for his glory, 'that I may be glorified,' Isaiah 60:21. Their fitness by grace for glory is the work of his hands. The vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, not by God, but by themselves, Romans 9:22. But the vessels of mercy are prepared by him, Romans 9:23, 'He had before prepared unto glory.' Adam lost himself, but whosoever of his posterity are recovered are 'wrought by God for glory,' 1 Corinthians 5:5. It is observable that the apostle ascribes this in the whole frame of it to God: 1 Corinthians 1:30, 'But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness,' &c., because he would remove all cause of boasting in the creature. He did not only set forth Christ at first as a principle of righteousness, and redemption, and sanctification, but engrafted in him, whosoever is in him, for the enjoyment of those privileges, and made him not only in general to the world, but to us, in the particular application, a principle of sanctification as well as righteousness. Union with Christ, engrafting in him, new creation, putting into another state, are all purely the work of God. He has no sharer in it. As Christ trod the winepress alone in the work of redemption, so God engrafts men alone into this vine. As Christ was the sole worker of redemption, so is God the sole worker of regeneration. In him we are created, but solely by God's skill; Christ the vine, and believers the branches, the one planted and the other engrafted by the same husbandman, John 15:1-2; he only planted and dressed Christ for us, he only plants and dresses us in Christ. It is 'by his own will,' not any other, that 'he begot us,' James 1:18. 'Of his own will,' his own good pleasure was the motive, his own strength the efficient. Hence he is called 'the Father of spirits,' Hebrews 12:9, not so much (as some interpret it, and that most probably) as he is the Father of souls by creation, as by regeneration, which adds a greater strength to the apostle's argument for submission to him and patience under his strokes. He keeps in his own hand the keys of the heart, no less than the key of the womb, which was always acknowledged to be in the hands of God. It is with this prerogative of God that Jacob silences Rachel, when she so impatiently cried out for children, as if she had a resolution to kill herself if she had them not, with this, 'Am I in God's stead?' Genesis 30:1-2. He only opens the womb of the soul as well as that of the body, impregnates it with grace, and brings forth the fruit of holy actions, as Philo in his allegory descants upon the place. The Jews perhaps meant no less in that saying in their Cabala, Abraham had not had Isaac if a letter of the name of God had not been added to his name; the power of God, a letter of his name, must go to regeneration. It is appropriated to none but God in Scripture: to the whole Trinity, without the conjunction of any creature, to the Father as the author, therefore called 'Our Father;' to Christ, as the pattern; to the Spirit, as the inspirer of that grace whereby we are made the sons of God. The very heathen have acknowledged this, some philosophers have affirmed, that the great virtue, wherein they placed the happiness of man, could not be had but by the favour of God, and all thought their heroes to be born of their gods. And the Scripture affirms that,

(1.) All preparations to this work, as well as the work itself, are of God. The removing indispositions, and the putting in good inclinations, is the work of the same hand; the taking away

the heart of stone, as well as the giving a heart of flesh. He removes the rubbish as well as rears the building; razes out the old stamp and imprints a new; destroys sin, which is called the old man, and restores the new by the quickening of the Spirit. The preparations of the dust of the ground to become a human body, had the same author as the divine soul wherewith he was inspired.

(2.) All the parts of the new creature are of God. Faith, which is the principal part of it, is 'the faith of the operation of God,' Colossians 2:12; not but that love and other graces are wrought by God, but in this grace, which is a constitutive part of the new creature, God comes in with a greater irradiation upon the soul, because it has not one fragment or point in nature to stand upon, carnal reason and mere moral righteousness being enemies to it, whereas all other graces are but the rectifying the passions, and setting them upon right objects. Yet all these, too, own him as the author. Our knowledge of God is a light growing from his knowledge of us; 'we know God' because we 'are known of him.' Galatians 4:9. The elective act of our wills is but a fruit of his choice of us: John 15:16, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' our willing of him is a birth of his willing us, our love a spark kindled by his love to us. God first calls us my people, before any of us call him my God, Hosea 2:23. The moon shines not upon the sun till it be first illuminated by it. God first shines upon us before we can reflect upon him; he calls us before we can speak to him in his own dialect; our coming is an effect of his drawing, and our power of coming an effect of his quickening. Every member in Adam was a fruit of his power, as well as the whole body; every line drawn in the new creature is done by his pencil as well as the whole frame.

(3.) The acts of the new creature. God does not only give us the habit of faith, but the act of faith: Php 1:29, 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake.' By believing is meant the act of believing, as by suffering is meant not only the power of suffering, but actual suffering; as the fruits upon the trees at the first creation were created as well as the tree which had a power to bear. The very attention of Lydia to the gospel preached by Paul was wrought by God, as well as the opening of her heart, Acts 16:14. Our walking in his statutes is a fruit of his grace, as well as the putting in his Spirit to enable us thereunto. The very act of motion is made by the head and heart, if there be a failing of spirits there, if any obstruction that they cannot reach the indigent part, the motion ceases. David acknowledged God his continual strength in his holy pursuits, 'My soul follows hard after thee,' Psalms 63:8. But what was the cause? 'Thy right hand upholds me.' His life and power issued out from the right hand of God. The graces of God's people stand in need of the irradiations of God, like the Urim and Thummim, before any counsel could be given by them.

(4.) The continuance both of the power and acts are from God. Habitual grace is called the 'fear of the Lord' put into the soul; the continuance of it is by his constant sustentation, it is that we may not depart from him Jeremiah 32:40, 'from upon him,' from leaning upon him, or believing in him, as the word "me'alaw" imports. If that fear put in did once depart from us, we should no longer cleave to God; we stick to him only because he ties us to himself, and cannot be continually with him unless he 'holds us by his right hand,' Psalms 73:23. The grace that is wrought, as well as the gospel which instrumentally wrought it, is 'kept by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Timothy 1:14; he begins every good work, and he performs it. He was the sole active cause in the creation of the faculties, and the principal cause in preserving them; he is the sole cause of the elevation of the faculties, and the preservation of them in that elevated state. As the virtue of the loadstone is not only the cause of the first attraction of the steel, but of its constant adhesion, therefore it is said: 1

Corinthians 1:21, that 'God does establish us,' not has done, to note the continual influence of his grace upon us. It was the dropping of the two olive trees that constantly fed the lamps in the candlesticks, Zechariah 4:2, Zechariah 4:8. Take this new birth in all the denominations of it, it is altogether ascribed to God. As it is a call out of the world, God is the herald, 2 Timothy 1:9; as it is a creation, God is the creator Ephesians 2:10; as it is a resurrection, God is the quickener, Ephesians 2:5; as it is a new birth, God is the begetter, 1 Peter 1:3; as it is a new heart, God is the framer, Ezekiel 36:26; as it is a law in the heart, God is the penman, Jeremiah 31:33; as it is a translation out of Satan's kingdom, and making us denizens of the kingdom of Christ, God is the translator, Colossians 1:13; as it is a coming to Christ, God is the drawer, John 6:44; as it is a turning to God, God is the attracter.

II. The second thing; it is necessary God should be the efficient of regeneration. He is, or none. In regard of God.

1. As he is the first cause of all things. He is the creator of the lowest worm, and the highest angel; the glimmering perfections of the least fly, as well as the more glittering eminencies of the angelical nature, are distinct beams from that fountain of light and power. Shall not he then be the cause of the divine motions of the will, as well as of the natural motions of the creatures? Every perfection in a rational creature, or any other, supposes that perfection to be somewhere essentially; every impression supposes a stamp that made it, every stream a fountain from whence it sprang, every beam a sun, or some lucid body from whence it darts. Whence should this gracious work then be derived? Not from nature, which is contrary to it; not from Satan, who is destroyed by it. It must be then from God, since it must have some stable and perfect cause. He who was the cause of all the grace in the head is also the cause of all the grace in the members. The same sun that enlightens the heavens enlightens the earth. The grace that Christ had was 'the gift of God,' John 3:34, much more must it be his gift to us, though we had souls as capacious as his. If the head derived not his grace to himself, the members cannot; for Christ being a creature, in regard of his humanity, must necessarily be dependent; for to make any creature independent upon God is to advance it above the degree of a creature-state, and make it God's fellow, yea, to have a godhead in itself, as being the first principle of its own being. To say any creature can move to God, without being moved by God, or live without his influence, is to make the creature independent on God in its operations; and if it be independent in its operations, it would be so consequently in its essence, besides, if it be not created by him, it may subsist without him, it stands in no need of his quickening. The believers in Scripture were very unadvised then to pray to God for his quickening and establishing grace, if he were not the enliver and author of it. His power works in preservation as well as creation, John 5:17, and whatsoever is dependent on him in preservation is dependent on him in creation and the first framing. And if it does not depend upon him in preservation, it is not his creature, but it is a god. All creatures have a dependence upon something immediately superior to them. The moon receives her light and chief beauty from the sun, which else would be but a dusky body; the earth its influence from the heavens. In artificial things the little wheels in a watch depend upon the greater, that upon the string (spring?), that in its motion upon the hand that winds it up. The higher any creature is, the more immediately it depends upon God in its production; the waters brought forth the fish, but God himself formed man.

2. As he is the promiser of it. The divine promise is only fulfilled by a divine operation, it is necessary then for the honour of his truth to be the performer of it. All his promises concerning this matter run in that strain, I will: Hosea 2:19, 'I will betroth thee to me for ever; I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, and in mercy: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord.' The Lord promises by this of knowing him all gracious works upon the soul, regeneration, faith, &c., for this knowledge is an effect of the covenant which God promises in that great copy of it: Jeremiah 31:34, 'They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.' It is not a simple abstracted knowledge, for so the devils know God, and Christ crucified, but such a knowledge that implies faith and love, and a new frame of soul. It is necessary his power should make good what his goodness has promised. It was not necessary any word of promise should go out of his mouth, there was no engagement upon God to do it, but it is necessary this promise should be performed; though he were free before he promised, yet he is not free after he has promised, because his truth engages him to perform it, and perform it as his own act, as much as his mercy moved him to promise it as his own act. As mercy made it, so his mercy is as pressing for the performance, and there comes in a superadded obligation from that of his truth over and above his mercy, to perform it in the same manner he promised it, and in all the circumstances of it. So that, supposing (which cannot be supposed) that his mercy should repent of making it, he would not be true if he did not perform it; besides, it consists not with his truth not to perform that by himself which he has promised by himself, nor with his wisdom to leave that to an uncertain cause at the best, and, further, a cause utterly unable (as every creature is) to produce that which he had promised to do with his own hand, as the cleansing the soul, pouring clean water upon it, pouring out a spirit of grace, writing the law in the heart, which imply his own act principally in this affair, in concurrence with the means he has ordained to that end. The performance of God's promise is as infallible as the cause that made the promise. No power can perform that for another which he promises himself to do; for the thing itself may be done by another, yet not being done by the party promising to do it, it is not truly done, and in conformity to the promise made. If it were possible then to be done by any but a divine hand, it would not be done truly, because God promises it as his own act, and therefore the working it must be his own act in conformity to his truth.

3. As he has the foreknowledge of all things. It is necessary God should foreknow everything future, and that shall come to pass. This is a perfection necessarily belonging to God; and to imagine the contrary is to frame an unworthy notion of God, and infinitely below the great creator and governor of the world. He therefore wills everything, for if he foreknew anything before he willed it in itself, or in its necessary causes, he foreknow nothing. If he did not will it, how can it come to pass? Therefore he did not foreknow that it would come to pass. If he did foreknow it, then he willed it, otherwise his foreknowledge depended upon an uncertain cause, and he might have judged that to come to pass which never might; unless the cause be determined by God, it is merely contingent. He willing therefore a work of grace in such and such persons, did foreknow that it would be wrought, because he did will that it should be, and his working is done by an act of his will: Romans 8:29, 'Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' The foreknowledge of God being stable and infallible, and being in this case a foreknowledge of what makes highly for the glory of all his attributes, can have no dependence upon an uncertain and fallible cause, but upon a cause as stable as his foreknowledge, which is his will, himself. His foreknowledge of this is not a foreknowledge of it in any created cause, but in

himself as the cause; because, as it will appear further, no created cause could accomplish it. In regard of the subject of this new birth.

1 In regard of the subject simply considered, the heart and will of man, none can corks upon it but God, or have any intrinsic influence to cause it to exercise its vital acts. Angels, though of a very vast power, cannot work immediately upon the heart and will of another creature, to incline and change it, by an immediate touch. All that they can do towards any moving the will, is by presenting some external objects, or stirring up the inward sensitive appetite to some passion, as anger, desire; whereby the will is inclined to will something. But the stirring up those natural affections in an unregenerate man, can never incline his will to good; for being the affections of the flesh, they are to be crucified. Angels also may enlighten the understanding, not immediately, but by presenting similitudes of sensible things, and confirming them in the fancy; but to remove one ill habit from the will or incline it to any good, is not in their power. God gave an angel power to purge the prophet's lips with a coal from the altar, Isaiah 5:6-7, but that was done in a vision, and a symbol or sign only that his uncleanness was removed. A coal could have no virtue in it to purge spiritual pollutions from the spirit of a man. Neither can man change the will; men by allurements or threats may change, or rather suspend the action of another, as a father that threatens to disinherit his son; or a magistrate that threatens to punish a subject for his debauchery, may cause a change in the actions of such persons; but the heart stands still to the same sinful points, and may be vicious under a fair disguise. He only that made the will, can incline and 'turn it as the rivers of waters; the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord,' Proverbs 21:1, and so is every man's heart kept in the hands of him that created it, both cabinet and key. No man knows the heart, no, the heart itself knows not everything which is in it. God knows all the wards in the heart, and knows how to move it. If a man could turn the heart of another, it could only be in one or two points; it cannot be conceived how he should alter the whole frame of it, make it quite another thing than it was before. The spirit of man being 'the candle of the Lord,' Proverbs 20:27, not to give light to him, but lighted by him, can only when it is out be re-lighted, and, when it burns dim, be snuffed by the same hand. Or, suppose for the present he could do this, it must be with much pains and labour, many exhortations and wise management of him upon several occasions. But to do this by a word, in a trice, to put a law into the heart in a moment, and give the hidden man of the heart possession of the will, that a man knows not himself how he came to be changed, this whole work bears the mark and stamp of God in the forehead of it. Men may propose arguments to another, and he may understand them if he has a capacity, but no man can ever make another have a capacity who is naturally incapable; it is God only can make the heart capable of understanding, he only can put a new instinct into it, and make it of another bent; it is he that renews the spirit of the mind to enable it to understand what he does propose, and elevates the faculty to apprehend the reason of it.

2. In regard of the subject, extremely ill qualified. Can any question the divinity of the work, when stones are made children to Abraham; when waters of repentance are drawn out of a hard rock, Aaron's dry rod made to bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit, Numbers 7:8, when souls deeply allied to the kingdom of darkness are translated into the kingdom of light? To see habits strengthened by custom, in a consumption, and hearts filled with multitudes of idols in several shapes, casting them out with indignation, and flourishing with new springing graces, it is too great a miracle to be wrought by the hand of any creature. Could anything but the arm of the Lord

change the temper of the thief upon the cross, to advance further in the space of an hour in the kingdom of God, than all the apostles had done in the three years' converse with their Master; to confess him, when one of the most eminent of them had denied him; to be more knowing in an instant, than they had been in a long time; and acknowledge his spiritual kingdom, when they even after his resurrection, and just before his ascension, expected a temporal one? Acts 1:6, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' If a Socrates, or a Cato, or those braver lights among the heathen, were turned to God, the interest of God in the work might upon some seeming ground be questioned; but when the leviathans in sin, drunkards, extortioners, adulterers, men guilty of the greatest contempt of God and the light of nature, in whom lust had kept a peaceable possession in its empire for many years, are thoroughly changed, who can doubt but that such must indeed be 'washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God'? 1 Corinthians 6:11. What can this be but the will of God, since their hearts were so delightfully filled with evil, that they had no room nor love for any holy thought? It is not conceivable that where sin has made such a rout, and cut and slashed all morality in pieces, things should be set in order there, but by a power stronger both than sin and the law, from whence sin derives its strength. It is no less than a divine miracle to renew an habituated sinner.

(3.) In regard of the nature of this new birth. It is a change of nature; a nature where there was as little of spiritual good as there was of being in nothing before the creation. It is a change of stone into flesh; a heart that like a stone has a hardness and settledness of sinful parts, a strong resistance against any instrument, an incorporation of sin and lust with its nature. Where the heart and sin, self and sin, are cordially one and the same, none can change such a nature but the God of all grace, who has all grace to contest with all the power of old Adam. No man can change the nature of the meanest creature in the world; he may tame them, bring them to part with some of their wildness, but he cannot transform them. If no man can transform the lowest creature from one nature to another, much less can any but God transform man into another nature. This nature is changed in every believer; for it is impossible a man should stand bent to Christ, with his old nature predominant in him, any more than a pebble can be attracted by a loadstone, till it put on the nature of steel. An unrighteous nature cannot act righteously, it must therefore be a God, who is above nature, that can clothe the soul with a new nature, and incline it to God and goodness in its operations. Now to see a lump of vice become a model of virtue; for one that drank in iniquity like water, to change that sinful thirst for another for righteousness; to crucify his darling flesh; to be weary of the poison he loved for the purity he hated; to embrace the gospel terms, which not his passion but his nature abhorred; to change his hating of duty to a free-will offering of it; to make him cease from a loathing the obligations of the law, to a longing to come up to the exactness of it; to count it a burden to have the thoughts at a distance from God, when before it was a burden to have one serious thought fixed on him, speaks a supernatural grace transcendently attractive and powerfully operative. Heavy elements do not ascend against their own nature, unless they be drawn by some superior force. To see a soul neighed down to the earth, to be lifted up to heaven, must point us to a greater than created strength that caused the elevation. These acts are supernatural, and cannot be done by a natural cause; that is, against the order of working in all things, for then the effect, as an effect, would be more noble than its cause.

(4.) In regard of the suddenness of it. Peter and Andrew were called when they thought of nothing but their nets; and Paul changed by a word or two, who before was not only unwilling, but

rebellious. Some have gone into a church wolves, and returned lambs. This change comes upon some that never dreamt of it, and has snatched them out of the arms of hell; upon others who have resisted with all their might any motion that way, and were never greater enemies to any, than to those that would check their sinful pleasures with such admonitions, and yet these have been on the sudden surprised. What ground is there to ascribe any of this, but to a divine work? Many have dropped in unto a sermon with no intention to stay, who have felt God's hook in their souls; have leaped like fish out of their element for a while, and God has caught them in his hand. Have you never heard of some who have gone to make sport with a convincing sermon, or to satisfy lust with unclean glances, who have been made prisoners by grace before their return? This quickness of the soul in coming to Christ was promised to be the fruit of the gospel: Hosea 3:5, 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,' when they should 'seek the Lord and David their king.' The word "pachad" signifies not only to fear, but to hasten; both significations may be joined together in the sense of the verse. They shall make haste to fear the Lord and his goodness; surely the power that performs it, is the same with the goodness which promised it. Thus some of the disciples have followed Christ at the first call, and moved readily to him, as iron to the loadstone. For a man that was at a great distance from God, and any affection to him, to be filled on the sudden with a warm love and zeal for him, when nothing of interest could engage him (and sometimes it has been with loss of friends, estate, yea, life too), is as great a discovery of a divine hand, as if a fly were changed into the shape and spirit of a hero; because a spiritual change is more admirable than a natural; and the more by how much the enmity, which was greater, is driven out, for a choice affection to rise up in its stead. The season when such a work is wrought is more significant of a divine force, when men have been in the heat and strength of the pursuit of their sinful pleasures, being then torn out of the embracements of lust with an outstretched arm of God.

(5.) In regard of the excellency of the new birth. Is it reasonable to think that the image of God should be wrought by any other hand than the hand of God, or the divine nature be begotten by anything but the divine Spirit? Since none but man can beget a child in his own likeness, none but God can impart to a soul the divine nature. It is not a change only into the image of God with slight colours, an image drawn as with charcoal; but a glorious image even in the rough draught, which grows up into greater beauty by the addition of brighter colours. 'Changed,' says the apostle, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 'into the same image from glory to glory;' glory in the first lineaments as well as glory in the last lines. Is it not too beautiful then, even in the first draught, to be wrought by any pencil but a divine? It is next to the formation of Christ, for it is an initial conformity to him. God is the fountain of all our good things. If 'every good and perfect gift comes from him,' James 1:17, shall not the best of beings be the author of the best of works? If believers are 'light in the Lord,' Ephesians 5:8, they are no less light from him and by him who is the 'Father of lights.' It is a 'heavenly calling,' Hebrews 3:1, therefore a heavenly birth. The new heart, the spiritual house wherein God dwells, as well as in the heavens, was not made with a less power and skill than the earth, which is his footstool, or the heaven, which is his throne. If none be able to make God a footstool, much less a throne, as Jerusalem, the church, is called in the times of the gospel, Jeremiah 3:17. (The embroideries and ornaments of the material tabernacle were not made by common art, but by a Bezaleel inspired by the Spirit of God, Exodus 31:3); can any but himself rear up a temple for the God of heaven to dwell in? 1 Corinthians 3:9. Or is the spiritual house of God fit to be made by and but by that God that dwells in it? It was according to the image of God that we were first created; it is according to the image of Christ that we are new created, Romans

8:29. Who understands the image of the Son but the Father? Who knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him? The new creature, according to the copy, can only be wrought by him to whom the copy is only visible. It is for the honour of God to allow him to be the framer of all creatures in the rank of beings. Is it not a dishonour to him not to acknowledge him the framer of the new creature in the rank of spiritual beings, since the later is more excellent than the treasures of the earth or the stars of heaven, than body or soul; since the image of God consists not so much in the substance of the soul as in a likeness to God in a holy nature? Ephesians 4:24. To be a righteous regenerate man is more excellent than to be a man; the most glorious effect, then, must have the most glorious cause. One beam of this divine image is too excellent to be the workmanship of any but a divine hand. The very first regenerate thought, to the last dropping off of impurity, is from the same hand. The first drawing us from sin, much more the stripping us of it, is more admirable than the drawing us out of nothing.

(6.) The end of regeneration manifests it to be the work of God. It is to display his goodness. Since this was the end of God in the first creation, it is much more his end in the second. What creature can display God's goodness for him, or give him the glory of it, without first receiving it? Goodness must first be communicated to us, before it can be displayed or reflected by us. The light that is reflected back upon the sun by any earthly body beams first from the sun itself. Both the subject and the end are put together in Isaiah 43:20-21, 'The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' The Gentiles shall have the gospel, who are beasts of the field for wildness, dragons for the poison of their nature, owls for their blindness and darkness. The waters of the gospel shall flow to them to give drink to their souls. This people have I formed for myself. Even beasts, dragons, owls, if formed for himself, they could not be formed but by himself, who only understands what is fit for his own praise. How can such incapable subjects be formed for such high ends, without a supernatural power? So in Isaiah 60:21, 'The branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' Planted by God, that God might be glorified by them. As God only is the proper judge of what may glorify him, so he is the sole author of what is fitted to glorify him. Nothing lower than the goodness of God can instil into us such a goodness as to be made meet to praise, serve, and love him; such a holiness as may fit us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and enjoy him for ever. As infinite wisdom formed us in Adam, and moulded us with his own hand to be a model of his perfection, so are we no less his workmanship in Christ by a second creation to good works, which, as they are ordained by the will of God, so they are wrought in us by the skill and power of God; what is ordained positively by him and for him is wrought by him. The whole world consists but of two men and their offspring the first man, Adam, the second man, Christ; both they, and all in them, created by God. It is a forming a creature for himself for his own delight. What delight can God take in anything but himself, and what is like himself? Man in his best estate is vanity. As his being is, so are his operations. Vanity, and the operations flowing from thence, are no fit object for the delight of an infinite excellency and wisdom. What pleasure can he have in those things which are not wrought by his own finger? Who knows how to dress anything savoury and pleasant to God but his own grace? Can a finite thing touch an infinite being to enjoy him without the operation of an infinite virtue? Can God delight in anything principally but himself, as he is infinitely good; or in other things but as they come nearest to that goodness? Whatsoever has a resemblance to a superior being must be brought forth into that likeness by something

superior to itself.

Now since the ends of this work are so high as to fit us for his praise, his delight, and a fruition of him; since it is to bring the interest of God into the soul, set him up highest in the heart who before was trampled under our feet, enthrone him as king in the soul, cause us to oppose all that opposes him, cherish everything that is agreeable to him, this must be his work or the work of none.

(7.) The weakness of the means manifests it to be the work of God. How could it be possible that such weak means, that were used at the first plantation of the gospel, should have that transcendent success in the hearts of men without a divine power? That a doctrine attended with the cross, resisted by devils with all their subtilty, by the flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries, the wise with all their craft, the mighty with all their power, should be imprinted upon the hearts of men; a doctrine preached by mean men, without any worldly help, without learning, eloquence, craft, or human prudence, without the force, favour, or friendship of men, should get place in men's hearts without a divine inspiration, cannot well be imagined. If it be said there were miracles attending it, which wrought upon the minds of men, it is true; but what little force they had in our Saviour's time the Scripture informs us, when they were ascribed to Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Though miracles did attend it after the ascension of our Saviour, yet the apostle ascribes not so much to them as the means, as he does to the 'foolishness of preaching,' it was that which was the 'power of God,' 1 Corinthians 1:18; it was that 'whereto God saved them that believe,' 1 Corinthians 1:21. But the greatest change that ever was wrought at one time was at the first descent of the Spirit, by a plain discourse of Peter, Acts ii., extolling a crucified God before those that had lately taken away his life, those that had seen him die, a doctrine which would find no footing in their reasons, filled with prejudice against him, and had expectations of a temporal kingdom by him. Must not this change be ascribed to a higher hand, which removed their rooted prejudices and vain hopes, and brought so many as three thousand over at once? If there be 'diversities of operations, it is the same God that works all in all,' 1 Corinthians 12:6. He conveys this 'treasure in earthen vessels, that the power might appear to be of God, and not of men,' 2 Corinthians 4:7. Such weak means as earthen vessels cannot work such miraculous changes. Therefore perhaps it was that the preaching of Christ in his humiliation had so little success attending it, that nothing should be ascribed to the word itself, but to the power of God in it. To evidence that success depended on the good pleasure of God, who would not make his preaching in person so successful as that in his Spirit, which appears by Christ's thanksgiving to his Father for revealing these things to babes, and not to the wise: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Luke 10:21. Have you never heard of changes wrought in the spirits of men against their worldly interest, when they have been made the scorn of their friends, and a reproach to their neighbours? Can the weakness of means write a law so deep in the heart, that neither sly allurements nor blustering temptations can raze out; that a law of a day's standing in the heart should be able to mate the powers of hell, the cavils of the flesh, and discouragements from the world, when there are no unanswerable miracles now to seal the gospel, and second the proposals of it with amazement in the minds of men? The weakness of the means, and the greatness of the difficulties, speaks it not only to be the finger but the arm of God, which causes the triumphs of the foolishness of preaching. When the proposal crosses the interest of the flesh, restrains the beloved pleasure, teaches a man the necessity of the contempt of the world, and that men should exchange their pride for humility, the pleasure of sin for a life of holiness; for a man not

only to cease to love his vice, but extremely to hate it; to have divine flights, when before he could not have a divine thought; to put off earthly affections for heavenly, and all this by the foolishness of preaching, it is an argument of a divine power, rather than any inherent strength in the means themselves.

(3.) The differences in the changes of men evidence this to be the work of God, and that it is from some power superior to the means which are used. As God puts a difference between men in regard of their understandings, revealing that to one man which he does not to another, so he puts a difference between men in regard of their wills, working upon some and not upon others, working upon some that have known less, and not working upon some that have known more, some embracing it, and others rejecting it. We may see,

[1.] The difference of this change in men under the same means. One is struck at a sermon, when multitudes return unshaken. Why is not the case equal in all, if it were from the power of the word? How successful is Peter's discourse, closely accusing the Jews of the murdering of their Lord and Saviour, which is the occasion of pricking three thousand hearts? Yet Stephen using the same method, and close application of the same doctrine, Acts 7:62, had not one convert upon record. While Peter's hearers were pricked in their hearts, these gnashed with their teeth, Acts 7:54. The corruption of the former was drawn out by the pricking of their souls, the malice of the latter exasperated by the cut of their hearts. What reason can be rendered of so different an event from one and the same means in several hands, but the overruling pleasure of God? The reasons were the same, set off with the same human power; the hearers were many of the same nation, brought up in the reading of the prophets, full of the expectations of a Messiah; they had both reasons and natural desires for happiness, as well as the other, yet the one are turned lambs, and the others worse lions than before; the bloody fury of the one is calmed, and the mad rage of the other is increased. The grace of God wrought powerfully in the one, and lighted not upon the other. Two are grinding at the same mill of ordinances, one is taken and another is left. Man breathes into the ears, and God into what heart he pleases.

[2.] The differences in the changes of men under less means. One is changed by weaker means, another remains in his unregeneracy under means in themselves more powerful and likely; some are wrought upon by whispers, when others are stiff under thunders. The Ninevites by one single sermon from a prophet are moved to repentance; the Capernaïtes, by many admonitions from a greater than all the prophets, seconded with miracles, are not a jot persuaded; some remain refractory under great blasts, while others bend at lighter breathings. One man may be more acute than another, of a more apprehensive reason; yet this man remains obstinate, whilst another becomes pliable. Whence does this difference arise, but from the will of God drawing the one, and reusing the other to the conduct of his own will, since both will acknowledge what they are advised to, to be their interest, to be true in itself, necessary for their good, yet their affections and entertainment are not the same? Some of those Jews who had heard the doctrine of Christ, seen the purity of his life and the power of his miracles, admired his wisdom, yet crucified his person; they expected a Messiah, yet contemned him when he came; when the poor thief who, perhaps, had never seen one miracle, nor heard one sermon of our Saviour, believes in him, acknowledges him to be the Son of God, whom he saw condemned to the same death with himself, and dies a regenerate man under great disadvantages. A figure (says one) of all the elect, who shall only be saved by grace, and a clear testimony of an outstretched arm of grace. Those that our blessed

Saviour admonished only as a doctor and teacher were unmoved, none stirred but those he wrought upon as a creator.

[3.] Difference of the success of the same means in different places. How various was the success of the apostles in several parts of their circuits! Paul finds a great door of faith opened at Corinth, and in Macedonia, and his nets empty at Athens; multitudes flocking in at one place, and few at another. He is entertained at Corinth, stoned at Lystra, Acts 14:19, in danger of his life at Jerusalem, while the Galatians were so affected with the gospel, that they could have 'pulled out their eyes' for him. The apostle was the same person in all places; the gospel was the same, and had a like power in itself; men had the same reasons, they were all fragments from the lump of Adam: the difference must be then from the influence of the divine Spirit, who rained down his grace in one place and not in another; on one heart, and not on another; who left darkness in Egypt, while he diffused light in Goshen.

[4.] Difference in the same person. What is the reason that a man believes at one time under the proposal of weak arguments, and not at another under stronger? It is not *ex parte objecti*, for that was more visible and credible in itself, when attended by strong arguments, than when accompanied with weaker. Perhaps God has stricken a man's conscience before, and he has undone that work, shaken off those convictions; he has contended with his maker, and mustered up the power of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like a wild bull in a net, and broke it, and blunted those darts which stuck in his soul; he has afterwards been screwed up again, and the arrow shot so deep, that with all his pulling he could not draw it out. What but a divine hand holds it in, in spite of all the former triumphs of nature? How come convictions at last to be fixed upon men, which many a time before did but flutter about the soul, and were soon chased away? And God by such a method keeps up the honour of his grace in men after regeneration, and teaches them the constant acknowledgement of his power in the whole management. Do we not daily find that the same reasonings and considerations which quicken us at one time in the ways of God stir us not at another, no more than a child can a millstone; that we are quickened by the same word at one time, under which we were dull and stupid at another; and the same truth is deliciously swallowed by us, which seemed unsavoury at another, because God edges it with a secret virtue at one time more than another? Hereby God would mind us to own him as the author of all our grace, the second grace as well as the first. Upon all these considerations this can be no other than the work of God. Can a corrupt creature elevate himself from a state of being hated by God, to a state of being delighted in by him? Satan's work none can judge it to be; the destroyer of mankind would never be the restorer; the most malicious enemy to God would never contribute to the rearing a temple to God in the soul, who has usurped God's worship in all parts of the world. Good angels could never do it, they wonder at it; the wisdom of God in thus creating all things in Jesus Christ is made known to them by it, Ephesians 3:9-10. They never ascribed it to themselves; if they did, they could never have been good, their goodness consisting in praising of God, and giving him his due. Good men never did it; the first planters of the gospel (whereby it is wrought) always gave God the praise of it, and acknowledged both their own action, and the success, to be the effect of the grace of God, and upon every occasion admired it, Acts 11:21, Acts 11:23. It was 'the hand of the Lord' and 'the grace of God.'

III. The third general head, from what principles in God it flows, or what perfections of God are eminent in this work of regeneration. What is observable in the forming Christ in the womb of the

virgin, is observable in the forming Christ in the heart of a believer: grace to choose her to be the holy vessel; sovereignty to pitch upon her rather than any other of the lineage of David; truth to his promise in forming him in the womb of a virgin, and one of the house of David; wisdom and power in the formation of him in a virgin's womb, above the power of nature; mercy bears the first sway as the motive of the decree, but in a way of sovereignty to call out some, and not others; truth to himself obliges, after sovereign mercy had made the resolution; wisdom steps in to contrive the best way to accomplish what mercy had moved, and sovereignty had decreed; holiness rises up as the pattern; and power rides out for the execution. Mercy moves, sovereignty decrees, truth obliges, wisdom counsels, holiness regulates, power executes.

1. Mercy and goodness is a principal perfection of God, illustrious in this work. 'Born not of the will of man, but of God,' of the will of his mercy. Plato thought that heroes were born "ex eros Theon", from the love of God; divine love brings forth an heroic Christian into the world; all outward mercies are streams of God's goodness, but those are but trifles if compared with this. There is as much of God in imparting the holiness of his nature as in imputing the righteousness of his soul. We are justified by Christ, quickened by grace, saved by grace; grace is the womb of every spiritual blessing. To be delivered from places and company wherein we have occasions and temptations to sin, is an act which God owns as the fruit of his mercy: 'I brought thee out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees,' Genesis 15:7, an idolatrous place; it is a greater fruit of his goodness to be delivered from a nature which is the seed-plot of sin. 'He heals our backslidden nature,' because he 'loves us freely.' It is therefore called grace, which is not only goodness and mercy, but goodness with a more beautiful varnish and ornamental dress.

(1.) Therefore in this take notice of the peculiarity of mercy. Such a goodness that not one fallen angel ever had, or ever shall have a mite of; neither did mercy excite one good thought in God of new polishing any of those rebellious creatures; mercy cast no eye upon them, but justice left them to their malicious obstinacy. That the rivers of living water should refuse to run in such a channel, or flow out of such a belly, to run in the heart of a man more muddy! As peculiar grace pitched upon the very flesh of Christ, to be limited to the second person, so the like grace pitches upon this or that particular soul, to be united to the body of Christ. That singular love which chose Christ for the head, chose some men in him to be his members: 'Chosen us in him,' Ephesians 1:4. And the anointing which is upon the head is poured out by such a peculiarity of love upon the members, not only by an act of his power as God, but by an act of appropriated goodness, thy God, Hebrews 1:9. God anoints his fellows with that holy gracious unction, as their God, not only as God; for anointing him as the head, under that particular consideration, he anoints also his fellows, his members, under the same consideration too, because he is as well their God, the God of the members, as well as the God of the head, for they are his fellows in that unction; the difference lies in the greater portion of grace given to the human nature of Christ. And the apostle Peter, 1 Peter 1:3, intimates in his thanksgiving to God, that God begot us as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' the paternal affection he bears to Christ being the ground of the regeneration of his people; the paternal affection first pitching upon Christ, then upon others in him. Indeed, it is a peculiar affection. In his mercy to the world, he acts as a rector or governor, in that relation he proposes laws, makes offers of peace, urges them in his word, strives with men by his Spirit, enduing men with reason, and deals with them as rational creatures; he uses affections and mercies, which might soften their hearts, did they not wilfully

indulge themselves in their hardness. This is his rectoral mercy, or his mercy as a governor, and as much as his relation of a governor can oblige him to. If men will not change their lives, is God bound as a governor to force them to it, or not rather to punish them for it? But in regeneration there is a choicer affection, whereby, besides the relation of a governor, he puts on that of a father, and makes an inward and thorough change in some which he has chosen into the relation of children. As a father, who cannot persuade his son lying under a mortal distemper to take that physic which is necessary for saving his life, will compel him to it, open his mouth, and pour it in; but as he is a governor of his servant, he will provide it for him, and propose it to him. To do thus is kindness to his servant, though he does not manifest so peculiar an affection as he does to his son. God governs men as he is the author of nature; he renews men as he is the author of grace; he is the lawgiver and governor; it does not follow that where he is so he should be the new creator too; this is a peculiar indulgence.

(2.) As there is a peculiarity of mercy, so there is the largeness of his mercy and goodness in this work. It was his goodness to create us, but a full sea of goodness made us new creatures: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to 'a lively hope,' "kata to polu autou eleos". His own mercy, without any other motive; much mercy, without any parsimony, not an act of ordinary goodness, but the deepest bowels of kindness, an everlasting spring of goodness, an exuberance of goodness. The choice love he bears to them in election cannot be without some real act; it is a vain love that does not operate; one great part of affection is to imitate the party beloved; but since that is unworthy of God to imitate a corrupt creature, he performs the other act of love, which is to assimilate us to himself, and bring us into a state of imitation of him, endowing us with principles of resemblance to him. It is abundant mercy to love them; it is much more goodness to render them worthy of his love, and inspire them with those qualities, as effects of his love of benevolence, which may be an occasion of his love of complacency. Worldly mercies do many times, yea, for the most part (if you view the whole globe of the earth) consist with his hatred, but this is a beam from a clear sun. At best other benefits are but the mercies of his hand, this of his heart. In those he makes men like others of a higher rank, in this like himself.

[1.] It is a goodness greater than that in creation. It is more an act of kindness to reform that which is deformed, than to form it at the beginning, because it is more to have a happy than a simple being. To repair what is decayed is a testimony of greater goodness than at first to raise it. Creation is terminated to the good of a mutable nature, regeneration is terminated to a supernatural good, and partaking of the divine nature. The creation was an emanation of his goodness, never entitled the work of his grace. Man's first uprightness was an impress of God; his second uprightness is far more pleasing to him, as being the fruit of his Son's death, wherein all his attributes are more highly glorified. It is a regeneration 'by the resurrection of Christ,' 1 Peter 1:3; that being the perfection of it, includes his death, which is the foundation of it, as the perfection of a thing includes the beginning. God pronounced all the structures of the first creation good, but not with those magnificent titles of his delighting in it, forming it for himself, that it might show forth his praise, which expressions testify a greater efflux of his goodness in this second creation. Nor did Christ ever say his delight was in that, or in that one man Adam, but in the sons of men, of apostate Adam, as to be redeemed and renewed by him after their apostasy: Proverbs 8:31, 'My delights were with the sons of men.' What sons of men? The exhortation, Proverbs 8:32, intimates it, those that are his children renewed by him that hearken to him and keep his ways.

God pronounced it good, but not his treasure, his portion, his inheritance, his segullah, his house, his diadem. All those things which he made, even the noblest heaven, as well as the lowest earth, he overlooks and speaks slightly of them: Isaiah 66:1-2, 'All those things has my hand made, and all those things have been,' &c., to fix his eyes, "avit", upon a contrite spirit, a renewed nature. He speaks of them as things passed away, and is intent only upon the new creation; values it above heaven and earth, and all the ceremonial worship. What is the object of his greatest estimation partakes of a greater efflux of his goodness to make it so. And the apostle Peter aggrandises this abundant mercy in regeneration, from the term, 'unto a lively hope;' not such an uncertain hope as Adam had when he was fullest of his mutable uprightness; a living hope, "elpida dzosan", that grows up more and more into life, till it comes to an inheritance that fades not away as Adam's did. Surely there is more of bowels in the Spirit's brooding over a sinful soul, to bring forth this beautiful frame, than in brooding over the confused mass to bring forth a world.

[2.] All the grace and goodness God has is employed in it. In the creation you cannot say, all the goodness of God was displayed, as not all his power nor all his wisdom: for as to his power he might have made millions of worlds inconceivably more beautiful and more wisely contrived; for though there be no defect of wisdom and power, yet neither of those attributes were exerted to that height that they might have been. So for his goodness, he might have made millions of more angels and men than he did create, with as (and more) illustrious natures; for a man may conceive something more than God has displayed in the creation, as to the extensiveness of his perfections at least. But in this God has displayed, as it may seem, the utmost of his grace, for no man or angel can conceive a higher grace than what God shows in this, of beginning in man a likeness to himself, and perfecting it hereafter to as high a pitch as a creature is capable of. Therefore called 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' Ephesians 1:7. A further good cannot be imagined or found out than what is there displayed. Therefore the apostle Peter speaks of God as effectually calling us into his eternal glory by Christ, under the title of 'the God of all grace,' 1 Peter 5:10, which calling includes all preparation for glory. All grace does not less fit us for it, than call us to it, there is more of grace in fitting us for it than barely in calling us to it; and the call itself has more of grace in it than the giving the possession of that inheritance you are called unto. It is not so high a favour in a prince actually to set his royal bride in the throne with him, as to call her to and prepare her for so high a dignity. To prepare a soul for it by regeneration is an act of pure grace; to give it after a preparation for it, is an act of truth as well as grace; nothing obliged him to the first, his promise binds him to the latter. What if I should say, this renewing of us, and subduing our sins in us, is a greater act of grace than a bare remission! Micah 7:18-19, seems to favour it. To pardon us is an act of his delightful mercy; but to subdue our iniquities is an act of his most tender compassion. Mercy is there joined with pardon, and compassion with subduing. And the latter expression, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,' may refer to both those acts of grace, against the guilt and filth of sin.

[3.] The freeness of his mercy is manifest in it. It is as free as election: Ephesians 1:3-4, 'Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings' (of which regeneration is none of the meanest), 'according as he has chosen us in him', "kathos exelexato". It is as free in the stream as it is in the fountain. Jesus Christ is as freely formed in us, as we were freely chosen in him, as freely, quoad nos, as to us, not in regard of Christ, who merited the former though not the latter. It is his own mercy, 1 Peter 1:3, 'his own will,' James 1:18, not moved by any other, as we do many things by the will of

others when our own are not free, in which are mixed acts. It is in regard of this freeness called grace. Supposing God would create man, and for such an end as to enjoy blessedness, he could not create him otherwise than with a universal rectitude, because, had God created him with a temper contrary to his law, he had been the author of his sin. Some therefore call not the righteousness of Adam grace, because it was a perfection due to his nature upon his creation. But there was no necessity upon God to bestow new creating grace, after he had stripped himself of the righteousness of his first creation. And also supposing God will restore man to that end from which he fell, and refit him for that blessedness, he cannot fit him otherwise than by restoring him to that righteousness, as a means of attaining that blessedness. Yet both these are free, because the original foundation of both is free. God might choose whether he would create man when he was nothing, and choose whether he would restore man when he was fallen. Yet there is more freedom in this latter than in the former, in regard of the measures of the new created righteousness, and in regard of the immutability of it, in regard also of demerit. Adam's dust, before creation, as it could merit nothing, so it had an advantage above us that it could not lie under demerit. But we, after the fall, are in a state of damnation, children of wrath, so that regeneration is not a creating us from nothing, but recovering us from a state worse than nothing. In regard that man was miserable, he was capable of mercy; but as he was a criminal, he was an object of severity. That is free mercy to renew any man by grace, when he might have damned him by justice, to work him for glory when he had wrought himself for damnation. The apostle therefore excludes all works whatsoever from any meritoriousness in this case: Titus 3:5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' I say, he excludes all works, because not one work, as good, was in being before the renewal of the soul, for so Titus 3:3 plainly implies, when he concludes all men, himself too, in a state incapable of doing anything that was good; the honour of his truth indeed excites him to perfect it, but his grace only, without any other motive, moves him to bestow it. All the grace you have in regeneration sprung only from this; the righteousness you are arrayed with, the flames of love in your hearts, the flights of your faith, cost you nothing, they were all the births of love. Goodness decreed all when you were nothing, grace formed all when you were worse than nothing, your faith is 'the faith of God's elect,' Titus 1:1. New creatures were chosen to faith by grace, and by the same grace was faith formed in the womb of the soul; electing grace preceded, renewing grace followed, the stream cannot be merited when the spring was free. Regeneration is an accessory to election. No man can merit the principle, therefore not the accessory.

2. As mercy and goodness, so the sovereignty of God is illustrious in this work. 'Of God,' in the text, is 'of the will of God.' The covenant runs in a royal style: 'I will put my Spirit into them; I will give a heart of flesh,' of my own free motion and good pleasure, like the patents of princes. God reserves this in his own power, to give to whom he pleases; Cameron says, that faith, which is a great constitutive part of regeneration, was not purchased meritoriously by Christ's death; and though Christ does give us faith as well as repentance, yet he does that, not as considered as a satisfier of God's justice in his death, but as God's commissioner in his exaltation, being empowered by God to give the conditions upon which they agreed together in the first compact about the work of mediation, unto all those that God had given him to satisfy for. Whether this opinion be well grounded or no, I will not determine; yet the making it depend solely upon election, and to be given as a fruit of election, that hereby we may be partakers of Christ, makes it more

fully depend upon the sovereignty of God. God renews when he pleases. 'The wind blows where it lists,' John 3:8. To some he affords means, to others not; he deals not with every nation as he dealt with Israel. In some, he works by means; to others, he gives only the means without any inward work; it is his pleasure that he works upon any one to will, his good pleasure that he gives to and one to do: Php 2:13, 'of his good pleasure.' Some hear the word, others the Spirit in the word; some feel the striking of the air upon their ear, others the stamp of the Spirit upon their hearts. Who chose this rough stone to hew and polish, and let others lie in the quarry? Who frames this for a statue, a representation of himself, and leaves another upon the pavement? What does all this result from, but his sovereign pleasure?

(1.) No ultimate reason can be rendered for this distinction, but God's sovereignty. We can render an immediate reason of some actions of God: why the heavens are round, because that is the most capacious figure, and fittest for motion; why the sun is the centre of the world, as some think, because it may, at a convenient distance, enlighten the stars above, and quicken the things below; why our hearts are in the midst of our bodies, because they may more commodiously afford heat to all the members; so also, why God loved Adam, because he saw his own image in him; why he sends judgments upon the world, because of sin; why he saves believers and condemns unbelievers, because they receive the grace of Christ, those reject it. We have not recourse immediately to God's will for a reason; the nature of the things themselves affords us one, obvious to us. But no reason can be rendered of other actions of God but his good pleasure. Why he chose Abraham above other men, and delivered him from Ur of the Chaldees; why Israel above other nations, since all other men and nations descended from Adam and Noah, and they were in their natures equally corrupt with others; they were not in themselves better than others, nor other nations worse than they; so in Esau and Jacob, why the elder should serve the younger, since they both issued from the same parents, lay in the same womb, were equally depraved in their nature, had original sin equally conveyed to them by their parents: no reason can be rendered but the will of God. So, if it be asked, why men are condemned, because they do not believe. Why do they not believe? Because they will not. God has given them means and faculties. If you ask, why God did not give them grace to believe and turn their wills, no other answer can be given but because he will not. It is his free will to choose some and not others. Election is put upon his pleasure: Ephesians 1:5, 'Predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will;' and the making known the mystery of his will is put upon his pleasure: Ephesians 1:9, 'Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure.' As God regards us absolutely, it is rather mercy than his good pleasure. Why has he changed our wills? Because he loved us, and bare good will to us in his everlasting purpose, to which he was incited by his own mercy. But if we compare ourselves with others, and ask, why he renews this man and not that, then it is rather an act of the sovereign liberty of his will, for there cannot be the result of any reason from any thing else; he pitches his compassion where and upon whom he pleases. The apostle joins mercy and this sovereignty of his will together: Romans 9:15, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' He is so absolute a sovereign, that he will give no account of these matters but his own good pleasure. Why he renews any man is merely voluntary; why he saves renewed men is just; why he justifies those that believe is justice to Christ and mercy to them; but why he bestows faith on any is merely the good pleasure of his will. The pharisees believed not, because they were not of Christ's sheep, John 10:26; that is, they were not given to Christ by the Father, as is intimated, John 10:29. And

the prosperity of those which are given to Christ is resolved wholly into the pleasure of God: 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,' Isaiah 53:10. In all our searches into the cause of this, we must rest in his sovereign pleasure; our Saviour himself renders this only as a reason of his distinguishing mercy, wherein himself does, and therefore we must, acquiesce: Matthew 11:27, 'Even so, Father, for so it pleased thee.'

(2.) We may well do so, because he is no debtor to any man in the way of grace. There is nothing due to man but death; that is his wages; the other is a gift: Romans 6:23, 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to them it is not given,' Matthew 13:11. Who shall control him in the disposal of his own goods? 'Who shall say unto him, What dost thou?' Grace is his own treasure; if he gives the riches of it to any, it is his pleasure; if he will not bestow a mite on any man, it is no wrong; 'if any man has given to him, it shall be recompensed to him again,' Romans 11:35. It is not unjust with God to deny every man grace; it is not then unjust to deny a great part of men this grace: 'Who has enjoined him his way?' says Job; or, 'Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?' Job 36:23. He is not to be taught by man how to govern the world, neither can any man justly blame him, if they judge aright of his actions. Though every man is bound to endeavour the conversion of others, and every good man has so much charity that he would turn all to righteousness if he could, and though the love of God is infinitely greater than man's, it cannot be argued from thence that therefore God should renew every man. This charity in man is a debt he owes to his neighbour by communion of blood, upon which the law of charity is founded, which obliges him to endeavour the happiness and welfare of his neighbour; but God is free from the engagements of any law, but the liberty of his own will; he is under no government but his own; he has none superior, none equal with him, to enjoin him his way, and to prescribe him rules and methods. If he gives any favour to man, it is his pleasure; if man improves it well, God is not indebted to him, and obliged to give him more, no more than a father is bound to give his son a new stock, because he has improved well the first he has entrusted him with; it depends only upon his pleasure.

(3.) God's proceedings in this case do wholly declare it. In the first gift of his people to Christ, he acted like a God greater than all in a way of super-eminent sovereignty: 'My Father which gave them me is greater than all', John 10:29. He acts as a potter with his clay; he softens one heart, and leaves another to its natural hardness. He converts Paul a persecutor, but none of the other pharisees who spurred him on in that fury and commissioned him to it; he snatches some from the embracements of lust, while he suffers others to run their race to hell. David, by grace, is made a man after God's own heart, and Saul left to be a man after his own will; some he changes in the heat of their pursuit of sinful pleasures, others he wounds to death by his judgments. The reason of the latter is deserved justice; the reason of the other is undeserved pleasure. He chooses the mean things of the world to be highest in his favour, and passes over those that the world esteems most excellent. 'Not many wise, not many mighty,' is his sovereign method. The amiable endowments esteemed by the men of the world have no influence upon him. He acts in this way with his own people; he gives sometimes to will, when he does not give presently to do; he distributes greater measures of grace to one than to another; he sometimes excites them by his grace, sometimes lets them lie as logs before him, that he may be owned by them to be a free agent. And further, it must needs be thus, because God does not work in regeneration as a natural agent, and put forth his strength to the utmost; as the sun shines, and the fire burns, ad extremum

virium, unless a cloud interpose to hinder the one, or water quench the other, but as an arbitrary agent, who exerts his power according to his own will, and withholds it according to his pleasure. For there are two acts of his sovereign will: one whereby he does command men to do their duty, promises rewards, and threatens punishment, but the subject is to be disposed to do God's will of precept. Here comes in another act of his sovereignty, whereby he wills the disposing such and such hearts to the accepting of his grace, and does will not to give others that grace, but leave them to themselves. This we see practised by God almost in every day's experience.

3. The truth of God is apparent in this work. Truth to his own purpose: 1 Timothy 1:9, 'Who has called us with a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.' Sovereignty first singles this or that man out; and truth to that firm and immutable counsel, and that resolve in his own mind, steps in to excite his holiness, wisdom, and power, to make every such person conformed to the image of his Son. It was not from any truth respecting any condition annexed to any promise he had made which he might find in the creature, for the apostle plainly excludes it, 'not according to our work'; for what motion can our work in a state of nature cause in God but that of anger and aversion arising from truth to his threatening, the condition whereof is fulfilled by us, but not one mite of good fruit that could as a condition challenge this great work at the hands of the truth of God by virtue of his promise. His truth to his threatening would have raised up thoughts of destroying men; his truth to his purpose carried on his design of effectually calling them. It is not an engagement of truth to his creature, but of truth to himself. So that if you ask why he has Peter, Paul, and others, since many better conditioned than they have rejected the gospel, the answer is, because he had so purposed in himself; and he is faithful, and cannot deny his own counsel, for that were to deny himself, and that eternal idea in his own mind: 2 Timothy 2:13, 'He is faithful, and cannot deny himself,' in regard of his purpose, in regard of his absolute promise. Truth to his promise; his promise to his Son, for so Titus 1:2 is principally to be understood: 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' There was a donation of some made to Christ, and a donation of grace to Christ for them, deposited in his hands as a treasure to be dispensed to every one of them in their proper time. His truth comes in upon this double donative: a donative of grace to them in Christ, before the world began, which would be but as a useless rusty treasure, if not bestowed upon those for whom it was entrusted in his hands; a donative of some, according to this purpose, to Christ, whose death, and resurrection, and purchase, would be ineffectual, if those thus given were not in time engrafted in him, and renewed by him, to be made partakers of all that which he purchased and preserved for them. Jesus Christ was to have a seed by covenant, a people to be conformed to his image. The issue then of forming a people for his seed, is the effect of God's truth to Christ. And consequent to this antecedent purpose in himself, and promise to Christ, he gives him an order to bring in those that were thus designed to be his sheep, which he calls his sheep by right of donation, before they were renewed: my sheep, by right of gift from my Father, mine by right of purchase at my death, mine by right of possession at their effectual call, these I must bring in; not I may, but I must; and they shall hear my voice: John 10:16, 'Other sheep I have; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;' not they may, but they shall be inclined to comply with my word and call. Satan and their own lusts shall not hinder them from coming unto me, but they shall be overruled by a powerful Spirit. So that there is truth to his purpose, truth to his promise to Christ' truth to the depositum in Christ's hands, truth to his word published, that he would give a new heart. So that whatsoever heart his work is wrought in, it is a

manifest effect of the truth of God to himself and his Christ. The gift of grace, in possession, is a necessary consequent of that gift of it, in purpose, before the world began.

4. The wisdom of God appears in this work. The secrets of wisdom shine forth in the great concerns of the soul in Christ, who is made wisdom principally to us in our sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption. Wisdom in the imputation of righteousness, in the draught of sanctification, and in the perfection of it in a complete redemption; wisdom, like thread, runs through every part of the web. The new birth is the great wisdom of the creature; by this he becomes wise, since the Scripture entitles all fools without it. The inspiration of this wisdom can own no other but divine wisdom for the author. It is his own wisdom; for 'Who has been his counsellor?' Romans 11:34. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, freely, wisely; a work of his will, a work of his understanding: Ephesians 1:11-12, 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory,' that the glory of the Father may shine out in us. If all things are thus wrought with the choicest counsel, much more the rarest work of God in the world. If all things are wrought with counsel, because he will have a praise from them, much more that from whence he expects to gather the greatest crop of glory. The bringing us to trust in Christ is for the praise of his glory; a glory redounds to him, because there is nothing of our own in it, but all his; a farther glory redounds to him, because it is in the wisest manner. It is to the praise and the glory of his goodness in the act of his will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom in the act of his counsel. There was a mystery of wisdom in the first secretion and singling out this or that person; a revelation of wisdom in the preparations to it, and formation of it. If there be much of his counsel in the minute passages of his providence in the lowest creatures, which are the subjects of that providence, much more must there be in the framing the soul to be a living monument of his glory. It is not a new moulding the outward case of the body, but the inward jewel wrapped up from the view of men; the spirit of the mind, which, being more excellent, requires more of skill for the new forming of it.

(1.) The nature of the new birth declares it to be an effect of his wisdom. It is a building a divine temple, a spiritual tabernacle, for his own residence: 'ye are God's building,' 1 Corinthians 3:9. Strength will not build a house without art to contrive and proportion the materials; skill is the chief requisite of an architect. The highest pieces of art come from the most excellent idea in the creature. The beautiful fabric of grace is modelled by the wisest idea in God; that which is glorious in the erection, supposes excellent skill in the contrivance. Every renewed man is a 'lively stone:' 1 Peter 2:4, 'Ye also as lively stones,' every one of you polished and carved by the wise Creator for an everlasting statue. It is he that has 'wrought us to the self-same thing,' 2 Corinthians 5:6, "katargasamenos"; polished us and curiously wrought us, who were rough stones, covered with the rubbish of sin. As a wise builder, he lays the foundation in sound habits, whereon to raise a superstructure of gracious actions. The counterpart in the heart is no less a fruit of his wisdom than the law in the tables of stone; wisdom in the first framing the law, wisdom also in the deep imprinting of it. That which enlightens the eyes, and makes wise to salvation, can be entitled to no other original cause than divine wisdom. The soul is a rational work of God. Surely, then, that which is the soul of the soul, the glory of the creature, the preparation for happiness, more pleasing to God than the brightest nature, than the natural frame of the highest soul, that which is the pleasure and delight, must be the fruit, too, of infinite wisdom. Bare effects of power are not the immediate objects of God's special delight.

(2.) The means of it declare it to be a fruit of his wisdom. Christ the exemplar has the treasures of wisdom; grace copied from it is part of those treasures. The gospel, the instrument, is 'the wisdom of God,' as well as 'the power of God,' 1 Corinthians 2:7. Divine skill framed the model, reared the building, no less sows the seed in the heart. What did partake of wisdom in the contrivance, progress, all the parts and methods of it, partakes of the same in the inward operations of it upon the soul.

(3.) The manner of it speaks it to be so. In regard of the enemies he has to deal with, there must be prudence to countermine the deep and unsearchable plots of the powers of darkness. As there is the strength of sin within, the might of Satan without, as fit subjects for his power, so there are the stratagems of Satan, the subtleties and deceits of the flesh, as a fit occasion for his almighty skill against hellish policy. In regard also of his working upon the soul, he works upon those that are so contrary to his design without imposing upon their faculties; he moves them according to their physical nature, though contrary to their moral nature; he makes us do willingly what we would not; he so tunes the strings that they speak out willingly what naturally they are most unfit for. The Spirit acts wisely in the revealing to us the knowledge of Christ, as Ephesians 1:17, 'The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,' which may note the manner of his acting in the revelation, which is the first work of the soul, as well as the effect it does produce, though I suppose the effect is principally meant. Some question the wisdom of God in acting so upon the will as not to leave it to its own indifference in this change. What reason is there to question his wisdom? Do not the angels in heaven admire God's wisdom as well as his grace, who has immutably fixed them to that which is good? Do they question the wisdom of God for so happy a confirmation of them against that indifference which destroyed some of their fellows by creation? But is there not an evident art in this work, to make the will willing that had no affection to this change; to fit the key so to all the wards that not one is disordered; to move us contrary to our corrupt reason, yet bring us to that pass to acknowledge we had reason to be so moved; to move our faculties one by another as wheels in a watch; to present spiritual things with such an evident light as engages our understandings to believe that which they would not believe before, and our wills to embrace that which our affections gainsay? It must therefore be a fruit of divine skill since it is a fruit of divine teaching, John 6:45.

(4.) There is a greater wisdom in it than in the creation of the world. The higher the work rises, the more of skill appears. It is a divine art to make man to live the life of plants in his growth, the life of beasts in his sense, the life of angels in his mind; more it is then to make him live the life of God in his grace. Man in his body partakes of earth, in his soul of heaven, in his grace of the heaven of heavens, of the God of heaven. The grace in the new birth is nearer the likeness of God than the figure of men in the first birth. God therefore does more observe the numbers and measures in the second creation than he did in the first. Man was the most excellent piece in the lower creation, therefore more of art in the framing of him than in the whole celestial and elementary world. The glorious bodies of sun, moon, and stars had not such marks upon them. The nearer resemblance anything has to God, the more of wisdom as well as power is signified in the make of it.

(5.) The holiness of God is seen in this work. The day of God's power breaks not upon us in the change of our wills, without his appearance in 'the beauties of holiness,' Psalms 110:3. The Spirit is called a spirit of holiness, not only as he is the efficient, but as he is the pattern, and like fire transforms into his own nature; for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The law in the tables of

stone was an image; the law in the heart is an extract of God's holiness. Our first creation in a mutable state was according to his own image, Genesis 1:26. Our second creation is more exactly like him, in a gracious immutability. The holiness in Christ's human nature was an effect of the holiness of God; the holiness we have then in resemblance to Christ, must be a fruit of the same perfection. If we are renewed according to his image, it must be according to his holiness. To be merciful and just, is to have a moral image; to be holy, is to have a divine. The apostle intimates this in his exhortation, we must be holy in serving him, because he was holy in calling us: 1 Peter 1:16, 'As he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy,' &c. In this respect, God calls himself, not only a holy one, but the holy one of Israel: Isaiah 43:15, 'I am the Lord your holy one, the creator of Israel, your king.' He is not only holy in himself, but displays his holiness in them, by an act of a new creation. By creator is not meant, his being the creator of them, as he is of all, even of wicked men and devils; but implies a peculiar relation to them, as distinguished from others. He is the creator of devils, holy in his actions towards devils, but not their holy one by any inward renovation, or consecrating them to himself, as he is the holy one of Israel. As he is a God in covenant, he is our God, therefore our God as he is a holy God, as well as he is a powerful God, communicating the one as well as the other in a covenant way, therefore the prophet Habakkuk joins them both together, 'O Lord my God, my holy one,' Habakkuk 1:12. His holiness is no less necessary for the felicity of his people, than his mercy and power. What happiness could his mercy move, his wisdom contrive, or his power effect, without the communication of his holiness? Mercy could not of itself fit a man for it, nor power give a man possession of it, without holiness attiring him with all those graces which prepare him for it. God, as sovereign, chose us; as merciful, pardons us; as wise, guides us; as powerful, protects us; as true, makes good his promises to us; but as holy, cleanses us from our old habits, makes us vessels of honour, filled with the savoury and delicious fruits of his Spirit, his pleasant things. The implantation of grace in the heart, is no less an effect of his holiness, than the preservation of it is, which our Saviour intimates, when in his petition for it he gives his Father rather the title of holy, than of any other attribute: John 17:11, 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name.'

6. The power of God appears in this work. 'Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind,' John 9:32; neither was it ever heard that any man could open the understanding of one that was born dark. Everything that pertains to life and godliness, of which regeneration is not the meanest, is the work of divine power: 2 Peter 1:3, 'According as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue;' glory and virtue, by a hendiadis, for a glorious virtue; and the apostle adds, that this calling was an effect of a glorious power; it is not "eis", but "dia", through glory and virtue; the same preposition "dia", which, as joined with knowledge, is translated through; as much as to say, through a glorious virtue or power, both "agete" and virtus, signifying valour and strength in their several languages. When God hardens a man, he only withdraws his grace. But a divine virtue is necessary for the cure of our hereditary disease. There is no great force required to cut a dead man, but to raise him requires an extraordinary power. We may as well deny this work to be a new creation, a resurrection, as deny it to be an act of divine power. There is a word that calls; there is also a power to work: 1 Thessalonians 1:5. 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, the power of the Holy Ghost. There was not only grace in the word, to woo, but the power of the Holy Ghost in it, to overcome the heart. There is not only an act of an almighty Spirit,

but an act of his almighty power. The hand of the Lord created the world, 'the heavens are the work of his fingers,' Psalms 8:3; but grace is the work of 'his arms,' Isaiah 53:1. It may be said of the first grace in the new birth, as it was of Reuben, Gen. 49:3, it is his 'might, the beginning of his strength, and the excellency of his power.' Though ministerial gifts were as excellent as Paul's, whose preaching was with demonstration and power, and who knew the readiest ways to men's hearts, if a man ever did, yet 'the excellency of the power was of God;' and when he brandished his spiritual weapons, they were only 'mighty through God,' 2 Corinthians 10:4. Though the declaration was his, yet the working was Christ's, Romans 15:18; none of his people are willing, till the day of his power, Psalms 110:3.

(1.) It is as great, yea, greater power, than that put forth in creation. It is as great; it is the introduction of another form, not in a way of any action or fashion, but in such a manner as was in the creation, that is, by the mighty operation of God; otherwise it could not be called a new creature though it might be called a new thing. You call not that which is made by the art or power of man, as a watch, a clock, a house, a new creature; for there is nothing of creation in them, but art and industry, setting the pieces of matter, created to their hands, together in such a form or figure. But this is called a new creature, not so much in regard of the newness of the thing, but in regard of the power that wrought it, and the manner of working it, being the same with that of creation. And being termed so, it implies the exerting an efficacious power; for creation is not brought by a cessation of action (which would be in God, if the will were only the cause of it) but the employment of an active virtue. God does not hold his hand in his bosom, but spreads it open, and applies it to an efficacious action. Since it is a new creation, it implies a creator, and a creative power, creation cannot be without both. It is a greater power expended in regeneration than in creation; more power morally in this, than physically in that. One word created the world; many words are combined for the new preparation of the heart. It is easier to make a thousand glasses, than to set together one that is dashed in pieces. It is easier with God to make a world (*quoad nos*, as to our conception, for all things are alike easy with God), and create thousands of men with his image, as bright as Adam's, than to bring that into form which is so miserably defaced.

[1.] First, In regard of the subject, sin has turned man into a beast, and omnipotence only can turn a bestial man into angelical and divine. There is a less distance between the least dust and the glorious God, than there is between the holy God and an impure sinner; sin and grace are more contrary to one another, than aliquid and nihil, something and nothing. A straw may with less power be made a star, than a corrupted sinner be made a saint. In creation, God was only to put in nature, here he is to 'put off' one that is strong, and to bring in another altogether strange and new, it is hard to bring a man off from his old stock, and as hard to make him nakedly to trust Christ. It is more difficult to make a man leave his sin, than to change his opinion, since men are more in love with habitual wickedness than with any opinion whatsoever. In regard of the indisposedness of the soul. There is some foundation for a natural religion, there being general notions of God and his attributes, which would administer some conclusions that he was to be feared and revered; and according to these notions many cheeks of conscience, which would induce men to some moral behaviour towards God. But in the setting our hearts right to God, and creating them in a mediator, there was not the least dust in nature to build upon. In the creating of Adam's body, there was some pre-existent matter, the dust of the ground, whereof his body has by a divine power made and organised; but we meet with no pre-existent matter for the formation of the soul,

which made him a rational creature; that indeed was the breath of God, not engendered by any concurring cause in nature. There is no pre-existent matter in the creature, of which this image is formed, though there be a pre-existent subject to receive the impression of it; it is not the rearing anything upon the foundation of nature, but introducing a nature wholly new, which speaks almightytness. In regard of the contradiction in the subject. The stream of man's natural reason, the principles, of self, whereby he is guided, run counter to it, there is a pride of reason which will not stoop to the gospel, which in man's wisdom is counted foolishness. Man is an untamed heifer, a wild ass that snuffs up the wind, full of hatred to the ways of God, guided by gigantic lusts, which make as great a resistance as a mountain of brass; stoutness of heart, strong prejudices against the law of God, fierceness of affection, drinking iniquity like water, universal madness, resisting the spirit, hare-brained imaginations; frowardness in the will, forwardness to evil, perversity against good; can anything, less than an almighty power, make a universal cure? It is more easy to make men stoop to some victorious prince, and become his vassals, than to bring men to a submission to God and his laws, which they entertain with contempt and scorn. Nothing obeyed God's word in the creation; though it contributed not to his design, yet it could not oppose him, it could not swell against him, because it has nothing. But every sinner is rebellious, disputes God's commands, fortifies himself against his entrance, gives not up himself without a contest. This pride is hereditary, it bore sway in the heart ever since Adam's fall, and has prescription of as long a standing as the world to plead for possession. What but infinite power can fling down this pride at the foot of the cross, make the heart strike its swelling sail to Christ, and become nothing in itself, that Christ may be all life in him, and all righteousness to him? It is only possible to God to make a camel, with this bunch on its back, pass through a needle's eye; no less than divine power can bring down these armies of opposite imaginations, which have both multitude and strength (and no man knows either their number or strength), and the whole frame of contradiction against the grace of Christ. Our Saviour intimates this creative power in that thanksgiving to his Father: Matthew 11:25, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,' &c. Christ, in all his addresses to his Father, used attributes and titles suitable to the business he insisted on. The revelation of divine knowledge to babes, the moulding their hearts to receive it, was an act of God as he is Lord of heaven and earth, putting forth an infinite power in the forming of it. If God were the author of grace in the hearts of those babes, persons better disposed, and nearer the kingdom of heaven, as he was Lord of heaven and earth, then there must be some greater power than that of the creation of the world put forth to conquer the wise and prudent, whose wisdom and prudence stands armed in the breaches of nature to beat off the assaults of the gospel.

[2.] In regard of the opposition of the present possessors. The chasing out an armed devil, that has kept the palace in peace so long, must be by a power superior to his own, Luke 11:21-22. This great Goliath has his armour about him, has had long possession and dearest affections; the impulses of natural concupiscence take his part; he has his alluring baits, his pleasing proposals; the world and the flesh are linked with him in a league to hinder the restoration of the soul to Christ, and the restoration of God's image to the soul. A threefold cord is not easily broken. It must be a power superior to those three great posters in conjunction, that must bind the strong man; and casting him out, and spoiling his goods, are acts of power, Matthew 12:29. Satan is too strong to be easily cast out, and the flesh loves him too dearly to be easily divorced from him; he is never like to lay down his arms by persuasions; though all the angels in heaven should entreat him, he would not give up one foot of his empire. Nay, though what God does propose has a greater

weight of goodness, pleasure, and profit in itself, than what those three great impostors can offer, yet, since reason is weak and mightily corrupted under the conduct of sense, which has an alliance with Satan's proposals, and first sucks them in, it is not like to meet with any entertainment, as being against the interest of the flesh; and the will being backed with two such powerful seconds, as Satan and the world, to assist it in its refusals. Indeed, if he that is in the regenerate, were not greater and more powerful than he that is in the world, they would not be able to resist his allurements and subtilties, 1 John 4:4. The triumphs of Christ at his ascension declare his power in his acquisition; with a strong hand he broke the chain of sinners, and 'led captivity captive' before he gave gifts to men, Psalms 68:18. He does the like in giving grace to the heart; he rides upon his white horse in the power of almighty grace, when he conquers the enmity in the soul, as well as when he overcomes the enemies of his church, Revelation 6:2.

(2.) It is a power as great as that which wrought in the resurrection of Christ. It is considerable how loftily the apostle sets it out: Ephesians 1:19-20, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.' Exceeding greatness of his power, "huperthallon", with an hyperbole, according to the working or efficaciousness of his mighty power, noting the infusion of faith in the soul by a powerful impression, 'according to the working of the might or strength.' One word was not enough to signify the great power working: it is strength with a greater edge upon it; as when a man would fetch a mighty blow, he stirs up all his strength, sets his teeth on edge to summon all his spirits to assist his arm. The power of God in creation of nature is never in the whole Scripture set forth so magnificently as his power in the creation of grace is in this place. The apostle picks not out any examples of God's power in his ordinary works, or that power in lesser miracles which exceeded the power of nature, to illustrate this power by. He does not say, It is that power whereby we work miracles or speak with tongues: no; neither is it that power whereby our Saviour wrought such miracles when he was in the world. It is a more illustrious power than the giving sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, yea, or life to a putrefied carcass, this is an extraordinary power. But yet this gracious power is higher than all this, for it is as great as that which wrought the two greatest miracles that ever were acted in the creation as great as the raising Jesus Christ perfectly dead in the grave, and having the weight of the sin of the world upon him, and as great as that power which, after the raising of him, set him in his human nature at his right hand, above principalities and powers, above the whole angelical state, as much as to say, As great as all that power which wrought the whole scene of the redemption, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone. It is such an unconquerable power, whereby God brings about all his decrees which terminated in Christ. Some say this power is not exercised in the begetting faith, but in the faithful after faith is begun. It is very strange that a less power is necessary to beget, than to preserve a thing after it is brought into being. And the same power is requisite to raise the heart of the most moral man under heaven out of the grave of corrupted nature, as well as those that are furthest in their dispositions from God. As, had not our Saviour had the weight of the sins of men upon him, had he been dead but an hour or two, lain in the grave with a little loose or light sand cast upon him, it would have required infinite power to have restored him to life. The apostle mentions this in other places, though not so highly as in this: Romans 6:4 'That like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.' It must be understood thus. Even so we, being raised up by the glory of the Father, should walk in newness of life. And it may be

partly the meaning of the apostle Peter, 1 Peter 1:3, 'Who has begotten us to a lively hope by, or through, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' not only as the foundation of our hopes, but by a power conformable to that which raised Christ from the dead. I would only by the way note, that this infers a higher operation than merely an exhortation and suasion; for would any man say of a philosopher that had taught him morality, that he had displayed in him the exceeding greatness of his power, only upon the account of advising and counselling him to reform his manners, and live more soberly and honestly in the world? Our Saviour esteemed this one thing greater than all the other miracles he wrought, and declared himself to be the Christ more by this than by any other. When John sent to know who he was. he returns no other account than the list of his miracles: 'The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached,' Luke 7:20. That which brings up the rear as the greatest is, 'the poor "euangelidzontai", are evangelised;' it is not to be taken actively of the preaching of the gospel, but passively, that they were wrought upon by the gospel, and became gospelled people, transformed into the mould of it, else it would bear no analogy to the other miracles; the deaf hear, and the dead were raised; they had not exhortations to hear and live, but the effects were wrought in them; so those words import not only the preaching of the gospel to them, but the powerful operation of the gospel in them. This greatest miracle in the catalogue is the only miracle our Saviour has left in the world since the cessation of all the rest.

I have insisted the longer upon these perfections in God apparent in this work.

1. To stir up every renewed person to a thankful frame towards God, that he should engage his choicest attributes for the good of a poor creature. To what purpose did the apostle so long and so highly speak of the power of God in raising them from a spiritual death, but that they should acknowledge it, and admire God for it? It cannot but raise high admirations and adorations of God, to consider how mercy moved for them, sovereignty called them out, wisdom modelled them, holiness cleansed them, and power framed them.
2. To stir up deep humility. It is a plain declaration of our miserable estate by nature, and the difficulty of emerging out of it, impossible for any creature to effect. Had not God been infinitely merciful, wise, holy, true, and omnipotent, and put forth his power to free men from a slavery to sin, not a man had been able to escape out of it; and these two, admiration of God, and humiliation of self, are the two great acts of a Christian, which set all other graces on work. Mercy speaks us very miserable, wisdom declares us fools, holiness unclean, and power extremely weak.
3. How mightily will it give a ground to the exercise of faith! He that is deeply sensible of this work of holiness and power in him, cannot but trust God upon his deed, as well as before he did upon his word. As you go to the promises without you, consider also the counterpart of the promise within you, and the efficacy of that power which wrought it. You have a ground of faith within you; the power extends to every one wherein this work is wrought: 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;' this the apostle speaks to all the believing Ephesians.
4. Therefore look much into yourselves by way of examination, to observe the actions of God's wisdom, holiness, and power within you. The want of this makes many gracious persons live disconsolately. Paul was certainly diligent in his observation, since he speaks so feelingly and experimentally of it. It is the way to answer Satan's objections, silence unbelieving thoughts, when you can trace the steps and operations of them in you; it would make you strive for an increase of

this work of regeneration, that you may feel in yourselves more evidences of the holiness and power of God.

5. Those that want it may well despair of attaining it by themselves and their own strength. Divine wisdom and power are exerted in this work, and men may as well think themselves able to raise a dead man, yea, Christ from the grave, and set him at the right hand of God, as do this by their own strength. If we want an eye or a hand, all the creation cannot furnish us with either. How can any power but that which is infinite give us an eye to look to Christ within the veil, and a hand to clasp him in heaven?

6. It directs men where to seek it, and to seek it earnestly. At the hands of God, since infinite wisdom, holiness, and power, are necessary for the production of it. With earnestness, because it is so transcendent a work, has so many perfections of God shining in it, that creature-strength and wisdom is utterly unable to frame and raise it; and with hopes too, if they earnestly seek it, since God has hereby declared himself infinitely loving, in the combination of so many attributes for the effecting of it. Plead, therefore, the glory of God in these his attributes, and if God give you a heart to seek it, it is a probable argument he will give you that grace which he has given you a heart to desire.

IV. Quest. How God does this?

1. This work is secret, and therefore difficult to be described. The effects are as obvious to a spiritual sense, as the methods of it obscure to our understandings; secret as the original of winds, sensible as the sound and bluster of them, John 3:8. If a dead man were raised, he would not know the manner how his soul returned into the body, how it took its former place, and made up a new union, yet he would know that he lives and moves. A gracious soul knows that he was carnal, and now spiritual, blind, and that he now sees. He finds strength instead of weakness, inclinations to good instead of opposition, sweetness in the ways of God instead of bitterness. The methods of grace are obscure as those of nature: Ecclesiastes 11:5, 'Who knows the way of the spirit, or how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child? even so thou knows not the works of God who makes all.' The manner of the formation of Christ in the soul is as undiscernible as the formation of a child, or the manner of Christ's conception in the womb of the virgin, both which are fearful and wonderful, as it is said of the first, Psalms 139:14, 'Who can declare his generation' Isaiah 53:8; that is, the generation of Christ, either in his person or in his people. We cannot give a satisfactory account of the natural motions of our souls, how one faculty commands another, how the soul governs the several parts of the body, what the nature of the action of our mind is in contemplation and reflection, how our wills move the spirits in the body, whereby the members are acted in their motion, and the functions of life performed. Much more undiscernible are the supernatural methods of the Spirit of God. We know ourselves heirs to the corruption of the first Adam by the inbeing of it, the light of the grace of the second Adam discovers itself in the soul, but the manner of the descent of either is not easily to be determined. The loadstone's attracting of iron is the best representation of this work; the soul, like that, moves sensibly, cleaves strongly to God; but wherein this virtue consists, how communicated, both in that of nature and this of spirit, dazzles the eye of reason.

2. Yet this is evident, that it is rational; that is, congruous to the essential nature of man. God does not deal with us as beasts, or as creatures destitute of sense, but as creatures of an intelligent

order. Who is there that believes in Christ in such a manner as heavy things fall to the earth, or light things fly up to the air, or as beasts run at the beck of their sensual appetite, without rule or reason? If the Spirit of God wrought so upon man, this were to lay our faculties asleep, not to act them, but to act only upon them; this were to invert the natural order by creation, to raze out the foundations of virtue, and deny the creature the pleasure of his condition, who, according to such a manner of operation, could not understand his own state, no more than a brute can the harmony of music, or the pleasing variety of colours. But grace perfects our souls, possesses them with new principles, moves one faculty by another, like the motions of the wheels in a clock or watch; like the common course of providence, wherein he orders all affairs according to the dependence of them one upon another by creation, without making any inroad upon the natural rights of any creature, but preserving them entire, unless in some miraculous action. He diffuses a supernatural virtue into the soul, not to thwart it in that course of working he appointed it in the creation, but to move it agreeably to its nature as a rational being. As the sun conveys a celestial virtue upon the plants, drawing them forth by its influence according to their several natures, so the Holy Ghost introduces a supernatural principle into men, whereby they act as reasonable creatures in a higher strain. What methods our Saviour used in the first declaration of the gospel, he uses in the propagation of it in the hearts of men. The same reason that is used in writing the indenture is used in writing the counterpart. He might, by his omniscient wisdom, have found the way to the most secret corner of every man's heart, and by his power have set up what standard he pleased in every part of the castle, without proposing the gospel in the way of miracles and arguments; but he transacts all that affair in such a manner, that men might be moved in a rational way to their own happiness. He required a rational belief, as he gave rational evidences: John 10:37, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not;' that is, the works that none but one empowered by God could do. God, that requires of us a reasonable service, would work upon us by a reasonable operation. God therefore works by way of a spiritual illumination of the understanding, in propounding the creature's happiness by arguments and reasons, and in a way of a spiritual impression upon the will, moving it sweetly to the embracing that happiness, and the means to it which he does propose; and indeed without this work preceding, the motion of the will could never be regular.

God does this by a double work.

1. Upon the understanding.

2. Upon the will.

1. Upon the understanding. The opening the eyes precedes the conversion from darkness to light, in God's operation as well as in the apostles' commission, Acts 26:18. The first appearance of life, when God raises the soul, is in the clearness and distinctness of its knowledge of God, Hosea 6:2-3. And the apostle, in his exhortation to the Romans, tells them the way for the transformation of their souls was by the renewing of their minds: 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds,' Romans 12:2. The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawning of the day, before the heat of the sun be felt. As the action of our sense is to sensible objects, so is that of our soul to spiritual. Our eye first sees an object before our hearts desire it, or our members move to it; so there is an apprehension of the goodness of the thing proposed, before there be any motion of our wills to it; so God begins his work in our minds, and terminates it in our wills. In regard of this, as a

state of nature is set forth under the term of darkness, so a state of grace is often termed light, that being the first work in the new creation, as it was the first word of command in the old, 'Let there be light,' 2 Corinthians 4:6, Colossians 3:10, and is therefore called a renewing 'in knowledge,' or unto knowledge or acknowledgement, "anakainoumenon eis epignosin". If you consider the Scripture, you will find most of the terms whereby this is set forth to us have relation to the understanding. The gospel itself is called knowledge, Luke 1:77, wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:30. What faculty in man is appointed for the apprehending of a science to gain wisdom, but the understanding? That whereby we receive the gospel is called 'the spirit of the mind,' 'the eyes of the understanding' and 'sight,' which is put before believing: John 6:40, 'Every one which sees the Son, and believes on him.' The work of grace is called 'revelation,' Galatians 1:16, 'illumination,' Ephesians 1:18, 'translation from darkness to light,' 'opening the heart.' The action of our minds being enlightened, is called 'comprehending', Ephesians 3:18, and 'knowledge,' 2 Peter 1:2. All respect the understanding as the original wheel which God primarily sets in order, from whence he does influence secondarily all the other faculties which depend upon its guidance, God preserving hereby the order which he instituted in nature. Therefore, when the understanding savingly apprehends the deformity of sin, the will must needs hate it; when it apprehends the mercy of God, and the beauty of holiness, the will must needs love him, and the higher the degrees of this saving illumination are in the mind, the stronger and firmer are the habits and acts of grace in the will. This illuminative act of the Spirit is before, prior natura, the other of inclining the will, for the understanding is first exercised about the word, as verum, true, before the will is concerned in it as good. The understanding takes in the light of the gospel, which, by the working of the Spirit, is reflected upon the will, whereby it is changed into the image of Christ, whose gospel it is: 2 Corinthians 3:18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.' The first act is of the mind, which is the eye of the soul; where the apostle intimates, that the whole progress, as well as the first change, is wrought in this manner. This is wrought,

1. By removing the indisposition and prejudices which naturally are in the mind. As a wise physician which orders his medicines for the removing of the principal humour. Chains of darkness must be broken, films upon the eye must be removed, which hinder the act of vision; for what the eye is to the body, that the understanding is to the soul. The darkness of ignorance is promised in the covenant to be scattered: 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them,' Jeremiah 31:34. This being a law in the inward parts, the eye must be cleared to read it, as well as the heart cleansed to obey it. The object being spiritual, requires a spiritual disposition in the faculty for the reception of it. This is called in Scripture a giving eyes to see, and ears to hear, Deuteronomy 29:4, and the revealing things not only by the word, but by the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:10, which, in regard of rectifying the reasons and judgments of men, is called a 'spirit of judgment,' Isaiah 4:4, 'and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof; by the spirit of judgment. and the spirit of burning:' a spirit of judgment, as it is light in the understanding, removing the darkness, a spirit of burning, as it is heat in the heart, thawing the hardness. It reduces the mind into a right order, and teaches it to judge between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, the want of which is the cause of sin; whence sins are called "agnoemata", Hebrews 9:7, errors, as arising from error in judgment. Since the mind is hued with fogs, and incapable to perceive the splendour of divine truths, God acts upon the mind by an inward virtue, causing the word proposed to be mixed with an act of faith, which he begets in the soul, whereby it apprehends the excellency of that state presented to it in the gospel. As there is a manifestation of

his name in the word, so there is an operation of his grace, an internal teaching by God, as well as an external by the gospel; the proposal of the word by man, the opening and fitting the heart by God: John 6:45, 'Every man that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me'. Christ taught all by his ministry, the Father only some by his Spirit. Learning of God goes before coming to Christ, and those two acts are plainly distinguished: Isaiah 6:9-10, 'Hear and not understand.' The lock of their minds was to be opened, as well as that of their ears; the prophet's voice could unlock the one, the Spirit only had the key of the other. Men may enlighten as moral causes, God only as the efficient cause, to root out the inward indisposition. The Spirit also removes the prejudices against Christ as undesirable, against holiness as troublesome, takes down the strength of corrupt reasonings, pulls down those idols in the mind and false notions of happiness, out-reasons men out of their inward thoughts of a happiness in sensual pleasures, pride of life, mammon of honour or wealth, which are the root of our spiritual disease, and first to be cured. In this there is a manifest difference between the working of Satan and the operation of God; he sets his battery against the affections, because the entry is there easiest; God breaks in upon the understanding, which, being the chief fort, will quickly be a means to reduce the lesser citadels. And when the work begins in removing the blindness, it is the way to a true conversion; when it begins only in the affections, it is a prognostic of a quick starting aside. In an outward exhortation, God acts suitably to our nature, since we are endued with understanding and will; but in acting upon us within, he does remedy the vice of our nature. since our reason and will are corrupted.

(2.) It is wrought by bringing the mind and the object close together. Sight is produced in a blind man by drawing off the scales from his eyes, and the recourse of spirits to the eye necessary for sight; besides this, there must be outward light, and objects coloured by that light; and from the eye so disposed within, and the thing discovered without, arises the action of sight. So from the preparation of the understanding, and the application of the object, arises this action of spiritual vision. There is a double opening, one of the gospel, the other of the understanding; our Saviour did both, he 'opened the Scriptures,' Luke 24:32, and 'opened their understandings,' Luke 24:45, that there might be a mutual entrance, that the word might dwell in their hearts, and their hearts have admission into the Word. The Spirit shows the great things of the gospel to the soul: John 11:14, "anangelei", 'He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you,' not in general, but bring them near to them, to make them view 'and know the things that are freely given to them of God,' 1 Corinthians 2:12, the benefits of the death and resurrection of Christ. He repeats them again and again, that there may be an evidence in the mind that they are the royal gifts of God. There is a knowledge, before this work of the Spirit, but as of things at a distance. Many know the things proposed in the gospel, but they know it not as a glorious gospel, nor see the wonders in this law, till the Spirit brings that and the faculty close together. As a man may discern a statue or picture at a distance, but till the eye and the objects meet close together, it cannot discern the beautiful workmanship upon them with any affection to them. Not that a man knew nothing, or knows new reasons of those things which he knew before; but there is a nearer, and therefore clearer, representation of them, which is demonstratio ostensiva, whereby he knows them in another manner than he did before. As a man may know the promises before, but they were not brought so near to him as to taste them; taste being an addition to knowledge, whereby a man knows that sensibly which before he only knew notionally. It is one thing to know a mechanical instrument, and another to know it in the operation of it, when it is applied to its proper use. It is like a man that has his understanding more cleared by seeing mathematical demonstrations, and lines drawn,

than by all the rules of art in his head.

(3.) By fixing the mind upon the subject so closely presented. The Spirit settles that light and the object so in the mind, that it can no more blow it out than puff out the sparklings of a diamond, or than an artist endued with the habit of some art can divest himself of his skill. Many men have some convictions of truth, but flashy and uncertain, and which slip from their minds. But when the Spirit opens the heart, it holds the object to the mind, and the mind to the object, starts one holy thought after another about the truth it has darted in, makes the mind peer about it, and take notice of every lineament of that truth that we eye, and those thoughts lie down, rise up, and walk with us. When Lydia's heart was opened, she 'attended to the things spoken by Paul,' Acts 16:14, her whole heart cleaved to them. In this respect the Spirit is a remembrancer, making the soul ponder and over again with all intenseness of mind the goodness and truth of those things in the gospel which are brought unto it, that the heart is, as Paul was, 'bound in spirit to Jerusalem,' Acts 20:22. The thoughts of that journey did so haunt him and follow him, as the shadow does the body, that no arguments of friends, nor fear of danger, could divert him; the soul is bound by them, one consideration overtaking another, and all at work beating upon the mind. Hence consideration is put before conversion: Ezekiel 18:28, 'Because he considers and turns away from all his transgressions.' And it is called the 'engrafted word,' fastened to the soul as a graft to the stock; when the heart is opened by the Spirit, the word is inserted in and bound to it, and at last the heart becomes one with the word, and grows up with it.

(4.) By bringing the soul to an actual reasoning and discourse upon the sight of the evidence. God convinces the judgment with reasons proper to evidence the truth and goodness of what he does propose, and that with pregnant and prevailing demonstrations, which give a competent satisfaction; therefore called the 'demonstration of the Spirit and power,' 1 Corinthians 2:4, that is, a spiritual and powerful demonstration. When the eye is opened, and the revelation made, and held close and fast to the soul with a divine demonstration, that this is the only means to elevate him to a high condition, and at last bring him to a blessed immortality, the understanding is moved to compare the force of those arguments, and consequently judges that true which before it counted false and foolishness, and comes by the help of this spiritual light to reason spiritually, and spiritually to discern the proposition made to it. It compares its natural state with the happy state offered to it, its own ignorance with that light, its own misery with that mercy. God will not have man, that is so far above a beast, do anything without reason; for this would be to do it brutishly, though the thing done were never so good. When men act as men, they follow the judgment of the best reason they can. And shall man, that was created a rational creature, be renewed without reason, when the very work is to advance him to the true state of a reasonable creature, and his reason is enlightened by the Spirit, that it may rightly judge of the demonstrative arguments it offers to him? Is there not as much reason for the guidance of the will in the highest concern, as for the conduct of it in affairs of a lower sphere? Man was first endued with reason, that he might rationally serve God; and his depraved reason is reformed, that he may rationally return to God. If, therefore, he act like a man in other things, he does not surely act like a brute in this; but the Spirit excites that reason he has enlightened to judge of those excellent things he does propose, and the strength of the arguments he backs them with, which are so clear and undeniable that they cannot be refused by a mind divested of those indispositions which drew out before a contempt of them. The change in the will being an election and choice, cannot be made

without convincing and satisfying reasons which induce it to that choice, and justify the election it has made. That can hardly be called faith, when a man believes that which he does not think upon the highest reason was his duty to believe. And indeed what man is there that cannot allege some reason why he is induced to this or that act? God moves men by presenting things to the understanding under the notion of good, honest, profitable; and when the understanding is enlightened to judge of things in some measure under the same notion that God proposes them, a man's own reason cannot but upon a view of them assent unto them, and that assent is followed with a change, according to the degrees of that illumination, if it be a saving one. Upon this account that our own reason is excited to judge of the proposal, our faith can no more be said to be a human faith, or the work to proceed from our own power, than it can be said to be sensitive because it comes by hearing; for though faith depends upon hearing and reasoning, as upon natural powers, yet the light whereby the faculties are acted is wholly supernatural, and from the Spirit of God.

(5.) Hence follows a full conviction of the soul. Both the knowledge of its own misery, and the amiableness of the gospel offer, whence issues a weariness under the one and desires for the other. By this enlightening, the soul sees sin in its empire, God in his wrath, Satan in his tyranny, and the hardness of the stone within him; he sees the law accusing, sin triumphing, heaven shut and hell open, God ready to judge him, and his soul every way deplorable. He sees also in the gospel how Christ has expiated sin, answered the demands of the law, stills the clamours of conscience, satisfied the justice of God by bearing his wrath; hereupon the soul closes with Christ, and is born again. Here are heaps of sin that cannot be numbered, on the other side are riches of mercy that cannot be reckoned, there is sin to damn, here is a Christ to save; heaven and hell, sin and Christ, damnation and salvation, are presented in their proper colours, and pressed upon the understanding; which beholds all by a clear light. And thus, by the illuminative virtue of the Spirit, the soul is laid at God's foot in a sense of its misery, and then drawn into Christ's arms by a sense of his grace. This is wrought by a connective persuasion, for so the word "elegchein" signifies, John 16:8, which causes both a sight of sin and a sense of righteousness, and produces a full assent in the understanding.

2. The next faculty wrought upon is the will. The will is inclined, as well as the understanding enlightened, whereby spiritual things are approved with a spiritual affection, the same hand that darts light into the mind, puts heat into the will. After the act of understanding has preceded in a serious consideration, and thorough conviction, the act of the will, by virtue of the same Spirit, follows in a delightful motion to the object proposed to it; it is conducted by light, and spirited by love; the understanding hands the object to the will, as necessary to be embraced, and the arms of the will are opened to receive it, as the eyes of the mind are to behold it. For the understanding of this, take these propositions.

Prop. 1. There seems to me to be an immediate supernatural work upon the will, as well as upon the understanding: not that the understanding is only enlightened, and the will follows the dictate of that without any further touch of the Spirit upon it; but the will, as it is the will, and therefore cannot be forced, there is need of a moral cause which may determine it according to its nature, and draw it by the cords of a man. When a master instructs a youth in his trade, he does it by arguments morally; when he holds his hand with the instrument in it, and directs the motion, he acts physically; so does the Spirit exhort us to spiritual motion, telling us inwardly which is the way, that

we may walk in it, and take our wills by the hand, as it were, and lead them in the way they are to go. A nurse's tongue and exhortation is not enough to make a child to go, because of the weakness of its limbs; nor the light in the understanding sufficient to move the will, wherein there is an habitual weakness and contradiction. How did God work up the wills of the Egyptians to lend their jewels to the Israelites, but by some immediate touch. Their reason might have furnished them with many more arguments against it than it could for it. They knew the Israelites had been highly injured, and that very lately, too; that they could not but have a deep sense of their oppression, and intentions of revenge, as far as their power extended. They knew that the Israelites prepared for flight, and might more than conjecture that they intended never to return or send their jewels to them; for what need had they of so many goods barely to sacrifice in the wilderness? How were their wills thus banded against so many arguments against this action, and without any strong reasons to move them to consent to such a desire of the Israelites? How must this be but by the efficacious power of God, not forcing their wills, but taming their fierceness, softening them by a secret instinct, and exciting them to a grant of the Israelites' request? The apostle says, God 'gives to will.' If there were not a particular act upon the will, it had better been said, God gives to understand and know, and man to will and do. After the evidence set up in the understanding, there is a secret touch upon the will, opening and enlarging it to run the way that is proposed in an excellent and charming manner. As the power of God raises every part of Christ, so the same power raises every faculty of the soul; it was also a physical power, since mere exhortation would never have effected it.

(1.) The Scripture intimates this in the terms whereby it signifies this work to us, as creation, resurrection, regeneration, new birth, all which denote some physical operation distinct in each faculty in the new creation, as there was in the first; not only the law in the mind to direct, but the heart of flesh to comply, is God's act. The fleshy heart is wrought by him, as well as the knowledge of the mind lighted by him. In generation something is removed, another thing introduced; in regeneration then of the will, there is consonant to that an eradication of corrupt habits, and an implantation of gracious ones. It is called a 'giving a heart,' a 'circumcision of the heart to love God,' Deuteronomy 30:6. Love is an act of the will, though it supposes a knowledge of the amiable object in the understanding. If faith be principally in the will, as I think it is, as to consent; and the words leaning, resting, coming rather note an act of the will than an act of the understanding; there is then an operation of God upon the subject, viz. the will, in the implanting of it.

(2.) The will is corrupted as well as the understanding. The works of the flesh issue from both; if the corruption were only in the understanding, then that being removed, the will would be regenerated. As in a watch, if the fault be only in one wheel, that being mended, the whole frame is rectified; but if there be a flaw in all, the mending of one, though the principal one, which moves the rest, will not set every wheel right, without a particular application of art to restore them to their due frame. Was not original righteousness subjectively in the will as well as in the mind? Did not a stoutness in the will succeed in the place of that righteousness, as well as darkness in the place of light? Must not there then be a habit of mollifying grace bestowed upon the one as well as a habit of enlightening truth set up in the other; an inclination to good in the will, and an aversion from evil, as well as the knowledge of both? The corrupt proneness in the will is the cause that it is easily excited to evil by the persuasion of the devil and the world; and is there not need of an inward rectitude in the will to bias it to a free embracing and close adherence to the good proposed to it by

God, that his grace may be efficacious in every part? This work is a quickening a man under a universal spiritual death; the will was dead, as well as the mind dark, which must have life instead of its deadness, as the other has light instead of its darkness; and if they be two distinct faculties, then there are two distinct acts of the Spirit, though they depend one upon another. There is no less power requisite to make us spiritually willing than to make us spiritually knowing, since the corrupt habits in our wills are rather stronger than the prejudices in our understandings; therefore there seems to be a distinct act in removing the resistance from the one as well as expelling the darkness from the other. As the Spirit takes away the wisdom that was sensual, earthly, and devilish, so it divests the will of that disposition whereby it was enamoured on that devilish wisdom of the flesh, and makes it willing to cut off the right hand and right eye, to deny sin, which is the very self, and engage in an irreconcilable quarrel against all that which engrossed its choicest affections..

(3.) If the understanding has such a power, by virtue of its illumination, without an act also of the Spirit upon the will, and a particular application of the understanding to the will, and the will to the understanding, why did not Adam's will follow his understanding? His understanding was clear, without darkness; his affections first made the rebellion; sense was the leader, and the will the follower. Eve's understanding was not silent under the temptation of Satan, her knowledge was actuated in that speech, 'God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die,' Genesis 3:3. She cites the word, her understanding must needs concur with it, unless it were corrupted and darkened before the fall. Where lay the resistance? In the affections, and the will which sided with them. Why may not the will, possessed with those evil habits, resist the understanding imperfectly restored to its primitive light, as well as Adam's will did where there was no scale or film upon the eye of his soul? And likely his affections had kept their due order, if the will had preserved its due dependence upon reason, and its sovereignty over the sensitive part. Do we not find that our wills are oftener in contradiction to the true sentiments of our understanding, and in conjunction with the affections, than in a due subordination to the one and commanding over the other? Is it not frequently seen that men of much light, knowledge, and gifts of reason, answer not the end of that illumination, and are without a will to turn to God? Besides, since corruption came in by the way of the affections, when the understanding was clear, how can regeneration of the will come in by the illumination of the understanding, without a particular operation upon the will and affections? If it be said, the will follows the dictate of the understanding, why did it not so in Adam? If we were perfectly restored, as Adam was in innocence, without the grace of God in our wills, as well as light in our understandings, we were not like to keep up in due order.

(4.) God in his other creatures gives not only a light and fancy in nature, but endues them with such principles that incline them to their motion, as connatural to them. Why then, shall we not think, since the will is an habitual power, that when the will is moved to supernatural ends, it is endued with such a supernatural habit, whereby it may be sweetly and readily moved to the chief good as its proper object? Are there not corrupt habits in the will, which the Scripture calls 'lusts,' and 'the works of the flesh,' Galatians 5:19-21, which the Spirit mortifies as well as those of the mind? Why not, then, gracious habits set up in the room of the other in this faculty as well as in the other?

(5.) If there were not a physical operation and habits in the will, what would become of infants, who cannot in that state be renewed without such a kind of working? They are not capable of moral exhortation, we cannot conceive any other way the Spirit has to work upon them, but by such a physical operation, putting habits into their wills, whereby they are renewed and sanctified; they are capable of the habit, though not of the act. We never find our Saviour spending any exhortations upon infants, but he took them in his arms and blessed them, and told us that of such is the kingdom of heaven; and if the kingdom of heaven be of such, there is some operation upon them different from this method of working only upon their understanding.

(6.) If there were not some operation of the Spirit upon our wills, regeneration and conversion would be more our work than God's. If the Spirit terminates his working only upon the understanding, and the will be moved by the understanding alone, without any conjunction of the Spirit in the work upon the will, then the Spirit does not immediately concur to the chiefest part of regeneration, but as it illuminates the mind; for the chief part of renewing grace is in the will; so it would be more our work than God's, if the moral only were his, and the physical operation only ours. It was in a less affair than this, wherein David blessed God for the people's willingness, offering so freely, acknowledging it indeed the people's act, but by God's overruling their wills, 1 Chronicles 29:13-14.

(7.) God is all in all in glory: 1 Corinthians 15:28, 'When Christ shall have delivered the kingdom to his Father, God then shall be all in all,' all in their understandings, all in their wills; he shall be the immediate cause of all things, and govern and dispose all things by himself, and for himself; binding the souls of all the glorified by everlasting ligatures to himself; all in all to the glorified, all light in their understanding, all love and delight in their will, objectively, efficiently. What efficacy he has in glory, shall we deny him in grace in every particular faculty?

Prop. 2. Yet this work, though immediate, is not compulsive and by force. It is a contradiction for the will to be moved unwillingly, any force upon it destroys the nature of it; if it be forced, it ceases to be will. It is not forced, because it is according to reason, and the natural motion of the creature; the understanding proposing, and the will moved to an embracing; the understanding going before with light, the will following after with love. The liberty of the will consists in following the guidance of reason; to have a liberty to go against it, is the greatest misery of the creature. That is properly constraint, when we are compelled to work contrary to the natural way of working; there is no constraint by force, but there is a kind of a constraint by love, because the Spirit accompanies this operation with so much efficacy, that instead of that sadness we should have in a thing we were forced unto, there is an unspeakable joy and contentment in the soul; it not being possible to taste so much of the love of God, to be delivered from so fearful a condemnation, to be brought to so glorious a hope, without being seized upon with much pleasure and delight. God changes the inclination of the will, but does not force it against its inclination; the will, being a rational faculty, cannot be wrought upon but rationally. Since the main work consists in faith and love, it is impossible there can be any force; no man can be forced to believe against his reason, or love against his will, or desire against his inclination. Belief is wrought by persuasion; no man can be persuaded by force. It cannot be conceived, that the will should will against the will. No man can be happy against his will, all happiness consisting in a suitableness of the object to the faculty; those things that in themselves are the greatest pleasures of the world, if they please not a man, cannot confer any happiness upon him. The Spirit never works thus, because 'where the Spirit of

the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Corinthians 3:17; he destroys not the liberty, but reduces it to will more nobly than before. Besides, the liberty of the will does not stand in indifference to this or that thing, for then the will would lose its liberty every time it has determined itself to any one thing, because after the determination it would be no longer indifferent to the other. But the liberty of the will consists in being carried out according to the dictate of the practical judgment, and not by a blind instinct. God does not deal with us as stones and logs, or slaves, whom the whip makes to do that which they hate in their hearts; but conducts us in ways agreeable to our nature; he calls, saying, 'Seek you my face;' and inclines the will to answer, 'Thy face, Lord, I will seek,' Psalms 27:8. That God who knows how to make a will with a principle of freedom, knows how to work upon the will, without entrenching upon, or altering the essential privilege he bestowed upon it; he that formed us, as a potter does his vessel, knows very well the handles whereby he may take hold of us, without making any breach in our nature.

Prop. 3. It is free and gentle. A constraint, not by force, but love, which is not an extrinsic force, but intrinsic and pleasant to the will; he bends the creature so, that at the very instant wherein the will is savingly wrought upon, it delightfully consents to its own happiness; he draws by the cords of a man, and by a secret touch upon the will makes it willing to be drawn, and moves it upon its own hinges. It is sweet and alluring; the Spirit of grace is called 'the oil of gladness;' it is a delightful and ready motion which it causes in the will, it is a sweet efficacy, and an efficacious sweetness. At what time God does savingly work upon the will, to draw the soul from sin and the world to himself, it does with the greatest willingness, freedom, and delight follow after God, turn to him, close with him, and cleave to him, with all the heart, and with purpose never to depart from him: Song of Solomon 1:4, 'Draw me, and we will run after thee.' Drawing signifies the efficacious power of grace; running signifies the delightful motion of grace; the will is drawn, as if it would not come; it comes, as if it were not drawn. His grace is so sweet and so strong, that he neither wrongs the liberty of his creature, nor does prejudice his absolute power. As God moves necessary causes, necessarily; contingent causes, contingently; so he moves free agents freely, without offering violence to their natures. The Spirit glides into the heart by the sweet illapses of grace, and victoriously allures the soul: Hosea 2:14, 'I will allure her, and speak to her heart;' not by crossing, but changing the inclination, by the all-conquering and alluring charms of love, as a man does that person whom he intends for his spouse; for to that he alludes, because in the latter part of the chapter, he speaks of the consummation of his marriage with the church: Hosea 2:16, 'In that day thou shalt call me Ishi.' In what day? In the day that he should allure her, and speak to her heart. God puts on the deportment of a lover in changing the frame of the will. The Spirit is as one that leads the way into truth (the Spirit 'shall guide you, "hodegesei", into all truth,' John 16:13); not drags; he opens the heart, not by a forcible entry, but as a key that fits every ward in the lock. The attraction of the will is much like that of iron by the loadstone, which had no motion of itself till the powerful emissions of the loadstone's virtue reached it, and then it seems to move with a kind of voluntariness; there is no force used, but a delicious virtue emitted which does, as it were, both persuade and enable it to join itself to its beloved attracter. There is a secret virtue communicated by God, which, as soon as it touches the soul, puts life and delightful motion into it, which before lay like a log. It embraces Christ as its portion, and passes a decree that it will keep his words: Psalms 119:67, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have said that I will keep thy words.'

Prop. 4. It is insuperably victorious. What the mouth of God speaks, what his will purposes, his hand does fulfil, 1 Kings 8:24. It is not a faint and languishing impression, but a reviving, sprightly, and victorious touch. As the demonstration of the Spirit is clear and undeniable, so the power of the Spirit is sweet and irresistible; both are joined, 1 Corinthians 2:4. An inexpressible sweetness allures the soul, and an unconquerable power draws the soul; there are clear demonstrations, charming persuasions, and invincible efficacy combined together in the work. He leaves not the will in indifference. If God were the author of faith only by putting the will into an indifference, though it be determined by its own proper liberty, why may not he also be said to be the author of unbelief, if by the same liberty of this indifference it be determined to reject the gospel? For in the same manner God is author of one motion of the will as well as of the other, if he does no more than leave the will in an equilibrium. This irresistibleness takes not away the liberty of the will. Our Saviour's obedience was free and voluntary, yet necessary and irresistible. He could not sin in regard of the hypostatical union, yet he had a greater aversion to sin than all the angels in heaven. Is not God freely and voluntarily good, yet necessarily so? He cannot be otherwise than good, he will not be otherwise than good. So the will is irresistibly drawn, and yet does freely come to its own happiness. The soul is brought over to God, and adheres to him, not by a necessity of compulsion, but of immutability. As the angels necessarily obey God, not by compulsion, but from an immutable love. A sinner is necessarily a servant to sin, a regenerate man necessarily a servant to God; both by a kind of necessity of nature. Our main business, then, is to see what new enlightenings there are in our minds by the Spirit in the gospel, what tastes and relishes we have of divine truths, how our wills are allured to a sincere and close compliance with the proposals of God in the gospel, what vigour is in them. This is God's method, to work first upon the understanding, then upon the will. That work which begins first in the affections, without light dawning and breaking in upon the mind, and growing up by consideration and inquiries into the gospel is to be suspected, and is not like to be durable. This is the Scripture method, and every regenerate person may find it more or less in himself.

V. The use is, 1. For instruction.

(1.) If God alone be the author and efficient of the new birth, then it does instruct us how insufficient a good education of itself is to produce this work in the soul, and how unfit to be rested on, without a further work. I doubt many may rest upon a religious education, without searching and inquiring into themselves what further work of God has been wrought upon them. God has entrusted parents with a power of instructing their children, but reserves the power of renewing grace to himself. If parents may set the object before them, God only can give them a spiritual eye to discern it; if they may inform the understanding, a divine touch only can bend the will; if they may lay the wood of spiritual lessons together, yet the fire to kindle them in the heart, and consume the lusts, must descend from heaven. Education may correct, but not extirpate the malignity of nature; good instruction, meeting with an orderly constitution, may sow the seeds of moral virtue, and restrain natural corruption, but not weed that out of our nature, or plant the root of grace, any more than the skilful management of a beast can change its natural inclination, though it may curb it. The folly bound up in the heart of a child is too strong for the wisdom of man, and is wholly to be expelled by the wisdom which comes down from heaven, set up in the heart by Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father. The little stars of precepts glittering in the mind, cannot make the young plants sprout up with their heads towards heaven, without the influence of the sun. Christ,

the Sun of righteousness, fixed in the soul by the Spirit, can do more than all the stars of moral instructions in the world. Timothy had as religious instruction from his religious mother and grandmother as any in the world, both being believers, 2 Timothy 1:5, yet Paul calls him his 'own son in the faith,' 1 Timothy 1:2, as having 'begotten him in the gospel.' Those instructions did not beget him, though they might facilitate the evangelical work which was wrought by the gospel in Paul's ministry. Therefore the apostle manifestly distinguishes between instructors and fathers: 1 Corinthians 4:15, 'Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.' He distinguishes their instructions from Christ, the efficient cause, and himself through the gospel, the instrumental cause. Yet such instruction is not to be neglected when children are capable; God may set home that by the gospel, which has been sucked in in younger years. Men may as well turn their backs upon the hearing the word, because it is insufficient without the operation of the almighty grace. Instruction and prayer should go hand in hand together; but take heed of resting upon a good education.

(2.) It instructs us that regeneration does not depend merely upon the word, if God alone be the efficient cause of it. It depends upon the inward efficacy of the Spirit. Had it depended upon the power of the apostles, or the outward demonstration of that word, they would have converted all that they had preached to, they would not have suffered any to have remained obstinate against the gospel: charity would have obliged them to the exercise of their power; and their power would have made their charity effectual. As God does seldom work without means, so means can never work without God. David had the law of God in his hand, but could not learn it without God's teaching; therefore he prays, Psalms 86:11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord: I will walk in thy truth.' And in many places of Psalms 119:1-176 he takes notice, that all spiritual knowledge comes from God, though in the way of his precepts: Psalms 119:98 'Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies'; and Psalms 119:104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding.' While we use the means, our eye should be upon God. Thomas had his fingers upon our Saviour's wounds, but his thoughts upon Christ's divinity: 'My Lord, and my God.' Food maintains the body, but by virtue of the soul animating it, and enabling it to concoct that food. The Spirit of God is the soul of the gospel, and of all means, to make them efficacious; and with this power of the Spirit the weakest means can effect more than the greatest means without it, which, indeed, can produce little or nothing. Peter's sermon, Acts ii., was but short, but improved by the Spirit to the conversion of three thousand souls. Means can do nothing of themselves to change the heart. When the disciples had two ordinances representing the death of Christ, i. e. the Passover and the Lord's supper, pride, the great enemy to regeneration, put up its head above water; they quarrelled 'who should be greatest,' Luke 22:24.

(3.) There is no reason to confide in our own purposes and resolutions, or any strength of our own, if God alone be the efficient cause of regeneration; for it depends not upon our resolves without the grace of God. Satan fears not our vows; he knows, without grace they are but as light feathers, easily to be puffed away by him; but sparks, which, without his breath, the flood of corruption in our souls would extinguish as soon as they begin to appear. How can our resolves without grace renew us, when Peter's resolve, with his inherent grace, could not defend him? who, after his boasting, when certainly he sincerely meant what he said, fell so shamefully, that he stood in need of a new conversion. How soon do we, after a transient awakening fall to nodding in our spiritual

sleep? If grace be not present with us to cure our lethargy, our purposes are as empty sails hoisted by us, the breath of the Spirit only fills with a full gale for motion. We can never 'steadfastly look into heaven, and see the glory of God,' unless we be 'full of the Holy Ghost,' Acts 7:55. Stephen's eye would have been twinkling, had not the divine Spirit fixed it. How soon will a slight blast of a temptation shake a building, which has no other foundation but the moveable sand of our own purposes, when as slight a temptation shook the image of God out of Adam with all its brightness, who was built with God's own hand, with a power also to keep himself! Adam could not be without purposes of obedience when he heard the precept, yet with a slender temptation came tumbling to the dust, and fell as low as hell. A vain confidence in our own resolutions is so far from being a cause of this spiritual birth, that it is rather a hindrance, and part of the pride of nature, that must be demolished, and to be reckoned as one of the eldest things among these old things that are to pass away. Trust not, therefore, to yourselves; look up daily for the divine influence; lean not to your own understanding, though in part enlightened; confide not in your own wills, though in part inclined to the best things, pursue nothing in your own strength.

(4.) It is an injury to God to associate any thing with him in this work, which he challenges as his own production. Would it not be a disparagement to deny him the sole efficiency in one of the noblest works of his wisdom and holiness? That he who wrought the comely fabric of the first creation by his power and wisdom, without a co-partner, or deputing any of the highest angels to bring the world into form, should not have the honour of a work which bears the stamp of a higher wisdom and power than the whole creation! That he who contrived the models of the little creatures in the world, should leave this to the foolish contrivance of any creature! Why should we imagine that the divine image, upon whom the highest blessedness of the creature depends, should be of so little value in the judgment of God's infinite wisdom, as to be turned over from the care of so wise a workman, to the capriciousness of a light and uncertain will, more blind and mutable than Fortune the heathen goddess? It is more (we have heard) to frame so excellent a piece as the new creature is, out of the rubbish of sin, than to frame the whole celestial and elementary world out of a rude mass of matter; since there is a greater gulf to be shot between corruption and grace than between nothing and the beautiful structure of heaven and earth; and, therefore, we may less disparage him, in denying him the title of creator of the world, than that of the creator of a new heart, since he has promised by his own mouth to do it with his own hand. The apostle cannot be charged with ignorance, but knew what he said in that comprehensive thanksgiving for 'all spiritual blessings in Christ;' if all, then one of the highest, the new creation, is not intended to be left out of the roll of spiritual blessings, associating none with God, as the principal, but Christ as the Mediator, conveying this grace by his Spirit, according to the orders of the Father: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' Ephesians 1:3.

(5.) See from hence how excellent a thing it is to be born again, if God be the sole efficient of it! Whatsoever God is the author of in his ordinary works, is excellent in its kind, they are all the effects of his will; this is an effect of his gracious will. Other generations are by the will of man, wherein the will of God concurs with them; this is solely by the will of God, without any concurrence of the will of man in the first work, called therefore by way of excellency, 'the faith of the operation of God,' Colossians 2:12, not a gift conveyed by angels, but his Spirit. A grain of grace of God's planting is more worth than millions of gold of man's getting; a more worthy gift

than all the gold of Ophir, which God gives to men by their industry, who shall never see his face; but this by his own Spirit in order to glory. It is a royal gift he reserves in his own hands, to bestow upon those that were his favourites in his eternal purposes; it grows not in every man's ground, neither is it sown in every man's field. The soul is more excellent than the body, not only in respect of its nature, but in respect of its immediate author. God is called particularly, 'The Father of spirits,' not of bodies, though he is so; but in the production of bodies he acts by the hand of nature, in the production of the soul by his own hand. In that work he acts by the intervention of second causes; in this, without. serving himself of any other efficient cause but his own will. If the soul, as being the only work of God, is therefore more excellent, then certainly a new-born soul is more excellent than anything in the world, in regard God is the author of it in a more peculiar manner, by the operation of his choicest affections.

(6.) If God be the efficient of regeneration, then there is a necessity of the influence of God in all the progress of grace. It is yet imperfect, the same hand that planted it must also water and dress it. There is a tough sinew left in man's will, which makes him halt after he has the new name of Israel put upon him, a weakness of faith, a coldness of love, a faintness of zeal. What he is the creator of, is nursed by his providence; what he is the new creator of, is fostered by a succession of grace. The scripture therefore appropriates all to him: he is the God that calls us, the God that anoints us, the God that carries us, the God that establishes us, the God that keeps us, and the God that perfects us. He is the author of grace in its first issue, its fruitful sproutings, its delicious ripenings, it depends upon him in creation, preservation, augmentation, as well as natural things depend upon him in all their progressive motions, from one degree to another, as the author of nature. When nature was most unspotted, grace was necessary to preserve and fix it in that state. Adam needed the assistance of grace with the embellishments of nature. The same power that inspires us with life, inspires us with a perpetual continuation of it. If the tide that turns the stream of the river desert it, and return to its own channel, the river will return to its natural current. Our hearts will decline, our life languish, unless fed by that supernatural efficacy which did first produce it. The plants cannot grow merely from their own internal form, nor trees bring forth their pleasant fruits without the influence of rain and sun, feeding and hatching their innate spirits, and drawing them out to make a show of themselves in flowers and fruits; and when they are brought forth, they stand in need of the same rain to fill them, the same sun to ripen them.

(7.) If God be the efficient, &c., we see whither we are to have recourse in all the exigencies of the new creature, to whom, but to the author of those beginnings of eternal life! God is all, in all parts of this glorious work: 'The God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory, make you perfect, strengthen, establish, settle you,' &c., 1 Peter 5:10. There is need of preserving, strengthening, increasing, quickening, and perfecting grace.

These you need, and these must be sought, and will be had from the same goodness and power by which you were new born.

[1.] Preserving grace.

First, God only can give it. There is a necessity of it; as God rears it, so he only can keep it from pining away. Plants will wither if the rain do not descend; the flame will be extinguished if fuel be not added. There is as much a necessity of a constant influence to keep up this new nature, as there is of the sun to preserve the horizon from that darkness which would invade it upon the

turning its face to other parts of the world. The perpetual duration of renewing grace is not essential to grace, for then Adam and the angels had stood by virtue of their grace, for nothing ever loses its essential property; but it is by an additional grace, distinct from the first grace wherein our regeneration does consist, as the preservation of the creatures in their natural beings is by an act of God, distinct from his creative act. The first grace God gives now is a bounty to his creatures, but it is further an obligation upon himself, not as it is grace, or as it is his own work, for Adam's grace which failed was brought by his fingers, inspired by his breath, but as it is a new covenant grace which alters the condition of it. God's finger wrote the law in the heart, and his breath can only blow the dust off, that would fill the engraved letters.

Secondly, God will preserve it. Job would argue with God, and ask him, 'Is it good unto thee that thou should despise the work of thine hands?' Job 10:3. Is it agreeable to his goodness and wisdom to slight and neglect the work of his own heart; not a fruit of his common liberality to the creation, but a choice fruit of his redeeming love? His common love, as he is the author of nature, preserves the old creation; much more his special love, as he is the author of the new nature, will preserve the new creation. His general goodness made the world, but his gracious goodness formed the soul; the one is more splendid than the other, therefore the effect more durable. Mercy compasses the godly about. Psalms 32:10, like bulwarks that surround a city for its defence, against the assaults of spiritual enemies. A higher providence attends man than other creatures, because he is of a more noble constitution; upon the same account a higher providence must attend the new creature, as being far more noble than mere man. God embraces all creatures in his arms with a common love as creatures, he lays the new begotten ones in his bosom by a special love. His power too is to be considered. He will not want a power to preserve that which he did not want power to new create. The power being the same that raised Christ from the dead, which raised any from their natural condition, will have the same issue, since it never suffered Christ to return to the grave again, neither will it suffer any new born soul to return to a spiritual death. Every new creature is the Father's by purpose, and by actual traction; they were his before they were Christ's. The Father draws them to Christ; and the power of Christ will be as eminent to preserve them, as the power of the Father was to draw them. Why were the creatures brought, by that instinct God put into them, into Noah's ark, but to be preserved from the destroying deluge? Why did he take pains to write the law anew in the heart, if he would suffer it to be dashed out again? If he would not preserve his own work, why did he not let the soul lie wallowing in its old filthiness, and forbear the expense of those fresh colours he has new drawn his image with? It seems to be a greater power to take off all that load of sin which lay upon you, than to preserve you from having so great a burden again upon you. It is not reasonable to think that God should be at so much cost, only to restore man to Adam's mutable condition, whereby to incur a greater condemnation.

[2.] Strengthening grace. This we need, as well as preserving grace. It is God that strengthens us in the inward man; by that strengthening grace the new creature can do all things, without it nothing. Through him we are more than conquerors over principalities and powers, Romans 8:37-38. Strength to mount up to heaven as an eagle, to run our race without weariness, to walk without fainting, to combat difficulties without sinking fears, is only to be had by waiting upon the Lord, who is the fountain whence all these flow, Isaiah 40:31, and by his grace confers a supernatural fortitude: Isaiah 40:31, 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;

they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.' Look not therefore for strength in your new nature; look for it in God, in that Spirit which first renewed you, since that glorious power is imparted to strengthen you. which was at first employed to new-create you. This was the matter of the apostle's prayer for the Colossians, and this should be ours: Colossians 1:9, Colossians 1:11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.' There is much weakness in us, a medley of lusts, an army of enemies, but the way is open for us to that glorious power, to endue us with a new vigour, which first seized upon us with an insuperable efficacy, our shattered and weakened sins shall not be able to resist that glorious power by which they could not stand the shock of when they were in their full strength. 'God will be a sun and a shield,' Psalms 84:11, a sun to dispel our darkness, a shield to secure us from darts; a sun against the allurements of the world, defeating them by a charming light; a shield against the allurements of the world, overpowering them by an irresistible force; the sun that gave us life, the shield that secures our strength. The glorious power which we need in our progress lies in the same arm which wrought our deliverance, and from thence must be fetched. It is only by him that we have strength to tread down the wicked one's temptations; and those fiery darts are made as ashes under the soles of our feet, Mal. 4:8.

[3.] We need increasing grace; and that is from God. The increase depends upon him, as well as the first planting. When we want it, he is the fountain from whence we must draw it; so did the disciples, Luke 17:5, 'Increase our faith,' or add to us faith, "prosthes hemin". Every new spring, fresh bud, spreading blossom, is an addition by his influence. When we have it, we must acknowledge his sole hand in it, so the apostle did when he saw the growth of the Thessalonian faith, and the abounding of their charity: 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 'We are bound to thank (eucharistein ofeilomen) God always for you, because that your faith grows exceedingly.' He did it by obligation: no such tie had lain upon him had God left them to increase it themselves. The new fruits you bear is from his new purging, as the first power to bear was from his planting, John 15:2. If you would thrive, it must not be by your own, but by the increases of God; 'God gives the increase,' both in the outward administration and inward operation of the gospel, 1 Corinthians 3:7. Faith, in every assent, is conducted by that power which first settled it in the heart, and without it cannot commence any higher degree. As every spark of spiritual life is by his kindling, so every sparkling of that spark is by his blowing. Look for it at God's hands, beg of him to write that law deeper, which his fingers first engraved in your hearts. It is God's being 'a dew to Israel' makes him grow up in beauty as 'the lily and the olive tree,' in strength 'cast out his roots as the cedars of Lebanon,' Hosea 14:5-7. If you would grow up as calves of the stall, you must lie under the healing wings of the Sun of righteousness: Malachi 4:2, 'Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,' &c. That Sun which by his beams conveyed into you a spiritual life, can only by the same heat influence you to a taller growth. Every drop of the knowledge of his will till you come to be filled, every mite of wisdom and spiritual understanding, is to be drawn from him only, Colossians 1:9, both the additions of knowledge and the deeper impressions and lively sproutings of what we know.

[4.] Quickening grace. This also we need. As our life, so the liveliness and activity of grace depends upon the divine influence; a divine motion is necessary to elevate our souls to those actions which are supernatural; our grace depends upon God in actu secundo, as well as actu primo. As God first puts a nature into creatures (in the exercise as well as the being) and then

quickens them by his providential concurrence in those acts suitable to their nature, which acts are therefore natural to those creatures, so by a gracious concurrence he does quicken the new nature in the soul to the exerting of gracious operations, according to that nature he has endued it with. As he tunes the strings by his skill to fit them for a divine harmony, so he enlivens them by his touch to make what music he pleases; every heavenly prayer, every gracious groan, every start of spiritual affection, is from the Spirit tuning, quickening, assisting against infirmities and deadness. There must be a continued drawing to make a continued running. 'Draw us, and we will run after thee,' Song of Solomon 1:4. It was the church, the gracious church, the spouse and dove of Christ, yet sensible of her own inability to quicken her pace to new communion with Christ, without fresh communications first from him. There is a bias in the soul to direct it in a right motion; there must be a hand without to put it upon that motion; Christ must 'put his hand in at the hole of the door' before a lazy soul, though gracious, will stir at his call, Song of Solomon 5:3; or as a child, which has a principle of motion, must be assisted and quickened by the nurse before it can move a step. Grace is more prevalent to keep us from sin than excite us to holiness, yet neither can be done by it without new quickenings; our motion is in him and by him, as well as our life, spiritually as well as naturally Acts 17:28, 'In him we live, move, and have our being;' the old stock must have continual supply. Without Christ we can do nothing, John 15:5; without him we cannot have grace in the plant, nor grace in the fruit. As the soul excites the spirits in the eye to an act of vision,—if they be not quickened by their governor, though things be before our eyes they see nothing,—so the Spirit of God excites, as it were, the spirits of grace to their particular acts, faith to apprehend and love to work. The goodness that made the promise guides the hand of the soul to fasten upon it: Psalms 119:49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' As God makes the promises, so he makes the meeting between the soul and the promise; every motion proceeds from God's touch upon the heart enlarging it, therefore our dependence must be upon God's grace: Psalms 119:32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' I will run, not by my own strength, but by the hand of God enlarging and enlivening my heart. Indeed, if God did not give to act as well as implant the habit, he would give no more to us in the new covenant than he gave to Adam in the old, who had a power to do, but not the act of doing; his power was from God, but the act of obedience depended upon himself, and for want of actual obedience he fell. We see whence we must derive our quickenings; we want them because we expect them from the new nature in us, not from the author of that nature, and the concurrence of his grace with it, and depending upon habitual more than actual grace is the cause of our having many a slip. We are as dead lumps, notwithstanding all the grace we have, if God did not cause a free life to spring up in us by successive breathings.

[5.] Perfecting grace is only from God. He is the finisher of what he is the author of, Hebrews 12:2, and in our spiritual warfare supplies us with new recruits, till the combat end in victory, and the victory in triumph. He will come 'as the former and the latter rain,' Hosea 6:3 : as the former rain to open the womb of the earth, and the latter rain to ripen the fruits of the earth. As he has laid the foundation of mount Zion, so he will perform the whole work in it; he fulfils the work of faith with the same power wherewith he begins it, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. The power which caused the resurrection of Christ caused his ascension; he had his forty days upon the earth, after his resurrection, before he was taken up to glory. There is a continuance of a believer in the world after his resurrection from a spiritual death, but the same power which caused his spiritual resurrection will as surely cause his heavenly ascension. That arm that brought him out of Egypt

will conduct him to the limits of Canaan, the flourishing pastures of the promised land. Grace is the first gift, glory is the latter; glory follows upon the heels of grace: 'He will give grace and glory,' Psalms 84:11. Grace to fit for glory, and glory to reward his own grace; all grace till it ends in glory. God must be sought and depended on for this; we cannot will our perfection without grace, as we cannot will our regeneration without grace; God gives the will, the progressive as well as the initial will. Then seek only to God, depend upon him only, for the warmth of his goodness, to bring those chickens to perfection which he has gathered under his wing; his affections are not tired, it is a pure disinterested love mingled with no defects; his wisdom and power is no less able to perfect than his love is to incite him to it.

Use 2. The second use is of comfort. Is God the author of regeneration? He that is the God of all grace is the God of all comfort too. Where he is the one, he will be the other. As he creates the soul to good works, so he creates it to heavenly consolations. When God acts as a God of justice toward sinners, he appears as a terrible God in his punishments; when he acts towards saints as a God of grace, he appears as a comforting God, he fills the one with all terrors, prepares the other for all comforts; he calls you by a new creation into his eternal glory, and sends therefore some sparkles of glory into the soul here. Are you born of God? You approach in excellency as near to Christ as a creature's capacity will admit. Christ was his natural begotten son, believers his spiritually regenerated children. Christ is 'the first born,' but 'among many brethren,' Romans 8:29, that Christ 'that sanctifies, and we that are sanctified, are all of one,' Hebrews 2:11, of one nature, say some, of one Father, say others; therefore 'he is not ashamed to call them brethren,' one nature does not so much make us brethren as one father. Christ was not regenerated, but generated, he stood not in need of the other, because the first generation failed not, neither could he, being God, he is the exact image of his Father's person, and so particularly of all his attributes, because he partakes of his essence. Believers are the living images of God's holiness, not partaking of all his attributes, but of that.

Particularly,

(1.) God will rejoice in his own work. If he rejoiced in the first planting of his image at the creation, he will no less rejoice in it at the restoration and with more gladness embrace the son that is returned from death to life by returning from his debauched course, than that son that remained with him all the while. Why does he renew the face of the earth by the mission of his Spirit, but that he may rejoice in his works? 'Thou sends forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renews the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works,' Psalms 104:30-31. If God shall in time rejoice in the earth, wherein he had little joy after the creation of it, and soon repented of his work, he will rejoice in the noblest work, in the frame of his image, which, next to Christ, makes all other works of the lower creation pleasant to him. He 'creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' and he will rejoice in the new creation of his people, in the people he has new created, Isaiah 65:18-19.

(2.) He will destroy all enemies to his own work. How will his love pierce into every part, and employ his power in destroying the enemies of his work; whip buyers and sellers out of his spiritual temple, cast out all their remaining rubbish; let not his house be always a den of thieves, that shall rob God of his glory, and his temple of its beauty! That God that can raise men five thousand years ago dead as easily as one dead the last minute, can remove all the bands of corruption, though

never so strong. If he has raised you from death, he will lift you up from all the remainders of death; the grave-clothes which yet remain about you, shall be in time untied, as well as the soul unloosed from the principal bands of death. Though there be in you a 'spirit that lusts to envy,' as well as a spirit that lusts to love, yet 'God gives more grace,' James 4:5, a. Lusts will down, corruptions fall in time before his grace, darkness must hide its hated head, when that word breaks louder from his lips, 'Let there be light.' The promises of a thorough sanctification belong to you, as well as the promises of a perfect remission. If God be the teacher, no matter what the scholar is; if God be the workman, no matter what the matter is; if God be the guardian, no matter what the enemies are; nothing is too rugged for his skill, or too hard for his power.

(3.) He will order all things for the good of his own work. 'They shall not labour in vain; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,' Isaiah 65:23. He did not want grace to restore them, he will not want comforts to support them. Their very afflictions shall be ordered to preserve the work of his own heart in them; and while he prunes and cuts, he will purge away the luxuriant corruptions, that his vine may be more beautiful and delicious. And if he does chasten you sharply, it is that you may be nearer 'partakers of his holiness,' Hebrews 12:10.

Use 3. The third use is of exhortation.

1. To the renewed.

(1.) Walk humbly. Swell not big, as if your own power had procured it, let not pride spread its sails in your souls. Consider, you are creatures still, though new creatures. As God put into you whatsoever you have of natural existence, so he has put into you whatsoever you have of spiritual; you are dust still by your natural creation, though new formed by the Spirit. There is nothing of grace, no act of grace, but you receive mediately or immediately from God. You opened not your own eyes, nor thrust back the lock of your own hearts, nor can call one spark of that spiritual life you have, your own creature; it moved not at your beck, obeyed not your orders; it is when God says, Go, that it goes, and, Do this and that, Settle upon this or that soul, and it does it. How humble should you be, since grace does nothing in any but by God's order, not your own. God works in us, we add nothing to God. The melted wax receives the stamp from the seal, but the wax adds nothing to the seal. 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 'If thou did receive it, why dost thou boast as if thou had not received it?' 1 Corinthians 4:7. Grace is God's communication to you, not yours to yourselves. What is received, is not your own work, but another's gift; were it desert, we had reason to boast; but being a gift, we have no reason to grow big. Lie therefore before him in your own nothingness. Renewing grace first lighted upon you when you were humble; and grace in its increase flourishes when the soul is in the same posture.

(2) Ascribe all that you are, as renewed creatures, to God. Ascribe it wholly to him; let self rub off every filing of this gold from its own fingers. 'Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the praise,' Psalms 115:1. The repetition removes the glory far from themselves. If praise be comely for an upright person, it is most comely in the greatest cause that can happen to him, Psalms 33:1. Account yourselves therefore nothing, and God and grace all; and let no shootings be heard in your souls while God is rearing up the divine temple, but those of Grace! Grace! Zechariah 4:7, both in the foundation and superstructure, till he comes to the top stone. Your breathing after God is but the effect of his breathing after you; the moon has no light of herself, but what she receives from the sun; nor any creature a spark of grace, but what is derived from the

Father of lights. God's purity is as the sun, your grace as a beam from that sun, not primitive in your nature, but derivative from God. Were it not from grace, Saul had never been Paul, nor Peter a penitent, nor Mary a convert, nor Zacchaeus a Christian, nor had thou ever been brought to the sweetness of a spiritual life, or advanced to the state and comforts of another world. Did you will to run till mercy moved your wills and spirited the feet of your souls? Your will, your race, was nothing; God's grace was all, Romans 9:16. Was it not his word of command, Let there be life? Was it not his invincible power battered down the strongholds of sin? Oh seriously think, O Christian, that dry and desert heart of thine could never have been mollified and watered by rocky nature, nor virtue ever bud and blossom in that barren soil, unless the soil were mended, as well as the plant fixed, by some powerful hand. Bless God, therefore, since had it not been for him, you had never been humbled, never been renewed, never reached so high as a holy desire, or a penitential tear, but lain till this day, and for ever, bemired in fallen nature. That you may know what reason you have to bless God with the highest praises, consider,

[1.] What your obligation is, how great! What good would your creation have done you since your fall without a new creation by the same hand? It must have rendered you miserable without this, and could never have rendered you happy but by the intervention of this. Without this you might have been his sons and daughters by creation, and devils by corruption. The heathens were God's offspring, as they were rational creatures, Acts 17:28, and the devil's children, as they were corrupt creatures. You might have had the image of God in a glimmering reason, without his image in a divine holiness. Was it not a greater obligation to restore that with kinder circumstances which you had wilfully thrown away, when it was in no wise due to you, than it was at first to bestow it? There was something like debt at first; supposing God would create a rational creature, integrity and innocence was naturally due to it, in regard of the holiness and wisdom of God, unless he would have been the author of the creature's sinfulness; but since that voluntary defection, the restoration was in no sort due, therefore the obligation greater. If God had created a thousand worlds, and given you the lordship of them for some millions of years, had this been such a kindness as to afford you a new nature, whereby you will be eternally happy in a likeness to God and enjoyment of him? As the work of redemption, so this of regeneration, darkens the glory of the work of creation; since more of grace, wisdom, power, holiness, are the springs of it, the obligation must be far greater; the difference is as great as between heaven and earth. Will you not bless God for making you creatures, for recovery from a fit of sickness? Is the obligation less in delivering you from a spiritual death? Is not the reason of blessing God greater for the second creation than the first, since it is the same skill adorns you with his image in the new creation, which beautified man with that image at the first?

[2.] Was there not as much unfitness in you as in the worst of men by nature? Not one good disposition grew upon nature, but all was the work of preventing grace. Could, then, the iron gates of your hearts fly open of themselves? Or could any else but a God break them open? Was not your nature carried as violently to sin as any, perhaps not into such brutish sins as others, yet more refined and devilish? If you did not launch out into the grossest sins, you owe your preservation to restraining grace. That Socrates was better and wiser than another, was from God, in the acknowledgement of a heathen, who says he was chosen to virtue, "Kata tou Theou cheirotonian", by the divine suffrage. Were your strings better? Sure they were of God's tuning. Man was not more unfit for a natural being before God created him, than the best man in the world

was for a spiritual being, till God wrought him with his own finger. Was not the worst in the world naturally as fit for it as yourselves? Did any better thing dwell in your flesh than in theirs, to give grace entertainment? Did not grace at first make its way, conquering, and to conquer, and not one blow struck by you to facilitate the victory? Nay, were you not so far from having a grain of grace by nature, that there was nothing but opposition and rebellion against the Author of it? Did you not want everything to make you lovely in God's eye? Nay, did you not hate him while he had a love of benevolence towards you? And have you not reason to bless him then, that he would not disdain to look upon you, such an impure and rebellious creature? Perhaps our case was the same with hers, Hosea 2:5, who said, 'I will go after my lovers.' She decreed to follow her idols, and was resolved not to be reclaimed; but God resolved otherwise, Hosea 2:6-7, who would not leave her till he had made her change her base and unworthy resolution for better: 'She shall say, I will return, &c.' And was it not a happy resolution in the divine breast, not to suffer you to run mad and furiously to bell? What an irrecoverable condition had you been in if God had not spoken a powerful word, 'Hitherto thou art gone, but no further shalt thou go!' Were you not once in your blood, and pitied by no eye, when God said, Live? And can you not wonder at the mercy of his lips, and raise your notes above an ordinary strain? Read over the records of the first work upon thy heart, and see if anything were written there with thy own finger. The very sense of thy own wretchedness was God's writing on thy heart; thou was weighed in the balances and found wanting; lighter than vanity, nothing of thy own to concur with God, but folly and misery.

[3.] If grace found thee unfit and rebellious, there could then be nothing of the least desert; and this should make you cast a wondering eye at the greatness of God's kindness. Man's voluntary defection, without any violence offered to him, had rendered him unworthy of any recovery; you did no more deserve it than the worst devil, who shall never have one line of it drawn upon him. Not one previous disposition, not one sigh or groan for it, could be discerned, much less the draught itself. Your true earnings were nothing but that death you lay under. The unloosing any band of it, or knocking off any fetter, was merely free grace. Is there not, then, reason to bless the Lord, when an undeserved power has been put forth to new create you, when a deserved power might have buried you for ever under your own ruins? Suppose you had been the most exact moralists in the world, the supernatural grace of the new birth could not be deserved by you, because nothing can be merited but by an act as excellent as the reward. No man can merit by any act a thing of a greater value than the act itself; but this grace is of another order, and far superior to any moral natural work. Indeed, upon covenant, if a man does such a thing, he shall have such a reward, the thing promised may be challenged upon the performing the condition, but cannot be said to be merited, because the act was inferior to the reward in the true value of it, but this grace could neither be merited nor challenged at God's hand upon a condition, since he had made no promise in this kind to give you a right to such a demand. It is one thing to be capable of it, another thing to have a just right. A sinner in the state of sin is capable of being changed, but not capable of having a right to that change. Well, then, you could never deserve such a mercy; and will you prize it and bless God for it?

[4] Since you did not deserve it, no, nor the proposals of it, consider what a condition you had been in had God left you to yourselves, or put your wills only into an indifference. Had it been by a mere suasion, or a naked proposition of the truth, I suppose you are so sensible of the mutability of your wills, that you might well believe you should scarce have complied with God. Your security

at best had been but as good as Adam's, who had his posse but not his velle. What furious passions and devils in your souls were set against him! and had you been left to your own choice, you would not have stirred one foot to follow his chariot. If you did 'purify your souls in obeying the truth,' it was 'through the Spirit,' 1 Peter 1:22; and all the faith you have was from the same fountain, Acts 18:27, 'which believed through grace.' Put it to yourselves: Do you think your hearts were not so stout, that nothing but divine grace could mollify them? Do you think there would have been any heat or warmth in you unless God had kindled the flame? Can you imagine your frozen hearts would have melted but by a divine breath? It was happy for you that God would put your wills beyond an indifference, and deal with you by the same power as he dealt with Christ, not leaving him or you in a doubtful state between life and death. How happy was it for you that God would be conqueror, and surmount your resistance, tame your force, scatter your counsels, level your mountain, and bring your fierceness under the yoke; that he would not wait your choice and leisure, but make the event certain; that he had mercy on you, because he would have mercy; that he would turn the stream of your hearts by the overmastering tide of his grace, and overpower the flesh in the chief parts of your souls, and secure the rational powers of mind and will for himself! How glad may you be of the loss of that indifference that secures your happy estate for ever! Who that is in favour with a prince would not willingly have his will fixed to please him, and dread nothing more than such an indifference, whereby he might hate his prince and lose his favour?

[5.] Is there not reason you should bless God, when he has dealt thus graciously with you, and not with many others in the world, why any of you should be raised up to a spiritual life, when you see many others near you stretched out in a spiritual death; why one upon the same bench and not another; why one should be gathered with his arm, and another left to the jaws of the devouring lion, why you should have any choice fruit grow in any of your hearts, when thorns and briers grow in every hedge? That God should have afforded you means of regeneration, and not to most others in the world, is a ground of blessing and praise, much more that he should afford you the grace of regeneration, and not to many others under the same means. He has not dealt so with every nation in giving them the means, Psalms 147:19; he has not dealt so with every person in giving them the grace. That wind that blows where it lists has left other dry bones to remain dry still, passed by others more civil and of sweeter conversations; drawn his image in one, and left others to tumble down to hell in the likeness of Adam, wherein they were born, overlooked one that was not far from the kingdom of heaven, and laid hold on another that was many leagues further from Christ. The Spirit of God only makes this distinction: he will pour out his grace in Galatia and Macedonia, and not suffer it to be known in Bithynia: Acts 16:6-8, 'And they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not;' cause it to rain in one city, on one person, and not on another; call one out of the grave, and leave others under the bands of death and in the dregs of human nature. You see your calling, and you may see how distinguishing it is, 'not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty,' 1 Corinthians 1:26. Can you see this and not bless the caller, the renewer? A less favour wrought so much upon David's heart that he would bless God in spite of mocks and scoffs, 2 Samuel 6:21. Oh rich discriminating grace! Where any are peculiar monuments of grace, they should have peculiar notes of praise. What reason can others have to bless God, if such should have no hearts to bless him for so great a mercy? All are under God's will of precept, all are under his will of promise, if they perform that precept; but all are not under his will of purpose, to give them strength to perform that precept.

[6.] It is to be considered, too, with what pains and patience God wrought this work in your hearts. You may best know what ado God had with your hearts before they were thus formed according to his will. Were they not as clay to the potter, which needed much tempering before they were fit for use? Did God find that pliability in you that the devil found? Had he a cordial welcome at the first proffer? Do you not remember resistance enough to make you for ever ashamed that ever you should put the blessed God to that toil? And yet you know not the thousandth part of that resistance God knew was lodged in your nature. Do you not remember how he met you at every turn, hedged up your perverse way with thorns, before he could be admitted to speak a word to your heart, how he answered one objection after another, whereby you would have stifled his work? Can you remember this, and not admire the mercy that took such pains with so unprofitable a heart? It is called a resurrection, but it is more. Before the resurrection of the body, one part of man lives and waits for reunion though the body be crumbled into very dust; but there is no life in you naturally: so little in you to take part with God, that even that which is the glory of man, his mind, and reason, and wisdom, were in arms against this work, as well as the sensitive and brutish part, for 'the carnal mind was enmity against God,' Romans 8:7. What was your language to God at first, but like that of the hellish spirit in the man in Luke 4:34 : 'What have we to do with thee?' Yet he dealt with you as the sun with the earth, which scatters the mists it sends out to choke its light, and spreads its warm wings over the face of the world. So does God, though men offend him with the steams of their sins, and uncivilly command him to depart from them, yet he leaves them not till he has made them willing that he should do them good.

[7.] The work itself requires admiration and blessing in regard of the excellency of it. It is more admirable than all the miracles of nature; the whole world can no more compare with it than a dunghill can equal the worth of a rock of diamonds; all blessings which make you happy spiritually and eternally are wrapped up in it. What can God give greater than his own nature? What are you capable of more than what he has done and will do upon that foundation? If God had only given thee knowledge, thou might have been a devil for all that; but the new nature makes you equal with angels. What man or angel could you be born of with so great advantage as to be born of God? There is no higher being to be born of. What can he do more than thus to beget you? You are new-born according to that image after which his only Son was eternally begotten; conceived by that Spirit whereby Christ was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin; raised by the same almighty hand whereby the great pattern of the new birth was raised from the dead. It is the highest elevation of human nature to be united to the Son of God, and to be made like to that glorious image. Greater gifts cannot be than these two, Christ to descend to partake of human nature, and the creature elevated to partake of the divine. If you will not loudly bless him for this, what can God do that shall deserve your praise, since a greater he cannot confer, more full of the spirits of his favour towards you?

[8.] May there not be some circumstances in your particular new birth that may raise your hearts to blessing and praise? Perhaps thou were 'born in a day,' as his promise is of a nation, Isaiah 66:7-8, and without those racking pains which attend the new birth of many. He did not take thee by the throat, nor arrest thee with legal terrors, but breathed upon thee with a gentle wind; conceived and formed thee in a little space of time, that thou were within the prospect of heaven before thou thought thyself out of the suburbs of hell, and brought thee forth a man-child before thou didn't imagine thyself to be delivered. Was it not mercy to renew thee without worrying thee;

to melt thee by a gentle fire of love, not break thee piece-meal by the hammer of wrath, that thou should scarce discern the lance from the balsam, and the wound from the plaster? Perhaps he arrested thee in a full course of sin, in some desperate career, when some plot was laid for a high piece of wickedness. It had been an act of his power had thou been brought up in some religious family, tutored in the ways of religion by a choicer education; but perhaps God took thee from the very steams of hell, when thou had not one thought of him, and he might have let thee alone as well as he did others of thy companions. It had been admirable power to turn clear water into wine, but more to turn stinking and putrefied water into a generous wine. Do not the visible characters of mercy and power in such a case call for more praise at thy hands? Can any other cause have a pretence to put in for a share in thy acknowledgements?

[9.] You are not without many examples to move you to this acknowledgement. Our Saviour himself could not regard the centurion's faith without astonishment. He wondered at that in his humanity which he wrought himself by his divinity, Matthew 8:10. And when Peter professes his faith in him by acknowledging him to be the Son of God, Christ presently owns his Father as the author of it: Matthew 16:17, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Angels sang both at the first and second creation, and shouted for joy when the corner-stone thereof was laid, Job 38:6-7. When they saw its beautiful order, they then showed themselves to be the sons of God indeed, in glorifying their Father for his incomparable works. The second creation being more glorious than the first, is not celebrated by them with fainter shootings; if God has then hallelujahs for you, it is fit he should have hallelujahs from you. If angels speak loud, it is not fit you should speak low; it is their concern, as they are God's friends and servants; your concern, as you are his workmanship, of his own carving. The saints in all ages of the church have led the way in this acknowledgement. The elders, made kings and priests on earth, in a conquest of Satan and their own hearts, crowned with a blessed grace, cast down their crowns at the feet of God Revelation 9:11, 'For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created,' both the present new creation and the old. 'Thou hast loosed my bonds,' Psalms 116:16. What follows? 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.' And God's renewing David's youth like the eagle's, his changing him into a new man, says Jerome, is one argument of David's praise, Psalms 103:6. Add to this, heathens have acknowledged it to be the work of God, one examining the reason why Homer calls virtuous men "dious", answers. Because goodness was not a work of art, but "ergon Dios". If divining and mystical knowledge be "theiai tini epipnoiai", by divine inspiration, shall we say of virtue it is "ergon technes thentes", the work of man's art? Where do you find any like Nebuchadnezzar, gazing upon the divine formation in his own heart, and proudly crying out, 'Is not this great Babylon which I have built?' Does such language drop from a David's mouth? No; but 'thou hast quickened me.' Or from Paul? No, 'by grace I am what I am.' Every inch, every spark, every joint of the new man is from grace.

[10.] If you do not acknowledge it to God, and bless him for it, you may justly suspect you are not born of him. It is the nature of true grace to reflect back upon God, as it is of a sunbeam shining upon a wall to reflect back upon the sun. Blessing God for it, is a character of a renewed man. It is an evidence of the ruin of the contradiction of nature against God, when man can strip himself of all, and own God the prime fountain of what he is and has. If a man boast of his being the cause of a new birth in himself by any work of his own, it is a shrewd sign he is not renewed, because by such boasting he crosses the main end of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of man, and

debase him to the dust from all grounds of glorying in himself. How jealous was the apostle in this case, and therefore backs his assertion again and again, that he might beat man's hands off from fingering anything of God's glory: Ephesians 2:5, 'By grace you are saved;' again, verse 8, 9, 'and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' Once again, 'Not of works.' And the reason why he is thus earnest, was perpetually to discountenance self-confidence, 'lest any man should boast.' The design of God in all gospel dispensations, is to pull away the stool whereon the flesh sits to glory: 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence.' It would seem strange that the new birth, a main gospel work, should be wrought without promoting a gospel end. To have a new birth, and such a flourishing pride, opposite to the end of it, is a contradiction. If the doctrine of faith does exclude boasting, as Romans 3:27, boasting is 'excluded by the law of faith,' the grace of faith also will exclude it; where the new birth is wrought, pride, the great enemy to it, will surely be captivated. We are then something in and by God, when we are most nothing in ourselves.

Well, then, be much in the work of praising God, who shined into thy heart when it was dark, and sealed instruction to thee; who took away the stony heart, and introduced one of flesh in the room; who manifested a day of power in the night of your weakness. Can you, dare you, to ascribe it to yourselves? Let God then have the praise. It is our fault we are more in complaints of what we want, than acknowledgements of what we have. Oh, rob not God of his deity, pretend not yourselves partners with him in the least of the stock. The more you return the glory of his grace, the more will he return the comfort of it to you; the more you give him that glory he is so jealous of, the more he will give you that grace he is so liberal of.

(3.) A third duty for those that are renewed. Acknowledge God in all the changes you see in others. Miracles must be regarded. It is greater for the apostles to act with new hearts than to speak with new tongues; greater than to stop the sun in its course, which would set all the world upon an astonished gaze. Shall any such miraculous work be done in our view, and we stand only as stupid spectators, and not render to God that glory which is due to him for his choicest work? As the sight and consideration of the material creation kept up the notion of the being of God as creator, so the consideration of his works upon the souls of men will quicken thy sentiments of God as a new creator. One is an argument to prove the power of his essence, the other an argument of the power of his grace. Noah does not bless them first for that act of filial duty showed to his father, but blesses God as the author of that modesty Shem had shown in covering his father's nakedness: Genesis 9:26, 'Blessed be the God of Shem.' When a great number were turned to Christ, Barnabas presently cast up his eye to the grace of God, 'he saw the grace of God,' Acts 11:21-23. Let every Lazarus you see raised from the grave raise up your faith to a higher elevation, and dress it in a jubilee attire. When you see a new temple reared to God, own it as the Lord's doing, and let it be marvellous in your eyes.

(4.) Be content with every condition your new creator shall cast you into. Discontent at any of God's dispensations does ill become one whom God has new begotten to a glorious inheritance. What can he do more than he has done, and what he will do upon that foundation? All that he acts is to further that which he has so powerfully and mercifully begun. What son would repine at the losing a rattle, as long as he is born to a never-fading inheritance? If grace has put forth a power to new create you, it will not use that power otherwise than for your good. It may contradict your carnal desires, not your spiritual interest. Well may any man be content with the jewel that is left, though the casket be lost. All things are too light if put into the balance with the new birth: the

dearest husband or wife, the sweetest children or friends, the most flourishing inheritance; study, therefore, contentment in the worst condition upon this ground; you know not how soon you may be put to practise all your skill. Do you not see the heavens gathering blackness over your heads? A new birth, that allies us to God as his children, will be of more force to settle us, than calamities can be to discompose us; for never was child so dear to an earthly, as a new created soul is to its heavenly Father.

(5.) Walk worthy of the author of it. A verbal acknowledgement will signify little without a real imitation of the virtues of him 'that has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' 1 Peter 2:9. A holiness is to be expressed by you, like the holiness of that God who has renewed you. Let no devilish or brutish carriage be yoked with a divine birth, indeed it cannot; the bespotting corruption of the world will not agree with the regeneration of the soul; the stains of the flesh are inconsistent with the purity of the new nature. Belial and Christ, God and Satan, are not joint begetters; Satan's impure breathings upon you should not be admitted to mix with the breath of God. A new nature by grace must not imitate a brutish nature by sin; a soul born of God must not be fashioned according to the world. If you differ from the world in your nature by grace, differ from the world also in your carriage by holiness. It is uncomely for one born of God to be taken with the foolish, flaunting pride of the world, more than the pattern God has set him; that is, to imitate beasts, not a heavenly Father. The world is little, nothing, vanity in the eye of God; so should it be in the eye of a divinely begotten soul. Use the world as travellers an inn, to lodge, not to dwell in, to accommodate you in your journey to that Father of whom you were born. Let a heaven-born nature be attended with heavenly flights, longing for that happy state wherein nothing but the divine nature shall be seen in union, as nothing but fire is seen in melted gold.

(6.) Mourn for your imperfections. Give God his due, and grieve for your defect in paying him his own. The soul in creation comes pure out of God's hand, but it is poisoned by the flesh, and the impurity in the sensitive part of man. Though your grace be from God, yet your imperfections are from yourselves. The waters that run through sulphur and alum mines flow from the sea, but the ill taste and scent are communicated by the matter it mixes with in its passage. God is the author of your faith, but not of the weakness of your faith; the author of your love, but not of the coldness of your love; the author of your zeal, but not of the faintness of your zeal. Chide your hearts, therefore for your weakness, as Christ did his disciples for their slowness in faith. 'Rejoice with trembling,' Psalms 2:11, rejoice in what you have, and mourn for what you want and come short in. Reason you have, since there is too much of the power of nature remaining with our best grace, so that it may be said of it, as Lot of Zoar, What grace has enclosed is but a little one.

Exhort. 2. To those that are not born of God. You see at whose hands you are to seek it. God was the first contriver of the gospel, the first preacher of the gospel, the sole artist in any gospel operation. No man can come except the Father draw him; not some men, but no man; every man must therefore seek to this great attracter. It is a vanity of human nature, that every man loves to be "autodidaktos", his own teacher; and no less a vanity it is, that every man loves to be "autogennetos", his own begetter. Men glory in the knowledge they get without a teacher, and no less glory in any change they can hammer out without a spiritual Father. As he that scorns to be taught by another shall surely have a fool to his tutor, so he that thinks to gain spiritual life by himself, shall be sure to have death for his quickener. No man would seek life from death, or light from darkness, and the best natural man is no better. The glory of the Lord must rise upon us,

before we can rise out of our death in sin: 'Arise, and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,' Isaiah 60:1.

(1.) Seek it only at the hands of God. It is not to be had by outward rules, but divine influence; the streams of life must come from him, since with him only is the fountain of life: Psalms 36:9, 'I will give a heart of flesh;' I alone, without any other co-ordinate cause, either man or angel. He only has the key of the heart, as well as that of the womb; confide not in yourselves. Adam was a root to convey sin and death, but no root to convey spiritual life. Corruption comes by propagation from him, grace only by spiritual regeneration from God. Would any wise man seek for water in a desert, or for grace from himself, who is naturally a dry wilderness? What toad, naturally full of poison, ever made himself sweet and wholesome? As Christ was by the grace of God made partaker of our nature in his incarnation, so by the same grace only can we be made partakers of his nature by regeneration. We are naturally weeds; if ever we be flowers in God's garden, the transformation must be God's act alone.

Seek it of God. But,

[1.] In the use of means, not abating anything of thine own industry. Seek, while God offers it; hold your mouth under the fountain while it runs. Moses hewed the tables, but God wrote the law. God promised David and Gideon victory, but not with their hands in their pockets, but their arms and armies about them. Moses must fight with the arms of Israel, but pray to the God of battles and victory. We must with one hand use the directions God has given, and lift up the other in spiritual supplication for success upon them. Therefore let not the doctrine of God's being the cause of the new birth encourage your laziness and sloth. This sloth among men Chemnitius thought to be the occasion of Pelagius his error, who, seeing the laziness of Christians, thought to correct it by making them think highly of their own strength; but that was a dangerous extreme.

[2.] Yet let your eye be solely upon God in the use of them, since all the means in the world cannot do it without him. Unless God pull up the floodgates, no water of life can stream into the soul; means can no more of themselves cast out death than the disciples could cast out some devils; but Christ was able to do what they could not. All the angels in heaven and men upon earth have not been able, these almost six thousand years, to make one fly; yet all the angels and the whole frame of the world were made by God in six days. Men speak to the sense, God to the heart; they to the understanding, and God into it; men argue with the will, and God persuades it. All the clamours of the whole nation of the Jews, yea, of all the men in the world, would not have made Lazarus stir out of the grave, had not our Saviour spoken the word, 'Lazarus, come forth.' How often do the clouds of heaven drop upon men, yet they still remain as a dry chip, their stony hearts perhaps moistened with some transient flashy affections, but not mollified into flesh. Pray therefore to God, before the use of any means, Lord, breathe life so powerfully upon me, that I may walk before thee, and never find myself again in a natural winding-sheet. Let thy voice, Lord, be heard and felt by me as the voice of thy Son was by Lazarus. To use means without a seeking to God for his blessing, is to be exercised in divine institutions with an atheistic spirit. He is an atheist that expects nourishment from his meat without God's benediction, and he no less that runs to means without lifting up his heart to God, thinking to get grace conveyed by the means without God's operation.

(2.) Direction. Plead much with God from the glorious attributes he honours in this work. Lord, here is a subject for thy power to work upon. God made the heavens when there was nothing but a rude mass; he brought forth the sun, moon, and stars, with all their glory, out of the barren womb of nothing. Is thy heart worse than nothing, more contradictory to God than nothing? It is so. Assume an argument from hence: Lord, here is a subject for thy power above what was manifested in creation; there is not a more tough heart in the world than mine; lose not the opportunity of displaying the greatness of thy power, since there is scarce a heart more stout and unwieldy than mine is. Lord, bestow a vital principle upon me; thou did it to the lifeless body of Adam; thy power will be more magnified in the breathing upon a lifeless soul of a son and daughter of Adam. In the same manner plead his wisdom and holiness. Plead also the enmity thy sin has against him, the wrong it has done him, in spoiling the creation, changing the end of it, hindering thee from thy natural duty, and that it is not for the interest of his glory to let sin bear such a sway and dominion, and usurp his room in one who would fain be another man.

(3.) Be deeply sensible of the corruption of thy nature; the want of this is the cause there is so little sense in men and women of the absolute necessity of the grace of regeneration, and a change of nature. Therefore labour to see yourselves in a forlorn condition by spiritual death. Look upon your great fall as a son of Adam, a slave of Satan, and possessor of a hellish nature, and at a vast distance from God and happiness.

(4.) Grieve not the Spirit in any of his operations. Quench not the sparks of the Spirit in any previous preparations and dispositions to this new birth. Be pliable to his breathings, hoist up your sails to receive his gales; when he knocks, open thy heart as wide as may be, push it to the furthest point, that there may be no remora; let all the house be free for his triumphant entrance. Since thy strength is too weak for it, beg of him at such a season to break it open; set upon prayer at such a season, and leave not till you have prayed your spirits up and your resistance out. How ungrateful and foolish is it to grieve that Spirit, who offers to form you into a new birth, and bring the life and joy of heaven into your heart! This is the only means to recover the loss you had by the fall of Adam, and surmount all the misery of it. Seek to him; he that can gather the dust of your bodies, if blown to the further part of the world, and knit it together, can overcome the filthy and deadly noisomeness of your souls; he can make a barren wilderness to become pools of water, a lump of vanity a garden of pleasure, a heap of rubbish to sprout up a new-born sun. If you would therefore be animated with a spirit of life, you must approach the beams of the sun, and lie under the rich and enlivening influences of it.

End of part 2 of A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration.

A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration

A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration by Stephen Charnock

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—2 Corinthians 5:17. The apostle in those words, 2 Corinthians 5:13, 'For whether we be besides ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause,' defends his speaking so much of his integrity; though some men would count him out of his wits for it, yet he regards not their judgment; for if he were in an ecstasy, or 'beside himself,' his purpose was to serve God and his church, and therefore he did not regard the opinion of men, whether he were accounted mad or sober, so he might perform the end of his apostleship. The sense therefore of it, as Calvin renders it, is this: Let men take it as they will, that I speak so much of my integrity, I do it not upon my own account, but have respect to God and the church in speaking of it, for I am as ready to be silent as to speak, when my silence may glorify God and advantage the church as much as my speech; 'for the love of Christ constrains me,' 2 Corinthians 5:14, for whom I am bound to live; and so he passes on to inculcate the duty of every man that hath an interest in the death of Christ. The love of Christ constrains us actively; the love wherewith Christ has loved us is a powerful attractive to make us live to him. It is the highest equity and justice that we should live to him who died for us. Whence observe, The true consideration and sense of the love of Christ in his death, has a pleasing force, and is a delightful bond and obligation upon us to devote ourselves wholly to his service and glory. There is a moral constraint upon the soul to this end: 'if one died for all, then were all dead,' then all were obnoxious to eternal death. Others (Vorstius, Calvin, editor) dislike this interpretation, and understand it not of the death to God brought in by the first Adam, but a death to sin and the flesh, procured by the second Adam, which death is spoken of Romans 6:2, 'How shall we, being dead to sin,' &c., and called 'a suffering in the flesh, and a ceasing from sin,' 1 Peter 4:1. If one died for all, then all for whom he died are dead, jure et obligatione, dead to themselves, that they might not be under their own power, but the power of him that died for them, and rose again. Since, therefore, we are dead to sin, we should take no care to maintain the life of it. And this seems, by the following verse, to be the true meaning of it: 2 Corinthians 5:15, 'And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' He has redeemed us by the price of his blood, that he might have us in his own power, as his own property, so that we are no longer our own masters, and have no longer right to ourselves. They ought to die to themselves, that they may live to Christ; it being fit they should live not to their own wills, or own honour, but to the glory and will of their Redeemer. It was to this end that Christ died, that he might have a seed to serve him, and live to him. It is ingratitude and injustice to deny him our service, since thereby we endeavour to frustrate the design of his coming. and the end of his death. Observe,

1. Self is the chief end of every natural man. 'That they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves.' Implying that all men living, who are not under the actual benefit and efficacy of our Saviour's death, do live to themselves. The greatest distinction between a regenerate and a

natural man is this, self is the end of one, and Christ the end of the other. The life of a natural man, and all the dependencies of it, is to gratify corrupt self, with the greatest detriment to his natural and moral self, the happiness and flood of his soul, but the life of a new creature, with all the dependencies of it, is for the glory of God and the Redeemer. This self-dependence, and a desire of independence on God, which was the great sin of Adam, whereby he would malice himself his own chief end, has run in the veins of all his posterity, and is the bitter root upon which all the fruits of gall and wormwood grow.

2. The end of our Saviour's dying and rising again was to change the corrupt end of the creature. The end of redemption, and consequently the end of the Redeemer, must be contrary to the end of corruption and the end of the first Adam. As Adam dispossessed God of his dominion to set up self, so does Christ pull down self to advance God to his right of being our chief end. It is called, therefore, a redemption of us to God: Revelation 5:9, 'For thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;' redeemed us from a slavery under sordid lusts, to God as our end.

3. Therefore we must be taken off from ourselves, as our end, and be fixed upon another, even upon Christ, else we answer not the end of Christ's death and resurrection: 'He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness,' 1 Peter 2:21. And if the ends of our Saviour's death and resurrection be not accomplished upon us, the fruits of it shall not be enjoyed by us. The whole work of regeneration, and conversion, and sanctification, and the efficacy of the death of Christ in the soul, consists in these two things: a taking us off from self, and pitching us upon God and Christ as our end. The terminus a quo is self, the terminus ad quem is Christ. We are 'redeemed by the precious blood of christ from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers,' 1 Peter 1:18, even from our first father Adam. This is properly to set up no other gods before him, and to abhor the grossest idolatry.

4. It is highly equitable, that if Christ died for us, and was raised for us as our happiness, we should live to his glory, and make him our end in all our actions, and the whole course of our lives. The apostle uses this consideration as an argument, and as a copy and exemplar. As Christ died not for himself, nor rose again for himself, but he died for God's glory and our redemption, to vindicate God's righteousness, and justify us in his sight, and rose again to make it appear that he had done our business in redeeming us, and went to heaven to manage our cause for us, so we are to rise to keep up the honour of God's righteousness and holiness, and to justify Christ in our professions of him, and conformity to him in the design of his death and resurrection. It is a high disesteem of ourselves not to live to Christ, which is both a more rightful and a more satisfying object of our affections, who returns our living to him with a happiness to ourselves. By his dying he purchased a dominion over us; by his resurrection his dominion over us was confirmed, and thereby our obligation of love and service increased. He died as our surety to satisfy our debts, and rose as our Saviour to justify our persons; so the apostle, Rom. 4:26, 'He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.' Therefore, as he rose to justify us, we must rise to glorify him. And indeed it is a great sign of a spiritual growth when we grow in our ends and aims for God.

5. The resurrection of Christ, as well as his death, was for us. He rose again, it must be understood, for them for whom he died; he died as a public person, bearing our sins, and rose again as a public person, and head of the believing world, acquitted from our sins: Hebrews 9:24,

'He is entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us.' And in a conformity to these two public acts of Christ does our regeneration and communion with Christ consist; in a mortification of the body of sin in conformity to his death; in newness of life, by quickening grace, in conformity to his resurrection, Colossians 2:12. The apostle proceeds on, and makes his inference in the 16th verse, 'Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' To know is used in Scripture for love and delight, both on God's part,—Psalms 1:6. 'The Lord knows the way of the righteous, that is, loves and delights in the way of the righteous,—and on man's part: Hosea 4:1, 'No knowledge of God in the land,' that is, no love of God. Not to know men after the flesh then, is either not to judge of men according to the endowments, though never so glittering, which arise only from fleshly principles; to esteem no man according to his greatness, his knowledge, and worth, in the account of the world, or, not to love men for our secular interest; or, not to regard men according to those fleshly privileges of circumcision and carnal ceremonies. Not ourselves, which is included in no man; not to esteem of ourselves by our knowledge, wealth, credit, honour, or any other excellency which falls under the praise of men, but by inward grace, living to God, fruitfulness to him, which falls under the praise of God. Men esteem not their fields for the gay wild flowers in them, but for the corn and fruit; 'yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' We do not glory in him because he was of kin to us, and our countryman according to the flesh; we look upon him no more only as a miraculous man, but we have more noble thoughts of him; we know him as the great Redeemer of the world; we consider him in those excellent things he has done, those excellent graces which he has communicated, those excellent offices he does exercise, we know him after a spiritual manner, as the author of all grace, appointed by God for such ends, accepted by God upon such works, glorified by God for such purposes; we regard him as transacting our great affairs in heaven, where he is entered as a forerunner for us, Hebrews 6:20, and as such we serve and honour him; we desire not his company in the flesh, but in the spirit, in his heavenly appearance and glory. Observe,

1. Natural men have no delight in anything but secular concerns; love nothing, but for their own advantage; admire not any true spiritual worth; they know and love men, yea, what love they pretend to Christ is only a fleshly love, a love from education, a customary love.
2. An evidence of being taken from ourselves and living to Christ, is our valuation either of ourselves or others, according to holiness. Though a civil respect be due to men according to their station in the world,—such a respect the writer of this epistle gave to Agrippa;—yet our inward valuations of men ought to be upon the account of the image of God in them. God, who loves righteousness, knows no man after the flesh, but as he finds the image of his own righteousness in him; and as a new creature is framed after the image of God, so his affections and valuations of men or things are according to God's affections to them, or esteem of them.
3. Our professions of Christ, serving him and loving him barely for ourselves and for fleshly ends, does not consist with regeneration. Such a love is a love to ourselves, not to Christ, a making him only subservient to us, not ourselves subservient to Christ.
4. We should eye Christ, and arise to the knowledge of him, as he is advanced and exulted by God. Look upon him as our head, delight to come under his wing, and have our whole

dependence on him, know him in his righteousness to justify us, know him not only as a Saviour risen, but in the power of his resurrection in our souls, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death; such a knowledge the apostle aims at, Php 3:8-10; the other knowledge is a knowledge of him in the head, this a knowledge of him in the heart; the other is a knowledge of him after the flesh, this a knowledge of him after the spirit, in the draught of Christ in our hearts by the Spirit, an inward conception of him in the womb of our hearts. The text is another inference made from that position, Php 3:15. If there be such an obligation upon us to live to Christ, because he has died and rose again for us; then certainly whosoever has an interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, as to the fruits of it, must be a new creature, a changed person; old things have passed away, all things are become new in him. Whosoever is in the kingdom of Christ, engrafted into him, under the participation of his death and resurrection, is a new creature; all other excellencies are defective, though they may be useful to the world; it is a 'new creation' only makes a man excellent and worthy of the kingdom. 'Old things are passed away,' old affections, old dispositions of Adam; those things, the "archaia", things that are very near of as old a standing as the world. Adam would be his own rule and ruler; he would be the rule of good and evil to himself; he would be his own end. These things must pass away; we must come to a fiduciary reliance upon God, under the new head of his appointment, and make him our highest good, our chief end, our exact rule, and therefore what is called the 'new creature, Galatians 6:15, is called 'faith working by love,' Galatians 5:6. Adam's great failures were unbelief and self-love; he would not believe God's precept and threatening; he would not depend upon God. To this is opposed faith, which is a grace that empties us of ourselves, and fixes us in our dependence on another. He would also advance himself, and be his own rule and end, to know as God; to this is opposed love, which is an acting for God and his glory. And these two are the essential parts of the new creature. Some of late would understand, by the new creature, only a conversion from idolatry to the profession of Christianity. But there must be a greater import in the words than so. The apostle makes it a qualification necessary both to Jew and Gentile, that neither the circumcision of the one did avail without it, nor the uncircumcision of the other prejudice them that possess it. Besides, men may turn from one profession to another without living to God, and directing all their actions to the glory of Christ. Some translate it, 'Let him be a new creature;' others, 'He is a new creature.' One notes his state, the other his obligation. 'Old things are passed away.' It is a reason rendered; there is a change in the whole frame of things. If you understand it of the old economy, the old legal state, then it is an argument showing the necessity of the new creature. Old things are withered; there is a new frame in the church, in the kingdom, therefore there ought to be so in the subjects of it; for the prophets use to speak of the state of the gospel under the names of a 'new heaven and new earth,' Isaiah 65:17. As old rites in the church are removed, so the old principles and the old frames of Adam should pass away. The old rubbish must be thrown out when the house is new built. And they are passed away in a regenerate man, jure, obligatione, potestate, though not wholly in actu. 'All things are become new', but not of ourselves, but by the grace of God, 2 Corinthians 5:18, 'and all things are of God.' It is likely the apostle expresses himself thus, to pull down the swelling thoughts of the Corinthians which they had of themselves. They were proud of their gifts, wherein, by the apostle's own confession, they came behind no church in the world, 1 Corinthians 1:7; and he discourses to them much of the excellence of charity above knowledge, and advises them to 'covet the best gifts,' 2 Corinthians 13:1-13. He depresses their confidence in knowledge without grace, which does but puff up, not

edify to eternal life. He wishes them, therefore, to look more to the new creature in them, to try themselves whether they be in Christ or no, by the change they found in their hearts. 'If any man be in Christ,' that is, be a member of Christ, engrafted into him. In the words observe, 1. The character of a true Christian by his state, a new creature.

2. The necessity of this new creation, if any man; if he be not a new creature, he is not in Christ; he has nothing at present to do with him, he is no true member of his body.

3. The universality, any man; not a man can be in Christ by any other way, without this new creation pass upon him.

4. The advantage of it: if he be a new creature, he is certainly in Christ, it is an infallible token that the Redeemer did die and rise again for him.

5. The nature of it.

(1.) Removal of the old form: old things are passed away.

(2.) Introduction of a new: all things are become new, as without in the church, so within in the soul.

6. The note of attention: behold, more particularly set to this passage, of all things becoming new, to remote the deceit that men are liable to. Old things in some measure may pass away, but look to that, whether new things come in the place contrary to those old, whether there be new affections, new dispositions; old things may pass away, when old sins are left, and no new frames be set up in the stead of them. The doctrine I shall insist upon is this:

Doct. Every man in Christ has a real and mighty change wrought in him, and becomes a new creature.

I pitch upon these words to show the nature of regeneration, the necessity of which I have already discoursed of.

It is difficult to describe exactly the nature of regeneration.

1. Because of the disputes about the nature of it; whether it be quality, or a spiritual substance; whether, if a quality, it be a habit or a power, or whether it be the Holy Ghost personally. Many controversies the wits of men have obscured it with. The Scripture discovers it to us under the terms of the new creature, a new heart, a law put into us, the image of God, a divine nature; these, though Scripture terms, are difficult to explain.

2. It is difficult, because it is visible, not in itself, but in its edicts. We know seed does propagate itself, and produce its like, but the generative part in the seed lies covered with husks and skin, so that it is hard to tell in what atom or point the generative particle does lie. We know we have a soul, yet it is hard to tell what the soul is, and in what part it does principally reside. We know there are angels, yet what mortal can give a description of that glorious nature? It is much like the wind, as our Saviour describes it: John 3:8, 'The wind blows where it lists, and thou hears the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The wind, we feel it, we see the effects of it, yet cannot tell how it arises, where it does repose itself, and how it is allayed; and all the notions of philosophy about it will not satisfy a

curious inquirer. So likewise it is in this business of regeneration; the effects of it are known, there are certain characters whereby to discern it; but to give a description of the nature of it is not so easy.

3. It is difficult, because of the natural ignorance which is still in the minds of the best. A man cannot understand all iniquity, for there is a 'mystery of iniquity;' neither can he fully understand this work, for there is a 'mystery of godliness,' 1 Timothy 3:16; not only in the whole scheme of it without, but in the whole frame of it in the heart. It is called the 'hidden man of the heart', 1 Peter 3:4; hidden from the world, hidden from reason, hidden from the sight sometimes of them that have it; a man can hardly sometimes see it in his own heart, by reason of the steams of corruption; as a beautiful picture is not visible in a cloud of smoke. The blindness the god of this world has wrapped us in, that we might not know God, or the things of God, is not wholly taken off: And even what we know of the truths of God, suffers an eclipse by our carnal conceptions of them; for all the notions we frame of them have a tincture of sense and fancy.

4. It is hard for those to conceive it who have no experience of it. If we speak of the motions of natural corruption, as wrath, passion, distrust of God, and enormous sins, men can easily understand this, because we have all sad experiments of an inward corruption; but the methods and motions of the Spirit of God in this work are not comprehended, but by those who have felt the power of it. The motions of sin are more sensible, the motions of the Spirit more secret and inward, and men want as much the experience of the one, as they have too much of the other. Hence it is that many carnal men love to have the nature of sin ripped up and discovered; partly, perhaps, for this reason among others, that they can better understand that by the daily evidence of it in their own practices; whereas other things, out of the reach of their experience, are out of the grasp of their understanding; and therefore seem to them paradoxes and incredible things: the spiritual man is not judged or discerned by any but them that are spiritual, 1 Corinthians 2:15. It is certainly true, that as a painter can better decipher a stormy and cloudy air than the serenity of a clear day, and the spectator conceive it with more pleasure: so it is more easy to represent the agitations and affections of natural corruption, than the inward frame of a soul wrought by the Spirit of God. I shall therefore describe it consonantly to the Scripture thus: Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature, are put into, and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory. This is included in the term of a new creature in the text. There is a change, a creation, that which was not is brought into a state of being. If a new creature, and in Christ, then surely not a dead but a living creature, having a principle of life; and if a living creature, then possessed of some power to act, and habits to make those actions easy; and if a power to act, and a habit to facilitate that act, then a law in their nature as the rule of their acting; every creature has so. In this respect the heavens are said to have ordinances: 'knows thou the ordinances of heaven?' Job 38:33; and they seem to act in the way of a covenant, Jeremiah 33:25, according to such articles as God has pitched upon. And, lastly, as in all creatures thus endued, there is a likeness to some other things in the rank of beings; so in this new creature there is a likeness to God, whence it is called 'the image of God in holiness and righteousness,' and a 'divine nature.' So that you see the divers expressions whereby the Scripture declares this work of regeneration are included in this term of the new creature, or the new creation, as the word is, "kaine ktisis". It is a certain spiritual and supernatural principle, or

permanent form, per modum actus primi, infused by God, whereby it is made partaker of the divine nature, and enabled to act for God.

Let us therefore see, 1. How it is differenced from other states of a Christian.

2. What it is not.

B. What it is.

1. First, How it is differenced from the other states of a Christian.

(1.) It differs from conversion. Regeneration is a spiritual change, conversion is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred; conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given us a principle to turn; conversion is our actual turning; that is the principle whereby we are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; and conversion the actual fixing on God, as the terminus ad quem. One gives posse agere, the other actu agere.

[1.] Conversion is related to regeneration, as the effect to the cause. Life precedes motion, and is the cause of motion. In the covenant, the new heart, the new spirit, and God's putting his Spirit into them, is distinguished from their walking in his statutes, Ezekiel 36:27, from the first step we take in the way of God, and is set down as the cause of our motion: 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes.' In renewing us, God gives us a power; in converting us, he excites that power. Men are naturally dead, and have a stone upon them; regeneration is a rolling away the stone from the heart, and a raising to newness of life; and then conversion is as natural to a regenerate man as motion is to a living body. A principle of activity will produce action.

[2.] In regeneration, man is wholly passive; in conversion, he is active: as a child in its first formation in the womb, contributes nothing to the first infusion of life; but after it has life, it is active, and its motions natural. The first reviving of us is wholly the act of God, without any concurrence of the creature; but after we are revived, we do actively and voluntarily live in his sight: Hosea 6:2, 'He will revive us, he will raise us up, and then 'we shall live in his sight;' then we shall walk before him, then shall we 'follow on to know the Lord.' Regeneration is the motion of God in the creature; conversion is the motion of the creature to God, by virtue of that first principle; from this principle all the acts of believing, repenting, mortifying, quickening, do spring. In all these a man is active; in the other merely passive; all these are the acts of the will, by the assisting grace of God, after the infusion of the first grace. Conversion is a giving ourselves to the Lord, 2 Corinthians 8:5; giving our own selves to the Lord is a voluntary act, but the power whereby we are enabled thus to give ourselves, is wholly and purely, in every part of it, from the Lord himself. A renewed man is said to be led by the Spirit, Romans 8:14, not dragged, not forced; the putting a bias and aptitude in the will, is the work of the Spirit quickening it; but the moving the will to God by the strength of this bias, is voluntary, and the act of the creature. The Spirit leads, as a father does a child by the hand; the father gave him that principle of life, and conducts him and hands him in his motion; but the child has a principle of motion in himself, and a will to move. The day of regeneration is solely the day of God's power, wherein he makes men cavilling to turn to him, Psalms 110:3; so that, though in actual conversion the creature be active, it is not from the power of man, though it be from a power in man, not growing up from the impotent root in nature, but settled there by the Spirit of God.

(2.) It differs from justification. They agree in the term to which, that is God: by justification we are reconciled to God; by regeneration we are assimilated, made like to God. They always go together. As our Saviour's resurrection, which was the justification of him from that guilt which he had taken upon himself, and a public pronouncing him to be his righteous servant, is called a new begetting him: Acts 13:33, 'God has raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;' because it was a manifestation of him to be the Son of God, who before, being covered with our infirmities, did not appear so to the world: so our justification from guilt, and new begetting us, and manifesting us to the angels to be the sons of God, are at one and the same time, and both are by grace; 'by grace you are justified,' Romans 5:1, the quickening and raising us together with Christ is by grace, Ephesians 2:5-6. The blessing of Abraham, which is the application of redemption from the curse of the law, and the receiving the promise of the Spirit by faith, are both together, Galatians 3:14. But [1.] it differs from justification in the nature of the change.

Justification is a relative change, whereby a man is brought from a state of guilt to a state of righteousness; from a state of slavery to a state of liberty; from the obligation of the covenant of works to the privilege of the covenant of grace; from being a child of wrath to be an heir of promise. Regeneration is a physical change, and real, as when a dead man is raised from death to life; it is a filling the soul with another nature, Ephesians 2:1, 'And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' The translators have inserted those words, 'has he quickened,' because those words are put in the 5th verse; but methinks the words refer better to the 23rd verse of the first chapter, speaking of Christ, 'who fills all in all,' and fills you too with a spiritual life; or he passes from the power of God in raising Christ, to his power in raising us. It is a change of nature, and of that nature whereby we are children of wrath, not only by the first sin, but by a conversation according to the course of the world. And this quickening respects the change of that nature which was prone to a worldly conversation, and a fulfilling the desires of the flesh. The first is a change of a man's condition, this a change in a man's disposition. When a man is made a magistrate there is a change in his relation; when a servant or slave is made a freeman there is an alteration of his condition; but neither the one's magistracy nor the other's liberty, fills their hearts with new principles, or plants a new frame in their nature. Relation and nature are two distinct things. In creation there is a relation of a creature to God, which results from the mere being of the creature; but there is also the nature of the creature in such a rank of being, which is added over and above to its mere being. The apostle in the verses following the text, speaks of reconciliation, or non-imputation of our trespasses, as distinct from that change wrought in us in the new creation. In justification we are freed from the guilt of sin, and so have a title to life; in regeneration we are freed from the filth of sin, and have the purity of God's image in part restored to us.

[2.] They differ in the cause, and other ways. Justification is the immediate fruit of the blood of Christ: 'Being justified by his blood,' Romans 5:9. Regeneration is by the immediate operation of the Spirit, therefore called 'the sanctification of the Spirit,' the matter of that is without us, the righteousness of Christ; the matter of the other within us, a gracious habit. The form of the one is imputing, the form of the other is infusing or putting into us; they differ in the end, one is from condemnation to absolution, the other from pollution to communion. In the immediate effect, one gives us a right, the other a aptness. In their qualities, the righteousness of one is perfect in our head, and imputed to us. The righteousness by regeneration is actively in us, and aspires to

perfection.

(3.) It differs from adoption. Adoption follows upon justification as a dignity flowing from union to Christ, and does suppose reconciliation. Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons. Adoption relates us to God as a father, regeneration entrances upon us the lineaments of a father. That makes us relatively his sons by conferring a potter, John 1:12. This makes us formally his sons by conveying a principle, 1 Peter 1:23. By that we are instated in the divine affection; by this we are partakers of the divine nature. Adoption does not constitute us the children of God by an intrinsic form, but by an extrinsic acceptation; but this gives us an intrinsic right; or adoption gives us a title, and the Spirit gives us an earnest; grace is the pledge of glory. Redemption being applied in justification, makes way for adoption. Adoption makes way for regeneration, and is the foundation of it: Galatians 4:5-6, 'God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Because you are thus adopted, God will make you like his Son, by sending forth the Spirit of his Son, to intimate the likeness it shall produce in the hearts of men to Christ, that you may cry, Abba, Father, behave yourselves like sons, and have recourse to God with a childlike nature. The relation to Christ as brethren is founded upon this new creature: Hebrews 2:11, 'For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified, are all of one.' they are all of one nature, not the divine nature which Christ had by eternal generation, but that divine nature Christ had by the Spirit's unction. And being of one nature, he is not ashamed, though glorious in heaven, to call them brethren; and being Christ's brethren by a divine nature, thence result also the relation of the sons of God.

(1.) It differs from sanctification. Habitual sanctification, indeed, is the same thing with this new creature, as habitual rectitude was the spiritual life of Adam; but actual sanctification, and the gradual progress of it, grows from this principle as from a root. Faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9, 'purifying their hearts by faith,' and is the cause of this gradual sanctification, but faith is part of this new creature, and that which is a part cannot be the cause of the whole, for then it would be the cause of itself. We are not regenerated by faith, though we are sanctified by faith; but we are new created by the Spirit of God, infusing faith into us. Faith produces the acts of grace, but not the habit of grace, because it is of itself a part of this habit, for all graces are but one in the habit or new creature, charity, and likewise every other grace is but the bubbling up of a pure heart and good conscience, 1 Timothy 1:5. Regeneration seems to be the life of this gradual sanctification, the health and liveliness of the soul.

2. The second thing proposed is, what it is not.

(1.) It is not a removal or taking away of the old substance or faculties of the soul. Some thought that the substance of Adam's soul was corrupted when he sinned, therefore suppose the substance of his soul to be altered when he is renewed. Sin took not away the essence, but the rectitude; the new creation therefore gives not a new faculty, but a new quality. The cure of the leprosy is not a destroying of the fabric of the body, but the disease; yet in regard of the greatness of man's corruption, the soul is so much changed by these new habits, that it is as it were a new soul, a new understanding, a new will. It is not the destroying the metal, but the old stamp upon it, to imprint a new. Human nature is preserved, but the corruption in it expelled. The substance of gold is not destroyed in the fire, though the metal and the flame mix together, and fire seems to be

incorporated with every part of it; but it is made more pliable to what shape the artist will cast it into, but remains gold still. It is not the breaking the candlestick, but setting up a new light in it; not a destroying the will, but putting a new bias into it. It is a new stringing the instrument to make a new harmony. It is an humbling the loftiness, and bowing down the haughtiness of the spirit, to exalt the Lord alone in the soul, Isaiah 2:11, speaking of the times of the gospel. The essential nature of man, his reason and understanding, are not taken away, but rectified. As a carver takes not away the knobs and grain in the wood, but planes and smoothes it, and carves the image of a man upon it, the substance of the wood remains still; so God pares away the rugged pieces in man's understanding and will, and engraves his own image upon it, but the change is so great that the soul seems to be of another species and kind, because it is acted by that grace, which is another species to from that principle which acted it before. New creation is called a resurrection. Our Saviour in his resurrection had the same body, but endued with a new quality. As in Christ's transfiguration, Matthew 17:2, neither his deity nor humanity were altered, both natures remained the same. But there was a metamorphosis ("metamorfosen"), and a glorious brightness conferred by the deity upon the humanity which it did not partake of before. So though the essence of the soul and faculties remain the same, yet another kind of light is darted in, and other qualities implanted. It was the same Paul when he complied with the body of death, and when he complained of it, but he had not the same disposition. As Adam in a state of corruption had the same faculties for substance which he had in the state of innocence; but the power, virtue, and form in those faculties, whereby he was acceptable to God, and in a capacity to please him, was wholly abolished. We lose not nor substantial form, as Moses his rod did, when it was turned into a serpent; or the water at Cana was turned into wine. Our nature is ennobled, not destroyed; enriched, not ruined; reformed, not annihilated.

(2.) It is not a change of the essential acts of the soul, as acts. The passions and affections are the same, as to the substance and nature of the acts, but the difference lies in the object. And acts, though for substance the same, yet are specifically distinguished by the diversity of objects about which they are conversant. Whatsoever is a commendable quality in nature, and left in man by the interposition of the mediator, is not taken away; but the principle, end, and objects of those acts, arising from those restored qualities, are altered. The acts of a renewed man, and the acts of a natural man, are the same in the nature of acts, as when a man loves God and fears God, or loves man or fears man; it is the same act of love, and the same act of fear; there are the same motions of the soul, the same substantial acts simply considered; the soul stands in the same posture in the one as in the other, but the difference lies in the objects; the object of the one is supernatural, the object of the other natural. As when a man walks to the east or west, it is the same motion in body and joints, the same manner of going; yet they are contrary motions, because the terms to which they tend are contrary one to the other: or, as when we bless God and bless man, it is with one and the same tongue that we do both, yet these are acts specifically different, in regard of the difference of their objects. The nature of the affections still remain, though not the corruption of them, and the objects to which they are directed are different. If a man be given to thoughtfulness, grace removes not this temper, but turns his meditations to God. The solitariness of his temper is not altered, but something new offered him as the object of his meditation. If a man be hot and earnest in his temper, grace takes not away his heat, but turns it into zeal to serve the interest of God. Paul was a man of active disposition; this natural activity of his disposition and temper was not dammed up by grace, but reduced to a right channel, and pitched upon a right object; as he

laboured more than any in persecuting, so afterwards he 'laboured more than any' in edifying, 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. His labour was the same, and proceeded from the same temper, but another principle in that temper, and directed to another term. As it is the same horse, and the same mettle in the beast, which carries a man to his proper stage that carried him before in a wrong way, but it is turned in respect of the term. David's poetical fancy is not abolished by this new principle in him, but employed in descanting upon the praises of God, which otherwise might have been lavished out in vanity, and foolish love-songs, and descriptions of new mistresses. So that the substance and nature of the affections and acts of a man remain; but anger is turned into zeal by virtue of a new principle, grief into repentance, fear into the fear of God, carnal love into the love of the creator, by another principle which does bias those acts.

(3.) It is not an excitation, or awakening of some gracious principle which lay hid before in nature, under the oppression of ill habits, as corn lay hid under the chaff, but was corn still. Not a beating up something that lay sculking in nature, not an awakening as of a man from sleep; but a resurrection as of a man from death; a new creation, as of a man from nothing. It is not a stirring up old principles and new kindling of them; as a candle put out lately may be blown in again by the fire remaining in the snuff, and burn upon the old stock; or as the life which retired into the more secret parts of the body in those creatures that seem dead in winter, which is excited and called out to the extreme parts by the spring sun. Indeed, there are some sparks of moral virtues in nature, which want blowing up by a good education; the foundation of these is in nature, the exciting of them from instruction, the perfection of them from use and exercise. But there is not in man the seed of one grace, but the seeds of all sin: Romans 7:18, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.' Some good thing may be in me, but it arises not from my flesh; it is not from any seed sown by nature, but it is another principle put into me, which does seminally contain in it all grace; it is a putting a new seed into the soil, and exciting it to grow, 'an incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter 1:23. Therefore the Scripture does not represent men in a trance, or sleep, but dead; and so it is not only an awakening, but a quickening, a resurrection, Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 1:19-20. We are just in this work as our Saviour was when the devil came against him: John 14:30, 'The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me.' He had nothing to work upon in Christ; but he rakes in the ashes of our nature, and finds sparks enough to blow upon; but the Spirit finds nothing in us but a stump, some confused desires for happiness; he brings all the fire from heaven, wherewith our hearts are kindled. This work, therefore, is not an awakening of good habits which lay before oppressed, but a taking off those ill habits which were so far from oppressing nature that they were non-natural to it, and by incorporation with it, had quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first created it.

(4.) Nor is it an addition to nature. Christ was not an addition to Adam, but a new head by himself, called Adam, in regard of the agreement with him in the notion of an head and common person: so neither is the new creature, or Christ formed in the soul, an addition to nature. Grace grows not upon the old stock. It is not a piece of cloth sewed to an old garment, but the one is cast aside, the other wholly taken on; not one garment put upon another: but a taking off one, and a putting on another, Colossians 3:9-10, 'putting off the old man, putting on the new man.' It is a taking away what was before, 'old things are passed away,' and bestowing something that had no footing before. It is not a new varnish, nor do old things remain under a new paint, nor new plaster laid

upon old; a new creature, not a mended creature. It is called light, which is not a quality added to darkness, but a quality that expels it; it is a taking away the stony heart and putting an heart of flesh in the room, Ezekiel 36:26. The old nature remains, not in its strength with this addition, but is crucified, and taken away in part with its attendants: Galatians 5:24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.' As in the cure of a man, health is not added to the disease; or in resurrection, life added to death; but the disease is expelled, death removed, and another form and habit set in the place. Add what you will without introducing another form, it will be of no more efficacy, than flowers and perfumes strewed upon a dead carcass, can restore it to life, and remove the rottenness. Nothing is the terminus a quo, in creation; it supposes nothing before as a subject capable; nothing in a natural man is a subject morally capable to have grace, without the expulsion of the old corrupt nature. It is called a new creature, a new man; not an improved creature, or a new-dressed man.

(5.) It is not external baptism. Many men take their baptism for regeneration. The ancients usually give it this term. One calls our Saviour's baptism his regeneration. This confers not grace, but engages to it: outward water cannot convey inward life. How can water, a material thing work upon the soul in a physical manner? Neither can it be proved that ever the Spirit of God is tied by any promise, to apply himself to the soul in a gracious operation, when water is applied to the bow. If it were so that all that were baptised were regenerate, then all that were baptised would be saved, or else the doctrine of perseverance falls to the ground. Baptism is a means of conveying this grace, when the Spirit is pleased to operate with it. But it does not work as a physical cause upon the soul, as a purge does upon the humours of the body; for it is the sacrament of regeneration, as the Lord's Supper is of nourishment. As a man cannot be said to be nourished without faith, so he cannot be said to be a new creature without faith. Put the most delicious meat into the mouth of a dead man, you do not nourish him, because he wants a principle of life to concoct and digest it. Faith only is the principle of spiritual life, and the principle which draws nourishment from the means of God's appointment. Some indeed say that regeneration is conferred in baptism upon the elect, and exerts itself afterwards in conversion. But how so active a principle as a spiritual life should lie dead, and asleep so long, even many years which intervene between baptism and conversion, is not easily conceivable.

3. Let us see what it is positively.

(1.) It is a change; and, as to the kind of it is,

[1.] A real change, real from nature to grace, as well as by grace. The term of creation is real; the form introduced in the new creature is as real as the form introduced by creation into any being. Scripture terms manifest it so. A 'divine nature,' the 'image of God,' a 'law put into the heart,' they are not nominal and notional; it is a reality the soul partakes of; it gives a real denomination, 'a new man,' 'a new heart,' 'a new spirit,' 'a new creature,' something of a real existence; it is called a resurrection: John 5:25, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' If Christ had said only that the hour shall come, it had been meant of the last resurrection, but saying that it was already come, it must be meant of a resurrection in this life. There is as real a resurrection of the soul by the trumpet of the gospel, accompanied with the vigorous efficacy of the Holy Ghost, as there shall be of bodies by the voice of the Son of God at the sound of the trumpet of the archangel. All real operations suppose some

real form whence they flow, as vision supposes a power whereby a man sees, and also a nature wherein that power is rooted. The operations of a new creature are real, and therefore suppose a real power to act, and a real habit as the spring of them. It is such a being that enables them to produce real spiritual actions, for the 'spirit of power' is conveyed to them, 2 Timothy 1:7, whereby as when they were out of Christ they were able to do nothing, so now being in him they are able to do all things, Php 4:13.

[2.] It is a common change to all the children of God. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;' every man in Christ is so. It is peculiar to them, and common to all of them. The new creation gives being to all Christians. It is a new being settled in them, a new impress and signature set upon them, whereby they are distinguished from all men barely considered in their naturals. As all of the same species have the same nature, as all men have the nature of men, all lions the nature of lions, so all saints agree in one nature. The life of God is communicated to all whose names are written in the book of life. All believers, those in Africa, as well as those in Europe, those in heaven as well as those on earth, have the same essential nature and change. As they are all of one family, all acted by one spirit, the heart of one answers to the heart of another, as face to face in a glass. What is a spirit of adoption in them below is a spirit of glory in them above; what in the renewed man below is a spirit crying Abba Father, that is in them above, a spirit rejoicing in Abba Father. The impress and change is essentially the same, though not the same in degree.

[3.] It is a change quite contrary to the former frame. What more contrary to light than darkness? Such a change it is, Ephesians 5:8; instead of a black darkness there is a bright light. As contrary as flesh and spirit, John 3:6, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Where both are put in the abstract, one is the composition of flesh, the other of spirit: as contrary as east to west, as the seed of the woman to the seed of the serpent, as the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The frame of the heart before the new creation, and the frame of the heart after, bear as great a distance from one another as heaven from earth. As God and sin are the most contrary to one another, so an affection to God and an affection to sin are the most contrary affections. It is quite another bent of heart, as if a man turn from north to south. It is a position quite contrary to what it was. The heart touched by grace stands full to God, as before to sin; it is stripped of its perverse inclinations to sin, clothed with holy affections to God. He abhors what before he loved, and loves what before he abhorred. He was alienated from the life of God but now alienated from the life of his lusts; nothing would before serve him but God's departure from him; nothing will now please him but God's rays upon him. He was before tired with God's service, now tired with his own sin. Before, crucifying the motions of the Spirit, now crucifying the affections and lusts. That which was before his life and happiness is now his death and misery; he disaffects his foolish pastimes and sinful pleasures as much as a man does the follies of his childhood, and is as cheerful in loathing them as before he was jolly in committing them. It is a translation from one kingdom to another: Colossians 1:13, a translation 'from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.' "Metestese", a word taken from the transplanting of colonies: they are in a contrary soil and climate, they have other works, other laws, other privileges, other natures. As Christ's resurrection was a state quite contrary to the former, at the time of his death he was in a state of guilt by reason of our sin; at his resurrection he is freed from it. He was before made under the law; he is then freed from the curse of it. He was before in a state of death, after his resurrection in a state of life, and lives for ever. God pulls out the heart of

stone, that inflexibleness to him and his service, and plants a heart of flesh in the room a pliability to him and his will, Ezekiel 36:26. It is as great a change as when a wolf is made a lamb; that wolfish nature is lost, and the lamb-like nature introduced by corruption man was carnal, and brutish; by the new creation he is spiritual and divine. By corruption he has the image of the devil; by this he is restored to the image of God. By that he had the seeds of all villainies; by this the roots of all graces. That made us fly from God; this makes us return to him. That made us enemies to his authority; this subjects us to his government. That made us contemn his law; this makes us prize and obey it: 'Instead of the thorn there shall come up the fir-tree; instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree,' and God will preserve it from being cut off, Isaiah 55:13, speaking of the time of redemption.

[4.] It is a universal change of the whole man. It is a new creature, not only a new power or new faculty. This, as well as creation, extends to every part; understanding, will, conscience, affections, all were corrupted by sin, all are renewed by grace. Grace sets up its ensigns in all parts of the soul, surveys every corner, and triumphs over every lurking enemy; it is as large in renewing as sin was in defacing. The whole soul shall be glorified in heaven; therefore the whole soul shall be beautified by grace. The beauty of the church is described in every part, Song of Solomon 1:1-17; Song of Solomon 2:1-17; Song of Solomon 3:1-11; Song of Solomon 4:1-16, &c.

First, This new creation bears resemblance to creation and generation. God in creation creates all parts of the creature entire. When nature forms a child in the womb, it does not only fashion one part, leaving the other imperfect, but labours about all, to form an entire man. The Spirit is busy about every part in the formation of the new creature. Generation gives the whole shape to the child, unless it be monstrous. God does not produce monsters in grace; there is the whole shape of the new man. You mistake much if you rest in a reformation of one part only; God will say, Such a work was none of my creation. He does not do things by halves.

Secondly, It bears proportion to corruption. As sin expelled the whole frame of original righteousness, so regenerating grace expels the whole frame of original corruption. It was not only the head or only the heart, only the understanding or only the will, that was overcast with the blackness of sin, but every part of man did lose its original rectitude. Not a faculty could boast itself like the Pharisee, and say, It was not like this or that publican; the waves of sin had gone over the heads of every one of them. Sin, like leaven, had infected the whole mass; grace overspreads every faculty to drive out the contagion. Grace is compared to light, and light is more or less in every part of the air above the horizon, for the expulsion of darkness when the sun arises. The Spirit is compared to fire, and therefore pierces every part with its warmth, as heat diffuses itself from the fire to every part of water. The natural man is denominated from corruption, not an old understanding or an old will, but the 'old man,' Ephesians 4:22. So a regenerate man is not called a new understanding, or a new will, but 'a new man,' Ephesians 4:24.

Thirdly, The proper seat of grace is the substance of the soul, and therefore it influences every faculty. It is the form whence the perfection both of understanding and will do flow; it is not therefore placed in either of them, but in the essence of the soul. It is by this the union is made between God and the soul; but the union is not of one particular faculty, but of the whole soul. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' it is not one particular faculty that is perfected by grace, but the substance of the soul. Besides, that is the seat of grace which is the seat of the Spirit, but this

or that particular faculty is not the seat of the Holy Ghost, but the soul itself, whence the Spirit rules every particular faculty by assisting grace, like a monarch in the metropolis sending orders to all parts of his dominions. The Spirit is said to dwell in a man, Galatians 4:4, Romans 8:9; in the whole man, as the soul does in the body, in forming every part of it, if it dwelt only in one faculty there could be no spiritual motion of the other. The principles in the will would contradict those in the understanding; the will would act blindly if there were no spiritual light in the understanding to guide it. The light of the understanding would be useless if there were no inclination in the will to follow it, and grace in both those faculties would signify little if there remained an opposing perversity in the affections. The Spirit, therefore, is in the whole soul, like fire in the whole piece of iron, quickening, warming, mollifying, making flexible, and consuming what is contrary, like Aaron's ointment, poured upon the heart, and thence runs down to the skirts of the soul.

Fourthly, Therefore there is a gracious harmony in the whole man. As in generation two forms cannot remain in the same subject; for in the same instant wherein the new form is introduced the old is cast out; so at the first moment of infusing grace, the body of death has its deadly wound in every faculty, understanding, will, conscience, affection. The rectitude reaches every part; and all the powers of the soul, by a strong combination, by one common principle of grace acting them, conspire together to be subject to the law of God, and advance in the ways of holiness: Psalms 119:10, it is with 'the whole heart' that God is sought. In the understanding there is light instead of darkness, whereby it yields to the wisdom of God, and searches into the will of God: the spirit of the mind is renewed, Ephesians 4:23. In the will there is softness instead of hardness, humility instead of pride, whereby it yields to the will of God, and closes with the law of God. In the heart and conscience there is purity instead of filth (whereby it is purged from dead works, Hebrews 9:14, settled against the approbation of sin), and a resolution to be void of offence, Acts 24:16. In the affections there is love instead of enmity, delight instead of weariness, whereby they yield to the pleasure of God, have flights into the bosom of God: 'Oh how love I thy law! it is my delight day and night.' The memory is a repository for the precepts and promises of God as the choicest treasure. It is a likeness to Christ; the whole human nature of Christ was holy, every faculty of his soul, every member of his body, his nature holy, his heart holy. If we are not formed, Christ is not formed in us; look therefore whether your reformation you rest in be in the whole, and in every part of the soul.

Fifthly, It is principally an inward change. It is as inward as the soul itself. Not only a cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, a painting over the sepulchre, but a casting out the dead bones and putrefied flesh; of a nature different from a pharisaical and hypocritical change, Matthew 23:25-27. It is a clean heart David desires, not only clean hands, Psalms 51:10. If it were not so, there could be no outward rectified change. The spring and wheels of the clock must be mended before the hand of the dial will stand right. It may stand right two hours in the day, when the time of the day comes to it, but not from any motion or rectitude in itself. So a man may seem by one or two actions to be a changed man, but the inward spring being amiss, it is but a deceit. Sometimes there may be a change, not in the heart, but in the things which the heart was set upon, when they are not what they were. As a man whose heart was set upon uncleanness, change of beauty may change his affection; the change is not in the man, but in the object. But this change I speak of is a change in the mind, when there is none in the object; as the affection of a child to his trifles changes with the growth of his reason, though the things his heart was set upon remain in the

same condition as before.

First, It is a change of principle.

Secondly, A change of end.

First, A change of principle. The principle of a natural man in his religious actions is artificial; he is wound up to such a peg, like the spring of an engine, by some outward respects which please him; but as the motion of the engine ceases, when the spring is down, so a natural man's motion holds no longer than the delight those motions gave him, which first engaged him in it. But the principle in a good man is spirit, an internal principle, and the first motion of this principle is towards God, to act from God, and to act for God. He fetches his fire from heaven to kindle his service; an heat and fervency of spirit precedes his serving the Lord, Romans 12:11. There may be a serving God from an outward heat, conveying a vigour and activity to a man, but the new creature serves God from inward and heated affections. Examine therefore by what principles do I hear, and pray, and live, and walk? For all acts are good or evil, as they savour of a good or bad root, or principle in the heart. The two principles of the new creature are faith and love. What is called the new creature, Galatians 6:15, is called 'faith working by love,' Galatians 5:6.

Faith. This is the first discovery of all spiritual life within us, and therefore the immediate principle of all spiritual motion. A splendid action without faith is but moral, whereas one of a less glittering is spiritual with it. The new creature being begotten by the seed of the word, and having thereby an evangelical frame, has therefore that which is the prime evangelical grace, upon which all other graces grow; and consequently all the acts of the new creature spring from this principle immediately, viz., faith in the precept, as a rule; faith in the promise, as an encouragement; faith in the Mediator, as a ground of acceptation. Therefore if we have not faith in the precept, though we may do a service not point-blank against the precept, yet it is not a service according to a divine rule; if we have not faith in the promise, we do it not upon divine motives; if we act not faith in the Redeemer, we despise the way of God's ordaining the presentation of our service to him. All those that you find, Hebrews 11:1-40, acting from faith, had sometimes a faith in the power of God, sometimes in the faithfulness of God; but they had not only a faith in the particular promise or precept, but it was ultimately resolved into the promise of the Messiah to come: Hebrews 11:14, 'Those all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,' &c. The performance of particular promises they had received, but not the performance of this grand promise; but that their faith respected. They, as new creatures, did all in observance of God promising the Mediator; and we are to do all in observance of God sending the Mediator, being persuaded of the agreeableness of our services to him, upon the account of the command, and of the acceptation of our services by him upon the account of the Mediator. This put a difference between Paul's prayer, after the infusion of grace into him, and before; so that our Saviour sets a particular emphasis upon it: Acts 9:11, 'Behold he prays.' Paul, no doubt, had prayed many times before his believing, but nothing of that kind was put upon the file as a prayer; before, they were prayers of a self-righteous pharisee, but these of an evangelical convert; these were prayers springing from a flexibleness to Christ, a faith in him; from a Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Love. There are many principles of action, hope of heaven, fear of hell, reputation, interest, force of natural conscience; some of those are inward, some outward, which are the bellows that blow up a man to some fervency in action; but the true fire, that contributes an heavenly frame to a

service, is the love of God. The desire of the heart is carried out to God; his heart draws near to God, because his sole delight is in God, and his whole desire for him: Psalms 73:25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Then, Psalms 73:28, 'But it is good for me to draw near to God.' This choice affection in the new creature spirits his services, makes his soul spring up with a wonderful liveliness. The new creation is the restoration of the soul to God from its apostasy; a casting down those rebellious principles which contended with him, and reducing his affections to the right centre; and when all the lines meet here in one centre, in God, all the returns to him flow from this affection. It is but one thing settled in the soul as the object of its earnest desire, and that should be the spring of all its inquiries and actions, the beholding the beauty of the Lord. Psalms 27:4. Things may be done out of a common affection; as when a man will raise a child fallen into the dirt, out of a common tenderness, but a father would raise him with more natural affection, which is a sphere above that common compassion. Every attraction therefore is not the renewed principle, but a choice affection to God. This is a mighty ingredient in this change, and does difference the new creature from all others. One acts out of affection to God, the other out of affection to itself. Men may be offended with sin, because it disturbs their ease, health, estate, &c. He may pray, and hear, merely out of a respect to natural conscience; but how can these be the acts of the new creature, when there is no respect to God in all this? But a new creature would quench the fire of corrupt self-love, to burn only with a spiritual and divine flame; he depresses the one to exalt the other, and would be disengaged from the burdensome chains of self-love that he might be moved only by the spiritual charms of the other purer affection; it is a death to him to have any steams of self-love rise up to smoke and black a service.

Secondly, A change of end as well as principle, The glory of God is the end of the new creature, self the end of the old man. Before this new creation, a man's end was to please self; now his end is to please God. A man that delights in knowledge, to pleasure his understanding, and for self improvement, when he becomes a new creature, though his desire for knowledge is not removed, yet his end is changed, and he thirsts after knowledge, not merely to please his inquisitive disposition, but to admire and praise God, and direct himself in ways agreeable to him. As the end of the sensualist is to taste the sweetness in pleasure, so the end of a renewed man is to know more of God, to taste a sweetness in him, and in every religious duty. This is the distinguishing character of the new creature. This design for the glory of God was not to be found among any of the heathens, who were so great admirers of virtue. Most of them intended only an acquiring a reputation among their countrymen; and though some of them might esteem virtue for its native dignity, yet this was to esteem it by the moiety of it, when they referred it not to the honour of God, from whence it flowed to the world. Man was not created for himself, and to be his own end; he therefore that does chiefly aim at his own satisfaction in anything, is not a new creature: he has his old deformed end into which he sunk by the fall. But grace carries a man higher, and reduces all to God, and to his well-pleasing. Colossians 1:9-10, the apostle desires they may be 'filled with the knowledge of the will' of God, that they may 'walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasing'. The very first motion of this new principle is towards God, to act for God; as the first appearance of a living seed in the ground is towards heaven; thither it casts its look, from whence its life came. What the new creature receives, is from God: 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 'They received it as the word of God,' and therefore what he does is for God.

(First.) The principal intent of God in the new creation is for himself: Hosea 2:23, 'I will sow her to me,' speaking of the church in the time of the gospel; not to sin, not to the world, not for herself, but I will sow her to me. Husbandmen sow the ground for themselves, for their own use, to reap the harvest, and the corn grows up to the husbandman that sowed it. What the seed does naturally, the new creature does intentionally, grow up for God. Since the new creature is a divine infusion, it must needs carry the soul to please God, and aim at his glory. God would never put a principle into the creature, to drive it from himself, and conduct it to his own dishonour; this consists not with God's righteousness, this would be a deceit of the creature. It is impossible, but that which is from God in so peculiar a manner, and with gracious intentions to restore the creature to his happiness, must tend to the advancement of God. Where there are no aims fit the divine glory, there is no divine nature, nothing in the soul that can claim kindred with God. Regeneration is a forming the soul for God's self, and to show forth his praise, hence they are said to be 'a peculiar people,' in respect of their end, as well as their state. Certainly that man, who makes not God his pattern and his end, that does not advance the praise and glory of God, was never new formed by him. What comes from God, must naturally tend to him. Is it possible that the living image of God should disgrace the original? that a divine impression should be unconcerned in the divine author?

(Secondly.) The new creation is an evangelical impression, and therefore corresponds in its intention with the gospel. This is the instrument whereby the new creature was wrought; and this was appointed and published for the glory of God: 'Glory to God in the highest,' Luke 2:14. It is to promote holiness in the creature, which is the only way whereby we can honour God. This is the prime lesson the grace or gospel of God teaches, to live godly, Titus 2:12, to live to God. What, therefore, is produced by the efficacy of such an instrument, cannot but aim at the glory of God, which was intended in it; otherwise the gospel would work an effect contrary to itself, which no instrument does produce when managed by a wise agent; and contrary to the end of the agent too, viz., the Spirit of God, whose end is to glorify Christ: John 16:14, 'He shall glorify me.' The frame and acts of a renewed man are like the grain or seed of the word sown in the heart. Nothing the gospel designs more than the laying self low, even as low as dust and death. The first lesson is self-denial. It is in self that the strength and heart of the body of sin and lust lies; and it is the principal end of the gospel to bring the creature to sacrifice self-love to righteousness, self-interest, self-contentment, wholly to God, and his law, and his love, that God may be all in all in the creature. Before the heart was touched with the gospel, it had not the least impulse to bring forth the virtues and excellencies of God into the world; but when it is changed, it is filled to the brim with zealous desires to have his name exalted upon a high throne among men.

(Thirdly.) A new creation is the bringing forth the soul in a likeness to God. The end, therefore, of the new creature, is the glory of God. As God is the cause, so he is the pattern of the new creature, according to which he does frame the soul; it is 'after God created in righteousness,' &c., Ephesians 4:24. There can be no likeness to God where the creature dissents from him in the chief end. Without such an agreement, there can be nothing but variance between God and the creature. All the commotions and quarrels upon earth are founded upon the difference of ends. God aims at his own glory, so does the new creature, otherwise it were impossible he should walk with God, or follow him as a dear child. It consists also in likeness to Christ: his resurrection is the pattern and cause of our regeneration: 'Ye are risen with Christ,' Colossians 3:1. What, to contrary

ends? Did Christ rise only to live to himself? No; but to live to God, as the great end for which he was appointed Mediator. Did he design to glorify God on earth, and does he live to dishonour God in heaven? No; he lives to the same end there for which he lived and died here. Our spiritual resurrection, is not only a restoring us to a spiritual life, but to the ends of this life; a living to God and Christ, and to the ends of his mediation. Surely the new creature cannot be so brutish, as not to mind the honour of that nature to which it is so near allied, the glory of that God unto whom it has the honour to bear a resemblance. A new creature has a mighty sprightliness, and a height of spirit in some measure, when anything in his hands concerns God, more than when it concerns himself; for his will being framed according to the will of God, is filled with an ambition for the promoting the excellency of his name.

(Fourthly.) The end of the new creation is to advance the soul. It can never be advanced by an end lower than itself, or equal to itself. Any interest lower than God would be a degrading of it, a disparagement to its state, and too sordid for the soul to drive at; for it is the excellency or sordidness of the end which does elevate or debase a man's spirit, and his actions also: the one enlarges, the other shrivels up the soul in its operation. All things below God are unworthy of the boundless nature of the soul of man, much more unworthy of a soul rectified by a new creation. The soul is only perfected in a tendency to this end, and disgraced and lost in the mud and dirt of lower aims. That grace that is most durable, and does most ennoble the spirit of a man, has this property, that it 'seeks not her own,' nor 'vaunts itself,' 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

(Fifthly.) It is impossible the soul can have this new creation without a change of end. It is not conceivable how anything can return to that, which it does not eye as its end. The soul, as deriving its original from God, has an obligation in all its motions to return to him as its chief end. The new creature has an higher obligation by grace. Does that, therefore, deserve the name of the new creature, that is so far from answering a gracious tie, that it does not so much as answer a natural one? That is yet below the sphere of inanimate creatures, who all run back to their fountain, and one way or other declare the glory of God. He is no new creature, therefore, who is devotedly fawning upon himself, caressing himself; he is one that is yet bemired in his old nature, and has not yet partaken of the fruit of Christ's purchase, redeeming and renewing grace. Those that are under the efficacious influence of it, and are the temple of the Holy Spirit, 'do glorify God in their body and spirit' too, inwardly as well as outwardly, because they are God's, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. The understanding and will are both elevated by grace. The more intelligent any creature is, the more noble is his end, or ought to be, and the more he does intend his end. The aim of a man is higher than that of a child; the aims of men in this or that station, are still more noble than the ends of men in a lower rank. Since the new creation, therefore, endues man with the most excellent nature he is capable of, it must fix a man upon the most excellent end, which is God and his glory; it were not else a new creature, or worthy of such a title.

(Sixthly.) This change of end does only fit the soul for its proper service. From this end does arise a quickness and an heartiness in every service. When God and his glory is not our end, our hearts flag, and we feel our spirits tired at our entrance into any service for him. When the apostle had made the glory of God his end in testifying the gospel of the grace of God, then his life was not counted dear to him, that he might finish his course with joy, Acts 20:24. Where this end sits uppermost in the heart, all allurements to the contrary are mightily despised. What a scornful eye does the apostle cast upon all other things! and sets no higher value upon them than he would

upon dross and dung, when they were not conducing to his main end, which was the knowledge of Christ, Php 3:8, Php 3:10.

Well, then, this is one of the most essential properties of the new creature, and that which is the clearest discovery of this state. A new creature is as earnest in secret for the glory of God, and as industrious for God, as if the eyes of all the world were upon him; the bent of his heart always stands this way; he glorifies God in his spirit as well as body, 1 Corinthians 6:20. When men will be zealous in things that concern God before men, and negligent in their spirits and inward part of the soul, then the glory of God as not their end, but themselves. For what is a man's end, sets an edge upon his spirit in private as well as public. But a new creature is of another frame. When he finds that he has missed of his full aim, and has not had that single respect as he ought, he is unsatisfied and troubled that God has been no more glorified by him. But he that is not renewed is well pleased if any concerns of self have been advanced, though God be not glorified; and his soul is at rest in that act, as it has lived to himself, and brought in something to increase the treasure of his self-ends.

Thirdly, As it is an inward change in respect of principle and end, so, thirdly, it is a change of thoughts. Being new, he is new in the choicest faculty. As when he was after the flesh he minded the things of the flesh, so now being after the spirit he minds the things of the spirit, Romans 8:5. As a child has not the thoughts of a man, so neither has a natural man the thoughts of a new creature. A principle is placed in his understanding which does emit other beams different from that smoky light which was in it before. Though a new creature cannot hinder the first motions, yet he endeavours to suppress their proceeding any farther, and excites others in his heart to make head against them; and would, as far as he could, hinder the rising of any wave, the least bubbling against right reason and the interest of God. When David had an inclination in his heart to God's statutes, the immediate effect of it is to 'hate vain thoughts', Psalms 119:112-113, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes;' and it follows, 'I hate vain thoughts.' The vanity of his heart was a burden to him, and he loathed all the inward excrescences, any buds from that bitter stump he still bore within him. A new creature is as careful against wickedness in the head or heart, as in the life. He would be purer in the sight of God than in the view of men. He knows none but God can see the workings of his heart or the thoughts of his head, yet he is as careful that they should not rise up as that they should not break out. The soul is so changed that it is no longer a stranger and ill-willer to the motions of the Spirit; it will welcome them upon their entrance, conduct them into the innermost room, converse familiarly with them, and delight in their company, it invites their stay, pursues them when they seem to depart, holds them fast, and will not let them go, as the church does to Christ. He turns much in upon himself, sets his eye upon his own heart, keeps that with all diligence, to observe what issues of a spiritual life are there; as it is directed in Proverbs 4:23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life'. If he perceives any weeds to spring up there, or mushrooms (as they will in a night), he cuts them up and throws them out. The understanding is more quick and sensible to discern them in the first risings, to receive good ones or check bad ones, than it was before; the new creature is sensible of any touch contrary to its interest. A corrupt mind draws to it the vilest things, and unproportionable to the true nature of the soul, as a corrupt stomach does unwholesome food, till by a new creation it be set higher, and by a sanctified reason becomes more choice about its objects; and then, like David, the heart is filled as with marrow and fatness, when he meditates on God in the night watches, Psalms 63:5-6. The

thoughts of God are an inward spring of pleasure to him, more than the thoughts of sin can be to a deformed and depraved soul.

Fourthly, Change of comforts follows upon this. Since there is a change of nature, there is a change of his complacency. The former nature is his trouble, therefore all his delights which arise from it are its discontents and burden. Every nature has a peculiar pleasure belonging to it: the nature of a dove will not acquiesce in that which pleases a swine, nor the new nature in that which pleases the old. The comforts of manhood are of another make than those of a child, and the comforts of a prince more elevated than those of a peasant, because he has another spirit. That Spirit who is appointed to renew him is appointed an officer to comfort him; as therefore he gives him new principles, so he gives him new consolations. He is, as a comforter, to glorify Christ, to receive of his, and show it unto the new creature. They are Christ's own words—'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you'—being described before under the title of a Comforter, John 16:14. He shall receive of mine; grace from me, suitable to the grace in me, wherewith to beautify; and comforts from me, suitable to those comforts in me, wherewith to refresh you. As they are brought to live the life of God in holiness, so they are brought to live the life of God in joy and comfort. Righteousness, peace, joy are the trinity which make up the kingdom of God in the heart: Romans 14:17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' As the grace of God is their life, so the joy of the Lord is their strength; strangers to God intermeddle not with it, and have no share in it. There is a joy put into the heart together with this new creature: 'Thou hast put gladness into my heart,' Psalms 4:7—a gladness not founded upon any worldly consideration as the joy of men, not a joy of their own putting in; but the new creature's joy is a joy of God's putting in. Other men's comforts are in the creature, the new creature's comforts in the Creator. Others cannot joy if worldly things be removed, because the foundation of their joy is without them; but these, by the loss of worldly things, have their comforts rather increased than impaired, because the foundation of their joy is within them. The comforts of a natural man are sucked from the dry breasts of creatures, the comforts of a new creature are derived from the full fountain of life, which makes their very sufferings gloriously comfortable to them, 1 Peter 4:13-14. The prodigal by his change of mind had a change of refreshment: robes for rags, and a fatted calf for husks. It is as much his comfort to loathe himself as derived from Adam, and to love the self implanted by God, as it was before the contrary. He can never look upon the new creature in him but with delightful views, and a pleasure mingles itself with every cast of his eye upon it. For certainly from making God our end, and doing all things for his glory, endows the highest delight; since God is the only happiness of that soul that is in conjunction with him as his main end, he must needs have a share in the happiness of God as well as his nature. Felicity and consolation follow it, as the shadow does the body; and every act of the new creature towards God is edged with comfort in the very acting.

Fifthly, As it is an inward change, so it is also an outward change. I call it outward in regard of objects, in regard of operations; though it is principally inward in regard of the prime seat of it, in regard of the form, which causes the outward. The power of seeing is in the soul, though the vision itself be in the eye. The change our Saviour made in those he cured was in the organ, when he made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk, which did necessarily infer a change of objects and a change of actions. So a man by this new creation sees the things of God, hears the voice of God, walks in the ways of God. All outward changes argue not an inward, but an

inward is always attended with an outward.

First, In regard to objects. The world and sin was before the object of his inquiries and endeavours. Now he seeks the face of God; his soul follows hard after him. The world and God are so contrary, that the love of the one is the enmity to the other. From multitudes of objects which distracted him, he is come to unity, which quiets and settles him: Psalms 27:4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' It is no lower an object than this, that the soul is conversant about, about God himself, to embrace him; about what has most of God in it, to value and cherish it; about the word of God, to direct him in his ways, and to do his work. The understanding is conversant about the things of God, in the apprehension of them; the will in the election, the affections in complacency in them. Spiritual objects are set up by every faculty, as the delightful things which it heartily embraces. Before, a man had no affection to God, you might as well have persuaded a swine to love the music of a lute, as a natural man supremely to love God. All his desires were set upon the dross of the world, the customs, coarse corruptions, pleasures of the world, but a truly regenerate man can as little make the world his chief object of desire and affection, as a man used to choice viands can feed upon chaff and husks. The intendment of the gospel is to set forth God in Christ as an amiable object, as infinitely glorious. It declaims against the world, to draw men from the affectionate considerations of it. The renewed work then does consist in fixing upon God in Christ, as the main object of desire and affection. When the heart, therefore, complies with the gospel, there must be a compliance with the chief subject of the gospel, and in such a manner as may answer the intendment of the gospel. While Paul was in his natural and pharisaical state, Christ and his truth was accounted as dung, trampled upon as dross, fit to be thrown out of the converse of mankind; but when his heart is changed, there is a change in the object of his valuation: Christ is then his treasure, his all, and other things but dross in comparison of him, Php 3:8.

Secondly, In regard of operations. 'Old things are passed away,' old actions as well as old affections. Operations are never constantly against nature, operari sequitur esse. The heart and the actions do not always contradict one another. 'According to the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks,' Matthew 12:24. According to the spring of grace in the heart will the hand of the life stand. It will vent itself more or less, according to the quantity of it. It is an inward baptism with fire, which will quickly break out and show itself in the members: Matthew 7:20, 'By their fruits you shall know them.' New apprehensions infer new operations. An alteration of judgment cannot be without an alteration of acting. As he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in him,' Colossians 2:6. The very intendment of God in the new creation was this: Ephesians 2:10, 'Created in Christ to good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them.' If there be not then new works, there is no new creation, for the chief intention and aim of God cannot be frustrated. Christ formed in a man is not a sleepy and inactive being: actions will scent of him. Fruits bear the image of the root whence they spring, and upon which they flourish. A new root cannot bring forth old fruits. If the nature of a crab-tree be changed into that of a vine, it will bear no longer crabs but grapes. Where holiness is implanted in the nature, holiness will be imprinted in the fire. A man that has reason superior to sense does use his sense rationally; a renewed man that has grace superior to reason uses his reason graciously. The operations were rational when bare reason held the sceptre, but they are spiritual when grace ascends the throne;

for it cannot be that that person who is acted by the Spirit, 'lives in the Spirit, walks in the Spirit' (Galatians 5:18, Galatians 5:25), should do anything without a spiritual tincture, in that wherein he is acted by it. For it is impossible but every action must be dyed of the same colour with the principle whence it flows, and by which it is directed. Actions of sensitive nature are be reason of grace ordered be a new rule, directed to a new end. He ate and drank to the flesh before, now to God, 1 Corinthians 10:31. He degraded his soul to invent ways to pamper his body. Now he puts his body in its due posture to serve the soul, and both to exalt God. Yea, his religious duties are changed, not as to the matter, but the manner. He knew them before, as he did Christ, after the flesh; he now knows them and performs them after the Spirit. There is zeal instead of coldness, liveliness instead of deadness, brokenness instead of presumption, a spirit of liberty instead of the whip of conscience, confidence in God instead of confidence in duty, melting pleading of promises instead of a pharisaical pleading of works. In a word, grace instead of nature, spirit instead of flesh. Paul, of a pharisaical boaster, becomes a Christian suppliant; 'behold he prays.' This change is outward as well as inward. In a man of an exact morality it is chiefly inward; he walks in his old outward ways with a new heart. In a loose man renewed it is apparently outward; he has left both his old ways and his old nature; but a man only outwardly reformed, without any inward change, walks in new ways with an old spirit. 'He that lacks these things,' says the apostle, after an enumeration of several graces, 'has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins;' for indeed he never was.

Thus have I considered this new creation in the nature of a change.

2. Let us consider it in the nature of a vital principle. This new creation is a translation from death to life: 1 John 3:14, 'We know that we have passed from death to life.' And we have not a spiritual life till we are in Christ. 'He that has not the Son has not life,' 1 John 5:12. When our Saviour called Lazarus out of the grave, he gave him a principle of life and motion. The same he does when he calls men from a spiritual death in sin. Whatsoever we had from the first Adam is mortal, whatsoever we have from the second Adam is vital; the one communicates a spiritual life, as the other propagated a spiritual death. The new creature is a vital powerful principle, naturally moving the soul to the service and obedience of God, and does animate the faculties in their several motions, as the soul does quicken the members of the body. It is called the hidden man, the inward man, implying that it has life and motion. As the life of the body is from the soul, as the effect from the cause, so the life of the soul is from grace. Christ is the meritorious cause of this life in his person, the efficient cause of it by his Spirit; but grace is the formal cause of this life, as God is the cause of our bodily life efficiently, and the soul the cause of it formally. It is not, then, a gilding, but a quickening; not a carving, but an enlivening. Whatsoever does proceed from an external cause is not life or a living motion. A piece of wood may be carved in the shape of a man, but remains wood still in such a form and figure. But a Christian has a spiritual life breathed into him, as Adam had a natural. When Adam's body was formed of the earth, it was no more than earth, till a heavenly spark was breathed into him by God, to set him upon his feet, and enable that piece of earth to move. It is distinguished therefore from hypocrisy, which is but the shadow of Christianity. This is a living principle; that a form, this a power; that a piece of art, this a nature. A picture may have the lineaments of a man, but not the life, understanding, and affections of a man.

3. Let us consider it as a habit, and then see what light the consideration of it, as a vital principle and a habit, give us into the nature of this new creation. By habit we must not understand, as we

do in common speech, a clothing, as when we say, Such a one was in such a habit; but by habit we mean an inward frame, enabling a man to act readily and easily, as when an artificer has the habit of a trade. Since this new creation is not a destruction of the substance of the soul, but that there is the same physical being and the same faculties in all men, and nothing is changed in its substance as far as respects the nature of man, it is necessary, therefore, that this new creation consist in gracious qualities and habits, which beautify and dispose the soul to act righteously and holily. Corruption of nature is the poison, the sickness, and deformity of our nature; grace is the beauty, health, ornament of it, and that which gives it worth and value. When a debauched man is become virtuous, we say he is another man, a new man, though he has the same soul and body which he had before, but he has quitted those evil habits wherewith he was possessed. It is impossible to conceive a new creature without new habits. Nothing can be changed from a state of corruption to a state of purity without them. The making darkness to become light, in the very nature of it, implies the introducing a new quality, Ephesians 5:8. This is meant by the seed: 1 John 3:9, 'His seed remains in him.' As seed makes the earth capable to bring forth good fruit, which had a nature before to bring forth, not corn, but weeds, till the grain was put into it; and it is expressed by 'a fountain of living water springing up into eternal life,' John 4:14 ("pege").

(1.) There is such a habit. God does provide as much for those that he loves, in order to a supernatural good, as for those creatures that he loves in order to a natural good; but God has put into all creatures such forms and qualities, whereby they may be inclined of themselves to motions agreeable to their nature, in an easy and natural way. Much more does God infuse into those that he moves to the obtaining a supernatural good, some spiritual qualities, whereby they may be moved rationally, sweetly, and readily to attain that good; he puts into the soul a spirit of love, a spirit of grace, whereby, as their understandings are possessed with a knowledge of the excellency of his ways, so their wills are so seasoned by the power and sweetness of this habit, that they cannot, because they will not, act contrary thereunto. And this habit of grace has the same spiritual force in a gracious way, as those principles in other creatures in a natural way. As the habit of sin is called flesh in regard of its nature, and death in regard of its consequent, so the habit of grace is called the new creature and spirit, Galatians 5:17, in regard of its term and consequent, life. This habitual grace is the principle of all supernatural acts, as the soul concurs as an immanent principle to all works by this or that faculty. As Christ had a body prepared him to do the work of a mediator, so the soul has a habit prepared it to do the work of a new creature. To this purpose, there is a habit of truth or sincerity in the will, and a 'hidden wisdom' in the understanding, Psalms 51:6. As the corrupt nature is a habit of sin, so the new nature is a habit of grace; God does not only call us to believe, love, and obey, but brings in the grace of faith, and love, and obedience, bound up together, and plants it in the soil of the heart, to grow up there unto eternal life; he gives a willingness and readiness to believe, love, and obey.

(2.) This habit is necessary. The acts of a Christian are supernatural, which cannot be done without a supernatural principle; we can no more do a gracious action without it, than the apostles could do the works of their office unless endued with power from above, which our Saviour bids them tarry at Jerusalem for, Luke 24:49. If there were not a gracious habit in the soul, no act could be gracious; or supposing it could, it could not be natural, it would be only a force. New creation is not from the Spirit compelling, but inclining; not like the throwing a stone contrary to its nature, but changing the nature, and planting other habits, whereby the actions become natural. As sin was

habitual in a man by nature, so grace must be habitual in a new creature, otherwise a man is not brought into a contrary state (though the acts should be contrary) if there be not a contrary habit; for it is necessary the soul should be inclined in the same manner towards God as before it was towards sin; but the inclination to sin was habitual.

(3.) This habit is but one. For it is an entire rectitude in all the faculties, and an universal principle of working righteously. As the corrupt nature is called the 'old Adam', and a 'body of death', the gracious nature is called the 'new man,' Colossians 3:9-10. As a man is but one man, a body one body, though consisting of divers members, and several parts, all formed by one spirit, and making up but one habit, so that as all sins are parts of that body of death, so all graces are but strings of this one root. As from that primogeneal light, kindled at the first creation by God, were framed the stars and lights of heaven, which have their several appearances and motions, and are distinct from one another, though all arising from the womb of that first light, so all particular graces, though they have their stated seasons of action, and are distinct in themselves, yet all flow from, and are contained in, this habit as in a root. They are so many grapes growing upon one stalk, clusters proceeding from one root of the new nature. It is from the participation of the divine nature that all those graces arise, the exercise of which the apostle exhorts them to, 2 Peter 1:4, &c; and indeed it being a divine nature, must needs include all the perfections due to it. As the divine essence of God is one, yet contains all perfections eminently; and if there were a deficiency of any, it could not be the divine essence; so the grace infused into the heart contains in it virtually all the perfections wherein it may agree with the nature of God's holiness, otherwise it were not a divine nature, if there were any defect in the nature of the habit, I say, in the nature of the habit. And it cannot be otherwise; for though the Spirit may give one gift to one man, another gift to another, 1 Corinthians 12:8-9, yet when he would make a new creature, there must be a nature or habit containing all graces. It could not else be a divine nature; for if the Spirit does purpose to make a new creature, he cannot but give all grace, which belongs to the essence and constitution of that new creature, otherwise he would either wilfully or weakly cross his intention.

(4.) This habit receives various denominations, either,

[1.] From the subject. It is subjectively in the essence of the soul, but as it shows itself in the understanding, it is called the knowledge of God; as it is the will, it is a choice of God; as it is in the affections, it is a motion to God. As the body of death is in the understanding, ignorance; in the will, enmity; in the conscience, deadness; in the affections, disorder and frowardness. As diseases receive several names, as they are centred in several parts, yet are but the dyscrasy or distemper of the humours.

[2.] From the object it is diversified. As it closes with Christ dying, it is faith; as it rejoices in Christ living, it is love; as it lies at the feet of Christ, it is humility; as it observes the will of Christ, it is obedience; as it submits to Christ's afflicting, it is patience; as it regards Christ offended, it is grief; yet all arising from one habit, and animated by faith, so that it is the love of faith, the joy of faith, the humility of faith, the patience of faith, they all spring from one habit, seated in one soul, conversant about one object, God in Christ: such a unity there is in all these diversifications. As the holy oil wherewith the vessels of the tabernacle were anointed was but one ointment, though composed of many ingredients, Exodus 30:25-26; as all the perfections of creatures are eminently in one God all the evil dispositions of the creatures seminally in man by nature: so all the beauties

of grace are eminently included in this habit.

Hence we may take a prospect of the nature of the new creature. It being thus a vital principle, and a habit, therefore the motion to God, and for God, must be,

1. Ready in respect of disposition. He stands ready and disposed to every good work upon God's call. As the habit of sin disposes the soul to every evil work, so the habit of grace prepares it for every good work, and makes it meet for its master's use: 2 Timothy 2:21, 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for his Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.' It is just as it was with Isaiah, Isaiah 6:6, at the first sight of the vision he complains, 'Woe is me, a man of unclean lips,' taken up with self-reflection, no offers to act for God; but when a live coal was taken from the altar and laid upon his mouth, there is a ready answer to God's question, Isaiah 6:7-8, 'Whom shall I send? Here am I, send me.' No demurs; it was a live coal from the altar had quickened him into a new frame for God. David does not say he had performed the statutes of God, but he had 'inclined his heart' to perform them, Psalms 1:1-6. That I may not grate upon any troubled spirit, consider,

(1.) This readiness is seminally in every renewed person, yet it does not always actually appear. As the old nature contains in it seminally all sins, yet every man is more prone to one than another, according to education, temper of body, or a set of temptations; so the heart of a renewed man has an habitual disposition to the exercise of all grace, because it has the seeds of all graces in it, yet it does not act all alike for want of vigorous occasions. As the attributes of God, though in the highest perfection, yet in their exercise in the world, sometimes one appears more triumphant than another, sometimes more of patience, sometimes mercy, sometimes justice, sometimes wisdom, one is more eminently apparent than another; so the divine nature has seminally in this habit all grace, and an agreeableness to every duty enjoined, a principle to send forth the fruits of all when an object is offered, and the grace excited by the Spirit of God; yet sometimes one is more visible than another, according to the call it has to stand forth and show itself. This habitual disposition may be when there is not a present actual fitness for some service of a higher strain, by reason of some particular commission of sin, which has sullied the soul, as a vessel of honour in respect of its formation may be fit for use, but in respect of some foulness contracted may not be immediately fit for some noble service, till a new scouring had passed upon it. A grown Christian, who has his senses exercised in the ways of God, does not always actually exercise this habit, yet he is ready upon the least motion actually to do it; as a new creature having a change of end does habitually mind the glory of God, yet he does not in every action actually think of it, or will it as his end; but he is ready to bring this habitual aim into exercise upon the least motion, and reaches out his arm to embrace and stand right to that point. David had an habitual repentance in him while he lay asleep in his sin, and by virtue of this habit, he does without any resistance comply with the first touch God gave him by Nathan. His repentance flowed, and never ceased till it had done its perfect work. It was a sign of a heart of flesh; a heart of stone could not have been so flexible. Job was eminent for patience, but being a new creature, he had a disposition to all the rest, and had acted them with as high a strain, had he had the same occasions.

(2.) This readiness to every service does not actually appear in persons newly regenerate. I think the lowest degree of this habit in one newly regenerate, is a purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord: Acts 11:23, 'When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted

them, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.' Certainly when there is such a fixed and constant purpose, it is a token of the grace of God; yet to this purpose there may not always be connected an actual readiness to every service. For at the first beginning of the new creature there is a strong resistance, it is in a strange soil, the armies of hell are in array against it, it is like a Daniel in a lion's den, or a Lot in Sodom, only God restrains the force of these enemies. As it is in a child derived from Adam, there is a principle in the natural corruption to exert all kind of wickedness; yet it does not presently rise to the utmost of its force, till ripened by time and other intervening causes. So though the new creature has in it a readiness virtually to the most raised action, to be as believing and laborious as Paul, as zealous as Elijah, as patient as Job, yet it mounts not presently to this state; a time must be allowed for growth. There is an infancy in grace, as well as in manhood. And as a child, though his soul be of the same nature with that of a man, yet he cannot exercise those acts of understanding and reason, because of the predominance of sense, and the indisposition of the organs; so neither can a young Christian: he may have a disposition equal to the best Christians, but not an equal strength; the reluctance of the corrupt habits is more vigorous, not being much mortified; he wants also that additional strength gained by exercise. There may be a greater resistance to one grace more than to another, from the strength of some corruption particularly opposite to that grace; yet 'to will is present with him,' though he 'cannot perform that which is good,' Romans 7:18. The posture of the soul to God was as natural to him as the posture of the heart was before to sin; as a young boy first come to school may have as strong a purpose to get learning as a man that has taken all his degrees in the university. The first graces which appear in a renewed soul are repentance and faith; because regeneration being a rooting up from the odd stock and setting up a new, as it relates to the old stock, it does necessarily produce repentance upon the sight of his misery, and for being upon the old stock so long; and faith, as a necessary grace for closing with the Redeemer upon a sight of him, and for engrafting him upon a new stock, and then love, admiration, and thankfulness, walk the stage, from a reflection upon the greatness of the misery escaped, and the great deliverance attained. Sprouts from a root grow up, some faster, some slower, yet all arising from the same root. So some graces appear at the very first setting this habit in the soul, other graces lie hid till new occasions draw them out. This disposition, inclination, will, readiness, purpose, is the first language of a habit.

2. A second thing wherein you have a prospect of the new creature is this; as it is ready in respect of disposition, so it is in activity of motion. Since it is a life infused by infinite activity, since it is a habit bearing the impression of God, and maintained by a union with him, it is impossible it can be sleepy and dull in a constant way. All life has motion proper to the principle of it: rational life is attended with rational actions; sensitive life, with acts proper to sense. It is as impossible then that a spiritual life should be without acts consonant to it, as that the sun should appear in the firmament without darting forth its beams. All life is accompanied with natural heat, which is the band of it, whereby the body is enabled to a vigorous motion. The new creature is not a marble statue or a transparent piece of crystal, which has purity, but not life. It is a living spirit, and therefore active; a pure spirit, and therefore purely active, according to the degree of it. It is the same habit in part renewed, which Adam had by creation, which was not a sluggish and unwieldy principle; it must therefore have an activity, it could not else be a proper principle to contest with the contrary principle, which is active like the sea, casting out mire and dirt. Since the old Adam conveyed such a vigorous principle of corruption, the new Adam is not venting to endure the

principle of his conveyance with a suitable activity. Grace abounds in its vigour, as well as sin has abounded in its kind, Romans 5:20. Upon Christ's call, Matthew left his receipt of custom; the other apostles their nets; motion presently follows an enlivening call of God. It is first a habit, then an act; first a 'spirit of grace and supplication,' then a 'looking upon him whom they have pierced,' by an act of their understanding, and a 'mourning' by an act of his will, Zechariah 12:10-11. First a 'sanctification of the spirit,' then a 'belief of the truth,' to the obtaining of glory, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. When anything ceases to act, there is either an oppression, or a death of nature.

(1.) This principle of the new creature is naturally active. All vital motions are natural; sometimes in men there are natural actions without any actual exercise of reason, as when the spirits flow out to any part for the defence of it upon the motion of any passion, as blood starts to the face upon shame, &c, which all the reason of a man cannot hinder. It is as natural to this new habit to produce new actions, as for anything to engender according to its own likeness and species, as for a living tree to spring out in leaves and fruits. A renewed man, whose seed is within himself, brings forth fruit after its kind, as well as the herbs and the trees, Genesis 1:12. All living creatures move agreeably to their natures, with a spontaneity and freedom of nature. The bramble does not more naturally bring forth thorns, than a habit of sin does steam out sinful actions; nor a fountain more freely bubble up its water, than a habit of grace springs up in holy actions. For shall the workmanship of God be more unapt to the proper end of it, than the workmanship of the devil, since good works are the end of God's new creating us, that we should walk in them? Walking is a natural motion: Ephesians 2:10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works.' A well dressed vine does not more naturally bring forth grapes, than a soul rooted in Christ does the fruits of the spirit; neither does the sun more naturally enlighten the world with its beams, than the new creature shoots forth its desires and affections to God; for it is impossible but this habit should tend to him, since it is planted by him. The new creature's services are his meat and drink, not his work; it is as natural to him to do it, as for a creature to desire and take its proper food; you need not hire a child to suck, by the promises of fine things, it will naturally, without imitation, take the breast. The new creature having a righteous and just nature cannot but do righteous things; nothing can act against its nature, while nature is orderly, and not disturbed by some disease or frenzy. As God, whose image a regenerate man bears, cannot but do good, because his nature is goodness: Romans 6:2, 'How can you that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' He can no more naturally do it than a dead man can walk. Not but that there are some mistakes sometimes, which proceed not from nature, but from some obstructing humour. Nature does not err in its right course unless hindered by some adversary; the errors renewed men are subject to proceed not from the regenerate principle in them, but from that remainder of corruption which by degrees is weakened by the other, and at last wholly put off.

(2.) It is voluntarily active. There is a kind of natural necessity of motion from life and habit, yet also a voluntary choice, it is a power which constrains and inclines the will: Ps. 110:8. The apostle tells us there was a 'necessity laid upon him to preach the gospel,' 1 Corinthians 9:16, yet it was not a compulsion, but a voluntary act, after his will was changed. The new creature is not constrained from without, but flows freely, is not forced; the chief work is upon the will, the proper effect of any work upon the will is voluntariness. The Spirit works to make it willing; its motion then is not by compulsion: there is a sweet necessity of the new nature, and a gracious choice of will, which meet together and kiss each other; a natural, not a coactive necessity. How freely does the soul,

winged with grace, move to and for God, as a bird in the air! With what a free and ready spirit does the new creature go to prayer, reading, and hearing! How freely does it breathe in the air of heaven! Not spurred by outward interest, or dragged by the threatenings of the law, nor chased to it by the clamours of conscience; but gently moved to it, and upheld by it, by a soft, and dove-like, and 'free spirit,' Psalms 51:12. How great is the difference between the flowing of a fountain and the dropping of a sponge; one is free, the other squeezed: between a statue drawn upon wheels, and a living motion; one moves, the other is moved. Our Saviour, by washing us from our sins in his own blood,

'has made us kings and priests unto God,' Revelation 1:6. First kings, putting into the new creature a royal and magnanimous frame, as he did into Saul when he advanced him to the kingdom; and then priests, to offer sacrifices to God with this royal and generous spirit. So that it is as troublesome to a soul, having this royal spirit, to omit things proper to this frame, as it is for a legalist to do them. Therefore where there are frequent omissions of duty, or a constant dullness in it, it shows the want of this kingly frame, and consequently that we are not washed from our sins in the blood of Christ. There is both such a nature and such a choice, that as the apostle says, 2 Corinthians 13:8, 'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' So the new creature cannot but do the things which are holy, just, and good, so far as he is regenerate, were there no rule without to guide him, because he has a habit of holiness with him, a will set to the right point. His former state made him have an aversion from holy services this makes all spiritual duties connatural to him. So that it is as irksome for him to live without God in the world, as before it was to live with him; he can as soon strip himself of his own soul, as act, from a renewed principle, contrary to God and righteousness.

(3.) It is fervently active. The nobler the being of anything is, the greater degree of activity it is attended with; the more spiritual the quality, the more vigorous the effect. Both the spirituality of the principle, excellency of the object, and affection to the end, conspire together to increase this activity. The principle is spiritually vital; the operation therefore is vigorous: the object is God as amiable; the warmer therefore the zeal; the acts are, loving God, trusting in God, depending on God, promoting his kingdom in the heart, acts delightful in themselves, delightful in their issue, the motion in them more quick; the end is the glory of God, the happiness of the creature; the higher the end, the more elevated the soul. There is an innate principle in everything to preserve its happiness; it is as natural as life itself. Inanimate creatures are endued with this nature. The flame aspires to heaven, and waves on this and that side greedily, to catch what man supply a fuel; much more will other creatures act vehemently for that which preserves their being: the toad to its plantain, the swallow to its celandine, the babe to the breast. and the Christian to the word. There is in the new creature an impetus and force settled in the soul to do good. It is a baptism of fire following that with water. The Spirit is first as water, washing us from our filth; then as fire, quickening us with grace: Matthew 3:11, 'I baptise you with water, he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' In this respect it is likened to creatures of the greatest activity, fire, wind, a spring of living water; what more active in the rank of corporeal beings than fire and wind, either above or in the bowels of the earth? Witness the many stately buildings speedily consumed by the one or overthrown by the other. The new principle in the creature fills every part, dissolves the hard, melts the lumpish leaden heart, and makes it moveable in the ways of God with a glowing heat. But above this there is a higher denomination; the new creature is called spirit: John 3:6,

'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' that is, a spiritual creature. The activity of a spirit does inconceivably surmount that of a body; what vast strides can a spirit take in a moment, from heaven to earth! The habit of sin in respect of its vehemence to evil is called a spirit, 'a spirit of whoredom,' Hosea 4:12; as well as the habit of grace, in respect of its vehemence to good, 'a spirit of love,' 2 Timothy 1:7. How active is the new creature in its motion to God! It can fly in a thought from earth to heaven, enter the bosom of God, clasp about him, hold him fast, even till almighty bids him let him alone. Where there are rivers of living water in the belly, they will flow, John 7:38; where there is a divine habit, the soul will have a paroxysm of divine heat for the glory of God, Acts 17:16. Paul's spirit was stirred in him upon the sight of the Athenians' idolatry. If created to good works, then not to a dull and sluggish motion in them, this was not the intendment of the Creator, and therefore not the disposition of the creature.

(4.) It is unboundedly active. This new creature's desires are as large as his nature, he cannot be bound up in the narrow and contracted motions of his former disposition. The natural activity of the soul overflows, like a swelled river, all natural bounds, since it is possessed by a spiritual habit. A man without a habit in an art, does but bungle at his work, is quickly tired, desponds of attaining what he would; but he that has a habit, suppose of mathematical knowledge, finds one proposition following upon another, one deduction rising up from another, that he has a largeness, he knows not where to end; so the new creature finds one affection coming upon the neck of another many times in transports and out-goings to God, which knows no limits. It is unfoundedly active;—

[1.] In affections to God. The new creature would be as unlimited in its affections to God, as God is in his affection to him. It will not fix lower than the object it has pitched upon in heaven; all its operations tend thither; nothing below can give them a cessation, though they may suffer an interruption; it flies up, and is pulled back; it mounts again and again, follows hard on after the Lord. His affections are larger than his ability. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire besides thee,' Psalms 73:25. He seems to scorn everything else in comparison of God, though it were an angel, like a man that makes haste to some mark, turns the impediments on this side and that side. The new creature puts by the temptations of the flesh and the world, to make its way into the bosom of God, the centre of its rest, and the boundless limit of its soul. The sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, sends its rays as far as the lowest valley of the earth; and the new creature, the darlings of his soul to the highest heavens. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Corinthians 3:16-17, the veil is taken away, it 'beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord;' like an eagle, mounts up as near as it can to the sun, peers upon it till its eyes be dazzled with its brightness; he is never glutted with the views of him; his desires for him are never bounded but by him; one breathing after another, that he may fill God, as it were, with his affections. as he is filled by him with his Spirit. In his obedience, too, he would have his 'heart enlarged,' that he may 'run,' not creep, in the ways of God's commandments, Psalms 119:32; it is his grief that he cannot keep pace with God's commandments; it is his joy that God flies upon the wings of the wind to him, and his sorrow that he cannot fly upon the wings of the wind to God. He groans under his dullness, and his pleasure consists much in a liberty in God's service.

[2.] In disaffection to sin. He hates that body of death which hinders the accomplishment of the desires of his soul, and regards it at no other rate than his fetter, disease, and torture. He is discomposed when he meets with any check in his religious course; it is a violence to his new

nature, and he cannot bear it without regret. His anger and impatience rises with as much force against any obstacle to a free converse with God, as it did before against any impediment in the way of his lust. Nature is restless till it has got the conquest of the disease and corrupt humours of the body. Neither can a new creature be at quiet, till all that is against the interest of the new nature be purged out; and to that purpose he daily knocks at heaven gates for new strength and recruits of power against sin in the spiritual conflict. It is a trouble to him that he has not as full a sense of his own corruptions as he would, and therefore he goes frequently to God to beg new discoveries of sin, that he may fetch his enemy out of his holds and skulks, and beat it to death; for by this habit the understanding is more quick in discerning the first rising of any sinful motion, and sensible of the least touch contrary to the new interest of it.

(5.) The new nature is powerfully active. There is not only an unbounded affection, but there is a power inherent in this habit to enable the soul to act; all habits add strength to the faculty. It is therefore called 'might in the inner man,' Ephesians 3:16; and a 'spirit of power,' 2 Timothy 1:7. It is put as a stock into the heart, to maintain the acts of holiness; as there is a stock of sap in the root to produce branches and fruit. A power of acting is always united with a form, and rooted in it. In regard the new nature is implanted by a higher cause than any moral habits, even by the Spirit of God, it must be able to do more than any moral nature can; and being more excellent than moral nature, must produce more excellent operations, otherwise it were not of a more excellent kind, if it had not a more excellent power. Jesus Christ was appointed to be a quickening Spirit, to convey a powerful life, to enable us to live to God. 'The kingdom of God' in the heart, as well as that in the world, 'is not in word, but in power,' 2 Cor. 4:20. Move steel as often as you will, you can never make it of itself move towards the north; but by the impression made on it by the loadstone, there is a power derived to turn and stand that way of its own accord. By nature we are 'without strength,' Romans 5:6, because without life, Ephesians 2:1. But in the renewing there is strength conveyed together with life, an ability to walk in God's statutes, conveyed with the new heart; out of weakness the soul is made strong; and the grace within, in concurrence with the supplies of the Spirit, is sufficient for it. It is not only an outward strength, as is from a staff in a sick man's hand, but an inward might. But besides this inherent strength there is an adherent ability; for Christ, who is his life, Colossians 3:4, is also his strength: Php 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' So that whatsoever active power is wanting in itself can be supplied by the head. And therefore the new creature has a kind of almighty power of activity, by the communication of another, which is called a greatness of power, and a mighty power which works towards them, or, "eis hemas", in them that believe, Ephesians 1:19. This power does reside in the heart, and this adherent power is ready for it, but neither of them is always perceptible, but upon some emergency, as a sound man has a greater power to act than he puts forth upon all occasions.

(6.) It is easily active. Since that motion to God, and for God, is connatural and voluntary, and a power and ability also in the new creature, it must follow, that the motion is very easy. Habits are to strengthen the faculty, and facilitate the acting of it. Bubbling is no pain to a fountain; rivers of water flow out of the belly easily, because naturally. The motion of this habit is as easy as the motion of the lungs, or the pulse of the artery; though constant, yet not troublesome or painful in itself, but by reason of some imparted humour settled in them. This stock of grace is called the unction: 1 John 2:20, 'But you have an unction from the Holy One;' the inward oiling the soul, as oil communicates agility to the body. This unction some understand of habitual grace conveyed from

the Holy One by the Spirit. As this unction upon our Saviour was the cause of his activity for God in doing good,—Acts 10:38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good,'—so it being the same in the new creature, will have the like effect upon him. Supernatural motions are as easy, by the strength of a supernatural habit, as natural motions are by the strength of natural habits. A bird does with as much ease fly upward as a beast walks upon the ground, and the seed does with as much ease spring up, and put its ear out of the ground, as a bitter root does its unwholesome fruits and flowers. So when the soul is filled with this new habit, the walks in the ways of God are as easy by virtue of it as a course of sin and folly was before. The yoke of itself is easy, Matthew 11:30, and the motion under a light yoke cannot be grievous. The very yoke is not a shackle and burden, but a privilege. There is indeed some reluctance sometimes, which arises not from the will as renewed, but from some evil habits resident in the soul, not yet fully conquered by renewing grace. You know how the apostle Paul does distinguish between the posture of his will, and the interruptions by that sin which dwelt in him, Romans 7:18-20.

(7.) It is pleasantly active. "Hedu men to kata fusin", says the philosopher. As all actions which flow from life are pleasant, so those which flow from a divine life in the soul. It is a joy to a just man to do judgment, Proverbs 21:16. That is, the entire inclination of the soul stands right to such actions; and as much a joy to him to do judgment, when enabled thereunto by a gracious habit, as it is to a sinful man under the bonds of iniquity to commit it. His soul leaps as much at an opportunity of pleasing God, as John Baptist did in his mother's womb at the appearance of Christ, as much as his heart sprang up before at the proposal of a sinful object. Never did the sun naturally rejoice so much 'like a strong man to run its race' in the heavens, Psalms 19:5, as the new man does spiritually rejoice to run his race to heaven. It is a mighty pleasure to have our spiritual enemies under our feet, to be estranged from them. It is the purest delight to comply with God, and be embosomed in him. He is shallowed up in these choicer pleasures, as a man that has had his full draughts of learning is in his studies, whence his diseases cannot draw him, though in his childish time he counted them his task and burden. The delights of an heart seasoned with habitual grace are more ravishing than all the pleasures of sense, because they arise from an habit planted in the soul by that Spirit which is a Spirit of joy as well as of grace. The fatness of God's house, the sacrifices presented by him, are his delight, and he drinks of a river of pleasure in his very acts of worship: Psalms 36:8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.' 'In keeping thy commandments there is great reward,' Psalms 19:1-14. He finds much sweetness in the very acts of worship. Ah, how can the motions of the habits of sin, under the quarrels of conscience, yield as much delight as the habits of grace under the breathings of the Spirit! The very marks of Christ in his body are his delight and triumph. He takes pleasure in distresses for Christ's sake: 2 Corinthians 12:10. says the apostle. 'I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.' The motions of his soul to Christ are his life and joy. He chides his soul that her flights to Christ are not so strong as Christ's flights to him. He would have a delight in doing the will of God's precept, as Christ had in doing the will of the mediatory command. He rejoices in his breathings after God, though he wants him, and is glad his soul can have any flights towards him though he cannot find him. The tabernacles of God are amiable, when his 'heart and his flesh cries out for the living God': Psalms 84:1-2, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord! my soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord.' And when, by reason of some distemper, he cannot move so

readily, some disease fetters him, some corruption has cast a clog upon him, yet he delights in the thoughts of what he had, as a man in the former converses with his friend, though now at a distance, and cheers up his soul with the thoughts that he will again return: Psalms 13:6, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,' He grieves because he at present cannot do what he would, and hopes for another frame, and rejoices in the faith that he shall repossess it: 'He will turn again,' &c., Micah 7:19. A natural man without an habit of grace may move in some ways outwardly good, but with some reluctance, and without any pleasure in the goodness of the thing enjoined, or the goodness of that God who enjoins it. He may have a sudden inclination to do a good action, but he is not pleased with that inclination itself. Ahab's humiliation was good in itself, no doubt, but Ahab was pleased with it, but not as it was a humiliation, or had a likeness to a gracious action, or a tendency to the pleasing God, but as it was a means of removing the judgment threatened, so that his pleasure was only in the issue of it; but a gracious soul is pleased with the habit itself, for he considers it as the perfection of his nature, regards it as an ancient inmate, though separated from his nature by Adam's degeneracy, as friends long absent rejoice in one another. When this rectitude is in part restored, and understood to be of kin to it by creation, but lost and now returned, there must needs be an high complacency in the soul, and a joyful compliance with it. And the stronger and more vigorous this inward rectitude is in habit, the more pleasure a man has in the exercise of it. As God, who is infinitely righteous in all his ways and in all his works, has an infinite pleasure in the exercise of this righteousness, and an infinite loathing of what is contrary to it, because it is his infinite nature, so the stronger the habit in a man, the more contentment there is in the exercise of it, because his nature is more elevated. And what is natural is delightful, and the more natural, the more delightful. Mercy is natural to God, therefore he delights in it; and because infinitely natural, therefore he does infinitely delight in it.

Well then, since all the motions of nature are pleasant, the new nature is not inferior in the pleasure of acting to any other nature whatsoever. It being the most perfect nature, must beget the most delightful operations. What a pleasure is it to draw near to God, to melt before him, to pour out a prayer to him, and dissolve itself into love and affection in any address to him!

(8.) It is a permanent activity. There is a spring of perpetual motion. The fountain does constantly bubble. The sun does constantly move, because naturally. Whatsoever is natural is constant in its posture; a fire perpetually burns, and water perpetually cools. What is the essential property of a thing does competere semper. A man is always rational, and ready to act reason; if there be any indisposition, it is not in the soul, but in the organ or ill habit of the body, which does obstruct the motions of the soul, and is an unfit instrument for it to act by. This habit is not a passion, but a principle; not a motion, but a spring of uniform motion; it is wrought in the nature, and like the heart is continually beating. The principle is permanent, it is an abiding anointing, 1 John 2:27, it is settled by God, given to us in Christ, backed and assured by the earnest of the Spirit in the heart, where this habit is seated. All is expressed, 1 Corinthians 1:21-22, 'Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who has also (that is, beside this) sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' It is a life and habit more fixed than that in Adam: his life depended upon the rectitude of his soul, but this depends principally upon the power of the Spirit, and the everlasting life of Christ. It is a water which quenches all thirst, and never leaves springing till it mount up to eternal life, John 4:14; it is perpetually active and springing, till it be

swallowed up in glory, as rivers in the sea. Others may move by some wires, and have some strains of a natural religion, by some sudden impulses which touch the strings and faculties of the soul but the wires break, the touch ceases, and the motion with it, it has no living spring. Nay, sometimes those motions in natural men under the gospel may be more quick, and warm, and violent for a time than the natural motion of this habit; as the motion of a stone out of a sling is quicker than that of life, but faints by degrees, because it is from a force impressed, not implanted and inherent in the nature. They are just like water heated by the fire, which has a fit of warmth, and may heat other things; but though you should heat it a thousand times, the quality, not being natural, will vanish, and the water return to its former coldness. But the new heart being in the new creature, causes him to walk in the statutes of God, not by fits and starts, but with an uniform and harmonical motion, Ezekiel 37:24, 'Ye shall keep my judgments and do them;' you shall treasure them in your minds and act them in your lives. Not but that there are in the new creature some faintings; it is sometimes more vigorous, sometimes more weak in its motion; it has its sicknesses; it meets with wounds, but none of them to death. Every one that is born of the Spirit is like the wind, John 3:8, it moves and blusters, and when you think it is passed away, it returns, resumes its force, and you feel as stiff a motion as you did before. A man is never weary of that which is habitual to him. There may be a weariness in duty and service, but not a weariness of it, so as to throw it off; but after he has refreshed and recruited himself, his habit will put him upon a delightful return to it. Where the ways of God are in the heart habitually, such shall go from strength to strength, till they appear in Sion, though there may be some rests and intermissions by the way: Psalms 84:5-6, 'In whose heart are the ways of them;' some read, 'the high way of God in their hearts,' more consonant to the Hebrew.

(9.) It is an orderly motion and activity/. Natural motions are orderly. As affirmative precepts bind semper, but not ad semper, so this habit enables the soul semper, but not ad semper; I mean, not to this or that service at all times. Natural things have their stated times, places, and measures. As trees bring forth fruit in their season, so does the new creature bring forth fruit 'in his season,' Psalms 1:3, in a season proper for that fruit. It is always producing some fruit or other, according to the particular seasons, sometimes love, sometimes humility, sometimes patience. This habit is ready at hand, whence he draws out fruits new and old. As God does all things in weight, and number, and measure, so does this habit of his own implanting. As God gives every creature meat in due season, so the new creature renders God his fruit in due season. As a wicked man is always acting sin, sometimes one, sometimes another, according to the seasons of them, so does this habit in the new creature act grace, sometimes one, sometimes another. From all these things put together there follows,

1. A predominance of grace in the new creature. As a state of nature consists in the prevalence of the corrupt habit which leavens the whole man, so the state of grace in a predominance of the gracious habit, which spreads itself over the whole soul, striving with the powerful opposite, which in part resides there still. It is a habit put in to mate and destroy that habit of sin which was there before; the soul by it is made alive from the dead: Romans 6:13, 'Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead.' Life triumphs over death, grace over nature, whereby the members become instruments of righteousness unto God, instead of being instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. It is put in to guide reason and will, and therefore is invested with the sovereign power. As sense was first in man, but that veiled when reason stepped into the throne,

as being a more excellent principle than sense, so must reason descend and give place to grace when that comes in, as being a more excellent principle than reason. It is reason, it should have the sovereignty, for it does but regain its own right, and take possession, which by the law of creation it ought to have kept till violently ejected by man. He that has this habit has a spirit of might as well as of the fear of the Lord; the same spirit which was in Christ, which is a 'spirit of might,' Isaiah 11:2. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,' Galatians 5:24: have, not shall. As soon as ever they are Christ's, which they are by this principle, a deadly wound is given to sin; such a one scorns to have anything more to do with idols, Hosea 14:8. He overcomes the world: 1 John 5:4, 'Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world.' He can do all things: enter the lists with the strongest Goliath, repel the sharpest temptations, through Christ which strengthens him, Php 4:13, so that grace is predominant.

2. There follows from hence a difficulty to sin. No creature can easily act against a rooted habit; how hard is it to make a beast do that which is different from and contrary to his nature, To act contrary to nature is burdensome and intolerable. What creature would willingly change its element? Will a bird sink of its own accord into the water, or a fish delight to leap upon the land, whose only element is the water? What creature would court the destruction of its life? What man would willingly deform and gash his own body? Men never do so by nature, but when frenzy has dispossessed them of their reason. Sin must dispossess a Christian of his grace before it can be easy for him to run into ways destructive to his nature and blessedness. That principle which is in all natures must be more eminently in the highest nature, and proportionately in every nature that is of nearest approach to it. Righteousness and holiness is the very constitution of the new creature: Ephesians 4:24, 'That new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' It is as impossible for the new creature to sin by the influence of habit, as for fire to moisten by the quality of heat, or water to burn by the quality of cold. It is as impossible for that habit to bring forth the fruits of sin, as for the sun to be the cause of darkness, or a sweet fig-tree to bring forth sour fruit. Yet as there is darkness in the air, though the sun be up, by the interposition of thick clouds so is there darkness in the new creature from the habit of sin in the soul, which is not only a lodger, but an unwelcome inhabitant: Romans 7:20 'Sin that dwells in me' still, and acts according to its nature, though much over-powered and weakened by degrees by that habit of grace. Therefore it is a hard thing for him to sin: 1 John 3:9, 'He cannot sin.' It is as hard for him to contradict the new nature as before to cross the old: 'I cannot do this wickedness,' says Joseph; it is against the frame and disposition of my soul.

(1.) It must be difficult to sin against 'purpose of heart,' which is the lowest step of the new nature, Acts 11:23, though it be not hard to sin against a flashy resolve.

(2.) It is hard for a man to sin who has cordially chosen God for his portion, which every new nature does, with a fixed revelation to keep his word: Psalms 119:67, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy word.' When it is carried out with a free motion to God, it cannot easily be diverted from that charming object; he cannot but value any diversion at no better a rate than that of punishment.

(a.) It is difficult for him to contradict the new habit, wherewith he is so highly pleased, and which he is assured has nothing but happiness in the womb of it.

(4.) It must be difficult for him to act that which, by virtue of this habit, he is daily in the mortification of.

(5.) It is difficult for the habit of sin in him to do the same acts after it has received a deadly wound, as for a wounded man to do that which he could when he was sound.

(6.) This nature cannot be in a man without an universal enmity to sin, though it may without an universal victory, this belongs to the perfection of it, but enmity to the very constitution of it: Genesis 3:16, 'I will put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.' He can at the best but half sin, and scarce that; he could not commit sin very freely before, because of the reluctance of natural conscience; he can less freely do it now, since there is a habit of grace in him, which does more powerfully fly in the face of sin when it appears; therefore there can be but a partial will to it or delight in it. The new man in the heart can never do it; the old man remaining cannot fully do it, because of the contradiction it receives from the new habit. If he does at any time sin, this new nature can no more be pleased with it than the nature of a man is with the poison which he has wilfully taken, which will contest with it, and endeavour to expel it, whether a man will or no. So that if a new creature be caught at a disadvantage, and be bemired by the remaining habit of sin in the heart, his spirit is wounded, his soul bleeds, his conscience upbraids him, he is displeased with himself and with his sin, runs to God, searches into himself, calls heaven and earth to his assistance, sharpens his spiritual weapons, and by virtue of this habit in him is dissatisfied, and in little ease, till he has overcome this rebellion of lust, dispossessed it, removed the guilt, and cast out the filth.

4. As we have considered this work as a change, a vital principle, a habit, so we will consider it as a law put into the heart. Every creature has a law belonging to its nature, so has the new creature. Man has a law of reason, beasts a law of sense and instinct, plants a law of vegetation, inanimate creatures a law of motion. A new creature has a law put into his heart: Jeremiah 31:23, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,' cited by the apostle, Hebrews 8:10. It is called the 'law of the mind,' Romans 7:23, it beginning first in the illumination of that faculty. As sin begun first in a false judgment made of the precept of God, 'You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'

Now, as to this law put into the heart, you may know what is meant by it in some propositions.

(1.) This law of the mind, or law written in the heart, is not wholly the same with the law of nature. Some indeed tell us that it is nothing but the law of right reason. But certainly they are mistaken,—it is a law of grace. The law of nature was the law of a covenant of works, this law of the mind is the law of the covenant of grace. The law of nature is in all men, this law of grace only in some; the law of nature was in Paul before his conversion, this law of the mind was in him upon his conversion. The law of nature consists not of faith in a mediator, but faith is a main part of the law of grace. The law of nature acquaints not a man with the knowledge of all sins, not with unbelief; this law of grace does, for the conviction of this is a work of the Spirit: John 16:8-9, 'Of sin, because they believe not in me.' The law of nature is the general work of the mediator in all men, 'who enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John 1:9. This is the peculiar work of the Mediator, by his Spirit, in the hearts of those that believe; the law of nature does not oppose sin as sin, this law of grace does; the law of nature is no part of sanctification, for this is in men that are born of the flesh, are flesh still; but the law of the mind is a part of sanctification, and wars

against the law of the members; there is indeed a war and a contest from the law of nature against some gross sins, but not against the law of sin in the members. As sin wars against the law of the mind, as a law of direction, so the law of the mind, or the law of grace, wars against sin, as it is a law which pretends to guide and order the ways of a man.

(2.) Yet it is the restoring of that law which was the law of nature originally. It is a renewing in the heart that law which was written in the heart of Adam: Ephesians 4:24, 'That new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' or after God was created "ktisthenta", alluding to that righteousness wherein Adam was created, lost by him, and restored by Christ. This righteousness which Adam had was the righteousness of the law: holiness towards God, which includes the duties of the first table; righteousness, including the duties of the second table; and truth being added (as it may be referred both to holiness and righteousness), shows the sincerity of it in the manner and the end of being holy to God and righteous to man. This was the law written in the heart originally, which was defaced by the fall, and whatsoever relics there were of this law in man, were only upon the account of the mediation of Christ, it is this law which is new engraved in the soul by regeneration. God does not say, I will write another law in their hearts, but 'my law' Jeremiah 31:33,—that which was my standing law, my law to Adam, and to your fathers. The law written in the heart is not substantially distinct from that in the nature of Adam. Man by his fall did blot this law, lost his righteousness, had an enmity in his heart to it, and to the very relics of it. He is not naturally subject to the law, nor can be, as it is the law of God, because of his enmity to God, Romans 8:7; the law of sin had taken place instead of it. Regeneration is a taking down the law of sin, and fixing the law of God in its due place and posture.

(3.) This law is written in the heart wholly. The whole law, every command which has the print of God upon it, is written there. As God wrote his whole law in tables of stone, so he writes the whole law in the 'fleshy tables of the heart,' 2 Corinthians 3:3. It is true holiness and righteousness; true, as to its essential and integral parts. God does not write one part of the law upon the heart, and leave out another; it is not a moiety of it, the impression of one command, and the defect of another. If it were not the whole law, something belonging to the essence of a new creature would be wanting. It would not be a new creature, because it would be a monster, wanting something necessarily requisite to the constitution of it, and would not be a new creature according to the original copy. Where there is an agreeableness in one nature to another, it is to the whole nature, the nature of the soul to the nature of the law.

(4.) This law written in the heart does not make the outward law useless, for that is still a rule. This inward law written in the heart is a conformity to the outward rule, and therefore is not a rule itself. The law in the heart is imprinted by the external word in the hand of the Spirit; and therefore to try the truth of the law within, we must have recourse to the law written. If a man has any notions of any human law, he must consult the law written, to know whether his notions of it be right, and whether his actions be according to the letter and reason of the law or no. As the law of sin within a man is not the rule of judging of sin, but the law of God, so neither is the law of grace within the rule of judging good, but the word of God. The law within, though it be commensurate to the law in its essential parts, yet it is imperfect as yet; but a rule ought to be perfect, Psalms 19:7, and so the written law is. It is this law written in the word that we are to take heed to, for the cleansing of our ways: Psalms 119:9, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' When this writing of the law in the heart was promised, Psalms 119:11, there was also an inward teaching

promised: Jeremiah 31:32, 'And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord;' which is spoken in regard of the abundance of the knowledge which should be in the time of gospel light, above what was in the twilight of Jewish ceremonies; so that the weakest Christian under the gospel knows more of God and his attributes in Christ, than the greatest Jewish doctor did before the coming of Christ. This was not so understood by Christ, as if teaching others were utterly useless; for then why should he institute apostles, pastors, teachers, &c., and promise to be with them to the end of the world, if this promise of inward teaching made outward teaching useless? In like manner, neither does the limiting the law in the heart make the outward written law useless, but rather it does establish and advance it, and the esteem of it. The outward law is the rule, as the model of a house is the rule by which a carpenter is to make a building, and to which he is to conform that idea he has in his mind of it; but that idea or figure of it which he has in his mind, is to be suited to that role which is prescribed to him in the outward pattern; and therefore that pattern is to be consulted with. The law of God is of eternal duration; and as it is a law of holiness and love of God, does oblige every reasonable creature, in what condition soever he be, whether of nature, grace, or glory.

Quest. Wherein does this writing of the law in the heart consist?

Ans. (1.) In an inward knowledge of the law, and approbation of it in the understanding. The knowledge of righteousness and the being of the law in the heart, are put together as the proper character of the people of God: Isaiah 51:5, 'Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.' Lest they should think a knowledge were enough, he adds, 'In whose heart is my law;' not in the head, but in the heart. There is in a renewed understanding, a principle teaching how to make use of the law. It is like the inward skill of a pilot, who guides the ship by the compass and rudder. The outward law is the compass by which we must steer; the inward law is the practical knowledge of this; an inward skill to make application of it to particular occasions. The word of God being a seed, does, as every seed, produce a being like itself, and like that plant whose seed it is: from the seed of corn arises a grain of the same nature. This seed being sown first in the understanding, is there cherished, and grows up in principles and thoughts agreeable to itself, whereby the mind becomes the epistle of Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:3, and an ark to preserve the tables of the law; whence David speaks of his soul keeping God's testimonies, Psalms 119:167, and not forgetting them, Psalms 119:16. The new creature by its new light sees an amiableness in the law, a holiness in the precepts, and a filthiness in himself thereby.

(2.) It consists in an inward conformity of the heart to the law. The soul has a likeness to the word and doctrine of the gospel within it; it is delivered into that mould: Romans 6:17, 'You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, into which you were delivered.' He considers the gospel as a mould, and the Romans as a metal poured into it, and putting on the form of it. As melted metal poured into a mould loses its former form, and puts on a new shape, the same figure with the mould into which it is poured; the soul, which before was a servant of sin, and had the image of the law of sin, being melted by the Spirit, is cast into the figure and form of the law. As when a seal has made its impression upon wax, the stamp in the one answers exactly to the stamp on the other, put the seal on again, and they both will meet as close as if they were one body, the wax will fill every cavity in the seal; but put this seal to any impression made by another seal, there will be an inequality, the stamp on the seal and that on the wax will not close. The law of sin and the law of God, being contrary impressions, cannot close together; but the law of grace in the heart and

the law of God close, they being but one and the same stamp. So that when any command of God appears, a new creature finds something within it of kin to it; as a natural man finds something ready to close with sin upon the appearance of it. The heart answers to the law as a lock to a key, ward for ward; sometimes it may not answer but resist, as a lock does, because of some rust or some filth got up into it; but then it needs not a new making but a new cleansing, to answer exactly to the key of the law. So that as the 'Gentiles, having not the law, are a law to themselves,' Romans 2:14, having it written upon their minds in those notions common to mankind, so the new creature, if he had not the written law, would be a law to himself. So natural is this conformity, that were there no law without, the renewed soul would naturally be carried out in the ways of holiness. 'The law,' says the apostle, 'is not made for a righteous man,' 1 Timothy 1:9, it is not chiefly intended for the righteous, but for the unrighteous, who would not stir one step in any good action without it, and will hardly stir with it. There would be no need of any written law in a commonwealth, if all men had an exact justice and righteousness in their own minds, and did conspire to the good of the community. But when disturbers of the peace and common welfare start up, there is need then of public laws to restrain them. But there is no need of a public enacting of a law for them that are good, because what the law enjoins they do by their own judgements and inclination. So that what a new creature does in observance of the law, is from natural freedom, choice, and judgment, and not by the force of any threatenings annexed to it.

(3.) It consists in a strong propension to the obedience of it. As there was a strong impetus in the old nature, inclining it to sin, so there is a strong impulse in the new nature, biasing it to observe the commands of the law. In this respect it is chiefly called a law written in the heart, in regard of the efficacious virtue of this new nature, sweetly constraining and directly conducting to the performance of it. The law without us commands us, the law within constrains us. That enjoins a thing to be done, this inclines us to the doing of it. The first law is written in the Scripture or in the conscience, whereby we judge those commands to be kept; the other consists in the propension of love, or faith working by love. As the impulse of concupiscence is called 'the law of sin,' Romans 7:25, so the impulse of grace is called the law in the heart; not as a thing distinct from the law without, but only a counterpart of it, an indenture answering to the other. They are but two parts united between themselves, and compose one perfect law; one as the direction, the other as the practice. That lays the injunction, this embraces it; and as naturally from the disposition of the new nature as he did embrace the law of sin from the disposition of the old. It is a powerful operative law of the Spirit of life, which 'sets us free from the law of sin and death,' Romans 8:2; not a dead letter, but an active principle, quickening the heart to close with the law, and delivering it from that which was the great hindrance to it. As the devil does act in men's hearts, Ephesians 2:2, not personally, but by a principle in the heart, the law of sin, so does the Spirit of life by the law of grace; for being written by a living Spirit, it is a living law. This is the chief intent or the whole new creation, to cause us to walk in God's statutes, Ezekiel 36:26-27. Psalms 37:31, 'The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.' The soul being thus evangelised and spiritualised, may be said to do by nature the things contained in the gospel, as the Gentiles are said to do by nature the things contained in the law, Romans 2:14, because there was a law of nature engraved in them.

(4.) It consists in a mighty affection to the law. What is in the word a law of precept, is in the heart a law of love; what is in the one a law of command, is in the other a law of liberty. 'Love is the

fulfilling of the law,' Galatians 5:14. The law of love in the heart, is the fulfilling the law of God in the Spirit. It may well be said to be written in the heart, when a man does love it. As we say, a beloved thing is in our hearts, not physically, but morally, as Calais was said to be in Queen Mary's heart. They might have looked long enough before they could have found there the map of the town, but grief for the loss of it killed her. It is a love that is inexpressible. David delights to mention it in two verses together: Psalms 119:47-48, 'I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved: my hands will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved;' and often in that psalm resumes the assertion. Before the new creation, there was no affection to the law; it was not only a dead letter, but a devilish letter in the esteem of a man: he wished it razed out of the world, and another more pleasing to the flesh enacted. He would be a law to himself, but when this is written within him, he is so pleased with the inscription, that he would not for all the world be without that law, and the love of it: whereas what obedience he paid to it before, was out of fear, now out of affection; not only because of the authority of the lawgiver, but of the purity of the law itself. He would maintain it with all his might against the power of sin within, and the powers of darkness without him. He loves to view this law; regards every lineament of it, and dwells upon every feature with delightful ravishments. If his eye be off, or his foot go away, how does he dissolve in tears, mourn and groan, till his former affection has recovered breath, and stands upon its feet! If he finds not his heart answering the law, he longs after the precepts, as the prophet says: Psalms 119:40, 'I have longed after thy precepts, quicken me in thy righteousness.' He longs to join hands again with the holiness of them. As his heart is inclined to obey it, so it is wounded upon any neglect of it, and never at ease, till he be reduced to his former delight in it. He has no mind ever to part with it, because of its intrinsic goodness, as well as convenience for him. It is his pleasure, not his confinement; his ornament, not his fetter; he hates every thing that is contrary to it. How does Paul grieve and groan under 'the body of death,' when he considered what opposition 'the law in his members made against the law of his mind'? Romans 7:23, Romans 7:21. The law in his members 'brought him into captivity to the law of sin.' Then, 'Oh wretched man that I am! though he knew he was in part delivered from it. How does he long for a perfect redemption from his shackles, which hindered him from following the law of his delight! And he that never murmured at his sufferings, but could glory in persecutions and death for Christ, seems to be impatient till he could hear the last expiring groan of this enemy: all which says the effect of his 'delight in the law of God after the inward man,' Romans 7:22. And that this writing the law does principally consist in this affection, those two expressions, 'putting the law into the inward parts,' and 'writing it in the heart,' intimate. The nature of man being enmity against the law of God, the writing it argues, not a change of the law, but a change of the frame of the heart to the law, that should be so fashioned, that the law should reign there, and all his affections subscribe to it. As the writing the law in the heart of Christ was nothing else but the agreeableness of the mediatory law to him, and his delight in it, Psalms 40:8, so it is with a new creature.

(5.) It consists in an actual ability to obey. Writing the law in the heart implies a putting a power and strength into the soul, enabling it to run the ways of God's commandments, as well as to incline the heart and affections to them; the promise is made to the latter times: not but that the ancient patriarchs were regenerate, but not by the law, not by any covenant of works: this ability did not reside in the law, but was transferred to them from the gospel. In this respect it is called 'a letter,' 2 Corinthians 3:6, because it did only instruct the eye or ear, when read or heard: this teaches the heart; that a killing letter, this a quickening Spirit; that exacted the observance of its precepts, but

wrote nothing in the heart to answer it, but condemned upon neglect, this commands the observance of the law, and gives an ability evangelically to perform it. That was a ministration of condemnation, this of righteousness, 2 Corinthians 3:9; that could do no other but condemn, because it gave no intrinsic power to observe it. It is through Jesus Christ that we are enabled, by virtue of this inward writing, to serve with our minds the law of God, though in our flesh we be captivated by the law of sin. As an unregenerate man is dragged to any good, but willingly obedient to the motions of sin, so a regenerate man is sometimes under the rape of sin, but is willingly obedient to the motions of grace. So that the law is written in the heart, in respect of the assent of the understanding, consent of the will, pleasure of the affections: in the understanding, by the clearness of the light of faith, in the will, by the heat of the fire of love. In the understanding there is a judicious approbation of it; in the will, a motion to it, closing with it, and an affection to keep it; and, according to its ability, an endeavour to keep pace with it.

5. The fifth thing. As there is a vital principle, an habit, a law written in the heart, so there is a likeness to God in the new creature. Every creature has a likeness to something or other in the rank of beings: the new creature is framed according to the most exact pattern, even God himself. In this the form of regeneration does consist. The new creature is begotten; begotten, then, in the likeness of the begetter, which is God. As sin is the impression of Satan's image, which was drawn over all by the fall, so renewing grace is the impression of the image of God; for it is a quite contrary thing to corruption. This likeness to God was man's original happiness in creation, and is his restored happiness in redemption: Colossians 2:10, 'renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' His misery consisted in losing it; our felicity, therefore, does consist in recovering it. Hence it is called a 'divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4. Every thing receives its denomination from the better part. A man is denominated rational, though he has both a sensitive principle common with beasts, and a vegetative, or growing principle, common with plants; so a new creature is denominated divine, because grace, a divine principle, is superior in the soul. Every perfection in the creature is supposed to be essentially somewhere. Every impression supposes a seal that stamped it, every stream a fountain from whence it sprang, every beam a sun from whence it is shot. Grace being the highest perfection of the creature, must be somewhere essentially. Where can that be but in God? His womb and power is the womb that bare it, and the breasts which gave it suck. It must then have a resemblance to him, as a child to the father, the copy to the original. We are said to be 'born of God,' 1 John 3:9. Now to be born of any thing is to receive a form like that, which the generating person has. But,

(1.) It is not a likeness to God in essence: it is no participation of the essence of God. It is a nature, not the essence, a likeness in an inward disposition, not in the infinite substance, which is communicated by generation only to the Son, and by procession to the Holy Ghost. The divine essence is incommunicable to any creature. Infiniteness cannot be represented, much less communicated. Man is no more renewed according to God's image, than he was at first created according to it, Genesis 1:27; which was not a communication of the divine essence, but of a righteousness resembling the righteousness of God, according to the capacity of Adam's nature; which image of God in Adam is by the apostle restrained to that of 'righteousness and true holiness,' Ephesians 4:24. The likeness in a state of glory is founded upon a sight of God as he is, 1 John 3:2; which may more properly be meant of the seeing of Christ as he is in glory; for the apostle goes on in the discourse without naming of Christ, but without question means him, ver. 5,

when he says, that 'he was manifested to take away our sins.' We shall be like him, as we shall see him; therefore not in essence. His essence is concluded by most to be invisible, even in glory. How can finite creatures behold an infinite being? He must be God that knows God's essence. We shall understand him in his bowels, as a father; in his wise acts, as a governor; in his judicial acts, as a justifier; in his merciful acts, as a reconciler. We shall see him in all his relations to us. Such a vision we shall have, whatsoever it is which shall transform us into as high a likeness to him as a finite creature is capable of. There can be no participation of the substantial perfections of God, which are incommunicable; for then it would not be a participation but an identity, oneness, or equality. God put in one letter, and the chiefest of his name, Jehovah, "he", which is twice repeated in it, into the names of Abraham and Sarai, reckoned Nehemiah 9:7, as one of his favours to Abraham, but not the whole name, that is incommunicable; and Jacob's name is changed to that of Israel, putting in "el", a communicable name of God.

(2.) Yet it is a real participation. It is not a picture, but a nature: it is divine. God does not busy himself about apparitions. It is a likeness, not only in actions, but in nature. God communicates to the creature a singular participation of the divine vision and divine love, why may he not also give some excellent participation of his nature? There is a nature; for there is something whereby we are constituted the children of God. A bare affection to God does not seem to do this. Love constitutes a man a friend, not a son and heir by generation. The apostle argues, 'if children, then heirs,' Romans 8:17. He could not argue in a natural way, if friends, then heirs. And the Scripture speaks of believers being the children of God, by a spiritual generation as well as by adoption. So that grace, which does constitute one a child of God, is another form whereby a divine nature is communicated. Generation is the production of one living thing by another, in the likeness of its nature, not only in the likeness of love; so is regeneration. Were not a real likeness attainable, why should those exhortations be of being 'holy as God is holy, pure as he is pure'? 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 3:3. The new creature receives the image of God; not as a glass receives the image of a man, which is only an appearance, no real existence; and though it be like the person, yet has no communion with its nature; but as wax receives the image of the seal, which though it receives nothing of the substance, yet receives exactly the stamp, and answers it in every part. So the Scriptures represents it: Ephesians 1:13, 'You were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.' Something of God's perfections are in the new creature by way of quality, which are in God by way of essence. In a word, it is as real a likeness to God as the creature is capable of, laid in the first draughts of it in regeneration, and completed in the highest measures in glory.

(3.) It is the whole image of God which is drawn in the new creature. It is 'the image of God,' Colossians 3:10, not a part: a foot or a finger is but the image of those parts, not of a man. The members in a child answer to those in a parent, that is but a chip from the body of his father, though not in so great a proportion. The image of a man has not only the face, or eyes, but the other members. Though a Christian may have one or too parts of this image more beautiful than the rest, as a man may have a sparkling eye that has not a proportionable lip, yet he has all the members of a man. The painter's skill appears in some lineaments more than in others. So the Spirit's wisdom appears in making some eminent in one grace, some in another, according to his good pleasure; yet the whole image of God is imprinted there. It would be else not a likeness, but a monstrous birth in defect. 'The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,' Ephesians 5:9; and therefore the immediate effect of the Spirit in the soul is the engraving all

goodness, righteousness, and truth in the essential parts of it. As God's nature is holy, his perfections holy, his actions holy, so holiness beautifies the nature, spirits the actions, and is written upon all the endowments of a renewed man. There is an impression of the wisdom of God in the understanding, and of the holiness of God in the will.

(4.) It is more peculiarly a likeness to Christ, wherein we partake of his nature: 'He that does righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous,' 1 John 3:7. There is a real likeness to Christ in righteousness, though not an equal perfection. The new nature is a draught of Christ, something of Christ put into the soul, such a likeness to Christ, that it seems to be (as it were) another Christ, as the image of the sun seems to be another sun in a pail of water, therefore called a 'forming of Christ in us,' Galatians 4:19. Not by any communication of his substance, either of the divine or human nature, but by conveying such affections into us, which bear a likeness to the affections of Christ. Hence we are exhorted to have 'the same mind which Christ had,' Php 2:5, and to 'arm ourselves with the same mind,' 1 Peter 4:1, which supposes such a mind put into the new creature which he is to excite, and put into actual exercise. And the apostle speaks of a conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection, Php 3:10. And God did 'predestinate' all his own 'to be conformed to the image of his Son,' Romans 8:29, "summorfous", of the same form and shape. Jesus Christ conformed himself to us, by assuming the human nature; and God conforms us to Christ, by bestowing upon us a divine. Hence we are said to be the seed of Christ, Isaiah 53:10; not a carnal seed as the Jews say, and therefore deny Christ to be the Messiah, because he left no posterity. Whereas seed is spiritually understood, as in the first promise, the seed of the serpent or the devil. Devils do not beget, but metaphorically, as they instil their cursed principles into men; so Christ sows his principles in us, whereby we become his seed. Hence also renewed men are called 'his fellows,' Hebrews 1:9. If fellows with him in the covenant, and fellows with him in glory, fellows also with him in his disposition of loving righteousness, and hating iniquity. This disposition was the inward motive of his death, and the foundation of his advancement. Without this disposition we cannot be conformable to him in his death, and consequently not his fellows in his advancement. The new creature is a likeness to Christ, therefore called the new man; as the natural man is like to Adam, therefore called the old man. The new man and old man are titles of Christ and Adam, and transferred upon others by a figure, metonymia causae pro effectu. These are the heads and roots of the two distinct bodies of men in the world. All are in the old Adam by nature, and so partake of the old man; all believers are in the new Adam by faith, and so partake of the nature of the new man. As we did partake of Adam's nature by our natural birth, so we partake of the nature of Christ by our spiritual: by the one we have the 'image of the earthly,' by the other the new creature has the 'image of the heavenly,' 1 Corinthians 15:48-49; the one derives sin, the other righteousness; they both imprint their image according to the quality of their extraction. Christ is full of purity, righteousness, charity, patience, humility, truth, and in a word, all the parts of holiness; then the form and image of Christ in the new creature can be no other than a lively representation of those divine qualities, a soul glittering with goodness, humility, &c., which the apostle comprehends in two words, 'righteousness and true holiness.' Therefore, if there be not a likeness to Christ in the frame and qualities of our souls, we are not born of him. No man will say an ox, or a sheep, or a dog descends from Adam, because they have not the likeness, shape, and qualities of Adam, neither can any man without such a likeness to Christ in faith, humility, patience love, obedience, and minding the glory of God, number himself in the spiritual seed of Christ. He retains the nature poisoned by the serpent, creeping upon the earth, feeding upon the dust, not the nature formed by

the eternal Spirit.

(5.) It is a likeness to the Spirit, which is the immediate cause of it. Therefore the new creature is called spirit in the abstract, as a natural man is called flesh in the abstract: John 3:6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' As that which is born of the flesh is like to flesh in its nature, so that which is born of the Spirit is like to the Spirit in its nature, as light in the air, being the natural effect flowing from the sun, is like to that light which is in the sun, its relishes, delights, breathings, are according to its spiritual original; its motions, purposes, dispositions, are like those of the Holy Ghost, of whom it is born. The principles and impressions in the nature must be agreeable to those the Spirit has. The Spirit is a Spirit of holiness, grace, love and zeal to the glory of God; his office is to exalt and glorify Christ. If we are renewed, then we shall have the same draught in our hearts, the same design; the fleshly principle will be changed into spiritual. They will be habitual too, as the frame of the Holy Spirit is. A natural man may do some acts that look like spiritual by fits and starts, but there is no settled principle; whereas the spirit in a new creature is a spirit of meekness, and curbs the passions; a spirit of humility, and overthrows pride; a spirit of zeal, and fires the heart; a spirit of power, and arms the soul against sin; a holy spirit, and therefore cleanses it, an heavenly spirit, and therefore elevates it.

Quest. Wherein does this likeness to God chiefly consist?

Ans. 1. In a likeness of affections. God is no bodily shape; we cannot be like him in our bodies, but in our souls, as they are spirits; but if there be a dissimilitude of affection and disposition, the unlikeness to God is greater than a likeness to him in point of the natural being. There is no draught of this image in us, unless we have a conformity of affections to God; it is then chiefly evidenced by a delighting in him, by faith and love, wherein we bear a resemblance to him in his affection to himself, by delighting in his image in others, wherein we imitate his affection to his creatures. He that loses not that image of God which is visible, cannot love the invisible original, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:20, and so, having no likeness to God in his affection, can have no likeness to God in his nature. And the apostle positively affirms, that 'he that loves, is born of God,' 1 John 4:7. The new creature extends its arms to every thing which has a resemblance of that whose image it bears. The divine nature is chiefly seen in the objects of the affections, when they are set upon the same objects, and in a like manner as God's and Christ's are. When we grieve most for sin, for this grieves the Spirit, when we desire most an inward holiness, this God most longs for: 'Oh that there were such an heart in them!' When we hate sin as God hates it, because of the inward filthiness; when we love grace as God loves it, because of its native beauty; when we can love God and Christ above all the world, and other things in order to him and his glory, when we can trust Christ with all our concerns, and God does trust him with his glory; then, and not till then, there is an image of God in us, which God values above all the world. When the soul is thus touched and quickened by grace, she can no more strip herself of the object and manner of her affections, than she can of the affections themselves. And when she does reach out herself to all that is good, and has a complacency in it, it is her happiness, because it is the great likeness to the spring of happiness. When we have the like affections with God, we have in our measure a like happiness and blessedness with God.

2. In a likeness of actions. Men by sin are 'alienated from the life of God,' Ephesians 4:18, by restoring grace then they are brought to have communion with God in his life, to live as God lives.

By nature men live the life of beasts and devils; by grace they come to live the life of Christ. If he lives then the life of God, he must be conformable in his actions to the acts of God. No nature is stripped of affections and actions proper to it; it would be else a picture without breath, a body without motion, a lifeless colour. The divine image is not a painted statue, but an active being. The nearer any thing approaches in its nature to the fountain of life, the more of liveliness and activity it must needs partake of. The communicable perfections of God are stamped upon the soul as a pattern to imitate, and as a principle to quicken. A new creature acts like God, as melted and inflamed gold will act after the nature of fire, by the assistance of that quality communicated by the fire to it, so does the soul by that divine quality it partakes of. It is as impossible that this image of God can produce anything but divine acts, as that the image of the sun in a burning glass should produce a darkness and coldness in the air. There will be the manifestation of the life of Christ in the motions of our soul, as the apostle speaks in case of sufferings for him there will be in our bodies, 2 Corinthians 4:10. Natural men are called the devil's children, because they resemble him in nature and works, egging on to sin, and delighting themselves in their own and others' iniquities, John 8:44; so renewed men are God's children, because they live the life of God, and abound in the works of God, 1 Corinthians 15:58. As there is the same nature and the same spirit which Christ had, there will be a following of him in his works; all creatures of the same species have the same instinct, the same nature, the same acts that the first creature of that kind had originally in its creation. Grace being a new excellency advancing the soul to a higher state, endues it with a more noble kind of operation. Nothing is lifted up to a more perfect state of being, but in order to a more perfect manner of acting, if a beast should be elevated to the nature of man, would you then expect from him the actions of a beast still? And can any have the implantation of the divine nature, who has only the actions of a man which bear no resemblance to God?

3. This likeness to God consists principally in a likeness to him in holiness. It is only 'he that does righteousness is born of him.' 1 John 2:29, 'If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that does righteousness is born of him'. It is by this the children of God are manifest from the children of the devil, 1 John 3:10 in doing righteousness. If we are unlike to God in this, we are like him in nothing; God has not a pretence of holiness, but a real purity. He that has not 'escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,' is no 'partaker of the divine nature'; the apostle puts that as a necessary qualification, 2 Peter 1:4. If by afflictions good men are partakers of God's holiness, much more by regeneration: Hebrews 12:10, 'He chastened us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' If God aim in his corrections at the bringing his people to partake with him in holiness, as a father does at the reformation of his child, that he may be a follower of his virtues, much more does God aim at it in regeneration, when a spirit of holiness is infused into the soul. The near creation is a drawing this excellency of God in the soul; if any attribute lift up his head above another, it is this, in this we chiefly are to imitate him; this is the greatest evidence of the divine nature. By sin we 'come short of that which is the glory of God', Romans 3:23; by the renewing of the soul we attain the glory of God; that is, attain a state of holiness and at last a perfection of it, a communion with him in holiness here, and a full enjoyment of it hereafter. Whatsoever our fancies, our hopes, our presumptions are, if this be not drawn in our soul, if we have not an internal holiness, we are not new creatures, and therefore not in Christ.

Use 1. It serves for information. If regeneration be such an inward change, a vital principle, a law put into the heart, the image of God and Christ in the soul; then,

1. How few in the world are truly new creatures! Is the law transcribed in many men's lives? nay, can we all read it copied in our own hearts? Cannot many see the image of the devil sooner than the image of God in their own souls? Is not the law of sin written in text letters, and with many flourishes, when the law of God is written in characters hardly legible, and crowded into a narrow room? How many are changed from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, and the old nature still remaining in its full strength, and the body of death more vigorous than twenty or thirty years ago! Changed years, and unchanged hearts, are a very sad spectacle.

(1.) Profane men are numerous. None will offer to rank these in the number of new creatures. Such nasty souls are no branches of Christ, nor habitations for him, we read of the devil in swine, but never of our Saviour in swinish souls. Are such regenerate? Can brambles be ever accounted vines, or thistles fig-trees? These rather look like hellish than divine creatures; diabolical, not God-like natures. A devotedness to the sins of the flesh is inconsistent with the circumcision made by Christ: Colossians 2:11, 'Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ;' that is, the body of sins which exert themselves in the flesh or natural body; whereas such have the body of sin, with an activity in every member of it. Is the image of Christ in such men? Is not he meek as a lamb? Are not they fierce as lions? Is not he holy, and they defiled with intemperance? Did not he labour for nothing but the glory of his Father, and the salvation of souls; and they mind nothing but the dishonour of God, and the destruction of themselves and others? Did not he do good to his enemies, and they scarcely spare their friends? Alas, with this contrariety, how can they pretend the image of Christ, when they have nothing but what looks like the image of his enemy the devil? Is not the gospel counted as great a foolishness by such, as at the first times of its publishing? Are not the great mysteries of God, and the contrivances of eternity, entertained with coldness, and sometimes with scoffs, and the word, the great instrument of this change, unregarded? Are such new creatures, that condemn the very means to attain it? Surely they are so far from being near the kingdom of God, that they are in the very suburbs of hell. Is a hugging base lusts against the light of nature, a contempt of God's law and authority, the nature of Christ? Were any such spots upon our Saviour's garment? Is this to be like him who was holy, harmless, separate from sin and sinners?

(2.) Among professors, is there much evidence of a new creation? When men shall say, All that the Lord speaks to us we will do, has not God as great occasion to say as he did of old, Deuteronomy 5:24, 'Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments!' We may find a change of language in some, a change of outward actions in others, but how few are there among many who stand up before God with the breath of life! Here and there a man or woman, wherein God may see the image of his own nature. How few are they with whom Christ can shake hands, and justly call them his fellows! Christ may be in the mouth, and the devil formed in the heart; the name of Christ may lie upon them, and the nature of Christ not in them. They may be born of the will of man in a religious education, but not born of the will of God in a spiritual regeneration. Is it not a graceless Christianity in many men, a faith without holiness, a Christianity without Christ? Regeneration is never without faith, love, and righteousness. They depend upon grace, as the property upon the form. Wherever the new creation is, these are, for they are the qualities created; wherever they are not, there is nothing of a new creature, let the pretences be never so splendid. There may be a nearness to the kingdom of God by profession, when there is no right to it for want of regeneration. Instead of humility,

according to our Saviour's pattern, does not 'pride compass men as a chain,' Psalms 73:6, counting that their ornament, which is the strength of their old nature. Instead of patience, roaring passions; instead of meekness, boiling anger; instead of love a glowing hatred. How few then are renewed! But few shall be saved and therefore few regenerate. How little is the report of a likeness to God believed by the incredulous world! How few are the strivings of any towards heaven! Most lie quiet without any such motions, like the dust on the ground, unless some stormy affliction raise them a little towards heaven, whence they quickly fall back to their old place.

2. It informs us that a dogmatical change, or change of opinion, is not this new creature. It is not, if any man change his opinion from Gentilism to Christianity he is a new creature, but 'if any man be in Christ,' by a vital participation from union with him. As men generally place saving faith in dogmatical assents, so they place the new creation in a change of opinion, as well from truth to error as from error to truth, though there be no spiritual knowledge of God, nor internal cordial closing with the gospel, nor practice of it. Such a change may endue the head with a knowledge which never gently slides down to the affections. It may indeed have some influence upon the life, as this or that principle comes nearest to, or is divine truth, and is settled as an opinion in the soul; yet this great change may not be wrought. That is but a change in the head, this in the heart; that of opinion, this of affection; that perfects the understanding, this both the understanding and will, and the whole soul. There is a natural desire of knowledge, but a natural aversion from grace; whence this change becomes easy, the new-creature change difficult. A hot contriving head may have a cold and sapless heart. A head informed by the knowledge of truth may be without a heart enlivened by the Spirit of truth. A head changed in opinion only will descend into the bottomless pit, when the least grain of renewing grace shall not receive so much as a singe from those flames. A change from error to truth, without a heart framed to the truth, does but more settle a man upon his lees, and makes him not only more regardless, but opposite to a true change to God. It stores up wrath for him, and his very judgment will be a witness for the condemnation of his practice. The knowledge of God will not justify, but condemn a practical denial of him; but for all that, they are abominable, Titus 1:1 b. This new-creature change is not from one doctrine to another, barely considered as doctrine, but a change to the gospel in the main intendment of it, as it is 'a doctrine according to godliness,' 1 Timothy 6:8, as it may affect, purify, and direct the soul in its motion. And by the way observe this: whenever you are solicited to a change of opinion, consider the truth of it by this rule, whether it have a tendency to encourage and promote internal godliness, since this doctrine of regeneration was the first gospel lesson taught, to which all succeeding truths refer as to their end and centre. The apostle tells us what the issue of all such doctrines are that refer not to this, 'pride, doting about questions, envy, strife, railings, and evil surmisings,' 1 Timothy 6:8. A heap of motions may consist with a body of death in its full strength, but a spirit of grace cannot; a nationalist may speak great things, but a new creature acts them. Great speculations only are but leaves without fruit, like cedars, that by their shadows may give a refreshment, but have no fruit to fill the soul hungering after righteousness.

3. Morality is not this new-creature change; that is, moral honesty, freedom from gross vices, &c. I have before spoken something about it, showing it insufficient, when I handled the necessity of regeneration, we cannot speak too much against it, it being a soft pillow, from whence many slide insensibly into destruction. How many, upon this account, think themselves new creatures, who are yet deeply under the image of Satan; and though they have blown off some dust from the law

of nature, yet never had a syllable of the law of grace written in their hearts! Nay, the image of the devil may be more deeply engraved in a soul whose life is free from an outward taint. Profane men express more of the beast; a civil and moral conversation may have more of the devil and serpent within, in spiritualised wickedness.

(1.) Yet morality is to be valued. It is a comely thing among men, a beauty to human societies, satisfaction to natural conscience, security to the body, example to others: men are to be applauded for it, and encouraged in it. It is a fruit of Christ's mediation, left for the preservation of human societies, without which the world would be a mere Bedlam and shambles. The works of kindness, justice, mercy, love, pity, &c., are useful and commendable. It is a thing which our Saviour loved, yet not with such a love as eternally to reward it. He looked upon the young man with some affection, Mark 10:21, but scarce upon the Pharisees without anger and disdain.

(2.) Yet we must not set the crown belonging to grace upon the head of it, and place it in a throne equal to that of the new creation. It is too amiable for men to be beaten off from it, yet with just reason we may persuade them to arise to a higher elevation. It is a curious paint, a delightful picture, an useful artifice, but not a vital principle. A glow-worm is a lovely light, yet it is not a star. We press not men to throw off morality, but to advance it, to exchange it for Christ, that their moral virtues may commence Christian graces. It is an elevation near the kingdom of God, not a translation into the kingdom of God; it is nature improved, not nature renewed; it is a well-coloured picture without a principle of life; an outward resemblance, not an inward power, 2 Timothy 3:5; a form of godliness; as a change that is made upon does in the draught of a picture, but no change in it by the conveyance of life. For,

[1.] It removes not the body of death. It is a cutting away the outward luxuriations, not the inward root. It removes the stench and putrefaction, not the death, an embalmed carcass is as much dead as a putrefied one, though not so loathsome. It removes not that wherein the strength of sin lies, though it does somewhat of the stench of sin. It may check those degenerate lusts inconsistent with the peace of natural conscience, but not heal the corrupt nature. It may be a change from scandalous to spiritual sins; from vanity in the outward life, to vanity in the mind from debauched practices, to a vainglorious and envious spirit: Ephesians 4:17-18, 'Henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God.' By the Gentiles, from whom the apostle would have the Ephesians differences, he means not the lower sort, but the whole rank, Ephesians 4:21, there was a 'truth in Jesus' which they had been 'taught;' he makes no distinction between the looser rabble, and the professors of wisdom, whom he calls fools, Romans 1:22, the followers of the divine (as they called them) philosophers, were alienated from the life of God, and walked in the vanity of their minds. The new man he exhorts them to put on was another kind of thing than what the greatest moralists among the heathen were acquainted with. It was at best human, not divine; an old nature purified, not a new implanted; or as the apostle phrases it, a walking in the vanity of their mind, in the darkness of their understandings, though not in a vanity of gross actions. It can never remove that body of death, which was introduced into the world while this outward morality stood. What immorality against the light of nature do you find in Adam? He did break a positive command in eating the forbidden fruit; you find nothing of drunkenness, lying, swearing; his great sin was inward pride and unbelief, nothing of those sins, the freedom from which you boast of, and rest on. Some would make Adam guilty of the breach of every command in the moral law; virtually I

confess they may; expressly I do not see how they can; and also virtually the highest mere moralist is guilty of the breach of the whole; yet all his morality, after the breach of this one command, could not preserve him in paradise, nor all the morality without a new nature restore you to it. You may have Adam's morality with Adam's corruption; a freedom from gross vices, with a heap of spiritual sins in your hearts, as Adam had, but not a true righteousness without the new Adam, the quickening Spirit.

[2.] Therefore the highest morality without a new creation is but flesh; all men out of Christ agree in a fleshly nature. It is the highest thing in the rank of flesh, but it is not yet mounted to spirit. Water heated to the highest pitch is but water still, and morality in the greatest elevation of it is but refined flesh; an old nature in an higher form. A profane man reduced to a philosophical morality is putrefied flesh reduced to some sweetness, endued with a fresh colour, but wanting life as much as before; it is an old nature new mended. But a new creature is Christ formed in the soul. Moral virtue colours the skin, renewing grace enlivens the heart; that changes the outward actions, this the inward affections; that paints the man, this quickens him; that is a change indeed in the flesh; not of the flesh into spirit; it is a new action, not a new creation. There is a difference indeed among men in this respect, as there is of cleanly lambs from a filthy swine, or a ravenous wolf; yet both are in the rank of beasts. There seems to be a difference in the wickedness and malice of devils. Our Saviour tells us of a kind that are 'not cast out but by fasting and prayer,' Matthew 17:21, intimating that there are other kinds of them, not altogether so bad or so strong, yet all agreeing in one common diabolical nature; as there is a difference in gracious men, one shining like a star, another of a lesser light, yet all agree in the nature of light, and light in the Lord. So though there be a difference among men, in point of moral virtue, yet all agree in the nature of flesh: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh,' John 3:6. Let it be what it will, a Nicodemus as well as Judas, it is flesh, a more refined sensuality, an animal life.

[3.] It must needs be differenced from the new creature, because its birth is different. Moral virtue is gained by human industry, natural strength, frequent exercises; it is made up of habits, engendered by frequent acts. But regeneration is an habit infused, which grows not upon the stock of nature, nor is it brought forth by the strength of nature; for man being flesh, cannot prepare himself to it. That may be the fruit of education, example, philosophy; this is of the Spirit; that is a fruit of God's common grace, this of his special grace; that grows upon the stock of self-love, not from the root of faith, and a divine affection; that is like a wild flower in the field, brought forth by the strength of nature; this like a flower in the garden, transplanted from heaven, derived from Christ, set and watered by the Spirit. And therefore the other being but the work of nature, cannot bear the characters of that excellency, which the affections planted by the Spirit do. That is the product of reason, this of the Spirit; that is the awakening of natural light, this the breaking out of spiritual light and love upon it; that is the excitation of an old principle, this the infusion of a new; that a rising from sleep by the jog of conscience, this a rising from death by the breath of the Spirit, working a deep contrition, and making all new.

[4.] It differs from the new creature, in regard of the contractedness of the one, and the extensiveness of the other. That is in part a purifying of the flesh, this a purging both of flesh and spirit, 2 Corinthians 7:1; that binds the hands, this clears the heart; that purges the body, this every part of the soul; that, at the best, is but oil in the lamp of life, this oil both in lamp and vessel, that is a change of outward postures, modes, and fashion of walking, this of nature, heart, and spirit; that

seems to be a dislike of some sins, this of all. If anything in moral honesty be given to God, it is but a certain part, the greatest and best is kept back from him. That may be a casting away some iniquity, but not making a new heart, when both are commanded together: Ezekiel 18:31, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit.' That is a casting away the loathsome works of the flesh, this a new root to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

[5.] It differs from the new creature in the immediate principle of it, and its tendency. That is a cleansing the outward flesh in the fear of man, out of reverence to superiors (as it is said of Jehoshaphat, he did that which was right, while he was under the awful instructions of Jehoiada, 2 Kings 12:2). This is a 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Corinthians 7:1. That is an outward reformation from the hearing of the word, some acts materially performed from the newness of the thing, John 5:35, this from a judicious and hearty approbation of the law and will of God; that arises from a natural love to reason, justice, equity, this consists of love to God; that avoids some sins, because they are loathsome, this because they are sinful; that tends not to God for himself, but for something extraneous to him, it is an acting for self, not for the praise of God. The actions of unregenerate morality, as well as loathsome profaneness, are to gratify the flesh in some part of it; they all meet in that point, as the clearest brooks, as well as the most rapid and muddy streams, run to feed the sea.

Well, then, deceive not yourselves, conclude not yourselves new creatures by your moral honesty; it will not follow, that because you have some virtues you have therefore true grace, but it will follow that if you are new creatures, and have faith and love, you have all graces in the root; and they will appear in time, though they may lie hid a while in that seminal principle; the greater virtues contain the less, but the less do not infer the greater.

4. It will certainly follow from hence, that restraints are not this new creature. Restraining grace and renewing grace are two different things; the one is a withholding: Genesis 20:6, 'I withheld thee from sinning against me;' the other an enlivening with a free spirit against it. Restraint may be from a chastisement, attended also with something of natural conscience. Abimelech had some natural integrity in his conscience not to meddle with another man's wife, which God acknowledges: 'I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee.' Yet without this restraint by a punishment, this natural integrity might have been baffled by the temptation. Restraints may spring from the law in the hand of the magistrate, when it does not spring from the law of God in the heart. Men may love that which they do not act, at least they may love it in others, though not in themselves, for some extrinsic considerations, and wish they had as fair a way to commit it as others have; they may hate what they practise. Do all that hear the word, love the word, hide it in their hearts, and let it sink down into the bottom of their souls? Do all that abstain from sin, loathe what they abstain from? The restraints of many being barely outward restraints, are no more arguments of regeneration, than God's withholding the devils by the chain of his powerful providence is a sign of the new creation of them. The damned are hindered from committing many of those sins which were their pleasure upon the earth; it is not a change of their disposition, but of their condition. Neither punishments in hell, nor punishments upon the earth, alter the nature; though after lying a thousand years in hell, they should have leave to dwell upon the earth again, they would have the same inclinations without an inward change. Do we not see it daily in men's afflictions, though the sense of the smart nips a little those inclinations, yet when that sense is extinguished, those inclinations bud forth afresh? The bare pruning a tree makes it

bear more fruit of the same kind as long as the root remains, rather than diminishes it: Isaiah 1:5, 'Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.' While the head is sick and the heart faint, though there may be a weakness to act some sins under the stroke, yet afterwards the revoltings are more violent many times than they were before. The best that restraints work of themselves, is but a cautiousness to sin more warily. The act may be repressed, while the habit remains.

5. A serious fit of melancholy, or a sudden start of affections, is not this work of the new creature. It is an habit, a law written in the heart; not a transient pang, or a sudden affection; not a skipping of fancy, or a quick sparkling of passion, but a new nature, a divine frame, spreading itself over every faculty; knowing God in our understandings, complying with him by our wills, aspiring to him by a settled and perpetual flame of our affections, rising heavenward, like the fire upon the altar, conforming ourselves to him in the whole man, a denial of whole self for God. It is not a working of the imagination, or a melancholy vapour, which may quickly be removed, or a flash of joy and love; but a serious humility, a constant grief under the remainder of corruption yet unextirpated; a perpetual recourse to God, and delight in him through Jesus Christ. Are your affections raised sometimes to God? and are they not oftentimes raised higher to objects extrinsic to God? Such affections may arise rather from the constitution of the body than alteration of the soul. They are but a taste of the heavenly gift and the good word of God, Hebrews 6:4-5; a taste, and no more, and is but a transient work. The object about which our affections are stirred may be divine, yet the operation but merely natural. May not sometimes affections be stirred much at the hearing the sufferings of our Saviour pathetically expressed, yet only out of a natural compassion, from an agreeable impression upon the fancy? The story of Joseph in the pit, and Christ upon the cross, may be heard with the same workings of passion. And may not the same be done at a well-humoured play, or at the hearing a report of the lamentable death of a Turk or heathen, pathetically expressed? These are but the workings of natural spirits. Some affections are as moveable as quicksilver, upon the least touch; they sweat like marble in moist weather, but resemble it also in hardness. You do not find the affections to be the chief seat of the law; this would be as to write letters upon melted wax or running water, but the tenor of the covenant runs upon the mind: 'I will put my law into their minds,' Hebrews 8:8, Hebrews 8:10. And when God works upon the mind, the affections will attend the dictates of that, and the motions of the will. But a work upon the affections only, is like water in a sponge, easily sucked up, and upon the least compression squeezed out. These may be where there is no root of grace; they suddenly rise, and suddenly vanish. When unrooted notions are received only into the fancy, without any illumination of the understanding, or determination of the will, the affections to them will be as volatile as the fancy which entertained them. Those in Matthew 13:20-21, that received the word with a sudden joy, were as suddenly offended for want of a root: 'anon with joy receives it, by and by he is offended.' The word translated anon, and by and by, euthus", is the same, a lightning of affection, and a sudden vanishing; therefore this is not the new creature, sudden affections, or a melancholy fit. The law of God seated in the heart, mind, and will, though a constant course of affection is a very good character to judge of the new creature.

6. It informs us of the excellency of the new creature. How excellent is this new creature? It is a change, a divine nature, a likeness to God, an excellency above that of the greatest moralist under heaven. The apostle calls it a change from 'glory to glory,' 2 Corinthians 3:18, implying that the first

change wrought upon the soul is glorious, and a new creature excellent in its first make, more glorious in its progress, inconceivably glorious when God shall put his last hand to the completing of it. Regeneration is more excellent than creation. It is more noble to be formed a son of God by grace, than made a man by nature; nature deforms, grace beautifies. By nature we are the sons of Adam, by the new nature the members of Christ. As grace excels nature, and Christ surmounts Adam, so much more excellent is the state of a Christian, a real Christian, above that of a man. Can there be a greater excellency than to have a divine beauty, a formation of Christ, a proportion of all graces, suited to the imitable perfections of God? Man is an higher creature than others, because he has an higher principle. A life of reason is more noble than that of sense. To live by sense, is to play the part and live the life of brutes; to live by reason, is to live the life of a man: but he that lives by the Spirit, lives the life of God, answers the end of his creation, uses his reason, understanding, will, affection for God, by whom they were first bestowed; acts more nobly, lives more pleasantly, than the greatest angel could do without such a principle. A new creature does exceed a rational creature, considered only as rational, more than a rational does a brute. The apostle makes a manifest distinction between the natural or the "psuchikos", the rational and the spiritual man, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. A man with the richest endowments, is no more to be compared in excellency with a regenerate man, than the top of a craggy mountain is with a well-dressed garden. That must needs be excellent, the forming of which is the end of all God's ordinances in the world, the end of the Spirit's being among the sons of men, the end of keeping up mankind, the end of his patience in forbearing his punishment upon contempt of the gospel. The end of his preserving the world, is to form Christ in the heart; and when the last new creature is formed, God has no more to do in the world: when all that are given to him shall come to believe, Christ shall then 'come, to be admired in them,' 2 Thessalonians 1:10. He does not come, therefore, till all his chosen ones are brought in to believe in him, for then he would not be admired by all those that are saints in his purpose. This, therefore, must needs be excellent. One new creature is more excellent than the whole unrenewed world with their choicest ornaments. It was never pronounced of them, that they were 'partakers of the divine nature.'

7. How much therefore should new creatures be esteemed and valued? Is anything, next to God, more worthy our esteem than that which bears his image? Is anything, next to a crucified Christ, glorified in heaven, more worthy our valuation, than Christ formed in the heart of a believer? What esteem have men had for those who have had tempers like to some heroes, some generous and useful men in the world? How much more respect should be given to them that bear the characters of God upon them, and have communion with God, and Christ, and the Spirit, in their nature! If the dead image of God in a natural man ought to be respected, much more the living image of God in a renewed man. If a picture is to have respect, much more the life. To slight them, therefore, redounds to the slighting that infinite perfection, whose image it is. They are his living images, sent into the world to represent him. He then that disesteems them for that work, disesteems him that wrought and engraved them, by the same rule that he that despised the disciples despised Christ, and the Father that sent him, Luke 10:16: 1 Thessalonians 4:8, 'He therefore that despises you, despises not man but God, who has also given us his Holy Spirit.' Yet no better must be expected here; for the contracted spirit of the world can love no other birth but its own, no other similitude but what draws near unto it: 'If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you,' John 15:19. The copy can expect no better usage than the original. The nearer any approach in likeness to Christ,

the more they will be exposed to contempt and scorn in the world.

8. If the new creature be such a thing as you have heard, then the sin of a regenerate man has a greater aggravation than the sins of any in the world. If you slip into sin, the sins of the whole unregenerate world have not so great a blackness. It is true a new creature may, and does sin, for though a new man is created in him with all his members, and essential and integral parts, yet the body of death does remain still with all its members, and a seed-plot still, though not in the same strength and fruitfulness as before. For the apostle Paul does not complain of a member of death, or a piece of sin, but the whole 'body of it,' and 'the law of sin in his members,' Rom. vii. It seems it did reside there still, and so it does in all the renewed, though but faint and feeble, an old man indeed, growing older every day, losing its teeth and strength, less able to bite, less able to assault. Yet sometimes a new creature may fall into sin, but not without great aggravation. For other men sin against nature, you against spiritual principles; others sin against an habit of common notion, you against an habit of divine grace. A natural man sins against the light of God in his conscience, a renewed man against the life of God in his heart. Others sin against a Christ crucified and risen from the grave; he sins against a Christ new-formed and risen in his heart. Others sin against the law of God in the word, he against the law written in his mind and word too. Such cast dirt upon the Spirit's work, cross the end of so noble a piece, bring a thief into the Spirit's temple, and grieve the Holy Spirit, who instructed him better. Whenever you sin, it must cost you more grief, because your sins are more grievous; and you must grieve the more for them, because the Spirit is grieved by them. Grief for sin is a standing grace in the new creature, and part of a likeness to the Spirit of God, whatsoever some men dream to the contrary.

Use 2. Is of comfort. There is ground of joy unspeakable and full of glory that results from this. Are you of this new creation that I have been discoursing of? Then take your portion of comfort. The jewel of comfort belongs only to the cabinet of grace. It is fit you should have the comforts of heaven in your hearts, who have a fitness for heaven in your nature. The day of the new birth was a happy day, to be brought from under the rule of sin and death in it, to the rule of the Spirit of God and life in it; from bearing fruit to death, to bringing forth fruit to God and everlasting life. If sin be a torment to the womb that bare it, no joy can reside in an unregenerate spirit, if sin be the soul's rack in its own nature, grace must be its pleasure; for it carries as much contentment and satisfaction in its bowels, as sin does disquietness and sorrow.

1. You have, by the new creation, a relation to the blessed Trinity. Such are the sons of God, the seed of Christ, the temple of the Spirit; what a connection is there between you and the three persons! God in Christ, and Christ in you, that you may be 'made perfect in one,' John 17:23. God in Christ reconciling the world, you in Christ reconciled to God; God in Christ as a father in a son, you in Christ as members in the body; Christ in you as a head in the body, the Spirit in you as an informing and enlivening principle. It makes you related to the Father as his friends, by the ceasing of your enmity; to the Son as his property, for then you are his; to the Spirit as the tutor of you and inhabitant in you, all implied, Romans 8:8-10. By your former birth you were children of wrath; by this, children of God: by that, partakers of the serpentine nature of the destroyer; by this, partakers of the divine nature of your Creator and Redeemer: by nature you descended from the loins of Adam, and thereby were related to all the corruption of the world; by the new birth you are descended from the Son of God, and 'counted to the Lord for a generation,' Ps. 135:30, and thereby related to all the perfection of heaven; as really descended from Christ by a spiritual, as

from Adam by a natural generation. What an overflowing comfort is this! To be a king's son is a higher privilege than merely to be his subject; subjects have protection, sons affection; subjects partake of the kindness of the prince, sons of his nature. As a son, he has a right to the inheritance of the father; as a subject, not. Men are subjects by covenant, though born of others, sons by generation. By being a new creature, the regenerate man acquires a more noble relation, than by being a creature. That relation that he lost by a prodigal corruption, is restored to him in a more excellent way by his spiritual regeneration.

2. If you be new creatures, you are the delight of God. It is impossible but God should have the most tender respect to his own likeness; he must needs take a pleasure in a resemblance to his own nature, in a habit of his Spirit's infusing. Can God despise the work of his own hand? Can he then despise the work of his heart, a likeness to himself, to his Son, to his Spirit? His delight is strengthened by a threefold cord, 'he delights not in the strength of a horse, nor takes pleasure in the legs of a man,' but 'in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy,' Psalms 147:10-11. You are the first fruits of his creatures, peculiarly dedicated to him as his portion by the new birth: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begot he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures,' taken out of the mass of the world for a holy offering to himself; the more refined part of his creation, not barely creatures, but first fruits peculiarly belonging to him, upon whom he looks with a delightful eye, and under another relation. God cannot but love himself, and therefore that which approaches most near to himself, for nothing in the creature is a fit object for God's love, but his own living image in him. As he loves himself in himself, so he loves himself in his creature. To deny his truth, is to deny himself; to deny his love to his image, would be to deny his love to himself. He can as soon hate his Christ glorified at his hand, as hate Christ formed in the soul. If sin makes men the objects of his hatred, as being contrary to his nature, grace then makes them the objects of his love, as being agreeable to his nature. He cannot but delight in his own birth, and delight in the seals of his own Spirit. You could not but displease him by being in the flesh; 'those that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Romans 8:8; you then please him by being in the Spirit. Shall the pleasure of the Father of spirits, in his own image, be of a lower degree than that of a natural father in his son, which bears the lineaments of his body? He has no pleasure in anything in the world, if not in you. Sin soon deformed all after he had pronounced them good, and stopped the joy God had in his works; it is by your redemption by his Son, and regeneration by his Spirit, that the joy in his works is restored to him; if he should not delight in you, what has he in the world to please himself with? Your services please him; a new spirit, a new beauty is added to all your addresses. A new creature prays not as before, hears not as before, he refers all to God; there is a brokenness instead of pride, every sacrifice is washed in contrition, a zeal of spirit, a heavenly warmth, a sweet and delightful savour ascends up to him. It is you only that with grace 'serve him acceptably,' Hebrews 12:28, with such a godly fear and frame wherein he takes a pleasure.

Well then, the new creature is the delight of God, though the scoff of men; the pleasure of him that commands the world, though reproached by them that shall fill hell with their souls.

3. How great a foundation then is laid in this for your happiness! New creatures, divine nature, a relation to God, the delight of heaven: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' New for them, as well as in them. Distance and dissimilitude from God is the foundation of all misery; a likeness then to him is the basis of all

blessedness. Divine happiness is non-natural to the divine nature, and due to it, as it were jure intrinseco; as new creatures you are heirs, as sanctified creatures you are made meet for the inheritance; you have a hereditary right, and an aptitudinary right. Can any comfort be greater, than to have right to an inheritance, and a fitness to enjoy it? 'Now are we the sons of God,' 1 John 3:2, we have this real relation; not only named so, but are so, which is a certain foundation of a happiness which does not yet fully appear to us. But such a knowledge we have, that when the original of this new nature shall appear, our imperfect likeness shall arise to a full perfection, 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;' upon the account of this relation we know there will be an exact likeness between him and us. I suppose it is properly meant of a likeness to Christ, we shall see him as he is; for the apostle, 1 John 3:5, refers it to Christ, without altering the person he had spoke of before; so that it is not meant of a seeing the essence of God, but the sight of Christ. Where lust reigns, the natural consequence is storms and dissatisfaction; he that has the image of the devil, has a model of hell; the new creature having the image of God, has a model of heaven. A drop of grace is a drop of glory; so much as there is of the new creation, so much of heaven is put into the soul. It is 'a lively hope' of heaven here, and a full enjoyment of heaven hereafter, that the soul is 'begotten unto,' 1 Peter 1:8, 1 Peter 1:4. The greater the progress in this state, the more lively are the hopes of it, and the nearer approaches of heaven to the soul; such a foundation of happiness, with the hopes and foresight of it, cannot but be attended with inconceivable pleasure.

4. How highly comfortable is it to view yourselves, and consider the draught of this image, and the progress of the new creation in your souls? How comfortable is the work of self-examination to such a soul! With what pleasure may you look upon your present estate, and be filled with ravishments at every view? When you look back upon your former condition, and think of your state of death, the noisomeness of your hearts to God, the stiffness of your souls against him, when you consider how spiritual death reigned over every part; and now see your nature changed, your souls upon a lively and quick motion to God, your relishes of the sweetness of spiritual pleasures to be greater than those of sensual; how comfortable is it to behold those diffusions of God in your souls, and to feel them full of love to him, and full of love from him! How comfortable to view the original, and copy from it, and to see how near the one does resemble the other; to cast your eye upon the state of wrath you were in by your first birth, and upon the state of grace you are in by the latter; to consider your former drudgery under sin, and your present freedom in the service of righteousness! It would make you perform those commands so often repeated of rejoicing in the Lord always, and shouting for joy, since mercy does so compass you about, Psalms 32:11, Php 4:4. As upon the awakenings of conscience, and the exercise of its reflective office, there must needs arise an anguish and torment in an unrenewed soul, so upon the reflections of the same faculty in a new creature, there must spring a sparkling delight. As God by the reviews of himself and contemplation of his own excellency has an infinite joy, so the new creature by the views of itself has a joy in its measure proportionable to that of God himself. As it is in itself the image of God, so it is a lower fruition of him. I enjoy my friend somewhat in his picture when the original is absent; and this joy is greater when a beam from heaven does shine upon this image, and both illustrate and discover the beauty of it, which in the darkness of ignorance and mistakes cannot be seen. But take heed that in these reviews you impair not your comfort by any proud and God-neglecting reflections, but with humble and debasing thoughts of yourselves, and thankful admirations of the grace of God, and praises of him for so excellent a draught in your hearts. It is wonderful to perceive how by such a carriage the comforts of heaven flow in upon the

soul, when thus humbly and thankfully it opens itself before God in this review. And let this add to your comfort, that if the reviews of so imperfect an image in you, and the dark sight of God, whose image it is, be so delightful, how much more pleasant will it be when your souls shall be elevated to the highest perfection and the most satisfying fruition!

5. And how great a comfort it is to consider that this imperfect image, which is the foundation of happiness, will in time be perfect, and as fully resemble him whose image it is as the creature is capable of! There is a day of perfect and glorious regeneration coming, wherein you will appear in all your royalty as heirs of God. The divine nature shall glitter without any filth of sin to sully it; holiness shall hold the sceptre without any lust to shake it. There is a day wherein Christ shall make all things new in the church, and in the; he sits upon his throne and says it: Revelation 21:5, 'Behold, I make all things new.' It will be so new and admirable, that when you look back upon that mean draught of it while you were in the world, you would think you never had a grain of the divine nature before in you. As the vision of God will be perfect, so will your likeness to him, 1 John 3:2; as it will be a vision without any clouds, so it will be a likeness without any dissimilitude, according to the creature's capacity. The vision of Christ here transforms us into a likeness to him in his death and resurrection, the vision hereafter transforms us into a likeness to him in glory; the close look of the soul upon God shall divest it of all carnal conceptions; the understanding shall perfectly behold the original, the will closely embrace it, the affections centre in it without distraction; the whole soul shall be changed from a less degree of glory to an inconceivable perfection in it, changed 'from glory to glory,' 2 Corinthians 3:18, when the well of living water springing up in thee to eternal life shall spring into it. This fire-baptism will not leave till it has fully consumed your dross, and refined your souls. That Spirit that begun the work will fill the heart with the knowledge and love of God, as his promise is to fill the earth. He will not leave despoiling you of the oldness of the flesh till there be not a mite left, and clothing you with a newness of the spirit till there be not a grain of the soul free from this new enlivening. As he began, so he will finish, in abolishing that which remains of vanity, and in filling this holy temple with the glory of the Lord. There is certainly as much power in the second Adam to perfect, as well as to begin this new creation, as there was in the first to convey his soul and defiled image to his posterity. The honour of Christ and the good of the new creature are concerned in it; the honour of Christ in point of power and affection, the good of the new creature in point of happiness; his honour would suffer if he did not perfect what he had begun. As Moses pleads with God for the perfecting the Israelites' deliverance in bringing them into Canaan, that the nations might not say, God was not able to deliver them, Numbers 14:16. In point of affection he loves his Father, therefore the image of his Father; he loves himself, therefore the picture of himself; he loves his Spirit which glorifies him, therefore will perfect the draught he has made. It will, then, in time be perfect, not a lineament of God but will be illustriously drawn; there shall be no more complaints of a body of death, nor any snarlings of sin and lust.

Upon these considerations you may apply the comfort this new creation affords you,

(1.) Against troubles in the world. Old things are passed away, even the old events and issues of your afflictions, they are no longer used merely to trouble you or punish you, but to perfect this new creation, to engrave more deeply or exercise this divine image. All things are but fellow-labourers to throw out the rubbish, and blow up this divine spark: Romans 8:28, they 'all work together for good, to them who are called according to his purpose.' As regenerating grace gives us a relation to God, so it should expel fear: Isaiah 43:1, 'Fear not: for I have redeemed thee,

I have called thee by name; thou art mine.' What reason is there to fear when he has called you by name, in a special manner, not in a general way? What reason to fear when thou hast the badge of God upon thee, who has new created thee? The grace wherein you stand, or the state of grace, should make you not only to 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,' but to 'glory in tribulations also,' as well as the apostle, Romans 5:2-3, because it 'works patience,' &c. It dresses up the new creature; and draws the several parts of the gracious habit into exercise. Though it seem strange, yet the 'glorying in tribulation' is as proper an effect of this new creation as 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' Grace, being the foundation of your glory in heaven, cannot but be the foundation of glorying in everything else which heightens it, and pushes it nearer to its centre. Let not affliction, crosses, reproaches, molest your new nature; be new creatures as to four respects to them as well as relation to God. Our Saviour's sonship, and the meat the world knew not of, supported him under greater injuries than we can ever be subject to. What clouds of trouble should ever sadden that heart which has the living image of God in his soul? This alone should turn the wormwood of affliction into honey, and bitterness into sweetness.

(2.) You may apply the comfort of your new creation against temptations. Will not the power of God be employed in the defence of that which is his only image in the world, since he knows that Satan is most active against it, because it is his image? And upon the same account will not God be active for it? Surely that Spirit which begot it broods upon its own birth, and watches for the defence of it against its mighty adversaries. Satan watches to cast dirt upon the divine nature; the Spirit watches to hinder it, and if cast on, to wipe it off, and restore it to its beauty. Can it enter into the heart of an infinite affection nakedly to expose his own work, his affectionate new creature, made up of faith in him and love to him, that which maintains his honour in the world, designs all for his glory, values his honour above his own credit, yea, his life; opposes everything that opposes him, hates everything that is loathsome to him, would endure any misery rather than displease him; I say, shall a God of infinite tenderness expose this creature to the violences and furies of hell without any defence? What should we make of God, by entertaining such thoughts of him, but a hard master, a cruel tyrant, one that would make his own work the sport of devils, to stand by carelessly and see his image trampled upon, and leave the best subjects he has in the world to the mercy of his mortal enemy? Let not such a thought enter into any new creature, nor let us believe that the love in the heart of the new Creator is less than the power in his hand. It was the sonship and resurrection of our Saviour secured him against the counsels of enemies: Psalms 2:2 and Psalms 2:7 compared, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' So our communion with him in his resurrection secures us against the malicious designs of Satan. Thou art my son, this day have I regenerated thee, is the voice of God to a new creature; and by this relation his happiness is secured under the greatest assaults, if he keep up faith, which will fetch vigour from the Head. The devil by his whole legions of temptations cannot more prevail against the seed of God, than Haman could against Mordecai, because he was of the seed of the Jews, as his wife prudently advised him, Esther 6:13.

(3) This comfort of the new creation is applicable against fears of falling away. Were grace like a moral habit, acquired by moral acts, it might sink under a force, it might be lost; but it is a divine work, a new creation in Christ, not anything gained by moral philosophy, and a road of virtuous actions. Men may seem to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; but does the Spirit begin this regeneration work, to suffer it to end in the flesh? When the apostle speaks of men's works, he

fears the consequence; but when he speaks of God's working in a man, he is confident of a good issue, Php 1:6. God never begins but he resolves to perform and finish. As it is impossible for one united to Adam in a natural way not to partake of his sinful life, so it is impossible for one united to Christ in a gracious way not to partake of his spiritual life. And as every man is really in the loins of Adam, so every believer is, in a sort, spiritually in the loins of Christ, and is as truly denominated his seed, and as no man can be cut off from the stock of Adam but by the grace of God, so no man can be taken off from the stock of Christ, when once implanted, but by the retraction of that grace, against which there is sufficient security in the covenant of grace, and several promises in Scripture, like stars in the heavens, set to give light to this truth. The new creature under the gospel shall grow in beauty as the lily, in strength like a cedar, his beauty shall be as fresh as that of the rose or lily, his root as firm as that of a cedar; and this from God, who will be as the dew unto it: Hosea 14:5, 'I will be as the dew to Israel: he shall grow up as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.' As dew quickens the plant, so will God enliven Israel; what withering can there be under such an influence? If you have been made new creatures in Christ, you are made stable creatures, his charge is as great to preserve you as it was to renew you. Besides, the divine nature is so delightful a thing, that he that once is a possessor, has no mind to be a loser of it. He that has once put off the old man, and put on the new, will have little heart to make another exchange, and divest himself of his beautiful robe, to be clothed again with the old tattered rags which he has dung upon the dunghill. The new creation is a 'fellowship with Christ in his resurrection,' Php 3:10, and therefore in the consequences of it. As Christ did not rise to die again, so the soul is not made new to become old again. Christ formed in the soul is like Christ incarnate in the world: the divine nature may be obscured, it may and will have its humiliations; it cannot indeed die, but though it seem to die, it will have its resurrection, and afterwards its ascension into glory.

(4.) It is comfort against weakness of grace, and strength of corruptions. The whole frame of the new creature is wrought at once: the soul is infused at once, but not as Adam was, created in his full stature, and perfect strength, and exercise of all his faculties. But as Adam's posterity were generated, first infants, then men, others may be more honourable creatures, but the weakest grace is a new creature; others may be more noble members, but every new creature is a member of the body; others may have more grace, but not a better title; the weakest is a heaven-born heir, and has the same title by the purchase of the Redeemer, the reality of the new creation, and the spirit of adoption. I do not mean by the weakest grace a superficial desire, or a velleity not to sin, and yet a daily running into it; but a grace mating and mastering corruption, though residing with it, a grace that is daily eating into the bowels of lust, and growing up to a sharper animosity and strength against what is contrary to it; for the least degree of grace is prevalent against sin, and is not overpowered by it, though it be mightily opposed. The essence of grace is the same in every new creature, though the degrees be different: it is one thing to have the nature of fire, another thing to have the strength of it; a spark is essentially fire, and will burn, though not so much as a flame. If the frame be new, though the draughts be not so clear, nor the lineaments drawn with such lively colours, yet there is a representation; the first draught of a picture bears a likeness to the person, but it will be more lively after the second or third sitting, when the limner has laid on his fresher colours.

[1.] If your complaints of the weakness of grace and strength of corruption be sincere, it is a comfortable sign you will hold out. Hasty pretenders and proud boasters are not durable. The seed

sown in the stony ground 'presently sprung up,' Matthew 13:5; grew faster, as if it would outstrip the common harvest, but as soon withered, whereas that which was sown in the good ground sprung up leisurely to perfection, and endured the storm.

[2.] You cannot reasonably think you should presently be rid of your corruptions. Some spice of a cured disease will remain in the soul as well as the body, and a certain spiritual weakness after the raising of the new creature. The law in the mind does not presently raze out the law of sin in the members. There is a diabolical nature as well as divine. The Platonist could say, The virtuous man who does something, "aproaireton", is both a god and a demon. Christ formed in the heart does not presently dispossess the serpentine nature, but master it. A man restored to health from a sharp disease may do the actions of a sound man, yet not in that manner and soundness, for all his motions are infected with the relics of that disease which lately mastered his body. Original corruption is not as a cistern (then it may be emptied), but a spring; pump out all you can at one duty, it will rise again, you will see it, before the next service. It is true that 'he that is born of God commits not sin,' he sins not with such a frame as he did before; but it is as true that 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth' of grace 'in us,' 1 John 1:8. There will be a running issue, that you may frequently touch the hem of Christ's garment for a cure. The soul of the best is never like to be 'without spot or wrinkle' till it be glorious, Ephesians 5:26.

[3.] All God's communications of grace are gradual. Doth the mustard seed spring up in an instant to the tallness of a tree? Grace is sown in an instant, but grows not up so suddenly. Christ formed in the heart is like Christ in the flesh; first in his cradle, before he be upon his legs. The new creation is not a sudden leap from corruption to perfect purity; the day dawns in the heart, but the light takes a time to expel the darkness: Proverbs 4:18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.' The first appearance at the dawning is an earnest that the victory will be complete at last. God did not make a full discovery of Christ to Adam, his revelations of him grew brighter with every age; the nearer his coming, the clearer was the foresight of him. The divine nature has its time of discovery in the creature, as it had in Christ the original; there were forty days between his resurrection and ascension, wherein he was but in the first degree of his exaltation. Christ risen in the heart will take some time before he ascends and carries up the soul to spiritual heights with him.

[4.] Consider well how it is with thy will. It is not the having of lusts, but the fulfilling of them, wherein our danger lies: Romans 13:14, 'We have then put on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof,' but endeavour to walk holily. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews could pretend to little more than will: Hebrews 13:18, 'willing to live honestly,' "kalos", comely, beautifully. And herein Paul 'exercised' himself, Acts 24:16. He manifested this will by compliance with all seasonable occasions to that purpose. Is there grace in thy whole soul? Is there an enlightened judgment to see the foulness of sin and the loveliness of Christ? Is there a renewed will to incline to God and to close with the Redeemer? Is there a rectified affection, consisting of love, desire, delight, though yet but weak in all the faculties? Are there dissatisfactions in you upon internal reviews? Have you not strong bewailings and laments for the strength of sin and weakness of grace, and breathings after a more vigorous and active grace? Let not then your complaints of the body of death stifle your praises of God for what he has wrought in Christ in order to your full deliverance. They did not so in Paul, Romans 7:24-25; let them not do so in you. Take comfort in what God has wrought, bless him for it, and solicit him to

confirm that which he has wrought in you, Psalms 68:24. He that provides food for the ravens that cry, will not stop his ears at the voice of his own image.

(6.) It is comfort against the fear of death. If you were born only of the old Adam, you were spiritually dead, and you must eternally die; it were unavoidable, if not changed; but if born of an incorruptible seed, the dissolution of your body shall be the consummation of your glory. Death strikes the outward man, and the new creature elevates the soul. The new nature will as naturally ascend to heaven, when it is unclothed of flesh, and has left all the relics of corruption behind it, as the pure flame aspires into the air, and seems to long to embody itself with the son, the first fountain of light. How joyfully will the original and copy meet: Php 1:23, 'to depart from hence,' is 'to be with Christ.' The truth of grace in the creature, and the infinite righteousness in the Creator, kiss each other. How affectionately will God entertain that image of himself! How delightfully will Christ view himself in the soul, and the soul view itself in the heart of Christ! The soul shall see Christ in glory, and Christ shall behold the soul in perfection, where there will be nothing but life and love, love and life for ever. Is death then to be feared, that brings the new creature to this happiness?

Use 3. Is for examination. Of all things, this deserves the strictest inquiry, in regard of its absolute necessity, and in regard of its superlative excellency.

1. It is possible to know it, and not very difficult to know it. You may know the acts of your own heart. Can you not view your own thoughts? Can you desire, or love, or hate, or grieve, but you must know that you do so? Can you not tell what is the object of your inclinations, what your affections run most greedily after? No man can be such a stranger to his own soul, if he look into it. Can you not tell whether you are the same men as before; whether you love what before you hated, and hate that which before you loved? A soul may know whether it loves God supremely or no, so as to appeal to God for the truth of it, as Peter to our Saviour: John 21:17, 'Lord, thou knows that I love thee.' It is in this reflexive power that a man excels a brute.

2. You must inquire into the effects and operations of it. Where there is this spiritual change, there is life; where there is a spiritual life, there will be spiritual operations. You must inquire, then, what sense and motion you have, that is superior to a life of nature. This new creation is not only the taking down the old frame, but setting up a new. The old creature frame will grow more inactive, the new creature form more sprightly. Regeneration is never without some effect; if we have not the properties, we have not the nature. If the air be dark and pitchy, that a man cannot see his way, it is a sign the sun is not up to enlighten that hemisphere. A thick darkness cannot remain with the sun's rising. The works of darkness, with their power, cannot remain with a new creature state. The old rubbish cannot wholly remain with a new building. Look well, therefore, whether old principles, aims, customs, company, affections, are passed away, and whether new affections, principles, ends, be settled in the room. Be sure to distinguish well between the form and the power, between a paint and life, and regard well your inward acts. The acts of the new creature are principally in the proper seats of it, the mind, the heart, the will, the conscience, the affections. Outward acts are no sign at all; no man can perfectly judge of another by them, nor any man judge of himself. As the strength of sin, so the strength of grace, the new creature, lies in the heart. Those waters which are bitter, are bitterest, and those which are sweet, are sweetest, at the fountain; they lose somewhat of their qualities in the streams, by the mixture of other things with

them.

3. In general observe, what contrariety there is to what you were before, and the very point wherein this contrariety does consist. It is a spiritual habit, a divine nature, the law of God in the heart. It must principally be discerned in its motion to God, in its respect to God, whose law, nature, habit it is, directly contrary to the sinful habit, the law of sin in the heart, the old serpentine nature which moved to sin. Let us see in general how it was with Paul, who speaks so much of the new creature. He was quite another man after his being in Christ than he was before. He was before an admirer of his own righteousness, a contemner of grace, a persecutor of Christ and his members. After the new creation, his pharisaical plumes fall, his own righteousness is as dross, he lays it down at the feet of Christ; grace is highly admired by him, and his whole labour is spent in glorifying Christ, and edifying his church. He abhors that which before he delighted in: he did before his own will, and the will of his sect; now, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' He is now an admirer, where he was a despiser; his industry, passions, heart, are for Christ, as before they were against him. The doctrine of the cross is no longer folly, but wisdom: he glories as much in being persecuted for Christ, as in being a persecutor of him and his people. His ravaging wolfish nature is gone, and a lamb-like nature in the place of it; he has as much sweetness toward the people of Christ, as he had sourness against them. Of an executioner, he becomes a martyr; and would not only lose his life, but be an Anathema, to do them good whom before he hated. Christ was his life, Christ was his joy, Christ was his all, and nothing but Christ dear to him. A quite contrary strain. And this is a new creature; and therefore examine yourselves. Is there faith instead of unbelief, the knowledge of God instead of ignorance, a constant glowing affection to him instead of enmity, or a coldness of love, the love of the Creator instead of that of the creature? This is to have the image of God instead of that of the devil.

But, in particular,

1. What fervent longings have you after a likeness to God? The first draught of this image begets strong desires for a farther perfection. The sighs and groans for a likeness to God are the first lineaments of God in the soul, and arise from some degree of affection to him, and delight in him. The breathings of the soul are 'for the living God,' as David, Psalms 13:2; Psalms 84:2, for God, as a principle of life and spirit in him. This hungering and thirsting after righteousness is a sign of righteousness already in the soul, and an earnest of a further fullness, Mat. v. None can fervently and unweariedly long for a divine nature but such as have had some taste of it. The divine nature in the soul will be returning to that nature whence it derives its essential purity. The principle coming from God will be aspiring to that nature which it is a part of, as rivers to the sea, and swell if they be hindered. He must needs long after a full draught, and can no more satisfy himself with imperfect lineaments, than a sick man can with an imperfect cure. It is to this end he breathes after heaven, because it is a state of perfection, not from any carnal notion of it. He knows he is not already perfect, and therefore presses forward with eager desire and endeavour, 'if by any means he may attain the resurrection from the dead,' Php 3:11-13, &c. He does not only desire a freedom from sin, but to be as pure and elevated in affection to God as an angel. God is not only free from unrighteousness, but full of righteousness; and therefore those desires of a divine nature are not limited to, and centred in, a negative holiness. He would set himself no other pattern but God. It is an excellent speech of a heathen, exhorting not only to live the life of a good man, which civil virtue and the vogue of men approved of, but to look above that to the choicest desire of a divine life; for,

says he, our endeavours should be for a likeness to God, not to good men. To endeavour to be like to man, is to make one image like another; but a new creature aims at the highest exemplar; it aspires after no lower a pattern than God himself, his will, his rule, his glory, his pleasure. Do the breathings of your spirits rise as much for it, as the steams of your lusts did before against it?

2. Put this question to yourselves, What inward authority has God over your hearts? Is the government of God set up in your souls? Can you with joy say, The Lord reigns, and none but he shall reign over me? The new creature coming under another government, has frames suitable to it, and delightfully owns that supreme authority, and pleases himself more in a subjection to God, than the wicked can in their slavery to sin. Do you 'yield yourselves to God, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God'? Are the motions of your souls guided by him? You are then 'alive from the dead;' it is the apostle's assertion, Romans 6:4. Sin does reside; but which reigns, God or lust? An usurpation may be on sin's part, when no voluntary subjection on ours. Is it an absolute, or only a partial resignation of yourselves to him? Do you give him a moiety, or do you give him the whole? Has he the sole sovereignty? or would you give him an associate? Are any evil ways hated, out of a respect to his word, to his authority, wisdom, goodness, or a respect to yourselves? Psalms 119:128, 'I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.' Psalms 119:133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Are God's dictates readily obeyed? Does a free submission to his authority govern and act thee in his ways? Do you count his yoke easy, and his burden light? Do you glory in the chain of grace, and count the service of sin as iron fetters? Is the will of God above your own wills? Do you defy the one to observe the other? Is God's will sacred with you, when it thwarts your own, or only when it suits your interest? It is not then the authority of God which prevails with you, but the authority of some extraneous thing which has the chief moving force. If so, there is no sign of the new creature in such a frame.

3. How are your affections to God? It is a new creature we are speaking of, and that is inward chiefly. Sin may be left in the practice, and not hated: goodness may be practised, when it is not affected. Where, then, is the new creature? It is not only a change of professions. Simon Magus had changed that before his baptism, but not his heart, either before or after, Acts 8:21. The strength of sin, lies in the understanding, will, and affections, and it is there that the strength of grace must appear, and set up its banners. Are your affections and lusts of your flesh crucified? They must be so, if you are Christ's new creatures, Galatians 5:24. The strong stirring of natural conscience may weaken a present resolution to an act of sin, but not an affection to it, and to the habit of sin. It may restrain from outward exercises, not from inward dispositions. Natural conscience informs of the evil, but does not confer upon us a disaffection to that evil. What are the inclinations of your affections? Are they pitched upon God? What are they for duration? Are they constantly in motion to him? Is it your pleasure to think of him, to live to him? Are the remainders of unlikeness to him your grief, your yet imperfect image your delight, not because it is imperfect, but because it is his image? Every sigh, or a slight affection, is not a new creature. It is a deep engravement, a constant inclination, contrary to what it was before, as white to black. Do your affections correspond with the affections of God? Do you hate everything that he hates? Or is there any one lust thou should caress and hide among the stuff? Such a frame is not the new-creature frame. God loves not one sin, neither must we, if we be like him. Is the love to God and Christ more settled than love to father or mother, which is an inbred affection, born with our

natures? Matthew 10:37. It must be so supreme. What desires have you to magnify his name? Do you love him so intensely, as to part with your lives to glorify and enjoy him? If you be new creatures, God and his glory will be dearer to you than friends, credit, life. He said not amiss, that no man is a true Christian who is not an habitual martyr; that is, that has not a disposition to lay down his life for the honour of God. And that apostle who has spoken so much of the new creature had such a raised affection, Acts 20:24, he would 'not count his life dear, so he might finish his course with joy;' which was 'to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' He could lay down his head more willingly upon a block than upon a pillow, if he might finish his course to his Master's honour, and publish his grace. Where there is no concern for the honour of God, there is little sign of a likeness to him; for this is an essential part of true Christianity. If we have a new nature, we cannot but love that nature, wherever we find it. And where we find it in a greater degree, and infinitely perfect, as in God, we cannot but love it there above all; else we offer violence to the divine nature; and in not loving it in God, we love it not in ourselves. It is impossible there can be this divine nature without spiritual affections, and that the image of God can be in us without having an intense love to him whose image it is. If anything, then, lie nearer the heart of any man than God, the image of God is not in him. Therefore look into your hearts. How does your hatred break out against sin? How is your sorrow poured out for sin?

4. How stand your souls to inward and spiritual duties? How vile are you in your own eyes because of sin? What grief is there even for your least imperfections? Are you every day defacing your pride, and strengthening your humility? Pride is the great fort of the old man, humility the great security of the new. How are you in prayer? Are you constant, are you fervent, have you daily converses with God? I mean secret prayer and meditation: there are the most intimate converses with God. I appeal to you that neglect those duties; can you pretend to this new creation? Do you think that the image of God in the heart would not often move to its original? Can a likeness to God consist with an estrangedness from him? Can any man live the life of God that does not care for the presence of God, either speaking to him, or thinking of him? Can that law in the heart, which is put in that we may not depart from him, consist with this which is the prime departure, never to seek him, or to seek him coldly? All the affections of the new creature bend to him, and centre in him. Can this be without a drawing near to him? The 'spirit of grace' is followed with a 'spirit of supplication:' Zechariah 12:10, 'the spirit of grace and of supplication.' The Spirit is not a dumb spirit in the new creature. The first work in the heart is to cry, 'Abba, Father': Galatians 4:6, 'God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' The first impression made by the Spirit is upon the eye of the soul to look to God, and the voice of the soul to cry to him. It is the first work of a regenerate man as regenerate. It is the argument our Saviour uses to Ananias, to have confidence that Paul was not the same man as before: Acts 9:11, 'Behold, he prays.' Our old nature being made up of aversion from God, the proper language of that is, 'Depart from us.' The new nature being made up of an inclination to God, the proper language of that is, 'It is good for me to draw near to God;' for upon this renewing grace God is the proper centre of the soul, and the same principle which moves other things to the centre will move the soul to God. It is made the effect of a pure heart: 2 Timothy 2:22, 'Peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart,' and the characteristical note of a saint: 1 Corinthians 1:2, 'Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.'

5. What valuations and relishes have you of the word and institutions of Christ? As the life is, so is the food; a spiritual appetite for spiritual food is a comfortable sign of a renewed nature. In every nature there is an aversion to what is destructive, an inclination to what is preservative. Every creature does as much desire its proper food, as it abhors that poison that would blast it. The new nature has a new taste, his palate is embittered to his former pleasure, and refined and prepared for his new delight: he relishes what before he loathed, esteems that sweetest that before was most unpleasant. The law in the heart, being an impression of the word, will answer it with a choice affection. The first cleansing of the heart, and the progressive sanctification of it, is wrought by the word: Ephesians 5:26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' The image of God in the heart cannot but value the image of God in his law; since the soul is brought to a love of God, it will love his operations, and all the methods of them, and therefore his word. A rectified judgment will have a rectified affection; there will be a spiritual palate, whereby it proves and 'approves what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God,' Romans 12:2. What is pleasing to God is good and pleasing to him. And the same apostle sets it as a sign of a perfect man, or a sincere new creature, to esteem that the wisdom of God which the world counts foolishness: 1 Corinthians 2:6, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.' The Spirit of truth in the new creature will fill it with a strong affection to those truths in the word. Truth in the heart, and truth in the word, being so near of kin, cannot be strangers or unwelcome to one another. What sympathy, then, is there between the word and your hearts? What exercise of grace in it? What improvement of grace by it? Do you desire it to satisfy your curiosity, or to further your growth? 1 Peter 2:2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.' Are you like the plants, both cleansed and quickened by the showers, and discovering themselves in a fresh verdure? How do you dilate your souls for it? How do you work it upon your hearts? Do you desire it should be stamped upon you? Do you long for a more perfect intimacy with it? Do you prize it above the satisfactions of wealth and the pleasures of sense? Is it 'more excellent than gold,' Psalms 19:10, 'and sweeter than honey?' Psalms 119:103. Do you spiritually concoct it, and turn spiritual meat into a spiritual juice, as the stomach does meat into chyle, and other parts of the body into blood? Life can only do this. Do you love to have it dwell richly in you, and bring down the highest imaginations to the foot of it? Do you cut the throat of your dearest Isaacs when the word commands you? Is it a pleasure to you to see the face of God in his ordinances? Is your pleasure raised most by the spirituality of truth? The more spiritual any truth is, the more satisfactory it is to a spiritual taste. Do your hearts burn within you at the warm breath of Christ? Are they not only warmed, but raised into a flame, and that lasting? Not like the straw, which does blaze and vanish.

6. What holiness is there in your hearts and lives? God cannot be otherwise than holy, therefore holiness is the perpetual concomitant of the divine nature; and so the apostle makes it to consist in 'escaping the pollutions that are in the world through lust,' 2 Peter 1:4. There is a principle which springs up in holy motions and thoughts. It is in the soul the image of God is stamped, and it is there that the new creature does chiefly exercise and preserve it. Holiness must be the proper effect of that which is planted by the Spirit of holiness. He that pretends to a likeness to God without it, fathers an irregularity upon him, and makes him a monstrous begetter. It is not born of the will of the flesh, to follow sensual pleasures, nor of the will of man, to follow only rational delights; but of the will of God, and therefore follows that will it was born of, John 1:13. 'Let thy kingdom come, thy will be done,' is the natural language of the new creature, and glad he is to

have the Spirit point him to those ways that are most conformable to the divine will, for it is not a strained holiness, but natural, such a one as arises from the 'fear of God in the heart,' Jeremiah 32:40, and a care to please God in his walk: 2 Corinthians 7:11, 'Yea, what care!' It is holy as God is holy, in some measure, and therefore like him whose infinite purity cannot endure pollution. And it can no more divest itself of its inclinations to righteousness than the soul can strip itself of its natural activity. There is a certain connection between a 'heart of flesh' and 'walking in God's statutes,' Ezekiel 36:26-27. To what purpose does God give it? either for his own work or for the devil's? There is no need of it for the latter; the heart of stone would have done his work effectually: therefore for the service of the former, and that constantly, for the new creature is 'created to good works,' not to do them by fits and turns, but 'to walk in them,' Ephesians 2:10; and he is described by the apostle to be one that 'walks after the Spirit,' Romans 8:1, the ordinary course of his heart is spiritual. How is it with you, then? Is holiness your proper element? Is it a death to you when any thing contrary to it buds up in your hearts? Is there a purity of heart joined with a zeal for goodness, Titus 2:14? They go hand in hand, as being both the ends of our Saviour's death, and both the works of the Spirit. Is there an angry detestation of the loathsomeness of sin, and a kindly affection to the purity of grace? It will be thus if the new creation be wrought, for as in original sin there was the root of all evil, therefore all holiness may be opposed, and all sin practised; so in the habit of grace there is the root of all grace, therefore all sin will be loathed, and every part of holiness will be loved. But on the contrary, if your old lusts be rather improved than impaired; if you are more charmed by swinish pleasures, and enamoured of them; if the enmity in your hearts or the loathsomeness in your lives remain, is there anything of a new creature in you? Judge for yourselves. Do you make as rich a provision for the flesh as before? Is your heart and life set upon it with as much affection? Are you joyful when employed in its drudgery? Is this to be a new creature? Can there be such darkness, if the sun of grace were risen upon you? Such fruits evidence the standing of the old root. He that has the black mark of the devil in his life has no reason to think he has the spiritual badge of Christ in his heart; and if he do, he does deceive himself.

7. How is your disposition against those things which are contrary to a divine nature? No creature has a greater antipathy to that which is contrary to its nature, than a regenerate man has against that which is contrary to the divine. It is as impossible there can be a friendly neighbourhood between the new man and the old, as between the ark and Dagon, between heat and cold, which are always quarrelling, yea, between Christ and Belial, 2 Corinthians 5:16.

(1.) Against the motions of Sin. An irreconcilable war is commenced between grace and corruption. At the first inlet flesh is in arms to hinder; the spirit in arms to maintain its standing, Galatians 5:17. The contest is in the whole man; grace being seated in the heart, sends out its commands, and despatches forces to every part to meet with its enemy, as motion beginning at the centre diffuses itself through the whole sphere, shaking every part to the circumference. Light will oppose darkness in every part of the air; they cannot shake hands together; the increase of one is the decrease of the other. Sensibility is a sign of life; a dead man complains not of wounds and cutting; you may take out his bowels, cut limb from limb, but a living man will complain of the least prick of a pin or a pinch. Natural men cannot complain of that which they do not feel. There is a mighty friendship between a dead carcass and rottenness, nothing is noisome to it. Loads of sin may lie upon him, like mountains upon a dead body, and no complaint: 'The motions of sin work in

his members' without resistance, and 'bring forth their fruit unto death,' Romans 7:5. But the new creature counts the least sin that has stolen in upon him his torture, like the stone in the bladder, a worm in the root, and can find no rest till he routs the beginnings of the disease. If there be no antipathy then to that which is contrary to the life and being of a Christian, it is a sure sign that there is nothing of a divine life, for as a renewed man 'esteems all the precepts of God to be right,' and 'hates every false way,' Psalms 119:128, so he must abhor every motion which would divert him from what he values, and entice him to what he hates. How are your understandings sensible of the first risings contrary to the interest of the new creature? Are they more ready to dissent from them, your wills more ready to check them than before? What counterworkings against the flesh, with its affections and lusts? Are you ready with weapons in your hand to stay the first stirrings of corruption? Are you ready to pluck those buds, and fling them away with disdain? Does both your courage and strength increase? Can you more readily be in arms against the rising of a lust than formerly you were, and cannot without horror bear the approaches of them? Does a little dust of sin got into your eye set you a-weeping before God?

(2.) How stand you affected to spiritual sins? Here you should lay the great stress in your examination of the new creation, for your lives may be the lives of saints, while your hearts are the hearts of devils; we may have no spots of the flesh upon our garments, and a world of them upon our souls; spiritual sins may revel where the more fleshly and sensual iniquities are excluded. There is a war in the heart of the new creature against spiritual wickedness: Ephesians 6:12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;' or wickedness spiritualised in the high places, "*Pros ta pneumatika tes ponerias en tois epouraniois*", the choicest faculties of the soul. Satan does most excite those sins in the heart, and natural conscience makes no resistance against them. It is only an enlightened conscience that understands and abhors this darkness, and loathes those steams which others cherish. Do you wrestle against these which partake most of the devil's nature? Do you dandle them in your minds, or do you groan at the appearance of them? Do you fly from them as you would do from a visible apparition of the devil? These are most contrary to the divine nature and life of God. And a renewed man can no more avoid contesting with them than the nature of a living creature can with poison. But if you can without any reluctance play the wantons with these in your hearts; if you think pride, vain-glory, ambition, speculative wickedness, &c., no evils, if your hearts never start at the appearance of them; if you entertain them as welcome guests, though you be never so free from the filthiness of the flesh, you have yet the strength of Satan's image in you, nothing of a Christian formed. A natural man may quarrel with some sins, not with all; renewed men with all, because all are enemies to God, and to the life of grace in the heart. He is always with arms in his hand to extirpate sin, and drive the Canaanite from his forts as well as the open field.

(3.) Are you in the like manner affected against temptations and occasions of sin? The state of regeneration makes the soul more subject to the assaults of temptations than before, from the envy of Satan, who stomachs the happiness of the new creature. Do your souls start at the appearance of a temptation? Do you regard any enticement to a departure from God as your torment? Do you discountenance it at the first approach, and give it more civil entertainment, than 'Get you behind me, Satan'? Christ in the flesh did so, and Christ formed in the heart will do no less; if he happen to come near the way of evil men, he will observe the wise man's counsel,

Proverbs 4:14-15, he will 'avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' His spirit will rise against anything that would intrude upon him, which looks unfriendly towards God. The nobleness of the new nature will make him disdain a sordid temptation, and inspire him with a holy generosity; and the stronger the nature, the more vigorously will it oppose that which would deform it. And if any temptation break in upon it at any time, and master it, how restless is it to be delivered from it, applies itself with all its force to heaven, complains against it, engages God's power on its side, makes up the gap where sin has broken in, and fortifies the place to prevent a future assault! In short, a natural man nourishes inward lusts, meets motions to sin half way, smiles upon an approaching temptation. A new creature starts at the first appearance for the most part, frowns upon satanic suggestions, turns away his eyes from beholding vanity. One makes provision to maintain them, the other to destroy them; one submits to the tempter, the other arms himself against him.

8. Put this question to yourselves, What delight do you find in God and his ways? This indeed is an evident sign of the new nature; by this men may judge of themselves, if they will not deceive and flatter themselves in their search. This is the greatest evidence of sincerity in all the ways of God. For the law cannot be in any man's heart, unless he delight to do the will of God: Psalms 40:8, 'Thy law is within my heart, I delight to do thy will, O my God.' He will be carried out with a spiritual joy and triumph to the acting what is spiritually good, with a mighty pleasure, as great as the body takes in eating when it is hungry, or drinking when it is thirsty. It was thus with our Saviour in the flesh, it is thus with Christ formed in the heart, it is his meat and drink to do the will of God; not so much in the new creature as it was in Christ, because in that there is a remaining principle of resistance, in Christ none. It is then he can 'delight himself in the Lord,' Isaiah 58:14, and count him his 'exceeding joy,' Psalms 43:4. As it is an argument that Seneca gives of the divine original of the soul, that it is most pleased with divine speculations, it is no less an argument of the new creation, when it is delighted, not only with the speculative, but with the practical contemplation of God, when the soul that triumphed before in the pleasures of sin can burn with an ardent love to God, and solace itself in communion with him; and unless holy services be our delightful element, we have not a likeness to that God, who is not only righteous, but delights in 'righteousness, loving-kindness, and judgment,' Jeremiah 9:24. Every being owes so much respect to its own welfare, as not to act sluggishly and drowsily in its main concern; for the same love which excites it to perform those things which are essential to its preservation will oblige it to act with the highest complacency; and the more conducing they are to the well-being of the creature, the more powerful is the joy which spreads itself through the whole essence of the creature; therefore holy services being as intrinsical to a holy principle as the most inward operations of any creature can be to its nature, will be done with a vigorous frame, and an edged intenseness of spirit. Without this, in some degree, nothing requisite to the operations of a new creature can be performed; without it we have no aversion to that which is contrary to the law, nor an inclination to what is conformable to it. It is a consent of the will to the whole law, Romans 7:16, a delight of the affections in it; a consent to it in respect of the goodness; a delight in it (Romans 7:22), in respect of the authority enjoining it, as it is the law of God; not principally as it is in some parts conformable to human reason, but as it is the divine will, whereby both the sovereignty, holiness, and righteousness of God is owned by the whole inward man; the understanding, will, and affections, conspiring together with a strong delight in God and his law. Hence you find David so often expressing his delight in it, Psalms 119:14, Psalms 119:35, Psalms 119:47, Psalms 119:70,

Psalms 119:77, &c. And indeed so much of weariness as we have in any service, so much of an old nature and a legal frame; so much as we have of love and delight, so much we have of a new creature, and new covenant grace. A natural man cannot have any of this choice joy in any spiritual service, because it is against his nature; no more than a fish can delight to be upon the land out of its proper element; but a new creature has little delight in anything, but as it regards God, and tends to him; other men's delights are terminated in the flesh, but the elevations of a renewed soul are highly spiritual. How then is it with you? Are the duties of religion, communion with God in them, your delightful element? Is a flight of your love to him, the acting for his glory, as pleasant as flattery to a proud nature, or gain to a covetous disposition? Have you little satisfaction in what you do, but still breathe and strive after a higher frame, and cannot rest, till with your choice embraces of your souls you clasp about God himself? O happy man! None but a divine nature could fill thee with such pleasing transports.

Use 4. Is of exhortation.

1. To those who are new creatures, that have some comfortable evidence in their souls, that there is the image of God renewed in them.

(1.) How should you admire and glorify God? Is it possible that so noble a work can be unattended with a spirit of gratitude? How should you be filled with a sense of divine goodness, and formed to set forth his praise? Surely this of thankfulness is not one of the least good works you are created unto. Before, when you were alienated from the life of God, you were estranged from his love and his praise, you would never glorify him whom you did not affect; but since a heavenly nature is introduced, a heavenly work should become the very life of your souls; tongues and hearts should be set on fire by grace.

[1.] Has not God made you differ from the whole mass of the corrupted world? There is as great a difference between a new and an old creature as between the clearest day and the darkest night; as between Christ, who is glorified in heaven, the head of his own flock, and the devil, who is damned in hell, the head of the unbelieving world; so they are opposed by the apostle, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15. Might you not have run down the stream with others, lived only a natural life with others, and at last died an eternal death, and descended, with all your intellectual and moral endowments, to the place only due to corrupt nature? But God, the God that is blessed for ever, has breathed into you a breath of life, caused you to stand up before him with a resemblance of his nature, set you apart for himself, wrought you for glory, and made you live another life, a life by the faith of the Son of God. And is it not reason you should differ from all the world in your praises of him, who has made you differ so vastly in your state and condition?

[2.] Has not God in this bestowed upon you a higher perfection than all natural perfection in the world? The lowest degree of sense is more excellent than the highest inanimate perfection; therefore a fly, in regard of life, is more excellent than a diamond, or the sun itself. The lowest degree of reason is above the highest degree of sense, and the lowest decree of renewing grace transcends the highest degree of reason, because this in the highest degree is but human and natural, that in the lowest degree spiritual and divine. Therefore you owe more to God for your regeneration than all creatures of the world do for their natural existence. He has done more for you, in communicating to you his own nature, than if he had made you viceroys over men and angels and put the whole created world under your feet, without investing you with this new

creation.

[3.] And this God has done for you, when you were in the common lump, and had no more worth in yourselves to move him to it than the rest of the world. No other motive on your part but misery. All the world had the same; for it lay in the like condition. All that you had, all that you were, was proper to move him to a contempt of you, and a loathing you forever. It was the invention of his own overflowing love, not any persuasion of your worth. What were you, and what was your father's house, that he should thus translate you from the drudgery of sin to the liberty of grace, from a spiritual death to a divine life? Had God called you out of the womb of nothing, unshaped as the great chaos, and asked you what degree of creatures you were willing to be raised unto, would you have presumed to desire God to make you like himself? Yet God in regeneration raised you to a state you dared not ask, above a rational creature, even to a divine, when he had no motive to anything, but to turn you, with Nebuchadnezzar, to graze among the beasts, and partake with devils in the eternal misery of that image you had contracted.

[4.] It is therefore a wonderful and miraculous change. If the framing the body of man be so 'wonderful' a work, Psalms 139:14, and a curious piece of embroidery, how much more admirable is this new formation of the soul into the likeness of God. If we should see a silly fly or a poisonous spider, a clod of earth, or a glow-worm, transformed into a glittering star, it would not be so great a miracle; it would be a change from one natural image to another. But this is a change from hell to heaven, from being a limb of the devil to become a member of Christ, from a worse than Egyptian darkness into a marvellous light. That is but a change of one innocent nature into another; this a change of a nature hateful to God into a nature delightful to him, a corrupt creature into an holy one, a change of something worse than a bare creature into something like the great Creator and Redeemer. This is your change, therefore the highest obligation in the world lies upon you, to praise and glorify God. It is in the day of your regeneration that God has rolled away the reproach of your corruption and death, as he said of the Israelites when they were circumcised in Canaan, Joshua 5:9. To quicken you to praise,

First, Often reflect upon your former state. Cast your eyes back upon what you were, that you may be thankful for what you are. Ah, what was I once? A hater of God, and hated by him; one bearing the image of Satan, and delighting in it; a noisome heap of lusts, estranged from God, sold under sin, dead to goodness, an enemy to the law. What a condition was I in then! Good Lord, how astonishing was thy mercy, how wonderful thy love, how great was thy power, to draw me out of this state!

Secondly, Review what you are. What am I now? Here is a new light in my understanding, new inclinations in my will; I can now look upon God with pleasure and run his ways with delight. Christ is my only joy, and Christ is my only gain. My old nature is wearing away, my new nature is rising higher and clearer; now am I freed by the blood of Christ from my guilt, and by the Spirit of Christ from my filth. What shall I render to the Lord for these inestimable benefits towards me? O blessed God! O dear Redeemer! O infinite condescending Spirit, to work these things for me, in me; to clear such a nasty soul, imprint such a heavenly image, conform me to so excellent a pattern, and by grace to fit me for a glorious eternity! Let then the love of the author, the excellency of the work, the misery of your former state, the happiness of your new, be joined together in your considerations to enhance your praise; and since you live the life of God, be sure to live the life of

thankfulness.

(2.) As it is your duty to admire and glorify God for making you new creatures, so it is your duty and advantage too to preserve in its vigour this new nature in you. When Adam's life was infused, he was to preserve it by feeding upon the fruits of paradise, Gen. 2:29. And you must preserve your spiritual lives by the fruits of divine institutions placed in the church. The inner man is to be strengthened; Paul prays to this purpose for the Ephesians, Ephesians 3:16, 'that he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,' which is not, as some understand it, a strengthening of reason, mind, and understanding, The Scripture by heart understands the mind, will, and judgment, but the apostle joins this inner man so with the heart (Ephesians 3:17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'), that he does manifestly put a difference between this inner man and the heart, making one the seat, the other the root in it. The apostle wishes them not a strength of the soul, but a strength of the new man and image of Christ in the soul. The devil is a mighty enemy to it; he has lost a servant: he will leave no stone unturned to recover him; his servant will be his judge; he will therefore endeavour to overthrow him. Go to God, therefore, for new supplies in the case of Satan's assaults; desire him to put a vigour into your grace, water the seeds, and blow up the divine spark. Our Saviour desired assisting and strengthening grace for Peter, when he foresaw the devil's preparations to worry him, Luke 22:31-32. So should we for ourselves, and Christ will not be backward to second us in it; yea, he will prevent us, and send in an auxiliary force over and above the standing habit which makes up the new creature. We need the gales of heaven to blow us forward, the concourse of God to his gracious creature, as well as his common concourse to his natural. Is it not the highest reason to engage all in the defence, and strengthening that which is the delight of God, the happiness of the soul, and the envy of the devil? What is worth our care, if this be thought worthy of our neglect? Sloth in preserving and strengthening argues a lesser value of a thing. Would you lose beauty for deformity, health for sickness? Would you lose the pleasures of heaven for the anguish of hell? Preserve this image then from being defaced, and look that Satan draw no more black lines in your hearts. 'Skin for skin, and all a man has will he give for his life;' eat his own flesh to preserve his life as long as he can. Oh then, if I may so say, soul for soul, and all that you have, you should give and employ for maintaining this spiritual life, which is as much above a natural life as the sun above a dunghill. Blow it up every day, dress the lamps as the priests in the temple. It is for want of this strengthening it, that we have so little liveliness in duty. It is for want of this excitation that we walk so often in darkness. What have we else to do but this? Preservation and strengthening of life is the chief design of men in the world. Is not a divine life of more worth? Let not then the cares of our bodies surpass those for our souls, and our fondness to natural life exceed our affection to spiritual life. We know but in part, we see but as in a glass darkly. The inclinations of our hearts to righteousness are not in their full strength.

(3.) Grow up to a taller stature. There must be a daily putting off the old man, and a putting on the new, a renewing the inward man day by day, 2 Corinthians 4:16. And though at the first regeneration there is the forming all the essential parts of grace, yet afterwards there is a daily augmentation (the Galatians were both knowing God, and known of him, Galatians 4:9, yet of these did the apostle travail, till Christ was formed again, Galatians 4:19), till the design of Christ be fully complied with, and the soul grown up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, by the participation of his nature. As providence is a continued creation, so growth is a continued

regeneration. As a man grows in reason by new improvements, so ought a Christian in grace, by new additions. Things are not ripened at once. The spirits in raw and immature bodies are depressed by gross and earthy mixtures with them, till they are encouraged by the sun and showers, and thereby able to digest the crude parts, and arrive at perfection.

[1.] This must be: Job 17:9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' The new nature can no more stand at a stay, than a living tree can, till it come up to the measures of its nature. It is the nature of seed to propagate itself, and spread its virtue into branches and fruit. It will be aspiring to that perfection which nature has allotted to it. If you do not grow, it is a sign there is no life in you. It is but a common gift, or a common grace, at best; the counterfeit, not the reality of the new creature. Living natures do thrive; pieces of art stand at a stay. He is no member of Christ, but as a wooden leg or arm; not knit by any vital band, but some extrinsic ligaments; not fed with the increases of God, because he does not grow. To content ourselves with a low degree of grace, makes us unworthy of the benefit of regeneration, and below those that pretend to a likeness to God.

[2.] It must be uniform. As it is one habit which is infused, so it equally thrives in all the parts of it. An unequal growth is the effect of a disease, not of nature. As nature causes a proportion of parts in the make, so likewise a proportion of parts in the growth. It is not a growth in faith, and a decay in love; or a growth in love, and a decay in faith. To pretend to the one without the other, is to have an head without an heart, a life without blood or spirits. A natural man may grow in some moral ornaments, as a dead man in hair and nails; but a spiritual vitality shows itself in an equal increase of all the members in the new creature. And it is best discerned by the thriving of those graces which are most contrary to your natural disposition which cannot so well be discerned in those which have some foundations in moral natures, as humility has a mild disposition, which by the addition of grace, advances to an eminent humility. But a new creature thrives in those graces which were most contrary to his corrupt nature, now over-mastered. The second draught of a picture defaces not one line or two of the former, but the whole frame, to make it more near the original. And thus a new creature ought to grow as the vine, and revive as the corn, in all the branches and fruits proper to its nature, Hosea 14:7.

[3.] By this we please God and pleasure ourselves. The more illustrious any work is, the more glory redounds to the artist. If the beginnings of the new creation be so amiable as to make heaven itself in love with it, how infinitely will God be pleased to see it grow to maturity among the whirlwinds and storms of temptations; every increase, adding new colours and lustre to this beauty, will renew the jubilee in heaven. Thus will God pronounce it good at first, and very good the nearer it comes to perfection, as he did in the creation of the world. By this growth you will have a greater capacity for heaven; for if the first new creation capacitates a man for glory, the higher it springs, the more beautiful the divine nature grows, the nearer it is to glory and the fitter to be planted in an eternal paradise, the more right to heaven will appear to yourselves.

(4.) A fourth exhortation. Behave yourselves in your ordinary walk, as new creatures of another rank from the world. It is the inference the apostle makes from the new state wherein the Ephesians were, 'For you were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord: walk as children of the light,' Ephesians 5:8. You must bring forth fruits meet for regeneration, meet for him by whom you are renewed, as the ground does herbs, meet for him by whom it is dressed, Hebrews 6:7.

[1.] Adorn the gospel, whereby the divine impression is made upon you. The apostle argues against lying, and by the same reason against all sin, from this head, Colossians 3:9-20. The gospel adorns the soul by its impression; the soul should adorn the gospel by its conversation: Titus 2:10, 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' Let the writing of the law in the heart appear on the other side of the life, and the divine light in your hearts shine in your outward man, as a candle through a lantern, that God may be glorified, Matthew 5:16. Let not lust and sin, extraneous to the new creature, bear any rule in any action; let no unworthy action reproach your profession. Do nothing unbecoming one who is like him that rules the world, unbecoming that word and gospel which God has magnified above all his name. Defile not your garments; we can never walk with God but in white, Revelation 3:4, in the whiteness of purity, not in the blackness of sin. Do not any works of Satan with the nature of God upon you. Indeed, we may be ashamed, that when there is so much of the image of Christ in the gospel, there should be so little of the image of Christ in our lives. Walk as those that are enrolled among the spirits of just men made perfect, as those who have the honour to be of the assembly of the first-born; live to God, not to yourselves. The more wicked the generation is you live in, the more it is your duty to shine, as the lights of heaven in the darkness of the earth, Php 2:15, and the more it will be your commendation, as it was the praise of Job, that he was upright in the land of Uz, among the race of profane Esau, not among the offspring of praying Jacob: Job 1:1, That man was perfect, and feared God.'

[2.] Live above affections to a drossy world, if you would honour your new nature. An earthly spirit cannot be the effect of a heavenly birth. Let not the rattles of your childhood be your present pleasure, or the bewitching world have any influence upon you. The world is no fit boundary for the soul in its natural capacity, much less in its spiritual; it is too empty for an immortal soul, much more for a divine nature. Let not anything on this side God be your darling, but your footstool, to mount you nearer heaven. Value them only as they enable you to do the higher duties of religion without distracting cares, and are subservient to the honouring God in the world. As the new creature was not redeemed with a vile price, so it is not endued with so sordid a nature, as to be much in love with these things. The conquest of this is one of the first fruits of the new birth. 1 John 5:4, 'Whatsoever is born of God, overcomes the world;' there is a mighty antipathy between the world, and anything that is the offspring of God. There cannot be so much ignorance of the things of another world, as to prize so vile a piece, as a house with walls and furniture, infected with a sinful leprosy. Let the inward contempt of the blandishments of it grow up in you; distract not yourselves with cares for it, but trust in God's promise, and leave things to the conduct of his wise providence. It is inconsistent with a new nature to lie at the bottom of this great sea, sucking up weeds and sand, and never peep its head above water, towards heaven.

[3.] Be much in the thoughts and views of the divine original of your nature. Shall the new nature seldom look up to that place whence it descended, or cast its eye upon that beautiful hand that framed it? Surely the new creature cannot be so unnatural. Employ your souls in exercises of an unbounded love to God, a settled delight in him, a high esteem of the righteousness of his nature, and an habitual walking with him; let the esteem of him, and vilifying yourselves, be your daily employment. The looking upon him will transform you more into his image; by this spiritual converse you will partake of a new brightness, and clearer lineaments. Every view will leave a greater perfection upon his image in you, by a reflection of a glory, 2 Corinthians 3:18: By this your hearts will be more suitable to those regions of blessedness to which the divine image is

hastening. It will make you sweat out some corruption every day, and advance you some steps toward the state of bliss.

[4.] Fix your aims on a state of perfection. You are to walk, not to stand still. Never rest till all that righteousness which of right belongs to that divine nature in you, be conferred upon you: breathe after a more close conjunction with the original. Keep up in a due sprightliness your detestations of sin, which you had when you were first enlivened, with what a holy indignation you flung away your lusts, with a Get you hence, and, What have I to do any more with idols? Set an edge upon this hatred every day, sharpen your indignation more and more. Preserve in your souls those affections which did rise up in you, when the irresistible charms of divine love did first allure you, when you first cast your eyes upon this new likeness and image of God; quicken them daily, and 'press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.'

[5.] Let your affection be carried to everything which partakes of the same image. There is in all creatures a kindness to those of their own nature; the most ravenous do not prey upon their own species; all men, descending from Adam, having the same nature, have some kindness to those of their own kind and all descending from Christ have the same nature, the same affections and instincts. It is in love and holiness wherein God does decipher himself in the soul, he would not be drawn in any other attributes in the heart of man; and thus in the Scripture he publishes himself in the abstract as holiness and love, delighting to be imitated by his creature in those two perfections, 'God is love, and he that dwells in God dwells in love,' 1 John 4:16. Love is, therefore, the nature of the new creature, and love to the same objects whereon God's love is pitched, first himself, then his image in his creature. So the love of God and that of a new creature go hand in hand together; first, the affections of the new nature stream out to God as the prime and original beauty, then to all new creatures, as they partake more or less of this divine image. This universal charity to God, grace, and good men, is the inseparable property of the new creature, the highest perfection of it, and the beginning of a state of glory. Love all those that partake of this divine nature.

[6.] Endeavour to propagate your new nature to others. It is the property of goodness to be diffusive of itself; and God, the highest goodness, is the most communicative. The divine nature should imitate him in this. No nature but delights to propagate itself. The new nature ought not to be sluggish in it; since the great change lies in the end, since the glory of God is set up as its main intendment, it will oblige it to propagate holiness and righteousness, whereby God is most glorified; for thereby the number is increased to represent him on earth and praise him in heaven. No sooner was Paul renewed, but he endeavours to bring all the world into the same frame. The apostate angels, being revolted from God, labour to sink all the world into the same disposition. Fire communicates by a touch its own nature to all matter that comes near it, and turns the hardest metals into its own likeness. So ought that holy fire in a new creature to labour to convert everything into its own flames. This is a peculiar mark set upon the evangelical times, and the special fruit of a gospel impression: Isaiah 2:3, 'Many people shall say, Come se, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.' It should be your endeavour that all about you may be the better for you. Strive to affect your children and servants with a sense of the corruption of nature derived from Adam, and the necessity of being implanted in the new head of the world, and partaking of another nature from him. Thus to be a fellow-worker with God is the most absolute work of grace, as to beget in its own likeness is the most perfect work of nature. And to persuade you to walk and act as new creatures, consider,

First, The excellency of your birth. It is a birth of heaven, a resemblance to God, do nothing below it or unworthy of it. Is it fit for you to lie among the pots and smut yourselves? The consideration of the relation you bear to God should inspire you with heroic resolutions for his glory. You are the only persons that keep up God's honour in the world, and his final anger from it. Whenever you are tempted, reflect upon yourselves, as Nehemiah: 'Should such a man as I' do this? Nehemiah 6:1-19. Or as Joseph to his mistress, 'Behold, my master has committed all that he has to my hand;' behold, God has put his divine nature in my heart, and 'shall I do this wickedness?' Consider in every action what that God you call Father by regenerating grace, that Christ who is the great exemplar and copy of the image in you, would do in such cases and circumstances. How unworthy is it for a living man to do dead works! As your life springs from the highest principle, let it be employed for the highest ends. Was ever any prince ashamed of his honour? And shall any new creature be ashamed of the particular badge of heaven upon it; of that righteousness which is the true nobility of his nature? Holiness is the beauty of an intellectual and rational creature; it must then be your highest honour to live conformably to the dignity of your nature.

Secondly, It was the intendment of God you should walk in a nobler manner than the rest of the world. Did God infuse into Adam a soul of a higher nature than that of beasts, to enable him to live only the life of beasts? God intended by the infusion of this new principle, that you should live above the sphere of humanity and the rate of man. How does the apostle chide the Christians because they did not advance above the life of mere man; and therefore gives them a title chiefly belonging to the unregenerate world: 1 Corinthians 3:3, 'Are you not carnal. and walk as men?' Our Saviour expects a more worthy carriage from his children than what barely nature can teach them. He would have them as God, and imitators of him, Matthew 5:44-47, and do something peculiar to this new state, which cannot be done by any unregenerate man in the world. Your holiness is not to be of the common level with the morality of the world, but such as may set forth the 'praise of God,' 1 Peter 2:9; they are a 'chosen generation,' therefore should have choice conversations; a 'royal priesthood,' therefore princes' deportments; a 'holy nation and peculiar people,' therefore should have holy and peculiar behaviours. They should thus be public evangelists, to set forth "edzangeilete", the graciousness and righteousness of God. There is also the highest obligation, because he has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. God intended that their conversations should be such as should amaze the world into a love of holiness, and admiration of that light which gives them such excellent directions, and that nature which enables them to so exact a walk. God's temples were not intended to be made dunghills.

Thirdly, Not to walk as new creatures is a dishonour to God. You that do not walk answerable to your high calling do more highly dishonour him than all other persons. You are quite contrary to his image, and represent God to the world as they would have him, not what he is in his own nature; for by a careless walk the world will judge God to be like you, or you very unlike to God. Is God holy, and you impure; God merciful, and you revengeful; God a God of peace, and you fomenters of malice and contention? To pretend to his image with such qualities is to disparage his nature, and rather degrade God to a likeness to the flesh than to mount up to a true resemblance of him: Psalms 50:21, 'Thou thought I was altogether such a one as thyself' It is a disgrace to a noble father to have a swinish, clownish, ill-bred person pretend to be his son. But how much is the contrary a glory to Christ, as delicious fruit and choice flowers credit the beams of the sun! What a mighty pleasure is it to God to behold a suitable walk of his new creatures! He loves them, and 'his

countenance does behold the upright,' Psalms 11:7. How much must he, who is holiness itself, take complacency in the holiness of it. If he loves it while in a low degree, no question but he loves it more in a higher exaltation. How does the Holy Ghost repeat Enoch's walking with God twice in Genesis 5:22, Genesis 5:24, to witness his pleasure in it?

Fourthly, Not to walk suitable to your new creation is a mighty disadvantage to yourselves. Though a new creature does not totally lose his grace if a temptation deflower his purity, yet his grace suffers an impair, and perhaps he may never recover the same degree of grace and comfort he had before. It is a question whether David ever had his sails filled with such strong gales of the Spirit after his fall as he had before. The marks of a disease will hang about us after the disease is cured, and the same stock of health may never be restored again. If you do let your hearts run out at any time to any sinful pleasure, though it may not raze out the image, yet it will make you more unfit for those views of God which can only maintain it. When you come before him, after such a departure, how will your hearts recoil upon you? With what pleasure can you look upon him whom you have so abused in his image in your souls, and in his image in his law? Besides, every unworthy walk detracts somewhat from the weight of that crown you might otherwise expect to be reserved in heaven for you, and makes it of a greater alloy. But if you keep close to the law in the word, and the law in your hearts, what communications will you have from God? What inward torches and feelings of him? How hastily will he run to meet you half way, and kiss you with the kisses of his mouth? 'Thou meets him that rejoices and works righteousness,' Isa. lxiv 5. How intimately will he wind himself into the secret corners of your hearts, as John 14:23, 'and make his abode with you;' and like fire in every part of iron, fill every part of the new man with a glowing and divine heat?

Fifthly, Such an exact walk will mightily stop the current of sin. It may justly be feared, the sins of many have taken too much heart from the unsuitable carriages of professors. But a walk according to the rule of the new creation might inflame others to godliness, at least stifle some corrupt motions, suspend some inclinations to sin, and for a time bind up the devil in them. This is the greatest charity to the world; by other benefits we advantage particular persons, by a holy example all that behold us. It strikes an awful reverence into the hearts of men, as being a ray of God; what the gospel enjoins are things comely, and of good report, many of them lovely and illustrious, even in a carnal eye, therefore such expressions of a gospel impression would engender admirations of it, cast a lustre upon the truth of God; men will look upon such works with reverence, and 'glorify God in the day of their visitation' or conversion, as Calvin understands it. To be a holy people is to be 'sought out,' they are both joined, Isaiah 62:12. Many by seeing the holiness of the church in gospel times shall be induced to give up their names to the Lord; it will tend more to the regeneration of others than a thousand sermons; it will raise the reputation of Christianity, and cause them to believe it to be of a divine extract; it would stir men up to a holy emulation to be like them. And beholding the law of God transcribed in the life, it would convincingly answer the cavils of the world, and demonstrate the commands they count grievous to be in themselves practicable. But whither is this gospel ornament we have been speaking of fled? Where is it to be found? How few walk as new creatures, 'as becomes the gospel,' however they profess it, and pretend a zeal for it!

Exhortation 2. To those who lie still buried in the ruins of the old Adam, who carry the image of beasts in their lives, or of devils in their hearts, or both, such I would advise earnestly to seek this

new creature state. Let not your hearts be besotted to a neglect of it, and stupefied into endless torments, which will, as surely as you live, be the dreadful issue, if this be not attained. To be so long under the gospel, and retain the obstinacy of an old nature to God, is a high aggravation. Talk not of sparing the old man; it is your enemy, wound it to death, use the utmost severity towards it; put it off, leave not a rag, if possible, behind; send it away, as Abraham did Hagar, and without so much as a bottle of water, to despoil it of any hopes of return. But, alas, how do you cherish and hug this enemy! How do you value it, as if it were a part of yourselves; as if you could not live without poison, or be happy without misery! How do you bid the new man stand far from you, as if it were a real torment to be in the arms of Christ, and the new creation your disease, not your felicity! Though you were the most unblameable in your lives, free from any pretence of an accusation there, what were you without this change, but devils in the garb of angels of light, poison in fair cabinets, and the natures of serpents in the bodies of men? What is become of your souls? Are they so immersed in flesh, that nothing of spirit can make impressions upon them? Have men quite forsworn the attaining any other excellency than what mere nature bestowed upon them? What deformity do you find in God, that you slight his image, which should be imprinted on you? What frightful thoughts have you of the Spirit that solicits you? How come your souls so senseless of their real happiness? Oh what a happy thing were it, if this day Christ were formed in all our hearts; that though we are nasty dunghills, worse than the stable wherein our Saviour was born in the flesh, we might become the sanctuary of our Lord and his Spirit; it is then the angels would renew their song at the birth of Christ in the heart as well as that in the world, 'Glory to God in the highest,' peace and eternal good will to such a soul. If you have any strugglings in your hearts, any convictions upon your consciences, and make not a further progress, these will be so far from being your advantage, that they will add an emphasis to your damnation.

Let me use some motives to press you.

(1.) Shall not the loathsomeness and misery of your present state startle you? It is a nature that makes you 'the children of wrath,' Ephesians 2:3. Were your old natures acceptable to God, what need any change? But the requiring this change demonstrates the old nature to be abhorred by God. This nature is the devil's filth, the serpent's poison, a deformed leprosy; it is the pain, anguish, torment, rack of every man that dies in it; it smells rank of hell. Is not another nature then desirable? When you commit some grievous sin, to which you are not accustomed, are you not dejected? If you not think worse of yourselves for it? And are you not pleased when you can escape it? If the reformation of one sin be a desirable thing, how much more the reformation of the whole nature! For if a drop of that filth bubbling up in the life be so loathsome, what loathsomeness is there in the heart, where the fountain springs! What gall of bitterness must be in the root, when a little of the fruit is so bitter to your taste! Corruption is the dishonour of your natures, the poison of your souls, the cause of all your unhappiness. It is this that banished you from paradise, ravishing away your pleasures, subjected you to vanity, the wrath of God, the hatred of angels, and tyranny of devils; it is this that has deformed your souls. Despoil yourselves of this cursed old man, give yourselves no rest till you have conquered it; never say, it is incorporated in your entrails and marrow. Where the question is about your everlasting happiness, let no excuse prevail.

(2.) Shall not the excellency of another state allure you? It is the excellency of any piece of art to come nearest its original; that star is most glorious that does most partake of the sun's light and power. The very light of nature tells us the state wherein we are is not our perfection, something

the soul flutters at beyond this, though it naturally understands not what it is. Is it not, then, the happiness of the soul to be reduced to its true centre, to be reinstated in an unspotted nature, to return to a due respect to those ends for which it was made, to have the understanding conversant about the loveliest object, the will inclined to the most amiable goodness, and the affections twining about it, and growing up with it? Can it be anything else but the highest excellency, to live the life of God; to have the image of God wrought upon you, and your souls conformed to his holiness? Can that be an imperfection, which makes you like an infinite righteousness? It was the highest perfection of man to be made according to the image of God, wherein God, as in a glass, might see a resemblance of himself. Is it not then a desirable thing to have it drawn again with more lively and lasting colours, after sin and Satan have so basely defaced it? All other things are not the perfection of man's nature; for whatsoever else there is, is possessed by beasts or devils; the pleasures of sense, by beasts; the endowments of knowledge, by devils; but the divine nature by neither. This therefore, which neither devils can be blessed with, nor beasts capable of, is only the perfection of the soul, more excellent than the soul itself, since that which perfects is more excellent than that which is perfected by it. Original corruption destroys your health, sullies your purity, enslaves your liberty. Regeneration restores your health, expels your filthiness, and knocks off your fetters. Let the excellency of this better state prevail with you.

(3.) Will the honour of the thing allure you? Where shall you meet with so honourable a relation? It is more honour to be a new creature in rags than a carnal prince in purple, though the greatest in the world, for you will then be settled heirs of all the promises. Is it not, then, more glorious to partake of the nature of that God, who created and commands the world, than by the force of the old nature to be slaves to sordid lusts, which are both a drudgery and a disease? As a spirit is more excellent than the body, so a spiritual being and frame is more honourable than a fleshly. There is a greater relation between God and a new creature than between natural fathers and sons. The sons of men have but a little particle of the vile matter and flesh of their fathers, but a renewed man has the whole divine Spirit in him; and by virtue of this, all things will, one time or other rise up and call you blessed; you will be more allied to Jesus Christ, by the inward formation of him in your hearts, than the blessed virgin by the conception of Christ in her womb, Luke 11:27. She was more happy by partaking of Christ in her heart, than by conferring a flesh on Christ from her body. What an honourable thing is it to be moulded into the divine likeness! Can you be more glorious, unless you were gods?

(4.) Will pleasure charm you? View it here. Pleasure must necessarily follow this new state, as light the sun; there is no state without a pleasure pertaining to it. Pleasures of sense belong to a life of sense; intellectual pleasures to a life of reason; divine pleasures to a divine nature. 'All the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness,' Proverbs 3:17. An infinite perfection is attended with an infinite happiness; the more lineaments, then, you have of the divine perfection, the more tastes you will have of the divine happiness. God has an infinite pleasure in his own perfections; it is his felicity to enjoy himself, to view himself. Pleasure then must naturally result from this image drawn in the soul, and as naturally, I conceive, according to the degrees of it, as the pleasure God has in his own holiness and love. The pleasure of heaven is the perfection of holiness; therefore there is a pleasure also attending the draught of it here; an imperfect pleasure from the imperfect form of it, as a perfect pleasure from the completing of it in glory. What want can there be of pleasure, if you come into this state? Will you not be conversant about the highest object, and that with your

choicest faculties? Can this be without some communications of the pleasure of God, as well as his nature? You will find a pleasure in the very strugglings to get into this state, much more in it.

(5.) Do you profess yourselves enemies to the devil? Why then will you gratify him by continuing in an old nature? He keeps a jubilee when he can draw men into great sins, and bind them under them, his main industry is to make men like himself, and continue them in that likeness. The whole world, that are not of God, lie wrapped up in the devil's image: 1 John 5:19, 'The whole world lies in wickedness, or 'in the wicked one,' "En toi poneroi"; more consonant to the former verses. Satan and natural men lie nugging together, though the latter dream not of it. His intent in assaulting man in paradise was to destroy the righteousness of his nature; his design now is to hinder the restoration of it, by keeping men off from the means, making them have false thoughts of the unpleasantness of it, as though it were a state injurious to man's tranquillity, by suppressing convictions, which are the first portals to the courts of blessedness. Oh, gratify not the devil; fly from his image, that you may fly from his misery.

(6.) Why will you cross your own sentiments, when sober reason in you may have leave to speak? What do you think was the end for which you came into the world? Was it to serve the devil or God? Whose image is it most rational for you to bear? Are there not innate desires in man to be as God? Adam desired it unlawfully; the same spirit runs through the veins of his posterity. God has shown you a way in his word whereby you may lawfully desire it, and successfully accomplish it. Do not all creatures, one way or other, instruct you in it? Do they not all run back to their fountain; rivers into the sea, that they may have a new formation in it; beams retracted to the sun; and why not the soul to God? Do they not all declare the glory of God? And shall man stand alone? And what way is there for him to declare God's glory, but by the reformation of his nature? You once had this desirable nature in your first head, and lost it; you may have the re-possession in the second head, and for ever preserve it. You cannot deny your obligation to have it, therefore you cannot deny your duty to seek it. You know your souls received their original from him; you likewise know that there is an obligation to return to him. As the spirit naturally returns to God who gave it, so it cannot be happy in that return, unless it first morally return to God, to be formed like him.

(7.) Nothing else can advantage you if you want this new-creature state. You can no more enjoy happiness by Christ without it, than Adam did in paradise, in the presence of God, with the nakedness of his nature. His being in paradise, the richer part of the whole lower creation, could neither heal him nor content him, after the loss of the purity of his nature. In that happy place his conscience racked him. There he fled from his Creator, which in his innocent nature he never attempted to do; and all the pleasures of that place could not restore him to God's favour or his own peace, without the promise of a seed, and by that seed the restoration in part of his former image.

(8.) Lastly, take this for your encouragement, it is attainable by the meanest person, Colossians 3:11. In the new creation 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all;' that is, there is no distinction of any. The eloquence of the Greek, or the rudeness of the barbarian; the uncircumcision of the Gentile, or the circumcision of the Jew; the baseness of the slave, or the liberty of the freeman, does neither advantage nor disadvantage them in this work of the new creation; and he names

Scythians, as being the rudest and most unpolished among all the known Gentiles. No natural endowments advantage us; no worldly indigences hinder us. The soul of the meanest is as capable of the new creation as the soul of the highest. There is nothing required to the putting on the new man, which is not attainable by the one as well as the other; yea, sooner by those of the meanest endowments, as wanting that fuel for their pride, which is the chief hindrance to a gospel impression. God values nothing but his own image; neither is he any more taken with the glittering parts and wisdom of men than our Saviour with the glory of the temple, which his ignorant disciples did so much admire.

Quest. But what means must be used to obtain this excellent privilege?

Aim. It is indeed the work of God, yet means may be used. He that observes precepts of morality shall gain moral habits; and by practising acts of temperance become temperate. So he that follows the rules given in the word for attaining the new creation, shall have it produced in him; and the more assuredly, because it is not produced by him but by God, who is more able to create new hearts in us than the unregenerate man is to work a moral reformation. For means:

1. Be deeply sensible of original corruption. View yourselves in the glass of Adam; reflect upon the fall, and the dreadful consequences of it; take an exact account of the enmity of thy nature, as the word represents it. We must acquaint ourselves with our sin and misery, and have self-emptying thoughts, before we can seek after a new creature. Man is apt to think his nature good enough; and this makes him the more miserable and wretched, and causes him to think there needs no change, Revelation 3:17.

2. Be deeply humbled before God. Lay yourselves low before him, and abhor yourselves in dust and ashes. Complain of your corrupt nature, melt before God, dissolve into tears. When you are weary and heavy laden, sensible of it by contrition, Christ will give rest by regeneration. The heart must be melted before it be made new. Pride must be humbled; we must be vile in our own eyes, as well as vile in our own nature. 'The Lord is high to them that are of a broken heart,' Psalms 34:18.

3. Often meditate of the excellency of this state, as it is represented in the word. Men hear and forget; they leave behind them what they have heard; they hide it not in their hearts; therefore does not the word profit them. Think often of the honour of being a new creature, as well as the necessity of being a new creature; if you have any thoughts arising of resting upon your knowledge, or morality, or good meaning, say to your soul, as the apostle in another case, O my soul, 'covet earnestly the best gifts, yet show I unto thee a more excellent way.' If any imagination arise which flatters you with hopes of being in Christ without an inward change, regard it as an angel from the bottomless pit, sent from the great impostor to seduce you from your happiness.

4. Fixedly resolve not to be at rest till you procure it at the hands of God. Perhaps you may have had some resolutions before, and some diversion has chilled those purposes; weaver not with uncertain velleities between inclination and aversion. Content not yourselves with sluggish wishes, and yawning desires, but put heart and hand to the work. Set vigorously to it, and those sons of Anak, those seeming terrifying difficulties, will fly before you. Where does the Scripture tell you, that God will neglect his laborious creature, and stand by without assisting him in his serious endeavours? No, no; God will not be wanting in his power, nor the Spirit in his operations, if we

firmly purpose and strongly pursue. 'God is near to all that call upon him in truth,' Psalms 145:18; that is, to all that call upon him with a true purpose and desire for his mercy: he is near by his merciful presence, not by his essential presence only. Fool not away your vows in vain mirth, nor drown your resolutions in sensual pleasures. Say as David in another case, 'I have sworn, and will perform it,' that I will in good earnest endeavour that I may become a new creature, Psalms 119:106.

5. Pray. Regeneration is against the inclinations of old nature; intermit not therefore to call earnestly for help from heaven; it is best attained upon the knee. God is the foundation of all vitality; the life of grace is no less the effect of his breath than the soul of Adam. Go to Christ, in whom, as in a steward, is treasured up a fullness of grace, to dispense to him that seeks it. Beg earnestly of the Spirit, who is the officer appointed, the great limner to draw this image in us. Why can you not go to Christ as well as the leper, and lie sobbing before him, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' thou canst change my nature? Do it constantly, do it fervently, and take notice with what inspirations you will be filled. But do you solicit him for this mercy at all? Has God one breath from thee in a whole week to this purpose? Have you, since you heard it, pressed from the necessity of it, made your case known to God? Has there been one groan, one sigh for it? What a stupid creature is man! Time will not always last; God will be solicited for it, and it is fit he should. An old nature is like an old devil, it cannot be cast out without fasting and prayer. The great changes of the soul are chiefly wrought in prayer and the word: our very looking up to God and upon God in humble prayer makes a gradual transformation in our souls: we never are in the mount with him, but our souls (as Moses his face) look quite of another hue and colour. By frequent converse with friends, we grow more into an imitation of the excellent qualities we perceive in them. Converse with God in frequent prayer and meditation, and you will grow more and more into a holy likeness to him.

6. Attend diligently upon the word. To pray to God to renew you, and slight the word which he has appointed as an instrument to effect it, is to dishonour God; for while you pray to him to be a father to beget you, you condemn him as a governor, by neglecting the means he has appointed for such ends. As the devil formed himself in the soul by man's listening to and sucking in his temptation, so Christ forms himself in the soul, by our sucking in the milk of the word, as the disposition of the nurse is by the milk conveyed to the infant. It is wrought by the gospel, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 'for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.' Not by the word of God at large, which consists of law as well as gospel. So the regenerations of old were wrought, not by the law, but by that of gospel mixed in that administration. By this means you may get a spiritual knowledge, and discard that ignorance which is the foundation of an alienation from the life of God, Ephesians 4:18, 'alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' Study the promises, and plead them before the Lord, for 'by these you are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4. Resist not any divine impressions, by a sluggishness and a listlessness. Be not in love with your spiritual death, nor cherish the bondage to sin in your will, when God makes motions to enliven and enlarge you. Welcome the breathings of the Spirit. Open your souls, as some flowers do for the sun; drink in the drops of heaven, as the earth does the rain; and when the Spirit quickens you by its influences, quicken the Spirit by your earnest supplications, Song of Solomon 4:16; make much of him, persuade his stay. Breathe, O blessed Spirit, upon this wilderness. Never leave till it be changed into a fruitful garden, both

pleasant to, and fruitful for, my blessed Creator and gracious Redeemer.

End of A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration.

A Discourse of the Pardon of Sin

A Discourse of the Pardon of Sin by Stephen Charnock

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity."— Psalms 32:1-2. This psalm, as Grotius thinks, was made to be sung upon the annual day of the Jewish expiation, when a general confession of their sins was made. It is one of David's penitential psalms, supposed to be composed by him after the murder of Uriah, and the pronouncing of his pardon by Nathan, Psalms 32:5, and rather a psalm of thanksgiving. It is called Maschil, a psalm of understanding. Maschil is translated eruditio, intelligentia, and notes some excellent doctrine in the psalm, not known by the light of nature. Blessed, , blessednesses. Ex omni parte beatus (blessed in every way). Three words there are to discover the nature of sin, and three words to discover the nature of pardon.

, Iniquity. Notes original sin, the root of all. Three words that note pardon.

Levatus, forgiven, eased, , signifies to take away, to bear, to carry away. Two words in Scripture are chiefly used to denote remission, to expiate; , to bear or carry away: the one signifies the manner whereby it is done, viz., atonement; the other the effect of this expiation, carrying away: one notes the meritorious cause, the other the consequent.

, Covered. Alluding to the covering of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Menochius thinks it alludes to the manner of writing among the Hebrews, which he thinks to be the same with that of the Romans; as writing with a pencil upon wax spread upon tables, which when they would blot out, they made the wax plain, and drawing it over the writing, covered the former letters. And so it is equivalent with that expression of 'blotting out sin,' as in the other allusion it is with 'casting sin into the depths of the sea.'

, Impute. Not charging upon account. As sin is a defection from the law, so it is forgiven; as it is offensive to God's holiness, so it is covered; as it is a debt involving man in a debt of punishment, so it is not imputed; they all note the certainty, and extent, and perfection of pardon: the three words expressing sin here, being the same that are used by God in the declaration of his name, Exodus 34:7. Here are to be considered, I. The nature of pardon.

II. The author of it, God.

III. The extent of it, transgression, sin, iniquity.

IV. The manner of it, implied, by faith in Christ. The apostle quoting this place, Romans 4:7, to prove justification by faith; as sin is not imputed, so something is imputed instead of it. Covering implies something wherewith a thing is covered, as well as the act whereby it is covered.

V. The effect of it, blessedness.

I shall not divide them into distinct propositions, but take the words in order as they lie.

I. The nature of pardon.

1. Consider the words, and what notes they will afford to us.

(1.) Covering, as it alludes to the manner of writing, and so is the same with blotting out: Isaiah 43:25, 'I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgression;' whereby is implied, that sin is a debt, and pardon is the remitting of it. It notes,

[a.] The nullity of the debt. A crossed book will not stand good in law, because the crossing of the book implies the satisfaction of the debt. A debt may be read in our manner of writing in a crossed book, but it cannot be pleaded. God may after pardon read our sins in the book of his omniscience, but not charge them upon us at the bar of his justice.

[b.] God's willingness to pardon. Blots, not razeth. He engraves them not upon marble, he writes them not with a pen of iron, or point of a diamond; writing upon wax is easily made plain.

[c.] The extent of it. Blotting serves for a great debt as well as a small; a thousand pound may as well, and as soon, be dashed out by a blot as a thousand pence.

[d.] The quickness of it upon repentance. It takes more time to write a debt in a book, than to cross it out; one blow would obliterate a great deal of writing upon wax. Sins that have been contracting many years, when God pardons, he blots out in a moment.

(2.) Covering, as it alludes to the drowning the Egyptians, is expressed by casting into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' This notes also,

[a.] God's willingness to pardon. Casts them, not lays them gently aside, but flings them away with violence, as things that he cannot endure the sight of, and is resolved never to take notice of them more.

[b.] God's reality in pardon. He will cast their sins as far as the arm of his omnipotency can reach; if there be any place further than the depths of the sea, thither they shall be thrown out of the sight of his justice.

[c.] The extent. All their sins. The sea covered Egyptian princes as well as the people. The mighty lord, as well as the common soldier, sank like lead in those mighty waters.

[d.] The duration of it. The sea vomits up nothing that it takes into its lower bowels; things cast into the depths of the ocean never appear more. Rivers may be turned and drained, but who can lave out the ocean?

(2) Not imputing. Not putting upon account, not charging the debt in a legal process. To this is equivalent the expression of not remembering: Isaiah 43:25, 'I will not remember their sins.' An act of oblivion is passed upon sin. This notes,

(1.) That God will not exact the debt of thee. God doth not absolutely forget sin, for what he knows never slips out of his knowledge. So that his not remembering is rather an act of his will than a defect in his understanding. As when an act of oblivion is passed, the fact committed is not physically forgotten, but legally, because the fear of punishment is removed. God puts them out of the memory of his wrath, though not out of the memory of his knowledge. He doth remember them

paternally to chastise thee for them, though not judicially to condemn thee.

(2.) Not upbraid thee. Not with a scornful upbraiding mention them to cast thee off, but with a merciful renewing the remembrance of them upon thy conscience, to excite thy repentance, and keep thee within the due bounds of humility and reverence.

2. More particularly the nature of pardon may be explained in these propositions. We must not think that these expressions, as they denote pardon, do intimate in this act the taking away of the being of sin, nature of sin, or demerit of sin.

1. The being and existence of sin is not taken away. Though sin be not imputed to us, yet it is inherent in us. The being remains, though the power be dethroned. By pardon God takes away sin, not as it is a pollution of the soul, but as it is an inducement to wrath. Though remission and sanctification are concomitants, yet they are distinct acts, and wrought in a distinct manner.

2. The nature of sin is not taken away. Justification is a relative change of the person, not of the sin; for though God will not by an act of his justice punish the person pardoned, yet by his holiness he cannot but hate the sin, because though it be pardoned, it is still contrary to God, and enmity against him. It is not a change of the native malice of the sin, but a non-imputation of it to the offender. Though the person sinning be free from any indictment, yet sin is not freed from its malitia, and opposition to God. For though the law doth not condemn a justified person because he is translated into another state, yet it condemns the acts of sin, though the guilt of those acts doth not redound upon the person, to bring the wrath of God upon him. Though David had the sins of murder and adultery pardoned, yet this pardon did not make David a righteous person in those acts, for it was murder and adultery still, and the change was not in his sin, but in his soul and state.

3. The demerit of sin is not taken away. As pardon doth not alter sin's nature, so neither doth it alter sin's demerit, for to merit damnation belongs to the nature of it; so that we may look upon ourselves as deserving hell, though the sin whereby we deserve it be remitted. Pardon frees us from actual condemnation, but not, as considered in our own persons, from the desert of condemnation. As when a king pardons a thief, he doth not make the theft to become formally no theft, or to be meritoriously no capital crime. Upon those two grounds of the nature and demerit of sin, a justified person is to bewail it, and I question not but the consideration of this doth add to the triumph and. hallelujahs of the glorified souls, whose chief work being to praise God for redemption, they cannot but think of the nature and demerit of that from which they were redeemed, Revelation 5:13.

4. The guilt of sin, or obligation to punishment, is taken away by pardon. Sin committed doth presently, by virtue of the law transgressed, bind over the sinner to death, but pardon makes void this obligation, so that God no longer accounts us persons obnoxious to him. *Peccatum remitti non aliud est quam non imputari ad poenam.* (For a sin to be pardoned is nothing else than not to imputed for punishment.) It is a revoking the sentence of the law against the sinner, and God renouncing, upon the account of the satisfaction made by Christ to his justice, any right to punish a believer, doth actually discharge him, upon his believing, from that sentence of the law under which he lay in the state of unbelief; and also as he parts with this right to punish, so he confers a right upon a believer humbly to challenge it, upon the account of the satisfaction wrought by his

surety. God hath not only in his own mind and resolution parted with this right of punishing, but also given an express declaration of his will: 2 Corinthians 5:19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,' i.e. openly renouncing upon Christ's account the right to punish, whence follows the non-imputation of sin, 'not imputing their trespasses unto them.' The justice of God will not suffer that that sin which is pardoned should be punished, for can that be justice in a prince, to pardon a thief, and yet to bring him to the gallows for that fact? Though the malefactor doth justly deserve it, yet after a pardon and the word passed, it is not justly inflicted. God indeed doth punish for that sin which is pardoned. Though Nathan, by God's commission, had declared David's sin pardoned, yet the sword was to stick in the bowels of his family: 2 Samuel 12:10, 2 Samuel 12:15, 'The sword shall never depart from thy house.' 'The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.' But,

(1.) It is not a punishment in order to satisfaction, because Christ's satisfaction had no flaw in it, and stood in need of nothing to eke it out; but it is for the vindication of the honour of God's holiness, that he might not be thought an approver of sin; and this was the reason of David's punishment in the death of his child by Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 12:14, 'Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.'

(2.) It is not so much penal as medicinal. A judge commands a hand to be cut off, that is for punishment; a physician and a father order the same, but for the patient's cure, and the preservation of the body. And though God after pardon acts not towards his people in the nature of a judge, yet he never lays aside the authority and affection of a father. We are delivered from a judge's wrath, but not from a father's anger. In that remarkable dumbness inflicted upon Zacharias for his unbelief, Luke 1:18, Luke 1:20, there was a confirmation of his faith, as well as the chastisement of his incredulity. The angel, upon his unbelieving desire of a sign, gives him a testimony of the truth of his errand, but such an one that should make him feel in some measure the smart of his unbelief.

(3.) If it be penal, it is not the eternal punishment due to sin. It is but temporary, and not embittered by wrath, which is the gall of punishment. This taking off the obligation to punishment is the true nature of pardon: which will be evident from 2 Samuel 19:19, 'Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me.' Shimei desires David not to impute iniquity, and not to remember it. It was not in David's power absolutely to forget it, and Shimei's confessing the fact with those circumstances in 2 Samuel 19:20, was enough to recall it to David's memory, if he had forgot it; but he desires David not to bring him to satisfy the penalty of the law for reviling his sovereign.

II. The author of pardon, God. For pardon is the sovereign prerogative of God, whereby he doth acquit a believing sinner from all obligation to satisfactory punishment, upon the account of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith.

1. It is God's act. Remission is the creditor's, not the debtor's, act; though the debtor be obliged in justice to pay the debt, yet there is no obligation upon the creditor to demand the debt, because it is at his liberty to renounce or maintain his right to it; and God hath as much power as man to relax his right, provided it be with a salve to his own honour, and the holiness of his nature, which he cannot deny for the sinner's safety, as the apostle tells us 'God cannot deny himself.' Yet properly, say some, though sin be a debt, God is not to be considered in pardon as a creditor, because sin is not a pecuniary debt, but a criminal, and so God is to be considered as a governor, lawgiver,

guardian, and executor of his laws, and so may dispense with the severities of them. If an inferior person tear an indictment, it may be brought again into court, but if the chief magistrate order the casting it out, who can plead it? It is God's act; and if God justifies, who can condemn? Romans 8:33, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that, justifies, who shall condemn?' That God absolves thee that hath power to condemn thee; that God who enacted the law whereby thou art sentenced, proclaims the gospel whereby thou art reconciled. It is an offended God who is a forgiving God: that God whose name thou hast profaned, whose patience thou hast abused, whose laws thou hast violated, whose mercy thou hast slighted, whose justice thou hast dared, and whose glory thou hast stained.

2. It is not only his act, but his prerogative, and he only can do it. God is the party wronged. *Nemo potest remittere de jure alieno.* (No one is able to remit the judgement of another.) This prerogative he glories in as peculiar to himself; the thoughts of this honour are so sweet to him, that he repeats it twice, as a title he will not share with another: Isaiah 43:25, 'I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions.' Pardoning offenders is one of a prince's royalties. And this is reckoned among his regalia, as a choice flower and jewel in his crown: Exodus 34:7, 'Forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sins.' A prince punisheth by his ministers, but pardons by himself. And, indeed, God is never so glorious as in acts of mercy; justice makes him terrible, but mercy renders him amiable. When Moses desired to see God in his royalty, and best perfections, he displays himself in his goodness: Exodus 33:18, 'Shew me thy glory.' Ezekiel 33:19, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.' And though the apostles had a power of remission and binding, that was only ministerial and declarative, like that prophetic power which Jeremiah had to root up nations and destroy, Jeremiah 1:10, i.e. to declare God's will in such and such judgments, as he should send him to pronounce. Men cannot pardon an infinite wrong done to an infinite justice. Forgiveness belongs to God, as, (1.) Proprietor. He hath a greater right to us than we have to ourselves.

(2.) Sovereign. He is Lord over us, as we are his creatures.

(3.) Governor of us, as we are parts of the world.

(4.) It is an act of his mercy, not our merit. Though there be a conditional connection between pardon, and repentance, and faith, yet there is no meritorious connection ariseth from the nature of those graces, but remission flows from the gracious indulgence of the promise.

3. It is the very tenderness of mercy, the meltings of the inward bowels: Luke 1:78, 'To give knowledge of salvation, and remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God.' *splagcna eleouV*, an inexhaustible mercy: Psalms 86:5, 'Thou, Lord, art ready to forgive, and art plenteous in mercy.' A 'multitude of tender mercies,' Psalms 51:1. What arithmetic can count all the bubblings up of mercy in the breast of God, and all the glances and all the dispersals of his pardoning grace towards his creatures? And he keeps this mercy by him, as in a treasury, to this purpose: Exodus 34:7, 'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity,' &c.; and is still as full as ever, as the sun, which hath influenced so many animals and vegetables, and expelled so much darkness and cold, is still as a strong man able to run the same race, and perform by its light and heat the same operations. When mercy shews itself in state with all its train, it is but to usher in pardoning grace, Exodus 34:6-7; not a letter, not an attribute that makes up the composition of that name, but is a friend and votary of mercy. And that latter clause a learned man explains of God's

clemency; 'He will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers,' &c., which he renders thus: He will not utterly cut off and destroy; but, when he doth visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, it shall be but to the third or fourth generation, not for ever. This name of God is urged by Moses: Numbers 14:17, 'Now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great; the Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity,' &c. 'Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy.' Where Moses repeats this clause more particularly than he doth the other parts of his name; which surely he would not have done, and pleaded it as a motive to God to pardon Israel, if he had not understood it of God's clemency; for otherwise he had dwelt more upon the argument of justice than upon that of mercy, which had not been proper to edge his present petition with. Nay, it is such pure mercy, the genuine birth of mercy, that it partakes of its very name, as children bear the name of their father: Hebrews 8:12, 'I will be merciful to their iniquity,' which in the prophet, Jeremiah 31:34, whence the apostle quotes it, is, 'I will forgive their iniquity.' That it is so, will appear; because:

(1.) No attribute could be the first motive of pardon but this. His justice would loudly cry for vengeance, and flame out against ungrateful sinners. His holiness would make him abhor not only the embraces but the very sight of such filthy creatures as we are. His power would attend to receive and execute the commands of his justice and holiness, did not compassion stop in to qualify.

(2.) Unconstrained mercy. Men pardon many times because they are too weak to punish; but God lacks not power to inflict judgments, neither doth man lack weakness to sink under it: Romans 5:6, 'When we were without strength, Christ died for us.' God lacked not sufficient reason to justify a severe proceeding, both in the quality of sin, every sin being a contrariety to the law, sovereignty, work, glory, yea, the very being of God. Now for God to pardon that which would pull him out of his throne, hath blemished the creation, robs him of his honour, must be an act of the richest and purest mercy; and in the quantity, multitudes of sins of this cursed quality, as numerous as motes in the sunbeams. It is impossible for the nimblest angel to write down the extravagances of men committed in the space of twenty-four hours, if he could know all the operations of their souls as well as their outward actions; all those God doth see, simul et semel, and yet is ready to pardon in the midst of numberless provocations.

(3.) Resolved and designed mercy. It is not through inadvertency and insensibleness of the aggravating circumstances of them; God must needs know the nature and circumstances of all those sins he himself laid upon Christ; yea, God hath an actuated knowledge of all when he is about to pardon, Isaiah 43:22. God reckons up their sins of omissions; they had been weary of him, and had not brought to him their small cattle; had preferred their lambs and kids before his service; wearied him with their iniquities; endeavoured to tire him out of the government of the world. What could one have expected after this black scroll, but fire-balls of wrath? Yet he blots them out, Isaiah 43:25, though all those sins were fresh in his memory. Nay, the name we have profaned becomes our solicitor: Ezekiel 36:22, 'For my holy name's sake which you have profaned.'

(4.) Delightful and pleasant mercy. He delights in pardoning mercy, as a father delights in his children. He is therefore called the Father of mercy: Micah 7:18, 'He pardons iniquity, and retains

not his anger for, ever, because he delights in mercy.' Never did we take so much pleasure in sinning as God doth in forgiving; never did any penitent take so much pleasure in receiving, as God doth in giving, a pardon. He so much delights in it that he counts it his wealth: riches of grace, riches of mercy, glorious riches of mercy. No attribute else is called his riches. He sighs when he must draw his sword: Hosea 11:8, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim!' but when he blots out iniquity, then it is, 'I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my name's sake.' His delight in this is equal to the delight he hath in his name. This is pure mercy, to change the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace, to bestow pardons where he might inflict punishments, and to put on the deportment of a father instead of that of a judge.

4. The act of his justice. Those attributes which seem contrary are joined together to produce forgiveness; yet God is not to be considered in pardon only as *judex* (judge), but *paternus judex* (a paternal judge). There is a composition of judge and father in this act; free grace on God's part, but justice upon the account of Christ. That God will accept of a satisfaction, is mercy; that he will not forgive without a satisfaction, is justice. Mercy forgives it in us, though justice did punish it in Christ. Christ by his death paid the debt, and God, by the resurrection of Christ, discharged the debt; and therefore the justice of God is engaged to bestow pardon upon a believer. God set forth Christ as 'a propitiation, that he might be just, and therefore a justifier of him that believes,' Romans 3:26. Either the debt is paid or not; if not, then Christ's death is in vain. If it be, then God's justice is so equitable as not to demand a second payment. Therefore another apostle joins faithful and righteous. It might have been faithful and merciful, faithful and loving, but faithful and righteous, or just, takes in the attribute which is most terrible to man, 1 John 1:9, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' *dicaioV* (righteous). Isaiah joins both together, 'a just God and a Saviour,' Isaiah 45:21, so that here is unspeakable comfort. That which engaged God formerly to punish man, engageth him now to pardon a believer; that which moved him to punish Christ, doth excite him to forgive thee.

5. The act of his power. It is a sign of a noble and generous mind to pass over offences and injuries. Sick and indigent persons are the most peevish and impatient, and least able to concoct an injury. And when we kindle into a flame upon the least sparks of a wrong, the apostle tells us we are overcome of evil: Romans 12:21, 'Be not overcome of evil.' We become captives to our angry passions. Speedy revenge in us being an act of weakness, the contrary must be an act of power over ourselves. God's not executing the fierceness of his anger, is laid upon his being a God and not man, Hosea 11:9. God's infinite power gives a rise to pardon: Micah 7:18, 'Who is a God like to thee, that pardons iniquity?' Junius and Tremellius render it, 'Who is a strong God?' and the Hebrew will bear it. 'Let the power of my Lord be great,' saith Moses, Numbers 14:17. The word *jigdal* is written with a great *jod*, to shew, say the Jews, that it is more than an ordinary power to command one's self when injured. Therefore, when God proclaims his pardoning name, he ushers it in with names of power: 'The Lord, the Lord God,' Exodus 34:6. It is a greater work to forgive than to prevent the commission of sin, as it is a greater work to raise a dead man than to cure a sick man: one is a work of art, the other belongs only to omnipotency.

III. The manner of it. How it is carried on.

1. On God's part by Christ.

(1.) By his death. He is the scape-goat upon whom our sins are laid, Isaiah 53:6. Our sins are made Christ's, and Christ's righteousness is made ours. He is said to be 'made sin for us,' and we are said to be 'made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Corinthians 5:21; a blessed exchange for us. He bore that wrath, endured those torments, suffered those strokes of justice which were due to us. The pardon of sin doth cost us confessions and tears, but it cost Christ blood and unknown pains (as the Greek liturgy, *Di agnoston kopon*, have mercy on us).

[a.] Laid upon him by God. God appropriates this work to himself: Zechariah 3:9, 'I will engrave the engraving thereof,' speaking of the stone, which is the same with his servant the branch. As a stone is cut with a chisel, which makes deep furrows in it, so did God deal with Christ, and that in order to the taking away of sin: 'I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day,' viz. the day of Christ's suffering. By that offering of himself, he shall perfectly satisfy me. Therefore it is called 'the will of God,' in order to the taking away sin, Hebrews 10:9-10, compared with ver. Hebrews 10:11-12, 'I come to do thy will, by which will we are sanctified,' which will was to take away sin; for, Hebrews 10:11, that was the end of his sacrifice, the legal sacrifices not being able to do it. God did not only consent to it, or give a bare grant, but it was a propense and affectionate motion of his heart: Isaiah 53:10, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him;' hence did the angels sing at his birth, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men.' The peace he was to procure was the fruit of God's will towards us.

[b.] Voluntarily undertaken by Christ: Hebrews 10:6-7, 'Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God.' Willingness in the entrance of the work, willingness to take a body, and willingness to lay down that body. He had as it were a fever of affection, a combustion in his bowels till it was finished. In his greatest agonies he did not repent of his undertaking, or desire to give it over. He cried indeed to his Father that this cup might pass from him, but he presently submits: If there be no other way to save sinners, I will pass on through death and hell to do it. When he was afflicted and oppressed, he murmured not at it: Isaiah 53:7, 'He opened not his mouth, he opened not his mouth.' It is twice repeated, to shew his willingness. And God was highly pleased with him for this very reason, because he did 'pour out his soul,' and 'bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors;' all which expressions denote his earnestness and readiness in it.

(2.) By his resurrection. His death is the payment, his resurrection the discharge: Romans 4:25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.' Not that we are formally justified by the resurrection of Christ, but that thereby God declared that whosoever believes in him should be justified upon that believing; for if Christ had not risen, there had been no certainty of the payment of the debt. In his death he pays the sum, as he is our surety; and in his resurrection he hath his quietus est (it is satisfied) out of God's exchequer. God will not have this payment from Christ, which he hath acknowledged himself publicly to be satisfied with, and from believers too; for upon his resurrection he sent him to bless men: Acts 3:26, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.' How? 'In turning away every one of you from his iniquity,' it being a great encouragement to turn men from sin, when God hath thus declared them pardonable by the resurrection of his Son.

2. On our parts by faith. Faith is as necessary in an instrumental way, as Christ in a meritorious way: Acts 26:18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sins by faith that is in me.' Christ purchaseth a pardon, but faith only puts us in possession of a pardon; yet it cannot from its own

worth challenge forgiveness at the hands of God, but upon the account of Christ, who hath merited forgiveness. Though the king grants a pardon to a condemned malefactor, yet he may be executed unless he pleads it the next assizes, though he hath it lying by him; so unless we sue it out, and accept of it by faith, all Christ's purchase will not advantage us. Faith looks not barely upon the sufferings of Christ, but upon his end and design in it. It looks not upon his passion as a story, but as a testament; and you seldom find the death of Christ mentioned in the New Testament without expressing the end of it. This forgiveness by Christ's death as the meritorious cause, shews,

(1.) God's willingness to pardon. If God did delight in the death of Christ, it was not surely simply in his death; for could a father delight to tear out the bowels of his son? The afflictions of his people go to his heart; much more would the sufferings of his darling. God had more delight in forgiveness than grief at his Son's sufferings; for he never repented it, though our Saviour besought him with tears; and that God who was never deaf to any that called upon him, nor ever will be, would not hear his only Son in the request to take the cup from him, or abate anything of the weight of his sufferings, because it was necessary for the pardon of sin, necessitate decreti (necessary according to the decree), if not naturae (according to its nature). God repented of making the world, but never of forgiving sin; so that the pardon of sin is more pleasing to him than the sufferings of his Son were grievous; otherwise whatsoever the Father would have done by instruments, yet surely he himself would not have been the executioner of him. But in this affair there were not only instruments, Judas to betray him, the Jews to accuse him, the disciples to forsake him, Pilate to condemn him, the soldiers to mock and crucify him, and thieves to revile him, but God himself: Isaiah 53:10, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.' His own Father that loved him (as Abraham in the type) puts as it were the knife to the throat of his only Son, which surely God would not have done had not pardon of sin been infinitely pleasing to him. And how great a pleasure must that be, that swallowed up all grief at his Son's sufferings! Yea, he seemed to love our salvation more than he loved the life of his Son, since the end is always more amiable than the means, and the means only lovely as they respect the end.

(2.) The certainty of forgiveness. God must deny Christ's payment before he can deny thy pardon. God will not deny what his Son hath earned so dearly, and what he earned was for us and not for himself. Did God pardon many before Christ died, and will he not pardon believing souls since Christ died? Some were certainly saved before the coming of Christ: upon what account? Not for their own righteousness; that is but a rag, and could not merit infinite grace. Not by the law; that thundered nothing but death, and condemned millions, but never breathed a pardon to one person. Or was it by their vehement supplications? Those could not make an infinite righteousness mutable; justice must be preferred before the cries of malefactors; and if those could have done it, God would not have been at the expense of his Son's blood. Therefore, it must be upon this account, Romans 3:25, 'for the remission of sins that are past.' Did God pardon upon trust? And will he not much more upon payment? Did he forgive when there was only a promise of payment, and some thousands of years to ran out before it was to be made? And will he not much more forgive, since he hath all the debt paid into his hands? Would God remit sin when Christ had nothing under his hand to shew for it? And now that he hath a public testimony and acquittance, will he not much more do it? Seeing his purging our sins, or expiating them by his death, was the

ground of his exaltation to the honour of sitting at the right hand of God in our natures: Hebrews 1:3, 'When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;' it is a certain evidence of the grant of pardon upon the account of this sacrifice to those that seek it in God's methods, since God hath shewn himself so pleased with it. For it is clear, that because Christ 'loved righteousness and hated iniquity,' i.e. kept up the honour of God's justice and holiness by the offering himself to death, that God hath given him a portion above all his fellows.

(3.) The extent of it. Both to original and actual sin: John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world;' sin of the world, the sin of human nature, that first sin of Adam. Of this mind is Austin, and others, that original sin is not imputed to any to condemnation since the death of Christ. But howsoever this be, it is certain it is taken away from believers as to its imputation. Christ was 'made sin for us,' 2 Corinthians 5:21, to bear all sin. It had been an imperfect payment to have paid the interest, and let the principal remain; or to have paid the principal, and let the interest remain. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' Romans 8:1, and therefore no damning matter or guilt left in arrear. It had been folly else for the apostle to have published a defying challenge to the whole creation to have brought an indictment against a justified person (Romans 8:33. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?'), if the least crime remained unremitted for the justice of God, the severity of the law, the acuteness of conscience, or the malice of the devil to draw up into a charge. Since the end of his coming was 'to destroy the works of the devil,' whereby he had acquired a power over man, he leaves not therefore any one sin of a believer unsatisfied for, which may continue, and establish the devil's right over him. If the redemption only of the Jews, with the exclusion of the Gentiles, in the first compact seemed to displease him, to shed his blood for small sins only would have been as little to his content, it had been too low a work for so great a Saviour to have undergone those unknown sufferings for debts of a smaller value, and to shed that inestimable blood for the payment of farthings, and leave talents unsatisfied. Certainly, God sent not his Son, but with an intention his blood should be improved to the highest uses for those that perform the covenant conditions, and that Father who would have us honour his Son as we honour himself, will surely honour his Son's satisfaction in the extensive effects of it, as he would honour his own mercy, since they are both so straitly linked together. And it is as much for the glory of Christ's satisfaction, as for the honour of his Father's mercy, to pass by the greatest transgressions.

(4.) The continuance of it. Thou art pardoned, and yet thou sinnest; but Christ hath paid and never runs more upon the score. Thou art pardoned and dost daily forfeit, and needest a daily renewal; but Christ hath purchased, and never sins away his purchase. God exacted a price suitable to the debt he foresaw men would owe him, for he knew how much the sum would amount unto. When he gave Christ, he intended him for the justification of many offences, Romans 5:16. 'The free gift is of many offences unto justification,' speaking of the gift of God, Romans 5:15. And therefore since God cannot be mistaken in the greatness of the sum, because of his infinite knowledge, it had been a greater act of wisdom not to provide any remedy at all, than not to do it thoroughly. If the continuance of that imperfect remission of Adam and the patriarchs was drawn out for above three thousand years and more, and the enjoyment of happiness made good to them merely upon Christ's undertaking, surely it will be much more upon his actual performing, Romans 3:25. There was then a *paresiV* (passing by or overlooking), now an *afesiV* (cancellation); they had a continuance of freedom from punishment by his mediatorship and engagement to his pledge,

much more shall believers have a continuance of pardon by his actual sacrifice, upon which the validity of all the former mediatory acts did depend, since now there is no more remembrance of sin by the continuance of legal sacrifices, his being so absolutely complete. Therefore God hath erected a standing office of advocacy for Christ, 1 John 2:1, in heaven, for the representing of his wounds and satisfaction, and bespeaking a continuance of grace to us. He is said to be 'the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world,' John 1:29; not o agaV, hath taken, or o agwn, will take, but o aigwn, which notes, actum perpetuum, the constant effect of his death. And since, as I said before, Christ hath an higher portion than others, because he loved righteousness, in this portion he hath a joy and gladness; but his joy would certainly be sullied, if pardon should not be continued to those for whom he purchased it.

(5.) The worth of it. That must be of incomparable value that was purchased at so great a price as the blood of God, Acts 20:28. (So it is called by reason of the union of the divine nature with the human, constituting one person.) It is blood, which all the gold and silver, and the stones and dust of the earth turned into pearls, could not equal. God understood the worth of it, who in justice would require no more of his Son at least than the thing was worth, not a drop of blood more than the value of it. Neither surely would Christ, who could not be mistaken in the just price, have parted with more than was necessary for the purchase of it. It would have beggared the whole creation to have paid a price for it. The prayers and services of a gracious soul, though God delights in them, could not be a sufficient recompence. And the bare mercy of God, without the concurrence of his provoked justice, could not grant it, though his bowels naturally are troubled at the afflictions of his creatures.

IV. Extensiveness, fulness, or perfectness of pardon. 1. In the act forgiving, covering, not imputing. 2. In the object; iniquities, transgressions, and sins.

1. Perfect in respect of state. God retains no hatred against a pardoned person. He never imputes sin formally, because he no more remembers it, though virtually he may, to aggravate the offence a believer hath fallen into after his justification. So Job possessed the sins of his youth. And Christ tacitly put Peter in remembrance of his denial of him. The grant is complete here, though all the fruits of remission are not enjoyed till the day of judgment, and therefore in Scripture sin is said then to be forgiven. It is a question whether believers' sins will be mentioned at the day of judgment. Some think they will, because all men are to give an account. Methinks there is some evidence to the contrary. Our Saviour never mentioned the unworthy carriage of his disciples to him in his sufferings, and after his resurrection seems to have removed from him all remembrance of it. It is not to be expected, that a loving husband will lay open the faults of his tender spouse upon the day of the public solemnisation of the nuptials. But if it be otherwise, it is not to upbraid them, but to enhance their admiration of his grace. He will discover their graces as well as their sin, and unstop the bottles of their tears, as well as open the book of their transgressions. Our Saviour, upon Mary's anointing him, applauds her affection, but mentions not her former iniquity.

It must needs be perfect.

(1.) All God's actions are suitable to his nature. What God doth, he doth as a God. And is he perfect in his other works, and not in his mercy, which is the choicest flower in his crown? God sees blacker circumstances in our sins, than an enraged conscience or a malicious devil can represent; but God pardons not according to our apprehensions, which though great in a

tempestuous conscience, yet are not so high as God's knowledge of it.

(2.) The cause of pardon is perfect. Both the mercy of God and the merits of Christ are immutably perfect. It is for his own glory, his own mercies' sake, that he pardons. He will not dim the lustre of his own crown, by leaving the effect of his glory imperfect, or satisfying the importunities of his mercy by halves. The saints in heaven have not a more perfect righteousness, whereby they continue their standing, than those on earth have; for, though inherent righteousness here is stained, yet imputed, upon which pardon is founded, is altogether spotless. A righteousness that, being infinite in respect of the person, hath a sufficiency for devils, had it a congruity; but it hath both for us, because manifested in our natures.

2. In respect of the objects. Sinful nature, sinful habits, sinful dispositions, pardoned at once, though never so heinous.

(1.) For quality. There was no limitation as to the deepness of the wounds caused by the fiery serpents in the wilderness ; the precept of looking upon them, extended to the cure of all, let the sting reach never so deep, the wound be never so wide or sharp, and his sight be never so weak, if he could but cast his eye on the brazen one. The commission Christ gave to his disciples, was to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark 16:15, every human creature; the worst as well as the best. Though you meet with monstrous sinners in the likeness of beasts, and devils, except none from suing out a pardon in the court of mercy. The almightiness of his mercy doth as much transcend our highest iniquities, as it doth our shallowest apprehensions. Our sins, as well as our substance, are but as the dust of the balance, as easily to be blown away by his grace, as the other puffed into nothing by his power. No sin is excepted in the gospel, but that against the Holy Ghost, because it doth not stand with the honour of God to pardon them who wilfully scorn the means, and account the Redeemer no better than an impostor. No man can expect, in reason, he should be saved by mercy, who, by a wilful malice against the Son of God, tramples upon the free offers of grace, and provokes mercy itself to put on the deportment of justice, and call in revenging wrath to its assistance, for the vindication of its despised honour. The infinite grace of God dissolves the greatest mists, as well as the smallest exhalations, and melts the thick clouds of sin, as well as the little icicles.

(2.) The quantity. Hath God ever put a restraint upon his grace and promise, that we shall find mercy if we sin but to such a number, and no more? It is not agreeable to the greatness and majesty of God's mercy, to remit one part of the debt, and to exact the other. It consists not with the motive of pardon, which is his own love, to be both a friend and an enemy at the same time, in pardoning some, and charging others; and thus his grace would rather be a mockery and derision of men. Neither doth it consist with the end of pardon, which is salvation; for to give an half pardon is to give no salvation, since, if the least guilt remains unremitted, it gives justice an unanswerable plea against us. What profit would it be to have some forgiven, and be damned for the remainder? Had any one sin for which Christ was to have made a compensation remained unsatisfied, the Redeemer could not have risen. So if the smallest sin remains unblotted, it will hinder our rising from the power of eternal death, and make the pardon of all the rest as a nullity in law. But it is the glory of God to pass by all: Proverbs 19:11, 'It is his glory to pass over a transgression.' It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence. It is a discovery of an inward principle or property, which is an honour for a man to be known the master of. If it be his glory to pass by a single and small

injury, then to pass by the more heinous and numerous offences, is a more transcendent honour, because it evidenceth this property to be in him in a more triumphant strength and power. So that it is a clearer evidence of the illustrious vigour of mercy in God, to pass by mountains and heaped up transgressions, than to forgive only some few iniquities of a lesser guilt: Jeremiah 33:8, 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, and whereby they have transgressed against me.' Therefore, when God tells the Jews that he would give them a general discharge in the fullest terms imaginable, to remove all jealousy from men, either because of the number, or the aggravations of their sins, he know not how to leave expressing the delight he had in it, and the honour which accrued to him by it: 'It shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and honour before all the nations of the earth.' He would get himself an honourable name by the large riches of his clemency. Mercy is as infinite as any other attribute, as infinite as God himself. And as his power can create incomprehensible multitudes of worlds, and his justice kindle unconceivable hells, so can his mercy remit innumerable sins.

8. Perfect in respect of duration. Because the handwriting of ordinances is taken away: Colossians 2:14-15, 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;' which was the ceremonial law, wherein they did, by their continual presenting sacrifices, and imposition of hands upon them, sign a bill or bond against themselves, whereby a conscience of sin was retained, Hebrews 10:2, Hebrews 10:8, and a remembrance of sin renewed. They could not settle the conscience in any firm place, Hebrews 9:9; they were compelled to do that every day, whereby they did confess that sin did remain, and want an expiation. Hence is the law called 'a ministration of condemnation,' 2 Corinthians 3:9, because it puts them in mind of condemnation, and compelled the people to do that which testified that the curse was yet to be abolished by virtue of a better sacrifice. This handwriting, which was so contrary to us, was taken away, nailed to his cross, torn in pieces, wholly cancelled, no more to be put in suit. Whence, in opposition to this continual remembrance of sin under the legal administration, we read, under the New Testament, of God's remembering sin no more, Hebrews 10:3, Hebrews 10:17. Christ hath so compounded the business with divine justice, that we have the sins remitted, never returning upon us, and the renewal also of remissions upon daily sins, if we truly repent. For though there be a blacker tincture in sins after conversion, as being more deeply stained with ingratitude, yet the covenant of God stands firm, and he will not take away his kindness, Isaiah 54:9-10. And there is a greater affection in God to his children than to his enemies; for these he loves before their conversion with a love of benevolence, but those with a love of complacency. Will not God be as ready to continue his grace to those that are penitent, as to offer it to offending, rebels? Will he refuse it to his friends, when he entreats his enemies? Not that any should think that, because of this duration, they have liberty to sin, and, upon some trivial repentance, are restored to God's favour. No; where Christ is made righteousness, he is made sanctification. His spirit and merit go together. A new nature, and a new state, are concomitants; and he that sins upon presumption of the grand sacrifice, never had any share in it.

V. The effect of pardon. That is blessedness.

1. The greatest evil is taken away, sin, and the dreadful consequents of it. Other evils are temporal, but those know no period in a doleful eternity. There is more evil in sin, than good in all the creatures. Sin stripped the fallen angels of their excellency, and dispossessed them of the seat

of blessedness. It fights against God, it disparages all his attributes, it deforms and destroys the creature, Romans 7:13. Other evils may have some mixture of good to make them tolerable, but sin being exceedingly sinful, without the mixture of any good, engenders nothing but destruction and endless damnation. Into what miseries, afflictions, sorrows, hath that one sin of Adam hurled all his posterity! What screechings, wounds, pangs, horrors, doth it make in troubled consciences! How did it deface the beauty of the Son of God, that created and upheld the world, with sorrow in his agonies, and the stroke of death on the cross! How many thousands, millions of poor creatures have been damned for sin, and are never like to cease roaring under an inevitable justice! Ask the damned, and their groans, yellings, howlings, will read thee a dreadful lecture of sin's sinfulness, and the punishment of it. And is it not then an inestimable blessedness to be delivered from that which hath wrought such deplorable executions in the world?

2. The greatest blessings are conferred. Pardon is God's family-blessing, and the peculiar mercy of his choicest darlings. He hands out other things to wicked men, but he deals out this only to his children.

(1.) The favour of God. Sin makes thee Satan's drudge, but pardon makes thee God's favourite. We may be sick to death, with Lazarus, and be God's friends; sold to slavery, with Joseph, and yet be dear to him; thrown into a lion's den, with Daniel, and be greatly beloved; poor, with Lazarus, who had only dogs to dress his sores, and yet have a title to Abraham's bosom. But we can never be beloved if we are unpardoned; no share in his friendship, his love, his inheritance, without a pardon. All created evils cannot make us loathsome in a justified state, nor all created goods make us lovely under guilt. Sin is the only object of God's hatred; while this remains, his holiness cannot but hate us; when this is removed, his righteousness cannot but love us. Remission and favour are inseparable, and can never be disjoined. It is by this he makes us as a diadem upon his head, a bracelet on his arm; it is by this he writes us upon the palms of his hands, makes us his peculiar treasure, even as the apple of his eye, which nature hath so carefully fenced.

(2.) Access to God. A prince may discard a favourite for some guilt, and though he may restore him to his liberty in the commonwealth, yet he may not admit him to the favour of his wonted privacies. But a pardoned man hath an access to God, to a standing and perpetually settled grace: Romans 5:1-2, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access.' Guilt frights us, and makes us loathe the very sight of God; pardon encourageth us to come near to him. Guilt respects him as a judge; pardon, as a friend. Who can confidently or hopefully call upon an angry and condemning God? But who cannot but hopefully call upon a forgiving God? Sin is the partition wall between God and us, and pardon is the demolishing of it. Forgiveness is never bestowed, but the sceptre is held out to invite us to come into God's presence. And what can be more desirable than to have not only the favour of, but a free access at any time to, the Lord of heaven and earth, and at length an everlasting being with him?

(3.) Peace of conscience. There must needs be fair weather when heaven smiles upon us. All other things breed disquietness. Sin was a thorn in David's crown; his throne and sceptre were but miserable comforters, while his guilt overwhelmed him. The glory of the world is no sovereign plaster for a wounded spirit. Other enjoyments may please the sense, but this only can gratify the soul. God's thunder made Moses tremble, Hebrews 12:21; but the probability of a gracious pardon

would make a damned soul smile in the midst of tormenting flames. How often hath the sense of it raised the hearts of martyrs, and made the sufferers sing, while the spectators wept I though this, I must confess, is not always an inseparable concomitant. There is much difference between a pardon and the comfort of it; that may pass the seal of the king without the knowledge of the malefactor. Pardon, indeed, always gives the *jus ad rem*, a right to peace of conscience, but not always *jus in re*, the possession of it. There may be an actual separation between pardon and actual peace, but not between pardon and the ground of peace.

(4.) It sweetens all mercies. Other mercies are a ring, but pardon is the diamond in it. A justified person may say, I have temporal mercies and a pardon too; I live in repute in the world, and God's favour too; riches increase, and my peace with God doth not diminish. I have health with a pardon, friends with a pardon, as Job 29:3, Job 29:6-7; among all other blessings this he counts the chiefest, that God's candle shined upon his head. A prisoner for some capital crime may have all outward accommodations for lodging, diet, attendance, without a real happiness, when he expects to be called to his trial before a severe judge, from whom there is no appeal, and that will certainly both pass, and cause to be executed, a sentence of death upon him. So, though a man wallows in all outward contents, he cannot write himself blessed, while the wrath of God hangs over his head, and he knows not how soon he may be summoned before God's tribunal, and hear that terrible voice, 'Go, thou cursed.' What comfort can a man take in houses, land, health, when he considers he owes more than all his estate is worth? So, what comfort can a man have in anything in this world, when he may hourly expect an arrest from God, and a demand of all his debts, and he hath not so much as one farthing of his own, or any interest in a sufficient surety? We may have honour and a curse, wealth and a curse, children and a curse, health and long life and a curse, learning and a curse, but we can never have pardon and a curse. Our outward things may be gifts, but not blessings, without a pardon.

(5.) It sweetens all afflictions. A frown with a pardon is better than a thousand smiles without it. Sin is the sting of crosses, and remission is a taking the sting out of them. A sight of heaven will mitigate a cross on earth. The stones about Stephen's ears did scarce afflict him, when he saw his Saviour open heaven to entertain him. To see death staring us in the face, and an angry and offended God above, ready to charge all our guilt, is a doleful spectacle. 'Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins,' saith the psalmist, Psalms 25:18. Sin doth embitter, and adds weight to an affliction, but the removal of sin doth both lighten it and sweeten it.

Use 1. An unpardoned man is a miserable man. Such a state lays you open to all the miseries on earth, and all the torments in hell. The poorest beggar with a pardon is higher than the greatest prince without it. How can we enjoy a quiet hour, if our debt be not remitted, since we owe more than we are able to pay? You may die with a forfeited reputation, and yet be happy; but what happiness, if you die with unpardoned guilt?

(1.) There must either be pardon or punishment. The law doth oblige either to obedience or suffering. the commands of it must be observed, or the penalty endured. God will not relax the punishment without a valuable consideration. If it be not executed, the creature may accuse God of want of wisdom in enacting it, or defect of power in maintaining it. Therefore there must be an exact observance of the law, which no creature after the first deviation is able to do; or an undergoing the penalty of it, which no sinner is able to bear. There must therefore be a remission

of this punishment for the good of the creature, and the satisfaction of the law by a surety, for the honour of God's justice. If we have not therefore an interest in the surety, the purchaser of remission, we must lie under the severity of the law in our persons.

(2.) You can call nothing an act of God's love towards you, while you remain unpardoned. What is there you do enjoy, which may not consist with his hatred as well as his love? Have we knowledge? So have devils. Have we riches? So had Nabal and Cain. Have we honour? So had Pharaoh and Herod. Have we sermons? So had Judas, the best that ever were preached. Nothing, nothing but a pardon, is properly a blessing. How can that man take pleasure in anything he hath, when all the threatenings in the book of God are so many arrows directed against him?

(3.) All the time thou livest unpardoned, thy debts mount the higher. Every new sin is an adding a figure to the former sum, and every figure after the three first adds a thousand. Every act of sin adds not only the guilt proper to that single act upon it, but draws a new universal guilt from all the rest committed before, because the persisting in any one sin is a renewed approbation of all the former acts of rebellion committed against God.

(4.) It is that God, who would have pardoned thee if thou wouldst have accepted of it, who will condemn if thou dost utterly refuse it. It is that God thou hast provoked, offended, and dishonoured. That power which would have been manifested in forgiving thee, will be glorified in condemning thee. That justice which would have signed thy absolution, if thou hadst accepted of its terms, will sign the writ of execution upon thy refusal of them. Nay, the mercy that would have saved thee, will have no compassion on thee. The law condemns thee, because thou hast transgressed it, and mercy will reject thee, because thou hast despised it. The gospel, wherein pardon was proclaimed, will acquit others, but condemn thee. God would be false to his own word, if, after thy slighting so many promises of grace and threatenings of wrath, thou shouldst be spared.

Use 2. Of comfort.

Pardon of sin may make thee hope for all other blessings. Hath God done the hardest, and will he stick at the easiest? Hath he overthrown mountains, and shall molehills stop him? It is an easier thing to waft thee to heaven, than it was at first to remit thy guilt: Romans 5:10, 'For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.' To this the death and resurrection of the Son of God was necessary, and there was to be a coming together and agreement made between mercy and justice. But since this is completed, the Redeemer saves thee by his life; since he hath died for thy remission, there is no need of his dying for thy further salvation. Seeing he hath made manifestation of his pardoning grace unto thee, he will not cease till he hath brought thee into a perfect state. For to what purpose should the creditor forgive the smaller part of the debt, and cast the creditor into prison for an unpayable sum.

(1.) If once pardoned, thou wilt be always pardoned. For the first pardon Christ paid his blood, for the continuance he doth but plead his blood, and we cannot be without a pardon till Christ be without a plea. He merited the continuance as well as the first remission. Will our Saviour be more backward to intercede for pardon, than he was to bleed and pray for it on earth? Would not our dearest Saviour let sin go unremitted, when he was to contest with the Father's wrath? And will he

let it go unpardoned when he is only to solicit his Father's mercy? Thou shalt not want the daily renewals of it, since he has only to present his blood in the most holy place, seeing an ignominious and painful death did not scare him from the purchase of it upon the cross. As God's heart is more ready to give than we are to ask forgiveness, so is Christ's heart more ready to plead for the continuance of it, than we are daily to beg it; for he loves his people more than they can love him, or love themselves. Our praying is according to self-love, but Christ's intercession is according to his own infinite love, with a more intense fervency.

(2.) Thou art above the reach of all accusations. Shall the law condemn thee? No. Thou art 'not under the law, but under grace.' And if grace hath forgiven thee, the law cannot sentence thee. Shall conscience? No. Conscience is but the echo of the law within us: that must speak what God speaks. God's Spirit and a believer's spirit are joint witnesses: Romans 8:16, 'For the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.' Conscience is sprinkled by the blood of Christ, which quite changeth the tenor of its commission. Will God condemn thee? No. That were to lose the glory of all his pardoning mercy hitherto conferred upon thee; that were to fling away the vast revenue grace hath all this while been gathering for him; yea, it were to deny his own covenant and promise. Shall Christ condemn thee? No. That were to discard all his offices, to undo his death, and belie his merits. Did he sweat and bleed, pray and die for thee, and will he now condemn thee? Hath he been pleading for thee in heaven all this time, and will he now at the upshot cast thee off? Shall we imagine the severity of a judge more pleasing to him than the charity of an advocate, since his primary intention in coming was to save the world, not to condemn it? No. It would not be for his honour to pay the price and to lose the purchase.

(3.) There will be a solemn justification of thee at the last day. Thou art here pardoned in law, and then thou shalt be justified by a final sentence; there is a secret grant here, but a public manifestation of it hereafter. Thy pardon was passed by the Spirit of God in thy own conscience, it will then be passed by the Son of God in thy own hearing. That Saviour that did merit it upon his cross, will pronounce it upon his throne. The book shall be laid out of sight; there shall be no more writing in the book of God's omniscience to charge thee, or of thy conscience to affright thee. His fatherly anger shall for ever cease; and as all disposition to sin, so all paternal correction for it shall be for ever abolished, and forgiveness be fully complete in all the glorious effects of it.

(4.) Faith doth interest as in all this, though it be weak. The grant of a pardon doth not depend upon the strength of faith, though the sense of a pardon doth. A weak faith, as a palsy person, may not so well read a pardon, though it may receive it. As a strong faith gives more glory to God, so it receives more comfort from him. Christ made no difference in his prayer, John 17:1-26, between the feeblest and stoutest believer. His lambs as well as sheep were to be fed by his apostle with gospel comforts; and oven those lambs, Isaiah 40:11, he himself carries in his bosom. Strong faith doth not entitle us to it because it is strong, or a feeble faith debar us from it because it is weak; but it is for the sake of a mighty Saviour that we are pardoned. It is the same Christ that justifies thee as well as Abraham, the father of the faithful; it is the same righteousness whereby thou art justified as well as Paul and the most beloved disciple.

Use 3. Of examination.

Consider whether your sins are pardoned. Will you examine whether your estates are sure, and will you not examine whether your souls are sure?

Here I shall, 1, remove false signs whereon men rest, and think themselves pardoned.

(1.) The littleness of sin is no ground of pardon. Oh, some may say, my sins are little; some tricks of youth, some petty oaths, or the like. The Scripture saith that drunkards, fornicators, extortioners, and covetous, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; not great drunkards only, but those that are drunk but now and then, as well as those that are drunkards every day.

[a.] Dost thou know the malignity of the least sin? No sin can be called absolutely (though it may comparatively) little. Is it a little God who is offended by sin? Is it a little wrath which is poured down on sin? Is it a little Christ that hath died for sin? Is it a little soul that is destroyed by sin? And is it a little hell that is prepared for sin? Is not the least sin deicidium, as much as in a man lieth, a destroying of God? Did not Christ shed his blood for the least as well as for the greatest? Is not hell kindled by the breath of the Lord for the least as well as the greatest sins? Is that little which is God's burden, Christ's wound, the Spirit's grief, the penitent's sorrow, and the devil's hell? Every drop of poison is poison, every drop of hell is hell, every part of sin is sin, and hath the destroying and condemning nature of sin. Can angels expiate the least sin, or can a thousand worlds be a sufficient recompence for the injury that is done to God by the least sin?

[b.] The less thy sin, the less the excuse for thyself. It is the aggravation of their injustice, that they 'sold the righteous for a pair of shoes,' Amos 2:6. Dost thou undervalue God so as to sell a righteous and eternal God so cheap, for a little sin? Is a little sin dearer to thee than the favour of the great God? Is a little sin dearer to thee than an eternal hell is grievous? To endanger thy soul for a trifle, to lose God for a bubble, is a confounding aggravation of it; as it was of Judas his sin, that he would sell his Saviour for a little silver, for so small a sum. Sin is not little in respect of the formality of it, but in respect of the matter, in respect of the temptation; and this littleness is an aggravation of sin.

[c.] Dost thou know how God hath punished the least sin? A drop of sin may bring a deluge of misery. An atom of sin is strong enough to overturn a world. It was but an apple that poisoned Adam and his whole posterity. Less sins are punished in hell than are pardoned here. God casts off Saul for less sins than he pardoned David for. How many ships have been destroyed upon small sands as well as great rocks!

(2.) Fewness of sins is no argument of pardon. Conceive, if thou canst, the amiableness and lustre of the angels, how far beyond the glory of the sun it was; yet one sin divested them of all their glory. It was but one sin kindled hell for the fallen angels; every sin must receive 'a just recompence of reward,' Hebrews 2:2. Shall one single sin entitle thee to hell, what will millions of sins then entitle thee to? One sin is too much against God. Had thy iniquities, been never so few, Christ must have died to answer the pleas of his Father's justice against thee. Every sin is rebellion against God as a sovereign, undutifulness to God as a father, contempt of God as a governor, and preferring the devil before God; the devil that would damn thee, before God that made thee and preserves thee; a preferring the devil's temptations before God's promises.

(3.) The commonness of sin is no argument of pardon. Many angels combined in the first conspiracy against God; but as they were companions in sin, so are they companions in torments. The commonness of Sodom's sin made the louder cry, and hastened the severer judgment; not one inhabitant escaped, but only righteous Lot and his family. Common sins will have common

plagues. It doth rather aggravate thy sin than plead for pardon, when thou wilt rather follow men's example to offend God than conform to God's law to please him. Sin was common in the old world, for 'all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Genesis 6:12; and all were swept away by the destroying deluge. To walk according to the course of the world, is so far from being a foundation of pardon, that it is made a character of a child of the devil. To walk according to the course of the world, is to walk according to the pattern of the devil, and to be in the number of the children of wrath: Ephesians 2:2, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.'

(4.) Forbearance of punishment is no argument of pardon: Ecclesiastes 8:11, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Forbearance if made use of by men, to make them sin more desperately, more headily. 'Fully set..' all checks silenced and stopped. Forbearance is no acquittance; it argues not God's forgiving the debt; the debt is due, though it be not presently sued for; and the longer the debt remains unpaid, the greater sum will the interest amount to; because the longer God doth forbear punishment, the longer time thou hast for repentance; the account for that time will run high. That God doth not punish, is an argument of his patience, not of his pardoning mercy. God laughs at sinners; he sees their day is coming, though they may be merry and confident of a pardon. God's forbearance may be justice; he may be brewing the cup and mixing that which thou art to drink. Prisoners may be reprieved one assize, and executed the next; reprieve of execution is no allowance of the crime, or change of the sentence.

(5.) Prosperity is no sign of pardon. Oh, I am not only borne with, and forborne; but I have a great addition of outward contentments since my sin. That which you make an argument of pardon, may be an argument of condemnation. Asaph was much troubled at the prosperity of the wicked; but at last saith, 'Pride compasseth them as a chain, and violence covers them as a garment,' Psalms 73:6. That kindness which should have made them melt, made them presume; that which should broach thy repentance, inflames thy pride; thy goods may increase thy sins.

(6.) Forgetfulness of thy sin, and commission long ago, is no sign of pardon; and therefore having no checks for them, is no sign of pardon. God doth not forget, though thou dost; no sin slips from the memory of his knowledge, though now he doth cast many sins away from the memory of his justice. In regard of God's eternity, the first sins are accounted as committed this moment; for in that there is no succession of time, and the sins thou hast committed twenty years ago, are as fresh as if thou hadst acted them all since thy coming into the congregation. Joseph's brethren, Genesis 37:25, laboured to wipe out the thoughts of their late cruelty by their eating and drinking, when the cries and tears of their brother were fresh in their memory, and might have damped their jollity. His affliction troubled them not; his relation to them, his youth, and their father's love to him, could not make them relent. But twenty-two years after, conscience began to fly in their faces, when awakened by a powerful affliction, Genesis 42:21. Is not thy conscience oftentimes a remembrancer to thee of thy old forgotten sins, and doth it not turn over the old records thou hadst quite forgot?

(7.) Hopes of God's mercy are no grounds of thy being pardoned. God's mercy is not barely enough, for then Christ needed not have died for sin; nor Christ's death enough, without the condition of that covenant whereby God will make over the interest and; merits of his death to

thee. God's mercy must be considered, but in God's own way. God is merciful, but his mercy must not abolish his truth. Doth not a judge's mercy consist with condemning a malefactor? God hath been merciful to thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it; thou wouldst not hear mercy speak in a day of grace, why then should not justice speak in a day of vengeance? Thou wouldst not hear a God of mercy when he cried to thee, how then should mercy hear thee when thou comest to beg?

2. Some false grounds why those that are pardoned think themselves not pardoned.

(1.) Great afflictions are not signs of an unpardoned state. Moses had sinned by unbelief, Aaron by making a golden calf; God pardoned their sin, but took vengeance on their inventions: Psalms 99:8, 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance.' Nathan, in his message to David, brings at once both pardon and punishment. The sin is removed, but the sword must still stick in the bowels of his family: 2 Samuel 12:13-14, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.' God may afflict temporally, when he resolves not to punish eternally. What! because he will not condemn thee as a judge, will he not chastise thee as a father? We may well bear a scourge in one hand, when we have a pardon sealed in the other. God pardons thy sin, but there is need of affliction to subdue that stout, stubborn heart of thine. God doth visit with rods when he is resolved not utterly to take away his loving-kindness from a people, Psalms 89:22-23.

(2.) Terrors of conscience are no sign of an unpardoned state. We find a pardoned David having broken bones and a racked conscience after Nathan had pronounced his pardon, when there was no remorse before, Psalms 51:1-19. He had the grant of a pardon, but the comfort of a pardon was wanting. God may scorch thy soul when he gives a pardon, not that justice is thereby satisfied, but sin more embittered to thee. By a pardon thou dost relish his mercy, and by the torments thou mayest have in thy soul, thou wilt understand his justice. He shews thee what he freely gives, but he would have thee know what thou hast fully deserved; he gives thee pardon, but gall and wormwood with it, that thou mayest know what the purchase of it did cost thy Saviour. The physic which heals, causeth pain. That physic which doth not make thee sick, is not like to bring thee health. God pardons thee, that thou mayest be saved; he terrifies thee withal, that thou mayest not be induced by temptations to sin.

(3.) Sense of sin is no argument of an unpardoned state. A pardon may be granted when the poor condemned man expects to be haled out to execution. Mary stands weeping behind her Saviour when Christ was declaring her pardon to Simon; that much was forgiven her, and afterwards Christ turns to her, and cheers her with the news of it, Luke 7:44-47. He pronounceth her pardon, ver. Luke 7:48, and the comfort of it: Luke 7:50, 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' The heavens may drop, when now and then the sun may steal a beam through the clouds. There may be a pardon where there are not always the sensible effects of a pardon. We find, after the stilling of a storm, the ragings and rollings of the sea. A penitent's wound may ache afresh when a Saviour's blood drops in mercy.

(4.) The remainders of sin are not a sign of an unpardoned state. Though a disease be mastered by physic, there may be some grudgings of it in a person. Though sin be pardoned, yet the dregs of sin will be remaining, and sometimes stirring. Christ hath enlivened us, not by wholly destroying, but pardoning, sin. Pardon takes away the guilt of sin, grace takes away the power of sin, but

neither pardon nor infusion of grace takes away the nature, and all motions of sin; for in purging out an humour, some dregs still remain behind: Colossians 2:18, 'And you hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.'

3. What are the true signs of a pardoned man?

(1.) Sincerity in our walk. A spirit without guile is made the character of a pardoned man in the text. There may be failings in the life, yet no guile in the heart; such a man is a pardoned man. A heart that hath no mixtures, no pretences or excuses for sin, no private reserves for God; a heart that, as the needle in a compass, stands right for the interest and glory of God, and answers to the profession as an echo to the voice; a heart that would thrust out any sin that harboured there, would not have an atom of any filth odious to the eye of God lurk there. Where this sincerity is, a willingness and readiness to obey God (which is the condition of the covenant), the substance of the covenant is kept, though some particular articles of it may be broken. Grace, the pardoning grace of God, is with them that love Christ in sincerity: Ephesians 6:24, 'Grace be with all them that love Christ Jesus in sincerity.' Not a man excluded that is sincere, though he hath not so sparkling a flame as another, yet, if he be sincere, the crown of pardoning grace, and that of consummating grace, will be set upon his head.

(2.) Mourning for sin. A tender heart is a sign of a pardoned state, when sin discontents thee, because it displeaseth God. What showers of tears did Mary Magdalene weep after a pardon! Love to God, like a gentle fire, sets the soul a-melting. Tears that come from love are never without pardoning mercy. God's bowels do first stir our mournings. It is impossible a gracious heart can read a pardon with dry eyes; it is the least it thinks it can do, as it were, like Mary Magdalene, to wash Christ's feet with its tears, when it hath been washed itself with Christ's blood. The soul cannot enough hate that which God hath been merciful in the pardon of. Forgiveness is like the warmth of the spring; it draws out the sap of the tree, the tears of the soul, which else would scarcely stir. If God hath given thee repentance, it is sure enough that he hath given thee a pardon; for if he did not mean to give thee that, he would never have given thee the other.

(3.) Fearfulness of sin. Whosoever knows the bitterness of sin, and the benefit of a pardon, can never confidently rush into it. A pardoned man will never go about to forfeit that which he hath newly received. Forgiveness from God doth produce fear in the creature: Psalms 130:4, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' It is a sign we have repented and got pardon, if we find, after that exercise of repentance and prayer, our hatred of sin increaseth, especially of that sin we wore guilty of before.

(4.) Sanctification. God never pardons but he subdues sin: Micah 7:19, 'He will subdue our iniquity, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' Both are put together. In the Lord's prayer, desires to be rid of all evil, and not to be led into any temptation, follow immediately upon the desire of pardon. A justified person and a sanctified nature are inseparable: Romans 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' there is pardon, but how shall I know that I am pardoned? If you 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' We never sincerely desire pardon, but we desire purging; and God never gives the one, but he bestows the other. If thou hast an interest in a pardoning Christ, thou wilt have the effects of a sanctifying Spirit. Where God's grace forgives an sin, he will give us grace to forsake all sin. It is his covenant to turn away ungodliness, when he takes away the punishment of sin: Romans 11:26-27, 'The Deliverer shall

turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' The applications of God's grace to us are attended with the infusions of God's grace into us. When he puts his law into the heart, he remembers sin no more, Jeremiah 31:33-34.

(5.) Forgiving others. In the Lord's prayer we pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Our Saviour comments upon this petition, to shew that pardon cannot be without this condition in Matthew 18:1-35, from Matthew 18:23-35. Christ makes it at least a *causa sine qua non* of pardon: Luke 11:4, 'And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.'

(6.) Affectionate love to God and Christ. When we desire to glorify him by his grace, as well as be glorified by it. It is the injury done to God by our sins which doth most affect that heart upon which the Spirit of God is poured: Zechariah 12:10, 'They shall mourn over him, or be in bitterness for him.' The soul is more concerned for Christ than for itself. When there is too much of self in our desires for it, God delays the manifestation of it to the heart, that we may come up to purer strains. Christ certainly shed his blood for their remission, who are willing to shed theirs for his glory. Else Christ, whose glory it is to outstrip the hottest affection of his creature, would be behind-hand with him in love. That soul that would spend its all upon Christ, he will not suffer to stand long sobbing before him, Luke 7:47.

Use 4. Of exhortation.

(1.) To those who are careless of it. Oh, by all means seek it! Will it at last comfort thee to think of thy mirth and pleasures, how honourable, how rich, or how well stored with friends thou hast been? What should take up thy heart, busy thy thoughts, or employ thy endeavours, but this that concerns thy eternal state? Wilt thou sin away the time of God's patience, and thine own happiness? Is it not a time which God hath allotted thee to get a pardon in? What would Cain, Judas, Pilate, Herod, and all the black regiment, give for the very hopes of it? Oh prize that here which thou wilt hereafter esteem infinitely valuable, and call thyself fool and madman a thousand times, for neglecting the opportunity of getting! The anger of a king is as the roaring of a lion; what then are the frowns of an infinitely just God? Why is thy strength and affection spent about other things? Would a forlorn malefactor leading to execution listen cheerfully to anything but the news of his prince's clemency? Seek it, [a.] Earnestly. Pardon is an inestimable blessing, and must not be sought with faint and tired affections.

[b.] Presently. Is it not full time seriously to set about it? Thou hast lost too many days already, and wilt thou be so senseless as to let another slip? How knowest thou but if thou dost refuse it this day, thou mayest be incapable of it to-morrow? There is but a step, a few minutes, between thee and death, and delays in great emergencies are dangerous.

[c.] Universally. Content not yourselves with seeking a pardon for grisly, staring sins, which fright the conscience with every look, but seek the pardon of your inward secret spiritual sins; while you beg most for the pardon of those, sanctifying grace will come in as well as justifying; the more you pray against the guilt of them, the more you will hate the filth of them.

(2.) To those that seek a pardon, and yet are in doubt of it. Secure sinners, that understand not the evil of sin, think it is an easy thing, and that forgiveness will be granted of course. But those that groan under the burden of their iniquity, imagine it more difficult than indeed it is. Presumption

wrongs God in his justice, and every degree of despair or doubting, in his mercy.

[a.] God is willing to pardon. Ephraim doth but desire that God would turn him, and God presently cries out, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?' Jeremiah 31:18, Jeremiah 31:20. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.' A penitent Ephraim is instantly a pleasant child. Ephraim strikes upon his thigh with confession, and God speaks to his heart with affection. God doth, as it were, take the words out of Ephraim's mouth, as though he watched for the first look of Ephraim towards him, or the first breath of a supplication. God is more willing to pardon sin than we are to sin; because we sin with reluctancy, natural conscience checking us, but God hath no check when he goes to pardon. He 'waits to be gracious,' Isaiah 30:18, 'therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you: and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.' He hath waited all the time of your sinning, to have an opportunity to show grace to you; and now you give it him by repenting, will he lose the fruit of his waiting? It is the end of Christ's exaltation, whether it be meant of his being lifted up on the cross, or his exaltation in heaven; it is true of both, that his end is to have mercy upon you.

[b.] God will pardon the greatest sins. His infinite compassion cannot exhaust itself by a frequent remission. Mercy holds proportion to justice; as his justice punisheth little sins as well as great, so doth mercy pass by great sins as well as little. Your highest sins are the sins of men, but the mercy offered is the mercy of a God. The debt you owe is a vast debt, but Christ's satisfaction is of a greater value; and a king's revenue may well pay a beggar's debts, though she owe many thousands the first day of marriage. Multiplied sins upon repentance shall meet with multiplied pardons: Isaiah 55:7, , 'abundantly pardon.' We cannot vie our sins with God's mercy. The grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ, which are necessary for the remission of one sin, are infinite, and no more is requisite for the pardon of the greatest, yea, of the sins of the whole world, if they were upon thy single score. The grace conferred upon Paul was more than would suit his necessity: 1 Timothy 1:14, uperepleonase, superabound; 'and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant,' enough to have pardoned a whole world as well as Paul; like the sun, that emits as much heat in his beams upon one puddle, as is enough not only to exhale the moisture of that, but of a hundred more. Suppose thou art the greatest sinner that ever was yet extant in the world, do not think that God, who hath snatched so many firebrands of hell out of the devil's hands, will neglect such an opportunity to make his grace illustrious upon thy humble soul. If God hath given thee repentance, it is a certain evidence he will follow it with a pardon, though thy sins be of a deeper scarlet than ever yet was seen upon the earth; for if he did not mean to bestow this, he would never have bestowed upon thee the necessary condition of it. Is there not a sinner can equal thee? Then surely God is wiser than to lose the highest opportunity he yet had to evidence his superlative grace. And therefore,

[a.] Continue thy humiliations. There must be a conformity between Christ and thee. He was humbled when he purchased remission, and you must be humbled when you receive it. God will not part with that very cheap, that cost his Son so dear: though thou art not at the expense of the blood of thy soul, thou must be at the expense of the blood of thy sins. When a man comes to be deeply affected with his sin, then God sends a message of peace: Isaiah 6:6-7, 'Then flew one of the seraphims, and laid a live coal upon his mouth, and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'" When, Isaiah 6:5, he had cried out, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.' The way to have a debt forgiven is to acknowledge it: Psalms 32:5, 'I said, I

will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' God stood as ready to forgive David's unrighteousness, as he was ready to confess it. Mercy will not save a man without making him sensible of, and humbled for, his iniquity. Put thy business, therefore, into Christ's hands, and submit to what terms he will impose upon thee.

[b.] In thy supplications plead his glory. You find this the constant argument the people of God in the Scripture use for the prevailing with God for forgiveness. That argument is most comfortably pleaded, which God loves most, and whereunto he orders all his actions. No stronger motive can be used to him to grant it, than that whereby he excites himself to bestow it. When thou beggest other things, thou mayest dishonour God; but God cannot be a loser of his glory in granting this. Lord, if thou turnest me into hell, where is the glory of thy mercy upon thy creature? Nay, where is the glory of thy justice, my eternal torments not being able to compensate the injury done to thee by sin, so much as the suffering of thy only Son, whose death I desire to share in, and whose terms I am willing to submit to?

Use 5. Exhortation to those that are pardoned.

1. Admire this grace of God. To pardon one sin is a greater thing than to create a world; to pardon one sin is greater than to damn a world. God can create a world without the death of a creature; he can damn a world without the death of a creator; but in pardoning there must be the death of the creator, the Son of God.

2. Serve God much. Is the guilt of sin, the cord that bound thee, taken off? It is fit that when thou art so unfettered, thou shouldst run the ways of God's commandments. A sense of pardon of sin makes the soul willing and ready to run upon God's errands, and to obey his commandments: Isaiah 6:8, 'I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Then said I, Here am I.' Then when he had received assurance that his iniquity was taken away, Isaiah 6:7, God's pardon set thee upon a new stock, and therefore he expects thou shouldst be full of new clusters.

3. Be more fearful of sin. Dispute with thyself, Hath God pardoned the guilt of sin that it shall not damn me, and shall I wallow in the mire of sin to pollute myself? Oh, thy sins after pardon have a blacker circumstance than the sins of devils, or the sins of wicked men, for theirs are not against pardoning mercy, not against special love. Oh, thaw thy heart every morning with a meditation on pardon, and sin will not so easily freeze it in the daytime. When thou art tempted to sin, consider what thoughts thou hadst when thou wert suing for pardon, how earnest thou wert for it, what promises and vows thou didst make, and consider the love God showed thee in pardoning. Do not blur thy pardon, so easily wound thy conscience, or weaken thy faith.

4. Be content with what God gives thee. If he gives thee heaven, will he deny thee earth? He that bestows upon thee the pardon of sin, would surely pour into thy bosom the gold of both the Indies, were it necessary for thee. But thou hast got a greater happiness; for it is not said, Blessed is he that wallows in wealth, honour, and a confluence of worldly prosperity, but, 'Blessed is he whose sin is forgiven, and whose iniquity is covered.'

A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration

A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration by Stephen Charnock Of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.—James 1:18.

I have chosen this text to treat of the instrument of the new birth. The apostle having advised them (James 1:13, 'But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempts he any man') not to charge God as the author of any temptation to evil, showing it to be contrary to the nature of God, who is infinite goodness and righteousness; for as he cannot be tempted with evil, so neither can he tempt any man; and declaring the true cause and spring of all evil to be inherent in ourselves, even that lust which is riveted in our nature, which he calls our own lust, - James 1:14, 'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' - he takes occasion from thence to show the order of sin's working. Sin is first conceived by that original corruption in our nature, and formed and brought forth into action; and when it is finished, and grows into a habit, it 'brings forth death,' James 1:15. To remove this error, which some in those days had sucked in out of a natural self-love that man has to excuse himself, and remove the cause of sin far from him, the apostle shows that God is the author and fountain of all the good we have: James 1:17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change.' God being the infinite Father of lights, who has no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a constant and settled brightness, of this goodness has given a great evidence, in conferring the choicest mercy upon us, even a new begetting through the gospel, and thereby the relation of children to him, that we might be consecrated to him as the first fruits and a peculiar portion. Of his own will, "bouletheis; by his mere motion, induced by no cause but the goodness in his own breast. (1.) To distinguish it from the generation of the Son, which is natural, this voluntary; of his own will, not naturally, as he begot his Son from eternity. (2.) Not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun, to which he had compared God before, does enlighten, and enliven, when matter is prepared to receive his quickening beams; but by an arbitrariness of grace. (3.) Not by any obligation from the creature; the will of God is opposed to the merit of man. The new creation answers to election; the first purpose was free, the bringing that purpose to execution is free whatsoever obligation there is, results not from the creature, but from himself, his own immutable nature, which has no variableness, nor shadow of change. "Begot us," "apekuesen", or brought us forth, for the same word "apokuei", ver. 15, is translated 'brings forth.' 'By the word of truth', a title given to the gospel both in the Old and New Testament: in the Old, Psalms 14:4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' or 'upon thy word of truth,' in the New Testament, Ephesians 1:13, 'In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' So 2 Corinthians 6:7, and 2 Timothy 2:15. And it is called truth by way of excellency, as paramount to all other truth. (1.) Either, by an Hebraism, the word of truth; that is, the true word. (2.) Or rather, by way of eminency, as containing a higher truth, more excellent in itself, more advantageous for the creature, than any other divine truth; wherein the

highest glory of God, the sure and everlasting happiness of the creature, is set forth; a word which he has 'magnified above all his name,' Psalms 138:2. And called the word of truth.

1. In regard of the author, truth itself; and the publisher, he who was 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

2. In opposition to all false doctrines, which can never be the instruments of conversion; for error to convert to truth, is the same thing as for darkness to diffuse light, or water to kindle fire.

3. In opposition to the windy and flashy conceits of men, which can no more be instrumental in the begetting a Christian, than mere wind can beget a man.

4. In opposition to the legal shadows; the gospel declares the truth of those types. Both the law and prophecy were but as a dim candle 'in a dark place,' 2 Peter 1:19, but this as a sun shining out at noonday. All other discourses did stream to this as their great ocean, wherein they were to be swallowed up. The law was the word of truth, but referred to the gospel as the great end of it. This contains the whole and ultimate purpose of God, for saving men by Jesus Christ, and in him enriching them with all spiritual blessings, and not by the works of the law, and thus the Spirit, which enlightens and seals instruction upon our souls, is called 'the Spirit of truth,' John 14:17, as it is called a Spirit of holiness, as it makes us holy, a Spirit of grace, as it makes us gracious, or as it declares the grace of God. Some by the word of truth understand Christ, the essential and uncreated "logos", Word, as it is understood by some in 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 1:25, 'By the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever; and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached to you.' Possibly it may be meant of Christ, who by the gospel is declared and preached to be the mediator between God and man, appointed to raise up those that are given to him. Others by the word there, mean the will of God of giving grace in Christ, which is manifest in, and expressed by, the gospel. But here it is evidently meant of the gospel, because of the inference the apostle makes: ver. 19, 'Be swift to hear;' that is, prize the word, wait upon the means with all readiness; 'slow to speak,' to utter your judgment of it, or be wise in your own conceit, whereof a readiness to speak peremptorily in divine truth is sometimes an evidence; 'slow to wrath' and passion, which hinder any profit by the word. 'That we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;' the chief among his creatures. The first fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to God, whereby they acknowledged God's gift of them, and desired his blessing upon them, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion. It was commanded in the law, Deuteronomy 18:4. It was a custom among many of the heathens. To offer them was a token of thankfulness; not to offer them, was accounted a sign of atheism and profaneness. The new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind; and it bespeaks duty too: being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they should serve God with a new spirit, new thankfulness, new frames.

We see here, 1. The efficient of regeneration, God; 'he,' the Father of lights.

2. The impulsive or moving cause, 'his own will.'

3. The instrumental cause 'with the word of truth.'

4. The final cause, 'that we may be a kind of first fruits.' The doctrine I am to handle is, Doctrine. That the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth. The Scripture does distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause by the prepositions "ek", or, "eks", and "dia".

When we are said to be 'born of the Spirit,' it is, John 3:5, "ek pneumatos"; 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:1, "ek Theou"; never "dia pneumatos", or "dia Theou:" but we are nowhere said to be born of the word, or begotten of the word, but "dia logou", by or with the word, 1 Peter 1:23; and "dia euangelion", 1 Corinthians 4:15, I have begotten you 'through the gospel.' The preposition "ek" or "eks", usually notes the efficient or material cause; "dia", the instrumental or means by which a thing is wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil, grace enters into the heart by the word of God; that entered by a word of error, this by a word of truth: 'Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you, John 15:3, whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him, for it is the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness, therefore, which it begets, is called the holiness of truth, Ephesians 4:24, opposed to the "epithumiai tes apates", 'lusts of deceit,' Ephesians 4:22. Lusts grow up from error and deceit, and holiness of the new man grows up from truth. The gospel administration, in regard of the effects of it, is called 'the kingdom of God,' Mark 1:14; it erects the kingdom of God in the world and in the hearts of men, and called the regeneration: Matthew 19:28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration;' the gospel administration being a creating of 'new heavens and a new earth,' Isaiah 65:17. This is the triumphal chariot, wherein Christ rides majestically to the conquest of hearts: Psalms 14:4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth,' "'al dvar 'emut", a psalm the Jews themselves understand of the Messiah. The word of his truth is the support of his kingdom, whereby he awes sinners into submission. Peace from heaven, and the health of our nature, is 'the fruit of the lips,' though of God's creation, Isaiah 57:19. It is like the dew or mist which watered the ground, and prepared the earth for the formation of Adam's body, into which God breathed afterwards a living soul, Genesis 2:6-7.

I. For explication, take some propositions:

1. It is not the law that is this instrument. The law, taken in general for the legal administration prescribed to the Jews, was instrumental for renewing, because there was a typical gospel in that Judaic administration: Hebrews 4:2, 'For to us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.' They were evangelised, "Euangelismenoi", as the word signifies. The Judaic administration was composed of law and gospel: the moral law, as a covenant of works; the ceremonial law, representing the covenant of grace. The law of God, or gospel among them, is said to convert the soul, Psalms 19:7. But the law, taken as a covenant of works, was not appointed for renewing the soul, otherwise what need had there been of enacting another law for that work? And those that say the law is instrumental in conversion, or inflaming our affections to obedience, say that all the benefits by it are to be ascribed to the covenant of grace in Christ. It is true, the law considered in itself is preparatory to cast men down, and show them their distance from God and contrariety to his command; but the law without the gospel never brought any man to Christ. Whatsoever it does in this case is not of itself, but by the mingling the gospel with it, which spirits it to such an end. Though the law did not encourage sin, yet it gave no help against it, but left the soul under the dominion of it, which is evident by the apostle's inference: Romans 6:14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace.' Hence the property of the law, which is meant by 'the letter,' 2 Corinthians 3:6, is to kill, but 'the Spirit' gives life; that leaves under the severity of justice, after sin had entered; but the spiritual administration, wherein the Spirit works, is to quicken and renew the soul, and make it able to get above the guilt and power of sin.

The apostle, therefore, wholly excludes the law: Galatians 3:2, 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' that is, the word of faith, as the gospel is called, Romans 10:8. By Spirit is meant, says Calvin, the grace of regeneration, as by faith is meant the doctrine of faith. I might have preached (as if the apostle had said) the works of the law till my lungs had been worn out, and the renewing Spirit would never have entered into you by that fire, but it descended upon you in the sweet gospel dew. The gospel is therefore called the 'ministration of the Spirit,' and the 'ministration of righteousness,' 2 Corinthians 3:8-9. It is the chariot or vehiculum wherein the Spirit rides, the proclamation by which it is declared, the channel through which it is conveyed. The law discovers the righteousness of God as well as the gospel; but that demands a righteousness from the creature, the gospel confers a righteousness upon the creature; the law shows us God's righteousness in his nature, the gospel shows us God's righteousness in his nature and grace. The law is a hammer to break us, the gospel God's oil to cure us; the law makes sin live and our souls die,—Romans 7:9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,—the gospel makes sin die and our souls live; the law awakens the lion, the gospel lets out his blood. At the best, the terrors of the law do chain up our furious affections, but the sweetness of gospel mercy changes them. The law prepares the matter, the gospel brings the new form. That was appointed for the rule of our walk, not for the restoration of our life. And they are the promises of mercy which are the motives to return; rebels will not submit to their prince as long as they know they shall have no quarter. Hue and cry makes the thief fly away the faster. By the 'great and precious promises;' we 'are made partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4. The promises of the law being conditional, belong not to us without fulfilling the condition, of which we are incapable of ourselves. The law, therefore, since the fall, is destructive, the gospel restorative, and the promises of it the cords whereby God draws us.

2. The gospel is this instrument. It is an instrument to unlock the prison doors, and take them off the hinges, strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty. It is by the voice of the archangel men shall rise in their bodies; it is by the voice of the Son of God in the word that men rise in their souls. Nothing else ever wrought such miraculous changes. To make lions become lambs, Isaiah 6:6, Hosea 4:13; beloved idols to be cast away with indignation; to make its entrance like fire, and consume old lusts in a short time: these have been undeniable realities, which have created affection and astonishment in some enemies as well as friends. It has a more excellent instrumentality in it than other providences of God, because it is a higher manifestation. Every creature conducts us to the knowledge of God, by giving us notice of his power, wisdom, and goodness, Romans 1:20. The declaration of his works in the world is instrumental to make men seek him, Acts 17:27. Every day's providence declares his patience, every shower of rain his merciful provision for mankind, Acts 14:17, every day's preservation of the world under a load of sin manifests his mercy. The heavens have a tongue, and the rod has a voice; the design of all is to lead men to repentance, Romans 2:4. If these, therefore, be some kind of instruments upon the hearts of considering men, the gospel being a discovery superior to all these, in manifesting not only a God of nature, but a God of grace, must be designed to a choicer and nobler work. The heavens and providence are instruments to instruct us, this to renew us.

It is an instrument; but,

(1.) It is not a natural instrument, to work by any natural efficacy, as food does nourish, the sun shines, or the air and water cools, or as a sharp knife cuts if it be applied to fit matter. If it were

thus natural, it would not be of grace. Though the shining of the sun, or the healing by a plaster, are acts of the goodness and mercy of God, yet the Scripture calls them not by that higher title of acts of grace. If the operation were natural, the gospel would never be without its effect wherever it were preached; as the sun, wherever it shines in any land, does both enlighten and warm. Our Saviour then would have had more success, since the gospel could not have greater natural efficacy than from his lips; yet the number of his converts were probably not much above five hundred, for so many he appeared to after his resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:6, when many thousands in that land heard his voice, and saw his miracles. Christ, who was always able to give himself success, would not, perhaps for this among many other reasons, to advance his spiritual above his corporal presence, and to prevent any thoughts of any natural virtue in the word, without the power of the Spirit working by it. Every day teaches us, that though many see the glass of the gospel, yet few see the glory of God in that gospel. Were it natural, then, that all that hear it were not renewed, would be more miraculous than that any are; as it was more a miracle that the sun should stand still in Joshua's time, against its natural course of motion, than that it moves every day in the heavens. If it were a natural instrument, it must then have life in itself, but how can the voice of a man, or the words and syllables in a book, be capable of receiving spiritual life, which they must have before they can naturally convey it to others? Were it a natural instrument, it would have the same effect upon the soul at one time as at another. But does not daily experience witness, that the word shines at some particular times upon the soul with a clearer ray than at other times, that such a soul has thought itself in another world (as it were), and that too when it has been much clouded by the weakness of the instrument declaring it? Lastly were it natural, the wisest men, men of the sharpest understandings, could not resist it, no man can hinder the sun's shining upon him, when he is under the beams of it, it would warm him whether he would or no, yet have not such been the most desperate opposers of it in all ages of the world, as well as in the times of the apostles? It is not then a natural, but a moral instrument, which will follow afterwards, when we come to consider how it works.

(2.) It is the only instrument appointed by God to this end in an ordinary way. God has made a combination between hearing and believing, Romans 10:14, Romans 10:17, so that believing comes not without hearing. The waters of the sanctuary run only through the channels of the gospel; the mines of grace are found only in the climates of the word. Why does not air nourish? Because God did not set that, but meat, apart for each an end. Though God could by his almighty power bless air to this end, yet in an ordinary way he has fixed his blessing on these natural causes of his own ordaining. God has appointed second causes for natural operations; if we would be warm, God has appointed fire and sun to warm us; he could do it immediately, by spreading a lively heat in every member, as well as he gave at first a power to fire to burn; but he uses natural instruments in natural effects, and likewise spiritual instruments in spiritual productions. God may blow in an extraordinary way upon the soul by a divine breath without any instrument, as he did immediately upon the prophets, or as he gave light to the world the three first days of the creation without a sun, but since only by the sun and stars. But God seems here to have fixed his power: Romans 1:16, the gospel is 'the power of God to salvation;' not that his power shall always attend it, but that he will exert his power, at least ordinarily, only by it; no other organ through which the wind of the Spirit shall blow, no other sword which the Spirit shall manage but this, Ephesians 6:13. Though our Saviour prayed upon the cross for some of his greatest enemies, who had their hands embrued in his precious blood, though he was heard, yet his prayer was not answered but

through Peter's ministry, to grace the first spiritual discovery of the gospel. Nothing else can have that efficacy. Had every man in Israel made a brazen serpent, and looked upon it when they had been stung, they might have looked till they had groaned their last, before they had met with any cure, because only one was of God's appointing. To a cast of an eye upon that, he had only promised his healing virtue, in that only then he had lodged his power.

(3.) It is therefore a necessary instrument.

[1.] In regard of the reasonable creature there must be some declaration. God does not ordinarily work but by means, and does not produce anything without them which may be done with them. God does not maintain the creatures by a daily creation, but by generation; he maintains that faculty of generation in them by the means of health and nourishment, and that by the means of the fruits of the earth, and does all this according to the ordinance he fixed at the creation, when he appointed every kind of creatures their proper food, and bestowed his blessing upon them, 'Increase and multiply.' So according to the method God has set of men's actions, it is necessary that this regeneration should be by some word as an instrument, for God has given understanding and will to man. We cannot understand anything, or will anything, but what is proposed to us by some external object; as our eye can see nothing but what is without us, our hand take nothing but what is without us, so it is necessary that God by the word should set before us those things which our understandings may apprehend, and our wills embrace. Now we believe things as we conceive them true, or not believe them as we conceive them false. We love, desire, delight in things, as we conceive them honest or profitable; we hate, we refuse, or grieve, as we conceive them dishonest, or troublesome, or hurtful to us; whatever we are changed by in our understandings, wills, and affections, is represented to us under some of these considerations. To make an alteration in us according to our nature of understanding, will, and affection, it is necessary there should be some declaration of things under those considerations of true, good, delightful, &c., in the highest manner, to make a choice change in every faculty of the soul, and without this a man cannot be changed as a rational creature; he will otherwise have a change he knows not why, nor to what end, nor upon what consideration, which is an inconceivable change in a rational creature.

[2.] It is necessary the revelation of this gospel we have should be made. There is a necessity of some revelation, for no man can see that which is not visible, or hear that which has no sound, or know that which is not declared. There is also a necessity of the revelation of this gospel, since faith is a great part of this work. How can any man believe that God is good in Christ, without knowing that he has so declared himself? Since the Spirit takes of Christ's, and shows it to us, there must be a revelation of Christ, and the goodness of God in Christ, before we can believe. Though the manner of this revelation may be different, and the Spirit may renew in an extraordinary manner, yet this is the instrument whereby all spiritual begettings are wrought; the manner may be by visions, dreams, by reading or hearing, yet still it is the gospel which is revealed; the matter revealed is the same, though the formal revelation or manner may be different. Paul's regeneration was by a vision, for at that vision of the light, and that voice of Christ, I suppose him to be renewed, because of that full resignation of his will to Christ, Acts 9:6, yet the matter of the revelation was the same, that Christ was the Messiah, for so Paul understands it, in giving him the title of Lord. Though God may communicate himself without the written word to some that have it not, yet according to his appointment, not without a revelation of what is in that

word.

[3.] This necessity will further appear, if we consider that it always was so. Adam and Eve were the first after the fall wherein God did constitute his church, whose regeneration and conversion were wrought by that promise of the seed of the woman made to them in paradise; God surely putting an enmity in the heart of those to whom this first promise of an enmity was made, upon which promise a sacrifice followed, which some ground on Genesis 3:21, 'God made them coats of skins' of beasts, which the word "od" signifies, and is never taken in Scripture otherwise than for the outward skin of a beast. And, indeed, it is not likely that 129 years should be between the promise and the first sacrifice, for some think Abel was killed by Cain in the 129th year after the creation, for it is certain 130 years after the creation Seth was born, Genesis 5:3. And this is confirmed, Heb. 9:32, 'Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.' The first testament was of more ancient date than the Jewish service ordained by Moses; and some ceremonies, as sacrifices, and distinction of clean and unclean beasts, were in use before, Genesis 8:20, so that there seems to be a sacrifice representing the Messiah for the dedication of the first testament, which Adam had received from God and transmitted to Abel, whom he taught the way of sacrificing. What regeneration Adam had was by this word of the gospel. Had not Adam believed it, he would not have delivered it to Abel; and Abel had not sacrificed, unless he had been taught so by his father, or immediately by God; but most likely by his father, because God does not use extraordinary means, when ordinary will serve. And Abel was regenerate, for it is said 'by faith he offered' this sacrifice, Hebrews 11:4: and it was faith in Christ, faith in the promised seed, for all of them in that catalogue, Hebrews 11:1-40, did eye Christ by faith, as well as Moses. of whom it is particularly expressed, Hebrews 11:26, that 'he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' Considering all this, it is evident, that the ancient restoration was by the revelation of Christ and the gospel as the only necessary means. Abraham, it is likely, had some external word in his father Terah's family, by tradition from the patriarchs, and had the revelation of the promise made to him by God, Genesis 18:19. And it was wrought then in an ordinary way by instruction, for, for that Abraham is commended, and no doubt but Isaac and Jacob did the same, so that all along this change of the heart was wrought by a declaration of the word of the gospel.

(4.) It seems to be the standing instrument of it to the end of the world. Some indeed think the conversion of the Jews shall not be by the declarations of the word in a way of preaching and instruction, as the Gentiles were brought in, but by a visible appearance of Christ, which they ground upon Zechariah 12:10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' they shall see Christ in the clouds as pierced by them, and understand Paul's conversion by an extraordinary light shining round about him, and a voice from heaven, to be a type and pattern of God's manner of the future conversion of the Jews, which is intimated, 1 Timothy 1:16, that the mercy he obtained was 'a pattern for them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting'. Whether this be so or no, yet however the conversion is by a revelation of that which is the matter and substance of the gospel, it is the revelation of Christ himself; and if, like Paul's conversion, by a voice, as well as by sight, by instruction as well as apparition; but it seems to me to be the perpetual standing means of regeneration. The fruits of our Saviour's ascension shall endure to the end of the world, and the enduing men with gifts for the building him a spiritual house is a great end of his ascension, Psalms 68:18, compared with Ephesians 4:8-9, 'Thou hast ascended on

high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them.' He receives gifts upon his ascension, for the subduing and changing the hearts of the rebellious, that they may be a fit habitation for God, who dwells in them by his Spirit; these gifts being the fruit of so glorious an ascension, and a rich donative to him for the accomplishment of his undertaking in the world, and being given for the smoothing, polishing, and fitting rude stones to combine together for a temple for the Lord to dwell in (which is the reason why he keeps up the world). As long therefore as God has a temple, and any stone to polish, these gifts will remain in the ministry of the word, and be exercised in order to so great a building; and we may infer also by the way, that it is not likely that God does dwell in any, but such who are so subdued and formed by the ministry of the word, which is the fruit of Christ's ascension. It seems also to have an more ancient date, and founded upon the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. All that prayer in the 17th of John seems to me to run upon those articles agreed on between them. Those that were given to Christ were given to keep his word: John 17:6, 'Thou gave them me, and they have kept thy word.' Which word was given to Christ by God in order to be given to them: John 17:8, 'I have given them the word which thou gave me.' And in his prayer for their sanctification, John 17:17, he seems to intimate that this was the ordinary method then subscribed to by both, and the settled means of sanctification; he does not only propose his desire for their sanctification, but the means, 'through thy truth,' and specifies what he means by truth, 'thy word is truth.' And what he did here pray for, for them that were then with him, he did for all that should hereafter believe, John 17:20; and though this be meant of a further sanctification of those that were already regenerate, yet it will, I think, evidently follow that if the word by agreement between the Father and the Son be the instrument of every degree of sanctification, it must be also of the first; since there can be no faith, but refers to the object believed, and the ground why it is believed, whence 'belief of the truth' is joined with the 'sanctification of the Spirit,' 2 Thessalonians 2:13; besides, John 17:20, all belief for the future was to be through the word, 'through their word.' Let me add another inference from this; what an excellent argument is this to plead in prayer, before you go to hear or read the word; Lord, was not this an article of agreement between thee and thy Son? Was not this the desire of our Saviour, who knew the best means of sanctifying?

[5.] It is necessary, by God's appointment, for all the degrees of the new birth, and all the appendixes to it. When God shows his own glory for a further change, he represents the species of it in the glass of the gospel: 2 Corinthians 3:18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' It is the ministration of the Spirit in all the acts of the spirit. If the Spirit quicken, it is by some gospel precept; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word. Whatsoever working there is in a Christian's heart, it is by some word or other dropping upon it. If any temptation which assaults us be baffled, it is by the word, which is the sword of the Spirit. The life of a Christian is made up of increasing light, refreshing comforts, choicer inclinations of the heart towards God. By the same law whereby the soul is converted the heart is rejoiced, and the eyes further enlightened: Psalms 19:7-8, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes.' The Spirit makes the word not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow; it is first life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word he begets us, and through the word he quickens us: Thy word has quickened me,' Psalms 119:50, Psalms 119:93. It is by the word God gathers a church in the world; by the same word he sanctifies it to greater

degrees, Ephesians 5:26. It is the seed whereby we are born, the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Peter 2:2. Faith comes by hearing, and salvation after faith by the 'foolishness of preaching,' 1 Corinthians 1:21. It helps us after we have believed through grace, Acts 18:27. Our fruitfulness depends upon our plantation by this river's side. The influence of other ordinances depends upon it. Sacraments that nourish and increase, are not efficacious, but by virtue of the word; they have their dependence on the word, as seals upon the covenant. The word is operative without sacraments; sacraments are not operative without the influence of the word, they are only assistants to it. This quickens and increases habitual grace, as well as it was the instrument first to usher it into the heart: Ephesians 5:26 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' As God will have the mediation of his Son honoured in the whole progress and perfection of grace as the meritorious cause, the efficacy of the Spirit as the efficient cause, so he will have the word in every step to heaven honoured as the instrumental cause; that as Jesus Christ is all in all, as the chief, so the word may be all in all as the means. As God created the world by the word of his power, and by the word of his providence bid the creatures increase and multiply, so by the word of the gospel he lays the foundation, and rears the building, of his spiritual house.

4. As it is not a natural instrument, but the only instrument appointed by God, and therefore, upon these and upon other accounts, a necessary instrument, so it is an instrument which makes mightily for God's glory. The meaner the appearance of the instrument, the more evident the power and skill of the workman. It would be miraculous for a man to raise up another from death, by a composition of medicines syringed down the throat, but a greater miracle to raise him by speaking a word. In the new birth there is nothing sensible to man but the word, the other causes are secret; like the wind, you know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes. The instrument being weak in itself, none can claim any share with God in the glory of the work. But were there a natural strength in the means, much of the honour would be pared from God, and assumed by the creature. It is like the trumpet in the right hand of Gideon's soldiers, and a pitcher with a lamp in the left. Upon the blowing of the trumpet and the breaking of the pitcher, the enemies fled; and God would have the means but small, but three hundred of thirty-two thousand, that Israel might not vaunt, and say, Mine own arm has saved me, Judges 7:2. It had not been so admirable for Samson to have killed so many with a sword or spear, or if the walls of Jericho had fallen flat by the force of some battering engine; but it was wonderful to see them tumble at the blast of ram's horns. Is it not the same to see strong-holds, high thoughts, Goliath-like corruptions, and spiritual death itself, fly before the voice of the word? To see a man like the Babel-builders, swelling and rearing up his own confidences against God, to have all the former language of his soul confounded by a word; to think of other objects, speak in another strain, descend from self to dust, deny pleasure, embrace a crucified Christ; that carnal reason should be silenced, legions of devils driven out, a messy Dagon fall before an ark of wood, that has nothing in it but the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna: in such weak means is the power of God exalted, and no other cry can reasonably be heard but 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' So it was more glorious for our Saviour to turn many of the Jews to him after his death than in his life, to bring them to believe by a Word, upon a person they had crucified as a malefactor, than if he had brought them to believe while he was attended with a train of miracles. The power of his miracles might seem in their eyes to be extinct with his death, since he that delivered others did not deliver himself from the hands of his murderers. He now honours both his own words and their faith, in

bringing them to believe by the preaching of men, who did not believe by the Word from his lips, attended with the seals of so many glorious miracles.

5. Consider, as it is an instrument, so but an instrument. God begets by the word; the chief operation depends upon the Spirit of God. No sword can cut without a hand to manage it, no engine batter without a force to drive it. The Word is objective in itself, operative by the power of the Spirit; instrumental in itself, efficacious by the Holy Ghost. The Word of Christ is first spirit and then life. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,' John 6:63. The word is the chariot of the Spirit, the Spirit the guider of the word; there is a gospel comes in word, and there is a gospel comes in power, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. There is a publishing of the gospel, and there is the 'fullness of the blessing of the gospel,' Romans 15:29. 'There was the truth of God spoken by Peter and Paul, and God in that truth working in the heart: Galatians 2:8, 'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.' The gospel in itself is like Christ's voice; the gospel with the Spirit is like Christ's power raising Lazarus; other men might have spoken the same words, but the power of rising must come from above. It is then successful when an inward unction drops with the outward dew, when the veil is taken from the heart, and the curtain from the word, and both meet together, both word and heart; when Christ kisses with the kisses of his mouth, and the man embraces it with the affections of his heart. The light in the air is the instrument by which we read, but the principle of that light is in the sun in the heavens. The word is a rod, a breath, but efficacious in smiting and slaying the old man, as it is the rod of Christ's mouth, the breath of his lips, Isaiah 11:3; a rod like that of Moses to charm us, but as it is the rod of his strength, Psalms 110:2; a weapon, but only 'mighty through God,' 2 Corinthians 10:4; a seed, but brings not forth a plant but by the influence of the sun. The word has this efficacy from the bleeding wounds and dying groans of Christ. It is by making his soul an offering for sin that he sees the travail of his soul in his new born creatures. By his blood are all the promises of grace confirmed; by his blood they are operative. The word whereby we are begotten was appointed by God, confirmed by Christ, and the Spirit which begets us was purchased by the same blood. To conclude: the word declares Christ, and the Spirit excites the heart to accept him; the word shows his excellency, and the Spirit stirs up strong cries after him; the word declares the promises, and the Spirit helps us to plead them; the word administers reasons against our reasonings, and the Spirit edges them, the word shows the way, and the Spirit enables to walk in it; the word is the seed of the Spirit, and the Spirit the quickener of the word; the word is the graft, and the Spirit the engrafter; the word is the pool of water, and the Spirit stirs it to make it healing.

II. Quest. How does the word work?

1. Objectively, as it is a declaration of God's will, as it does propose to the understanding what is to be known, in order to salvation hereafter and practice here, as it does declare the purpose of God to save only by Jesus Christ the Mediator, and by him to deliver us from sin, Satan, and whatsoever is contrary to everlasting happiness; and thus is significative of something to our minds and understandings. The Spirit gave us an eye to see, and the word is the light which discovers the object to the eye. The Spirit gives us an organ, but something must be proposed for that organ to exercise itself about, otherwise there is no use of the understanding in any rational operation; which certainly there is, for though the object is supernatural, and the inward work upon the mind supernatural, yet the proposal of the object to the mind is made in a rational manner. The

word does objectively propose life and death in a way suitable to the nature of man, that he may rationally choose life: 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life,' Deuteronomy 30:19. Both the blessings of the gospel and the curses of the law are presented in the word, that the one may be chosen, the other avoided. The word is proposed under various notions: as true, and so it is the object of the speculative understanding; as good, so it is the object of the practical understanding and will; as profitable, so it is the object of the appetite and affections. When it is received into the speculative understanding, it is a preparation to the new birth; when it is received into the practical understanding and will, it is the new birth. It discovers the wonders in God's own heart, his Son, and his promise; the Spirit demonstrates it, and gives power to embrace it. It first presents the promise and then answers the pleas the stubborn heart makes against it, yet by the same gospel, it fetches demonstrative arguments from that quiver to satisfy a cavilling understanding, and motives from thence to overcome a resisting will, it silences the fears, points to the way, excites the soul to an acceptance of Christ, all by this gospel, and so draws us, as a man draws a child, by presenting some alluring object to him. The Spirit immediately himself touches the soul, but by the word, as an instrument proposing the object, and drawing out the soul into an actual believing. The two chief parts of the word are,

(1.) The discovery of our misery by nature. The heart is ripped open, our putrefied condition in our blood evidenced, our deplorable state unfolded, and thereby the conscience awakened to sensible reflections. It dissects the heart, discovers the secret reserves, unravels the thoughts, pursues sin to its fastnesses, and pulls and brings it out, as Joshua the kings to execution: 1 Corinthians 14:26, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' It opens sin to the very bowels, discovers the inward filth, takes off its beautiful disguise, its silken covering, and shows the running ulcer under it. It discovers the forlorn estate by nature, and the insufficiency of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God. Let the word be whispered by the Spirit in the ears of a ruffling sinner, and the curtains which obscured his sin from his eye drawn open, that he may see what a nest of devils he has, what astonishment will it raise in him! How will he stand amazed at his own folly! How will he loathe that self which before he so vehemently loved!

(2.) A second discovery is of the necessity and existence of another bottom. It discovers our misery by nature, and our remedy by Christ, the plague brought upon the world by the first Adam, the cure brought to the world by the second. It proclaims a peace, concluded between God and the humbled sinner, by his Son, the great ambassador, confirmed by his blood, assured by his resurrection. It shows him the fountain of death in his sin, the fountain of life in Christ, the free streams and gracious communications of it. The promise discovers the gracious nature of God, his kindness to man, the openness of his arms to receive him, and thus bring the soul off from itself to the foot of God and the bottom of the cross. When the word like fire and the heart like tinder come close together, the heart catches the spark and burns. From the word reconciliation and peace step out and meet the soul, it finds the kisses of Christ's mouth inspiring it with life, the box of the gospel promises broke open, the window of the gospel ark opened, and the dove flying out of it into the desert heart. The word proposes things as they are in reality, and the soul knows things as it ought to know, 1 Corinthians 8:2. It understands the unavoidable necessity and the infallible excellency of the things proposed; it sees the rocks and shelves wherein the danger lies, and a compass whereby to steer, a road wherein to lie safe at anchor; whereupon he relents for his sin,

is astonished at divine kindness, rejoices at the promise as before he trembled at the threatening, and has far other thoughts of God than he had before, in which act divine life is breathed into the soul.

2. The word seems to have an active force upon the will, though the manner of it be very hard to conceive. It is operative in the hand of God for sanctification. The petition of our Saviour, John 17:17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,' seems to intimate more than a bare objective relation to this work; it both shows us our spots and cleanses them. It is a seed. Seed, though small, is active, no part of the plant retains a greater efficacy; all the glory and strength of the plant, in its buds, blossoms, and fruit, are hidden in it. The word is this seed, which being settled in the heart by the power of the Spirit, brings forth this new creature. It is a glass that not only represents the image of God, but by the Spirit changes us into it, 2 Corinthians 3:18. A word that pierces the heart, Hebrews 4:12, ye, 'sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit.' It is a fire to burn. The Spirit does so edge the word that it cuts the quick, discerns the very thoughts, insinuates into the depths of the heart, and rakes up the small sands from the bottom, as a fierce wind does from the bowels of the sea. It is God's ordinance to batter down strongholds. Though it be not a natural instrument to work necessarily, yet it is likened to natural instruments, which are active under the efficiency of the agent which manages them; and this also, in the hands of the Spirit, works mighty effects. The 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth' are joined together, one subordinate to another, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. The Spirit efficiently infusing holy habits; the word objectively and actively—objectively, as outwardly proposed; actively, as inwardly engrafted;—it at least excites the new infused gracious principle, and produces our actual conversion and believing. As the pronouncing excommunication in the primitive times filled the person with terror; and no question but upon the same account the authoritative pronouncing the pardon of sin by the apostles, though only declarative, might have a mighty operation upon the soul in filling it with joy; yet both, as managed by the Spirit, concurring with his own ordinance. So that the word is mighty in operation as well as clear in representation; for an activity seems to be ascribed to it by the Scripture metaphors. The chief activity of it is seen in that likeness which it produces in the soul to itself. Seeds have an efficacious virtue to produce plants of the same kind with that whose seeds they are; so the word produces qualities in the heart like itself. The law in the heart is the law in the word transcribed in the soul; a graft which changes a crabbed stock into a sweet tree, James 1:21; like a seal it leaves a likeness and impression of itself; it works a likeness to God as he is revealed in the gospel, for we are changed into the same image. What image? The same image which we behold in that glass, 2 Corinthians 3:18; not his essential image, but the image of his glory represented in the gospel for our imitation. The word is the glory of God in a glass, and imprints the image of the glory of God in the heart. It is a softening word, and produces a mollified heart; an enlightening word, and causes an enlightened soul; a divine word, and engenders a divine nature; it is a spiritual word, and produces a spiritual frame; as it is God's will, it subdues our will; it is a sanctifying truth, and so makes a sink of sin to become the habitation of Christ. To conclude: this is certain: the promise in the word breeds principles in the heart suitable to itself; it shows God a father, and raises up principles of love and reverence; it shows Christ a mediator, and raises up principles of faith and desire. Christ in the word conceives Christ in the heart; Christ in the word, the beginning of grace, conceives Christ in the soul, the hope of glory.

III. The Use. 1. Information.

1. How admirable, then, is the power of the gospel! It is a quickening word, not a dead; a powerful word, not a weak; a sharp-edged word, not dull; a piercing word, not cutting only skin deep, Hebrews 4:12. That welcome work does it make, when a door of utterance and a door of entrance are both opened together! It has a mighty power to out-wrestle the principalities of hell, and demolish the strongholds of sin in the heart. It is a word of which it may be said, as the psalmist of the sun, Psalms 19:6, 'His circuit is to the ends of the earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' To part of the soul is hidden from a new birth by the warm beams of it, when directed by God to the soul. What a powerful breath is that which can make a dead man stand upon his feet and walk! If you should find your faces, by looking in a glass, transformed into an angelical beauty, would you not imagine some strange and secret virtue in that glass? How powerful is this gospel word, which changes a beast into a man, a devil into an angel, a clod of earth into a star of heaven!

(1.) It is above the power of all moral philosophy The wisdom of the heathens never equalled the gospel in such miracles; the political government of the best states never made such alterations in the hearts of men. How excellent is that gospel which has done that for the renewing of millions of souls, which all the wit and wisdom of the choicest philosophers could never effect upon one heart! All other lectures can do no more than allay the passions, not change them; bring them into an order fit for human society, not beget them for a divine fellowship; not draw them forth out of a principle of love to God, and fix them upon so high an end as the glory of God that is invisible. This is the glorious begetting by the gospel, which enables not only to moral actions, but inspires with divine principles and ends, and makes men highly delight in the ways they formerly abhorred. What are a few sprinklings of changes moral philosophy has wrought in the lives of men, to the innumerable ones the gospel has wrought, which were such undeniable realities, that they were never openly contradicted by any of the most violent persecutors of the Christian religion, and were always the most urged argument for the truth of the gospel in the ancient apologies for it? How long may we read and hear mere moral discourses, and arrive no higher than some reformation of life, with unchanged hearts: have sin beaten from the outworks, yet retain the great fort, the heart!

(2.) Above the power of the law. The natural law sees not Christ, the Mosaical law dimly shows him afar off; the gospel brings him near, to be embraced by us, and us to be divinely changed by him. The natural law makes the model and frame of a man, the Mosaical adds some colours and preparations, and the gospel conveys spirit into them. The natural law begets us for the world, the Mosaical kills us for God, and the gospel raises up to life. The natural law makes us serve God by reason, the Mosaical by fear, and the gospel by love. It is by this, and not by the law, those three graces which are the main evidences of life are settled in the soul. It begets faith, whereby we are taken off from the stock of Adam, and inserted in Christ; hope, whereby we flourish; and love, whereby we fructify. By faith, we have life; by hope, strength; by love, liveliness and activity. All these are the fruits of the gospel administration.

(3.) Its power appears in the subjects it has been instrumental to change. Souls bemired in the filthiest lusts, have been made miraculously clean; it has changed the hands of rapine into instruments of charity, hearts full of filth into vessels of purity; it has brought down proud reason to

the obedience of faith, and made active lusts to die at the foot of the cross; it has struck off Satan's chains, and snatched away his captives into the liberty of God's service; it has changed the most stubborn hearts. The conversion of a great company of those Jewish priests that were most violent against it and the author of it, is ascribed to the power of the word: Acts 6:7, 'And the word of God increased, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' How many were raised to life by Peter's sermon! More souls turned than words spoken upon record. It subdues the will, which cannot be conquered but by its own consent. Light can dart in upon the understanding whether a man will or no, and flash in his face though he keep it in unrighteousness. Conscience will awaken and rouse them, though men use all the arts they can to still it. The will cannot be forced to any submission against its own consent; the power of the gospel is seen in the conquest of the will, and putting new inclinations into that.

(4.) The power of it is seen in the suddenness of its operation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the change at the last resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 'We shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trumpet.' How have troops of unmastered lusts fled at the voice of the gospel trumpet, like a flock of frightened birds, and left their long-possessed mansion! How have the affections, which have sheltered so many enemies against God, been on the sudden weary of their residence, and abhorred what they loved, and loved what the moment before they abhorred! How have welcome temptations been upon this sudden change rejected, a despised Saviour dearly embraced, a furious soul tamed, a darling self crucified, and a soul open to every temptation strongly fortified against it! How frequent are the examples, in the first times of Christianity, of men that have been almost as bad as devils one day, one hour, and joyful martyrs the next; and as soon as ever they have been begotten by it, asserted the power of it in another new birth by flames!

(5.) And this has been done many times by one part, one particle of the word. One word of the gospel, a single sentence, has erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere reason could never erect; one plain scripture has turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. One plain scripture has killed a man's sins, and quickened his heart with eternal life; one word of Christ, remembered by Peter, made him weep bitterly, and two or three scriptures, pressed by the same Peter upon his hearers, pricked their hearts to the quick. How has hell flashed in the face of a sinner, out of a small cloud of a threatening, and heaven shot into the soul from one little diamond spark of a promise! A little seed of the word, like a grain of mustard seed, changed the soul from a dwarfish to a tall stature! This the experience of every eye can testify.

(6.) And this power appears in the simplicity of it. Savonarola observes, that when he neglected the preaching of the Scripture, and applied himself to discourses of philosophy, he gained little upon the hearts of people; but when he came to illustrate and explain the Scripture, the minds of people were wonderfully inflamed and excited to a serious flame; and that when he discoursed in a philosophical manner, there was a non-attention, not only of the more ignorant, but the more learned sort too; but when he preached Scripture truths, he found the minds of men mightily delighted, sting with divine truth, brought to compunction, and a reformation of their lives, which shows, says he, the power of the word, acting more vigorously than all human reason in the world. And indeed Scripture, and Scripture reason, is the wisdom of God; all other reason is the wisdom of man. God will depress man's wisdom and advance his own. It works as it is 'the word of God

which lives and abides for ever', 1 Peter 1:23. To wrap a fine piece of silk about a sword, or gild a diamond, is to hinder the edge of the one, and the lustre of the other.

2. Information. The gospel is then certainly of divine authority, since in this 'God has set a tabernacle for the Sun of righteousness to move in, as the heavens are the tabernacle for the material sun, Psalms 19:4. That word that raises the dead, must needs be the word of no less than God. Our Saviour's discovery of men's thoughts argued his deity. The word's discovery of the inward workings of the heart, and the alteration it makes there, evidences a divine stamp upon it. God would never have made a lie so successful in the world, or blessed it in making those alterations in men, so comely in the eye of moral nature, so advantageous to human society, as the principles it instils into the minds of men are. A lie would never have been blessed to be an instrument of so much virtue and truth; it would not consist with the righteousness of God's government, or his goodness and truth as governor, to bring the hearts of men into so beautiful an order by a deceitful gospel. What word ever had such trophies! What engine ever battered so many strongholds! If the lame walk by the strength of it, if the dead are raised by the power of it, if lepers are cleansed by the virtue of it, if impure souls are sanctified, dead souls enlivened, are we to question its divine authority? Should a word work such wonderful effects for so many ages, that had no stamp of divine authority upon it? Would all those witnesses be given by God to a mere imposture? Let the victories it has gained evidence the arm that wields it. What sword was used at the first conquest of the world through grace, but this of the Spirit? How soon was the devil, with all his heap of idols, fain to fly before it! How soon was the devil, with all his pack of lusts, forced to leave his habitation in the hearts of men! Is not that of divine authority that so routs the enemies of God, puts sin to flight, expels spiritual death, breaking the bands of that worst king of terrors; that had skill to find out sin in its lurking holes, and power to dispossess that, and introduce spiritual life into the soul? Can that be a thing less than divine, that restores man to his due place as a creature respecting his Creator, referring all things to his glory; that implants the love, fear, hope of God in the mind; that makes man, of a miserable corrupt creature, to become divine; that roots out the vices of hell, and stores the soul with the virtues of heaven? Can such a gospel be termed less than a divine word of truth? If there be any word that can so change the nature, and transform wolves into lambs, let it have the honour and due praise when it is found out; but whatsoever the atheism of the world is, that never felt the powerful efficacy of it, you surely that have felt it a mighty weapon to conquer the devils that once possessed you, and an instrument to new beget you when you lay in your blood, should entertain no whisper against the divine authority of it, but count it the power and wisdom of God as, indeed, it is in itself, and in its effects upon souls, Romans 1:16. It is said there to be 'the power of God to salvation.' Upon that account the apostle was not ashamed of it; neither should we, but conclude as the same apostle says, 'If I be not an apostle, yet to you I am an apostle.' So if the gospel be not in itself the gospel of God, surely it is so to you who have been renewed.

3. Information. It shows us the reason why the gospel is so much opposed by Satan in the world. It begets those for heaven whom he had begotten for hell. It pulls down his image and sets up God's; it pulls the crown off his head, the sceptre from his hand, snatches subjects from his empire, straitens his territories, and demolishes his forts, breaks his engines, outwits his subtilty, makes his captives his conquerors, and himself, the conqueror, a captive; it pulls men 'out of the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into a kingdom of light,' Colossians 1:13. And all this, as

it is a word of truth, opposed to his word of deceit, whereby he has cheated mankind and deceived the nations; that we may well say of him, as the apostle of death, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Corinthians 15:55. O hell, where is thy sting? O Satan, where is thy victory? This slays Satan and revives the soul.

4. We see then how injurious they are to God, who would obstruct the progress of the gospel in the world; that, as the papists, would hinder the reading and the preaching of the word. Whose seed are they, but the seed of that dragon, that would as well hinder the new birth as devour a divine-begotten babe 'as soon as ever it were born,' Revelation 12:4. Such would hinder the greatest and most excellent work of God upon the souls of men, would have no spiritual generations for God in the world. Such envy Christ a seed, and God a family, they would despoil him of a family on earth, though they cannot of a family in heaven. In banishing the word, they would banish the grace of God out of the world, and leave no place in a world drowned with ignorance, where this dove should set her foot. Those that would take away the seed, would not have a spiritual harvest, but reduce souls to a deplorable famine, lock them up in the grave, and keep them under the bands of a spiritual death.

5. It informs us, that the gospel shall then endure in the world, as long as God has any to beget. Men may puff at it, but they cannot extinguish it, it is a word of truth, and truth is mighty, and will prevail. It was a mighty wind wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, to show not only the quick and speedy progress of the gospel, as upon the wings of the wind, but the mighty force of it, that men can no more silence the sound of the gospel than they can the blustering of the wind. It shall prevail in all places, where God has a seed to bring in, a people to beget. Those given to Christ shall come from far: 'from the east,' Isaiah 59:12, 'and from the west, and from the land of Sinim' (now, I think, called Damiata, in Egypt). The word, being the instrument, shall sound everywhere, where he has sons and daughters to beget for Christ. As long as Christ does retain his royalty, 'his mouth shall be a sharp sword,' Isaiah 59:2. That is the first thing concluded on between God and Christ, before they come to any further treaty, which is expressed in that chapter. As Christ shall be his salvation to the ends of the earth, so shall the word be the instrument of it to the end of the world: the 'polished shaft' is 'hid in his quiver.' As he is a light to the Gentiles, so the golden candlestick of this gospel wherein this light is set, shall endure in spite of men and devils. Since his promise of a seed to Christ stands sure, the word, whereby he begets a generation for him, is as sure as the promise, and shall not return void: Isaiah 55:11, 'but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the things whereto he sent it.' Never fear then the removal of the gospel out of the world, though it be removed out of a particular place, since it is a word of truth, and an instrument ordained to so glorious an end.

6. It is a sign, then, God has some to beget, when he brings his gospel to any place. He has a pleasure to accomplish, and it shall not return unto him void. Prosperity is entailed upon it for the doing the work whereto he sent it. Since then it is appointed an instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for a new begetting, it will be efficacious upon some souls where it comes, for the wise God would not send it, but to attain its main end upon some hearts. God never sends his word to any place, but it is received and relished by some as the savour of life. It looses the bands of spiritual death in some, and binds them harder upon obstinate sinners, to them that perish it is the savour of death. In every place the gospel was savoury to some: 2 Corinthians 2:14-15, 'God made manifest the savour of his knowledge,' by the apostles, 'in every place.' Wherever this seed is

sown, the harvest has been reaped, either more or less. It is fruitful at Corinth, for there God had much people, Acts 18:10. It is not fruitless at Athens, though the harvest was less; most mocked, but some believed, and but one man of learning and worldly wisdom, Acts 17:32, Acts 17:34. When God sends John in a way of righteousness, if the Pharisees believe not, God will make a conquest of publicans and harlots: Matthew 21:32, 'John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you believed not: but the publicans and harlots believed him.' The net of the gospel is not cast wholly in vain, but from the time of its coming, to the time of its removal, some souls have been caught, though not of the most delicious fish, yet of the worst sort.

7. It informs us, what an excellent thing is a new birth! The end is more desirable than the means, this is the chief end of all the ordinances of God in the world. The gospel had never been revealed but for this intent, this is the 'design of the Spirit's operation in any gospel administration. All the lines of the word are to draw the lineaments of grace in the heart. This must be a noble and excellent thing, for which chiefly the oracles of God sound in the world, for which so great a light is set up in the gospel. All the love of Christ breathes in the gospel; the whole Testament is sealed by his blood; the perpetual workings of the Holy Ghost, the preaching of the word, the celebration of the sacraments, are in subservience to this end, the one to make us live, the other to make us grow. How inconceivably excellent is that, how valuable in the eye of God, how advantageous to the happiness of men, that is, the design wherein so many divine operations meet!

8. What a lamentable thing is it, that so few should be new begotten by the word of truth! How many are there among us that understand not what a new begetting and birth is, no more than Nicodemus when he discoursed with our Saviour! What a deplorable thing is it that the word should be preached, and so little regarded! that not only an hour's, but many years' discourses should pass away (as the Psalmist speaks of our lives) 'like a tale that is told!' Psalms 90:9. How miserable is that man that has the objective cause of the new birth, without the effective! It is the word of truth. What will become of you, if you prefer a word of error before it; if you prefer the devil's killing suggestions before God's reviving, oracles? What does the word of truth move you to, but to a new birth? Why will any man struggle against it? Every resistance of the word is a resistance of God himself. It is God hews by the prophets, Hosea 6:5; it is God offers to beget by the word; every reluctance then against the word is a reluctance against God. The word will either bring in a new form of grace, or a new form of torment. If the working of the one be rejected, the in-working of the other cannot be avoided; it will either cut the bands of a spiritual death, or cut the sinews of our souls. That piece of timber that has not its knots cut off for the building, shall be cut in pieces for the fire. A new life waits for them that obey the gospel; an endless death for them that reject it; they that obey not the gospel, know not God, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And what is reserved for such, but revenging flames in another world? It would be happy for such, that they had never heard of a renewing gospel. Every gospel discourse that might have been the cause of a spiritual life, and a divine cordial, if sucked in, rejected, will be a bitter drug in that potion which shall be drunk in an eternal fever.

9. Hereby you may examine whether you are new begotten. It is the word of truth whereby God befits. In this word he opens the glory of his grace, and through this he conveys the power of his grace. The conquests of Christ were to be made by the word, and it was so settled at the first constitution of him as Mediator and Redeemer: Isaiah 49:2, 'He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.' It was by this the hearts of men were to be conquered. And what heart is not subdued by

the sword of his mouth, is not subdued by the power of his arms. Some word or other was the instrument to beget you (I speak of people grown up). The apostle's interrogation is a strong negative. There is no believing without hearing, Romans 10:14. Hearing goes before believing; he lays it down as a certain conclusion from his former arguing: 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' If you conclude yourselves new begotten, how came you by it? Is it by the word, or no? That is God's ordinary means. If you be not renewed by this, it is not likely you are renewed at all; no other instrument has God ordinarily appointed to this end. Afflictions may plough men for it, but the word is the only seed that renews the face of the earth. All false notions or presumptions of the new birth must be brought to this touchstone; it is a misshapen and monstrous birth, that is not by a seed of the same kind; the law in the heart has no seed of the same nature with it to engender it, but the law in the word, that word which we properly call gospel; the word of truth, not the word of philosophy, which is a word of uncertainty; God's word, not Plato's word. If a thousand beasts had been consumed by common fire, not one of them had been an holocaust, a grateful sacrifice, unless consumed by the fire of the altar which came down from heaven. Moral wisdom is not that fire, has not that eminent descent from heaven; it is not that speech from heaven whereby our Saviour is said yet to speak, Heb. sit. 26. A little spark kindled by the voice of Christ from heaven, from whence he yet speaks in the gospel, is more worth than all the bonfires in the world, kindled by the sparks of moral wisdom. Those qualifications which grow of their own accord, without the word, are like the herbs which sprout in wild places without any tillage, which are of a different kind than what are planted and watered in a garden, and overlooked by the care of man. If your dispositions you boast of were not planted by the word, how fair soever they may look, they are but a wild kind of fruit; therefore, it concerns you to look back upon yourselves, think what word it was whereby you were begotten. If no particular word can be remembered, if your regeneration were wrought insensibly in your younger years, examine what suitableness there is between the word and your souls, whether your hearts are turned into the nature of it. The measures of grace are according to the measures of the word. If you cannot remember the first glorious entrance of it, you must see for the rich dwelling of it. An inhabitant may enter into our houses unseen, but he cannot dwell there without our knowledge; the lines of the word will be seen in the heart, though the particular pencil whereby they were wrought may not be remembered.

10. It instructs ministers how to preach. It is the word of truth, the gospel, that must be the main matter of our preaching; and those things in the gospel that have the greatest tendency to the new begetting men, and working this great change in them, and driving it on to greater maturity. The instrument of conversion is not barely the letter of the word, but the sense and meaning of it, rationally impressed upon the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience. The opening the word is the life of it, and the true means of regeneration. If any man would turn his servant or child from a course of sin, would he discourse to them of the nature of the sun and stars, their magnitude, motions, numbers, and qualities? This would be nothing to the purpose; his way would be to show them the deformity and danger of their sin. The word of truth is God's instrument, and it should be ours; what is the end of the word, should be the end of our preaching. It was through the gospel the apostle begot the Corinthians; not that the preaching of the law is excluded, but it must be preached in order to the gospel as a preparation to it. Whatsoever in the word of truth does prepare for the new birth, produce it, cherish it, preserve it, centre in one and the same end. How careful and industrious should we be to beget children to God, that we may

present them, and say, 'Here am I, and the children, which thou hast given me.' The new birth will be your joy, and crown and you will be ours, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. Aaron's sons are called the generations of Moses, as well as Aaron, Numbers 3:1, though none of his natural sons are reckoned; Aaron's by natural generation, Moses' perhaps by a spiritual regeneration and instruction.

Use 2. Of exhortation.

1. Highly glorify God for the word of truth, which is so great an instrument. How thankful should we be for an intention, to secure our estates from consuming, houses from burning. bodies from dying! The gospel, the word of truth, does much more than this: it is an instrument to beget a soul for God; an instrument whereby God makes himself our Father, and us his children. It is but an instrument; let not the glory be given to the instrument, but to the agent. As it is an instrument, let it have part of your affections, but nothing of the glory that belongs to God; love the truth, but glorify and bless the God of truth, that has ordained it to be so excellent an instrument.

(1.) Bless God in your hearts. [1.] That ever you had the word of truth made known to you. How many millions sit in a spiritual darkness, without so much as the means of a new begetting! Millions never heard the sound of it, nor ever will. [2.] Much more that it has been successful to any of you. Have you any thing in your spirits that bears witness to the truth of it? When you read or hear it, do you find something of kin to it in your souls, and feel something within you rise up and call it blessed? How should you read and hear it, with eruptions of thankfulness to God for it, hearty embraces for it, and fervent ejaculations to God to work more in you by the power of it! Why has the word grappled with any of our souls, and not with others; arrested any of you in a course of sin, and left others to walk in their own ways, to ran down silently like the streams of a river, till swallowed up in an ocean of death? The apostle Paul heard the voice, others with him only a sound of words, Acts 9:9, Acts 9:7, Acts 22:9; some have heard a sound of words, without the voice of God in it, while others have heard a divine voice in a human sound. The wind has blown upon many, God in that wind only upon few; some have received air, whilst others have received Spirit and life; some have only the body of the word, while others feel the spirit and power of it in their hearts. Shall not God be glorified for this? Had it not been for him, and his Spirit, words had been only words and wind to all as well as to some.

(2.) Glorify God in your lives. As you feel the power of it in your hearts, let others see the brightness and efficacy of it in your actions. The new born creature should principally aim at the glory of God, since the instrument whereby he is begotten was first published for the 'glory of God in the highest,' Luke 2:14. What is produced by the efficacy of such an instrument must have the same end, viz. the glory of God in the practice of holiness. A holy gospel imprinted can never leave the heart and life unholy. A gospel coined for the glory of God, when wrought in the heart, can never suffer the soul to aim chiefly at self; but at the great end for which the gospel was first discovered. The gospel of holiness and truth in the heart will engender sincerity and holiness in the life.

2. Prize the word of truth, which works such great effects in the soul. Value that as long as you live, which is the cord whereby God has drawn any of you out of the dungeon of death. Never count that foolishness by which God has inspired you with the choicest wisdom, and never count that weakness which has made any of you of death, living; and of darkness, light; and of

miserable, happy by grace. If a soul be worth a world, and therefore to be prized, how precious ought that to be which is an instrument to let a soul for the felicity of another world! How should the law of God's mouth be better to us than thousands of gold and silver! Psalms 119:72. How should we prize that word whereby any of us have seen the glory of God in his sanctuary, the glory of God in our souls! When corruptions are strong, it is an engine to batter them; when our hearts are hard, it is a hammer to break them; when our spirits are impostumed, it is a sword to cut them; when our hearts are cold, it is a fire to inflame them; when our souls are faint, it is a cordial to refresh them, it begins a new birth and maintains it. It is the seed from whence we spring, 1 Peter 1:23, the glass wherein we see the glory of God, 2 Corinthians 3:18. By the waters of the sanctuary, we have both meat for nourishment, and medicines for cure, from the tree that grows by its streams: Ezekiel 47:12, 'The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine.' Have a great regard to it, keep it in the midst of your hearts, for it is life, Proverbs 4:21-22.

3. Pray and endeavour for the preservation and success of the word of truth. Were there a medicine that could preserve life, how chary should we be in preserving that? The gospel is the tree, whose leaves cure the nations, Revelation 22:2. It was a blessing God endued the creatures with, when he bid them increase and multiply, Genesis 1:22. It was an evidence that he intended to preserve the world. If the gospel get ground in the hearts of men, it is an evidence it shall continue in spite of the oppositions of men or devils.

4. Wait upon God in the word. Where there is a revelation on God's part, there must be a hearing on ours. Sit down therefore at the feet of God, and receive of his words, Deuteronomy 33:3. (1.) Despise it not; he that contemns it never intends to be new begotten, since he slights the means of God's appointment; he that intends an end, will use all means proportionately to his desires for that end; he that contemns it never was renewed. Habitual grace being wrought by it, cannot, but in its own nature, have a great affection to it. He that loves Christ cannot but love all the methods of his operations. (2.) Despise it not because it is but an instrument: say not, because God is the chief agent, therefore you need not come to the word. Our Saviour knew that 'man did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,' Matthew 4:4. Did he therefore neglect means for preserving his life? Because God gives the increase, should not the husbandman plough and sow? If God does not work upon you by the means, you can have no rational hopes he will do it any other way. What though ministers can only speak to the ear? John Baptist could do no more, whose ministry was notwithstanding glorious, in being the forerunner of Christ. To neglect it, therefore, is to double-bar your hearts against the entrance of grace, and slight the truth which Christ brought down from the bosom of God.

(1.) Never did God appoint any other way but this. Miracles were never appointed but as attendants upon this. Miracles come after teachings in the great gifts to the church, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10. First, the 'manifestation of the Spirit,' the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge,' then 'gifts of healing and miracles.' Miracles are ceased, as being not absolutely necessary; but the ministry of the word will last to the end of the world. By the prophets God brings souls out of a state of bondage, and by the prophets he preserves them in a state of grace: Hosea 12:13, 'By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.' Miracles and the resurrection of one from the dead, was never appointed under the legal administration, but Moses and the prophets, Luke 16:13. These were the ordinary means, and if these did not work, miracles were inefficacious.

(2.) God never made any promise but in this way. God promised to circumcise their hearts to love him with all their soul, but in the way of hearing his voice, and observing his statutes, Deuteronomy 30:6, Deuteronomy 30:10-11. He meets souls only that remember him in his way, Isaiah 64:5. And to the preaching of the gospel only, our Saviour promised his presence to the end of the world, Matthew 28:20; the promise is perpetually and immovably throughout all ages of the world fixed to this command. The promising his presence to the preaching of the gospel, implies that his presence shall be enjoyed only by attendance on the gospel. The gracious workings of the Spirit are by this, they are the words of Christ brought to remembrance by him, whereby he does so mightily operate.

(3.) No other way did God apparently work by formerly. In the time when God did especially manifest himself to his people by visions, dreams, and apparitions of angels, and in those days made revelations to them, he converted not any either from a state of nature, or from a particular fall, but by the word. Manasseh's conversion was by the word of the seers, 2 Chronicles 33:18; nor was David reclaimed after his fall by an immediate vision, but by the ministry of Nathan; Peter by a look, which revived the word spoken to him, Luke 22:61. The angel that attended the eunuch, Acts 8:26, made no impressions upon him, but was ordered to direct Philip thither to explain to him the mystery of the gospel; and the Spirit particularly orders him to go near the chariot, Acts 9:29, but makes no impression upon him but by the ministry of the word. An angel is sent to direct Philip, but Philip is sent to discover Christ. An angel is sent to Cornelius, not to preach the gospel, but to direct him where to send for a teacher, Acts 10:3, Acts 10:5-6, the Spirit prepares Peter to go, Acts 10:29-30, and likewise prepares Cornelius for his reception; God prepares the jailer by an earthquake, but renews him not but by the ministry of Paul, Acts 16:26, Acts 16:32. In the times of the gospel there was first to be a teaching of God's law, before a walking in his paths, Isaiah 3:3. The arm that made heaven and earth makes the new heart and new spirit, but by a word as well as them. The net of the gospel is only appointed to catch the fish, though the fish that had the tribute-money in its mouth was immediately for the service of Christ, yet he would not use his power to bring it to the shore, without Peter's casting out the net. Christ first brings souls to the net, and by the net to himself.

(4.) God has always blessed this more or less. Moses' rod in Moses his hand has brought miracles, Christ's rod in the Spirit's hand has wrought greater; the new creations have been always by it, and the after-breathings of the Spirit through it. By this he makes men righteous, holy, sincere, in a way of eminency, as the morning light which increases to a perfect day, and no longer as a morning cloud which quickly vanishes, Hosea 6:5, which some understand of a gospel promise mixed with that discourse. How has the light of the beauty and excellency of God, flashing upon the understanding from the glass of the gospel, filled the will and affections of many with desire and love to that glory it represents, and that state it offers! The very leaves of it, the profession has healed nations, and brought human societies into order, and the fruit of it has been the cure of many a soul. Wait therefore for the falling of this fruit. Grace is a beam from the Sun of righteousness, but darted through the medium of gospel air; a pearl engendered by the blood of Christ, but only in the gospel sea. It has not been without its blessing to others, it has raised men from death to life. Is the virtue of the seed expired? or the strength of the Lord grown feeble? If ever therefore you could have the image of God in inward impressions of grace, and outward expressions of holiness, you must look for your transformation in and by the gospel. All the other

knowledge in the world cannot give a man a right notion of the new birth, much less produce it. Look not after enthusiasms, nor expect it in new ways, 'to the law and to the testimony,' ways of God's appointment. The Jews could not expect an angel to bring them soundness of limbs, but by the pool; nor we the Spirit to infuse grace into us, but by the word. It is from the mercy-seat only God speaks to Israel; wisdom's gates are the places where to expect her alms, Proverbs 8:34. Wait therefore upon the word, Herein the Spirit of God travails with souls.

Quest. How shall we wait upon the Lord, so as that we may be new begotten by it?

1. Wait upon the word frequently. Be often in reading and hearing, and meditating on it. Men set upon these works as if they were afraid they should be new born too soon, or prejudiced in their concerns and contentments in the world, as if they feared the mighty wind of the Spirit should blow away their beloved dross too fast, as if it were a matter of indifference to be like their Maker. If you had gold not thoroughly refined, would you not cast it again and again into the fire? If filth not wholly purged, would you not use the fountain again and again? Those that are in the sun are coloured and heated by it, and have things more visible; those that are much in the word, see more of the wonders, feel more of the warmth, receive deeper impressions, are endued with the grace and holiness of truth, have a purer flame in their affections for heaven. How do you know but an opportunity missed, might have been the best market? How do you know but the Spirit might have joined himself to the word, as Philip to the eunuch's chariot, while he was reading? 'While Peter yet spake those words (it is said), the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word,' Acts 10:44. What words? Even the marrow of the gospel, ver. 43, 'that through his name, whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.' God may have a portion ready for us, and we go without it, because we are not ready to receive it. We must not expect a raven to bring us food upon a bed of sluggishness. Do it the rather, because you may live to see such times, wherein Bibles may be as much shut as they are now open, wherein (as in former times) you may be willing to give a large parcel of your goods for one chapter of it. We read of some that have given a load of hay for one chapter of St James. Be frequent in waiting upon the word.

2. Let your hearts be fixed upon that which is the great end of the word. New begettings are the end of the gospel. Come, then, with minds fixed upon this end, and desires for it. Regard it not as a mere sound of words, but as an instrument of the noblest operations in the soul. If this be the great work of the gospel, we ought to read and hear it, with desires to be enlivened where we are dead, quickened where we are dull, be made new creatures where we are yet but old, taller creatures where we are yet but of a low stature; not only to have our understandings instructed, but our hearts changed; to inquire after God to behold the beauty of the Lord, Psalms 27:4, that we may be transformed into it; to look for God, who is in the word of a truth, for the kingdom of God comes nigh to you in the gospel. That was that word that Christ, when he sent his disciples out first to preach, bid them speak unto men, Luke xii. Men usually get more than they come to seek. He that goes to market, intending only to lay out his money upon some trifle, returns for the most part with no better commodity. Zacchaeus got upon the tree to meet with Christ, and so noble an end wanted not an excellent success: that day came salvation into his house, Luke 19:9. When the Jews did not mind the end of sacrifices, and regarded not the things God principally looked for in them, God slighted them, and they went without any divine operations upon their souls by them, Isaiah 1:11, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 1:14. When our ends suit the gospel, then are we like to feel gospel influences. We come with wrong ends, and, therefore, return with unchanged hearts; we come for

a sound, and go away with no more. One end therefore in coming should be to gain this new begetting, or increase the growth of the new creature; our ends are not else conformable to the ends of God in it; therefore, as the earth sucks in the rain, and the roots in the earth attract it unto themselves that they may bring forth fruit, so should we open our hearts to receive the showers of the word with an aim at a new birth, or a further growth. As this is *finis operis*, so it should be *finis operantis*.

3. Mind the word in the simplicity of it, and that in it which tends to that end. Some men are more taken with colours than truth, more enamoured with words than matter, fill themselves only with air, and neglect the substance. Such are like those that are pleased with the colours of the rainbow, more than with the light reflected, or the covenant of God represented by it. No man is renewed by phrases and fancies; those are only as the oil to make the nails of the sanctuary drive in the easier: in Ecclesiastes 12:11, 'Acceptable words,' joined with 'words of truth,' are as the 'fastening of the nails,' both 'given by one shepherd.' Words there must be to make things intelligible; illustrations to make things delightfully intelligible, but the seminal virtue lies not in the husk and skin, but in the kernel; the rest dies, but the substance of the seed lives, and brings forth fruit; separate, therefore, between the husk and the seed. The word does not work as it is elegant, but as it is divine, as it is a word of truth. Illustrations are but the ornaments of the temple, the glory of it is in the ark and mercy-seat. It is not the engraving upon the sword cuts, but the edge; nor the key, as it is gilded, opens, but as fitted to the wards. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Corinthians 2:5. It is the juice of the meat, and not the garnishings of the dish, that nourishes. Was it the word as a pleasant song, or as a divine seed, that changed the souls of old, made martyrs smile in the midst of flames? It was the knowledge of the excellency of the promise, and not worldly eloquence, made them with so much courage slight gibbets, stakes, executioners; they had learned the truth as it is in Jesus.

4. Mind the word as the word of truth. Take it not upon the account of persons, value it for its own sake, as it is a word of truth. It is neither Paul nor Apollos, but God that gives the increase. Value it not by men; it is no matter what the pipe is, whether gold or lead, so the water be the water of life; the word has an edge, because it is the word of God, not because it is whetted upon this or that grindstone. Some will scarce receive a truth, but from one they fancy; as if a man should be so foolish as to refuse a medicine which will preserve his life, because it is not presented to him in a glass which he has a particular esteem of. To receive or refuse any truth upon the account of the person, is a sign of carnality, and the way to remain carnal; upon this account the apostle pronounces the Corinthians again and again carnal, 1 Corinthians 3:4. Despise not the meanest instrument. Our Saviour in his agony was comforted by an angel, much more inferior to him who was the Lord of angels, than any minister can be to a hearer. Mr Peacock, being fellow of a college, in great despair, when some minister had been discoursing with him, and prevailing nothing, offering to pray with him, No, says he; dishonour not God so much, as to pray for such a reprobate. A young scholar of his standing by, answered, Surely a reprobate could not be so tender of God's honour; which words prevailed more to the bringing him to believe than all that the other had spoken. When men turn their backs upon the word, because the mouth does not please them, they turn their backs upon God, John 13:20, and perhaps upon their own mercy. When any have respect to the man more than the word, God will leave them to the operation of the man, and withdraw his own.

5. Attend upon the word with an eye to God. Look not for the new birth only from the word. It was the folly of the Jews to think to find life in the Scriptures without Christ; life in the letter, without the original of life, John 5:39-40. 'Except the Lord build the house' (that is the temple), 'they labour in vain that build it,' Psalms 127:1. Without God all our endeavours to build a spiritual temple are like the strivings to wash a blackamore white. No believing the word, though preached a thousand times, without God's revealing his arm, Isaiah 53:1. It is not the file that makes the watch, but the artist by it. No instrument can act without the virtue of some superior agent. It is the altar that sanctifies the gold, and Christ that sanctifies the ordinances. Paul may plant by his doctrine and miracles; Apollos may water by his affectionate eloquence; but God alone can give the increase by his almighty breath. Man sows the seed, but God only can make it fructify. The richest showers cannot make the ground fruitful, but as instruments under God's blessing. It is not said the prophets did hew them, but God by his prophets, Hosea 6:5. Then have your eyes fixed upon God. It is the word of his lips, not of man's, whereby any are snatched out of the paths of the destroyer, as well as kept from them. Man's teachings direct us to Christ; God's teachings bring us to Christ; man brings the gospel, at most, to the heart, the Spirit only brings the gospel into the heart, man puts the key in the lock, God only turns it, and opens the heart by it, man brings the word of truth, and God the truth of the word into the soul, man brings the objective word of grace, God alone the attractive grace of the word. If where there is already the new birth, the soul must be fixed on God for further openings, much more where it is not yet wrought. David had an excellent knowledge, yet cries out for the opening of his eyes to see the wonders in God's law. It is God only can knock off the fetters of a spiritual death, and open the iron gates, that the King of glory may enter with spiritual life. If any, therefore, will regard the word more than as an instrument, as a partner with God in his operation, he may justly leave you to the weakness of that, and deny the influx of his own strength.

Therefore let the word be attended with prayer.

(1.) Before you wait upon God in any ordinance, plead with him as Moses did in another case, 'To what purpose should I go, unless thy presence go with me?' What can the letter do without the Spirit, or words without that powerful wind to blow them into my heart? None can have life by the bread of the word, without the blessing of God. As man brings the graft, desire God to insert it. As God has promised gifts to his church, so he promised his own teachings: Hebrews 8:11, 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' Urge God with his own promise, desire him to open his mouth, and to open your hearts; his mouth to breathe, and your hearts to receive. When men overlook God, he makes a separation between the word and his own quickening presence. The end does not necessarily arise from the means; and, therefore, in the use of them, there must be a fiduciary recourse to the grace of God. In the time, too, of waiting upon God, let there be ejaculations; let your hearts be continually lifted up to God; let your expectations be from him. We should be like Jacob's ladder; though the feet stand in Bethel, the house of God, our heads should reach to heaven in all our attendances.

(2.) After you have been at the word. God is the great seer, Christ the great prophet; we should go to him for the repetition of things upon our hearts; we may have that wind afterwards by prayer, which we felt not so stiff at hearing. The operations of truth, as well as the knowledge of it, are best fetched out upon our knees by earnest prayer. How do you know but, while you are praying, the fire may descend from heaven, and transform you into a divine likeness? Thus you will make God

the Alpha and Omega of his own ordinances, in your acknowledgement of him, as well as he is so in himself.

(3.) Rest not in bare hearing. Look for God in the ordinances as he is the living God, who lives in himself and gives life to men and means: Psalms 34:2, 'My soul longs for the living God,' there is a strength and glory of God to be longed for in the sanctuary; no means are to be rested in or used, but as to lead to such an end for which they are fitted. To rest in the word heard, or read, is to make that our end, which God has appointed only as the means. The word is sweet, but as it is the pipe through which God and his image, God and his grace, which is sweeter and higher than all ordinances, stream to the soul. Rejoice in the word, but only as the wise men did in the star, as it led them to Christ. The word of Christ is precious; but nothing more precious than himself, and his formation in the soul. Rest not in the word, but look through it to Christ.

6. Attend upon the word submissively. It is not the hearer, but the humble hearer, shall find the power of the word working in him; as it is not the speaking a prayer, but the wrestling and struggling of the heart with God in prayer, receives a gracious answer. The humble are the fittest subjects for grace, those that lie upon the ground with their mouth close to the pipe. 'He gives grace to the humble.' Resign yourselves up to the word, struggle not against the battery it makes, nor the wind that blows; receive every stroke till you see the frame of the new creature. Let a silence be imposed upon the flesh, and self bowed down to the dust, while Christ the great prophet speaks. Be not peevish, not expostulate with God's sovereignty, as they did: Isaiah 58:3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takes no knowledge?' Acknowledge God a free agent, submit to his sovereign pleasure. A truly humble bow to God will prevail more than all the saucy expostulations of proud flesh. In hearing the word, pick not here a part, and there a part, as suits your humour, but consider what really is God's will, and submit to it. Cornelius was of this resigning temper when the Spirit descended upon him: Acts 10:33, 'We are here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' An humble soul, says Kempis, by the grace of God, understands more the reasons of eternal truth in a trice, than a man that has studied many years in the schools, because he has the operations of them in his heart.

7. Receive the word with faith. I mean, not the faith which is a part of the new creature, but an assent. There is a rational belief that it is the word of truth, which is in many men that have no justifying faith. Actuate this. The believing the word to be so, to be the word of God, is the first step to the receiving advantage by it. No man will ever comply with that which he believes not to be true, or believes not himself to be concerned in. It is said by the apostle, Hebrews 4:1-2, 'The word profited not, because it was not mixed with faith.' There was truth in the word, but no firm assent to it in their hearts. There can never be a full compliance with Christ, in order to a new birth, if there be not first an assent to the word. Where there is a defect in the first concoction, there will also be a defect in the second and third. If you do not believe with Naaman, that the waters of Jordan are appointed by God for this end, and not those of Abana and Pharpar, you will never be rid of the spiritual death, no more than he would have been of his leprosy. You never see God in his sanctuary, nor feel God in his power for want of this. Surely as this made our Saviour suspend the power of his miracles, by the same reason it makes him suspend the power of his word: Matthew 13:58, 'He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' If men did believe there were a place where they might enjoy all earthly delights in a higher measure, at an easier rate,

how ambitious would they be of putting themselves into a state to enjoy them? If men did believe the report of the gospel, would they not be full of great undertakings for the enjoyment of the proffers of it? But the gospel, more is the pity, has not naturally that credit with men that a fiction has.

8. Observe much the motions upon your hearts while you are attending upon God. If the sails be not skilfully ordered to catch and hold, and make the best improvement of the wind that blows, much of the wind will pass beside it, and the ship lag many leagues behind, or lie wind-bound a long time before it receive a like gale. God has particular seasons: Hebrews 4:7, 'Today if you will hear his voice.' Sometimes the Spirit is more urging than at another time, and sends his motions thicker upon the heart; let those times be observed, and when there are motions on the Spirit's part, let there be compliance on yours. Catch a promise when the Spirit opens; bind yourselves to an observance of the precept when the Spirit shows it; let God's drawing be answered with the soul's running; observe what precious oil is dropped through the golden pipes upon the heart, and spill it not; take notice of what sparks light upon you, and lose not the warmth they may convey to your hearts; what beam of light breaks in, let it not be puffed out by a temptation or diversion; observe what is afforded to make your hearts burn, and your corruptions and sinful inclinations cool. Regard not so much your affections, as what touches are upon your wills. Affections may arise from a natural constitution of the body, some tempers being more easily excited to exert affections than others, yet they are not always, nor altogether, to be disregarded, nor are they always to be looked upon as ciphers; but, especially, see what influence the word has upon the understanding and will chiefly, as well as upon the affections. Judge of yourselves by the inward power and might, by the breakings in of the light, and the sprightly strain of your wills. The might of the Spirit works in the inner man, Ephesians 3:16; not in a part of the inner man, but in every faculty. See what compunction there is in your souls, what strong desires in the will. Bare affections are but like a sponge, which will by a light compression let out that water which it so easily sucked up. Men may 'receive the word with gladness' without having any root of spiritual grace, Mark 4:16-17. When men regard only particular affections, they usually sit down in those sparks of their own kindling, and look not after a thorough change. Or if you find such affections see whether those affections are raised rather by the truth than the dress; whether they be kindled by the consideration of those attributes of God, his mercy, goodness, wisdom, holiness, which have a great hand in the new birth, whether by the deep consideration of our Saviour's death and resurrection, the great designs of the gospel; whether the motion be orderly, first, understanding, then will, and afterwards affections. This is a genuine flame kindled by a fire which comes down from heaven, working upon all the parts of the soul. A bare work upon the affections is rather a strange and carnal fire. Observe, therefore, what tender blades bud and shoot forth in the higher faculties of your souls.

9. Press the word much upon your hearts after hearing. How great is the neglect of this application of the word of truth! Men will spend hours in hearing, and not one minute in serious reflections, as if the word in their ears, or a receipt in their pockets, could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. What is only dashed upon the fancy, or lightly coloured, may soon be washed off. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart, and covers it with earth; for want of being laid deep, and branded by serious meditation, the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it,

Mark 4:5-6, Mark 4:16. How can food nourish your body, unless it be concocted by natural heat? or spiritual food enliven you, unless concocted by meditation? The shepherds, after they had heard the news of Christ's incarnation from the mouth of the angel, reflected upon their duty, Luke 2:14-15. Words must be kept some time upon the mind, and rolled over and over again, before they can work any sensible change, because the heart naturally has an averseness to God and his word; as the strongest physic must be in the body some time, and be wrought upon by the stomach, before it can work upon the humours. How do you know, but while you are musing, a divine fire may sparkle in your souls, and Christ rise in your hearts? Grapes must be pressed to get out the wine that will cheer the heart. Put the question to your soul, in every part you can remember, as our Saviour did to Martha, John 11:25-26, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?' There is such a thing as the new birth: believest thou this? It is necessary to be had: believest thou this? God only can work it: believest thou this? And so for every divine truth. Leave not thy soul to its vagaries, hold it on to the work, press it to give a positive answer whether it believe this or that truth. Put not yourselves off with a slight answer to the question, but examine the reasons of your belief of it. Look upon yourselves as really concerned in the word you hear, otherwise it will no more affect you than if you should tell an ambitious man, gaping after preferment in England, of a wealthy place fallen in Spain, which will not engage his thoughts, as being out of his sphere and at too great a distance. To have a listlessness to such duties, or any spiritual duty, after hearing the word, which is the food of the soul, shows a great corruption within, as the heaviness in the body, and corrupt vapours in the mouth, show the badness of concoction.

10. Labour to have the savour of truth upon your spirits, as well as the notions of it in your heads. The kingdom of God consists not in word, but in power: the new birth consists not in a bare notion but in spiritual savour. The highest notional knowledge comes far short of experimental; the knowledge a blind man has of light and colours, by hearing a lecture upon it, is but mere ignorance to the knowledge he would have if his eyes were opened. Endeavour to have the savour of Christ's ointments, Song of Solomon 1:8, and inward sense exercised, Hebrews 5:14. The apostle distinguishes knowledge and judgement, Php 1:9. Knowledge is a notion in the head, judgement, or "aisthesis", is the sense or savour of it in the heart. What a miserable thing is it to spend our lives without a taste! Knowledge is but as a cloud that intercepts the beams of the sun and does not advantage the earth, unless melted into drops, and falling down into the bosom of it; let the knowledge of the word of truth drop down in a kindly shower upon your hearts, let it be a knowledge of the word heated with love.

I might have added more; bring plain hearts to the word, put off all disguises. Moses took off his veil when he went into the presence of God. Bring not flesh and blood as your counsellors; these are no friends to a new birth. And come with love; love makes the strongest impressions upon the soul.

It might here be also worth the inquiry, why so few are renewed by the word of truth in this age; why the gospel has no more powerful effect among us, as in former ages? It is a wonder to see a man begotten by the word, as it was a wonder for the woman to bring forth a man-child, Rev. xii. When our Saviour was brought into the temple, not a man but Simeon knew him; no question but many pharisees, doctors, and gentlemen were walking there, but none but Simeon knew him, to whom he was revealed, Luke 2:22, Luke 2:25, the rest looked upon him as an ordinary child. Formerly men flocked to Christ as the doves to the windows. The sword of the Spirit was never

unsheathed, but it cut some hearts, the word seems now to have lost its edge and efficacy, which ought to be considered and laid to heart.

Many causes may be rendered; I will only hint a few.

(1.) Taking religion upon trust. Old customs are hardly to be parted with: 'Every man will walk in the name of his God,' Micah 4:5. To root out false conceptions in religion, which either education, fancy, or humour have rooted, is very difficult.

(2.) A conceit of the meanness of the word, whereby there is a secret contempt of it, and so a formal and customary use of it.

(3.) A conceit of men, that they are new born already. Many think their condition good, because of their civil honesty. Though that be a very comely and commendable thing, yet security in it kills its thousands. Many, because they are free from the common pollutions of the world, and possessed with many amiable virtues, never consider how much their hearts are stored with an enmity against God. Such count their righteousness their gain, and think it a sufficient bribe for God's mercy.

(4.) A conceit that to be new born is but to change an opinion. A change of opinion may look like faith, as presumption does, but it is not faith. The devil holds some men in the chain of sublimated speculations, which hinder the working of the most spiritual and influential truths.

(5.) Pride of reason, frequency of disputes. It is a rational age, an age overgrown with reason, and the Scripture tells us, 'not many wise,' &c. The truths of God are very much turned into scepticism.

(6.) The common atheism that so much prevails among us. How should men regard a discourse of the new birth, a begetting to God, when they scarce believe there is a God at all, but their own lusts, to be like unto? How should they be wrought upon by the word of God, that scarce believe there is any God to reveal a word, and that there is no word of God?

(7.) Hardness of heart, occasioned (through the just judgment of God) by the frequency and unprofitable hearing of the word. The word is most operative when it comes first into a nation or town. When the heart is not broken by hearing the word of truth, it becomes more hardened and compact in sin. Many other reasons might be rendered, but I have held you too long upon this subject.

End of A Discourse of the Word, the Instrument of Regeneration.

Charnock's Writings

Charnock's Writings by William Symington An extract from the Life and Character of Charnock The correctness of the composition, in these works, is remarkable, considering that they were not prepared for the press by the author himself, and that they must have been originally written amid scenes of distraction and turmoil, arising out of the events of the times. The latter circumstance may account for the manly vigor by which they are characterized, but it only renders their accuracy and polish the more wonderful. Refinement of taste and extensive scholarship can alone explain the chasteness, ease, and elegance of style, so free from all verbosity and clumsiness, which mark these productions. There were giants in literature in those days, and STEPHEN CHARNOCK was not the least of the noble fraternity.

Charnock may not have all the brilliancy of Bunyan, nor all the metaphysical acumen and subtle analysis of Howe, nor all the awful earnestness of Baxter; but he is not less argumentative, while he is more theological than any of them, and his theology, too, is more sound than that of some. "He was not," say the original editors of his works, "for that modern divinity which is so much in vogue with some, who would be counted the only sound divines; having tasted the old, he did not desire the new, but said the old is better." There is, therefore, not one of all the Puritan Divines whose writings can with more safety be recommended to the attention of students of divinity and young ministers. It is one of the happy signs of the times in which we live, that a taste for reading such works is beginning to revive; and we can conceive no better wish for the interests of mankind in general, and of our country in particular, than that the minds of our young divines were thoroughly impregnated with the good old theology to be found in such writings as those which we now take the liberty to introduce and recommend. "If a preacher wishes to recommend himself by the weight of his doctrines," to use the language of Mr Parsons, "he will find in the writings of Charnock the great truths of Scripture illustrated and explained in the most lucid and masterly manner. If he wishes to be distinguished by the evangelical strain of his discourses, and by the continual exhibition of Christ and him crucified, he will here find the characters of Christ, and the adaptation of the gospel to the circumstances and wants of man as a fallen creature, invariably kept in view. If he wishes for usefulness in the Church of God, here he has the brightest example of forcible appeals to the conscience, and of the most impressive applications of Scripture truth, to the various conditions of mankind. And, finally, if he reads for his own advantage as a Christian, his mind will be delighted with the inexhaustible variety here provided for the employment of his enlightened faculties, and his improvement in every divine attainment."

We cannot resist giving a few sentences from the original preface which his friends Adams and Veal prefixed to the treatise On the Existence and Attributes of God. "The sublimeness, variety, and rareness," say they, "of the truths handled, together with the elegance of the composure, neatness of the style, and whatever is wont to make any book desirable, all concur in the recommendation of it.....It is not a book to be played with or slept over, but read with the most intense and serious mind; for, though it afford much pleasure for the fancy, yet much more work for the heart, and hath indeed in it enough to busy all the faculties. The dress is complete and

decent, yet not garish nor theatrical; the rhetoric masculine and vigorous, such as became a pulpit, and was never borrowed from the stage. The expressions full, clear, apt, and such as are best suited to the weightiness and spirituality of the truths here delivered.

Discourse On the Eternity of God

Discourse On the Eternity of God by Stephen Charnock

[The following are excerpts from "Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God" by Stephen Charnock. Published by Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids: MI, 1979, in 2 volumes, vol. 1, pp. 285-299.]

3. There is no succession in God. God is without succession or chance. It is a quality of eternity; "from everlasting to everlasting he is God," i.e. the same. God doth not only always remain in being, but he always remains the same in that being: "thou art the same" (Psalms 102:27). The being of creatures is successive; the being of God is permanent, and remains entire with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed, the first notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which notes to us the duration of a being in regard of its existence; but to have no succession, nothing first or last, notes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its essence. The creatures are in a perpetual flux; something is acquired or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of existence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him. Every day he acquires something till he comes to his maturity; every day he loseth something till he comes to his period. A man is not the same at night that he was in the morning; something is expired, and something is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his substance, a change in his accidents. But God hath his whole being in one and the same point, or moment of eternity. He receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he loseth nothing of what he was before; he is always the same excellency and perfection in the same infiniteness as ever. His years do not fail (Hebrews 1:12), his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to-morrow, or yesterday, with him. As nothing is past or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are present, so nothing is past or future in regard of his essence. He is not in his essence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now. All his perfections are most perfect in him every moment; before all ages, after all ages. As he hath his whole essence undivided in every place, as well as in an immense space, so he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time. Some illustrate the difference between eternity and time by the similitude of a tree, or a rock standing upon the side of a river, or shore of the sea; the tree stands always the same and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot. The flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverse respect and relation of presence to the various parts of the river as they flow. The waters of the river press on, and push forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the same the next. So are all sublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no substantial change, yet they have an accidental; for the actions of the angels this day are not the same individual actions which they performed yesterday: but in God there is no change; he always remains the same. Of a creature, it may be said he was, or he is, or he shall be; of God it cannot be said but only he is. He is what he always was, and he is what he always will be; whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now. As it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is a flame: but it is not the same individual flame as was before, nor

is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more. While it continues it may be said there is a flame; yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts. So of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is. But God is the same, without any succession of parts and of time; of him it may be said, "He is." He is no more now than he was, and he shall be no more hereafter than he is. God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself. He sees all things sliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immovable nature. All other things pass from one state to another; from their original, to their eclipse and destruction; but God possesses his being in one indivisible point, having neither beginning, end, nor middle.

(1.) There is no succession in the knowledge of God. The variety of successions and changes in the world make not succession, or new objects in the Divine mind; for all things are present to him from eternity in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world, in regard of their existence. He doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he sees all things at once; "Known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18); but in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, there is yet no succession in God in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world; yet both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present to him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as if they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God; yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying and rising at the same time; so that there is succession in things when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come, in regard of their existence; but there is not past, present, and to come, in regard of God's knowledge of them, because he sees and knows not by any other, but by himself; he is his own light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees; beholding himself, he beholds all things.

(2.) There is no succession in the decrees of God. He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, so his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, so they are decreed at once; there is a succession in the execution of them; first grace, then glory; but the purpose of God for the bestowing of both, was in one and the same moment of eternity. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Ephesians 1:4): The choice of Christ, and the choice of some in him to be holy and to be happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is by the eternal counsel of God all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counsel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

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2. God hath life in himself (John 5:26): "The Father hath life in himself;" he is the "living God;" therefore "steadfast forever" (Daniel 6:26). He hath life by his essence, not by participation. He is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives not light or life from anything; and therefore he hath an unlimited life, not a drop of life, but a fountain; not a spark of a limited life, but a life transcending all bounds. He hath life in himself; all creatures have their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist; for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life. What doth necessarily exist therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence, without influence of any efficient cause. When God pronounced his name, "I Am that I Am," angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thousand four hundred years; Moses, to whom he then speaks, was in being; yet God only is, because he only hath the fountain of being in himself; but all that they were was a rivulet from him. He hath from nothing else, that he doth subsist; everything else hath its subsistence from him as their root, as the beam from the sun, as the rivers and fountains from the sea. All life is seated in God, as in its proper throne, in its most perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, essentially, therefore eternally. He is a pure act, nothing but vigor and act; he hath by his nature that life which others have by his grant; whence the Apostle saith (1 Timothy 6:16) not only that he is immortal, but he hath immortality in a full possession; forever without restriction, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himself. He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be. He always was, because he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any space before he did exist, then there was something which made him to exist; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being would be God. And to say God sprung into being by chance, when we see nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath some cause of its existence, would be vain; for since God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth something; and by the same reason, that he sprung up by chance, he might totally vanish by chance. What a strange notion of a God would this be! Such a God that had no life in himself but from chance! Since he hath life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence, he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itself, hath life without bounds, and can never desert it, nor be deprived of it; so that he lives necessarily, and it is absolutely impossible that he should not live; whereas all other things "live, and move, and have their being in him" (Acts 17:28); and as they live by his will, so they can return to nothing at his word.

3. If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatsoever begins, is changed in its passing from not being to being. It began to be what it was not; and if it ends, it ceaseth to be what it was; it cannot therefore be said to be God, if there were neither beginning or ending, or succession in it (Malachi 3:6): "I am the Lord, I change not;" (Job 37:23): "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." God argues here, saith Calvin, from his unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his purpose. Had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change from nothing to something. A change of essence is greater than a change of purpose. God is a sun glittering always in the same glory; no growing up in youth; no passing on to age. If he were not without succession, standing in one point of eternity, there would be a change from past to present, from present to

future. The eternity of God is a shield against all kind of mutability. If anything sprang up in the essence of God that was not there before, he could not be said to be either an eternal, or an unchanged substance.

4. God could not be an infinitely perfect Being, if he were not eternal. A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Whatsoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot swallow up all perfections in itself. God hath an unsearchable perfection. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7.) He cannot be found out: he is infinite, because he is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility ariseth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the short line of man's understanding. His essence in regard of its diffusion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehensible, as well as his action: if God, therefore, had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not possess the highest perfection; because a perfection might be conceived beyond it. If his being could fail, he were not perfect; can that deserve the name of the highest perfection, which is capable of corruption and dissolution? To be finite and limited, is the greatest imperfection, for it consists in a denial of being. He could not be the most blessed Being if he were not always so, and should not forever remain so; and whatsoever perfections he had, would be soured by the thoughts, that in time they would cease, and so could not be pure affections, because not permanent; but "He is blessed from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 12:13). Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfection without limitation; he would have been limited by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himself, and so more perfect than he: but since God is the most sovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined perfecter by the most capacious understanding, He is certainly "eternal;" being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be omnipotent, almighty, if he were not eternal. The title of almighty agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatsoever hath a beginning was once nothing; and when it was nothing, could act nothing: where there is no being there is no power. Neither doth the title of almighty agree with a perishing nature: he can do nothing to purpose, that cannot preserve himself against the outward force and violence of enemies, or against the inward causes of corruption and dissolution. No account is to be made of man, because "his breath is in his nostrils" (Isaiah 2:22); could a better account be made of God, if he were of the like condition? He could not properly be almighty, that were not always mighty; if he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him; he that hath all power, can have no hurt. If he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, nothing can make him miserable, since misery consists in those things which happen against our will. The almightiness and eternity of God are linked together: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8): almighty because eternal, and eternal because almighty.

6. God would not be the first cause of all if he were not eternal; but he is the first and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things: that which is the first cannot begin to be; it were not then the first; it cannot cease to be: whatsoever is dissolved, is dissolved into that whereof it doth consist, which was before it, and then it was not the first. The world might not have been; it was once nothing; it must have some cause to call it out of nothing: nothing hath no power to make itself something; there is a superior cause, by whose will and power it comes into being and so gives all the creatures their distinct forms. This power cannot but be eternal; it must be before the

world; the founder must be before the foundation; and his existence must be from eternity; or we must say nothing did exist from eternity: and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time. What we see, and what we are, must arise from itself or some other; it cannot from itself: if anything made itself, it had a power to make itself; it then had an active power before it had a being; it was something in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of existence at the same time. Suppose it had a power to produce itself, this power must be conferred upon it by another; and so the power of producing itself, was not from itself, but from another; but if the power of being was from itself, why did it not produce itself before? Why was it one moment out of being? If there be any existence of things, it is necessary that that which was the "first cause," should "exist from eternity." Whatsoever was the immediate cause of the world, yet the first and chief cause wherein we must rest, must have nothing before it; if it had anything before it, it were not the first; he therefore that is the first cause, must be without beginning; nothing must be before him; if he had a beginning from some other, he could not be the first principle and author of all things; if he be the first cause of all things, he must give himself a beginning, or be from eternity: he could not give himself a beginning; whatsoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing, it could do nothing; it could not give itself anything, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not. If he made himself in time, why did he not make himself before? What hindered him? It was either because he could not, or because he would not; if he could not, he always lacked sufficient power, and always would, unless it were bestowed upon him, and then he could not be said to be from himself. If he would not make himself before, then he might have made himself when he would: how had he the power of willing and nilling without a being? Nothing cannot will or nill; nothing hath no faculties; so that it is necessary to grant some eternal being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny some eternal being, we must deny all being; our own being, the being of everything about us; unconceivable absurdities will arise. So, then, if God were the cause of all things, he did exist before all things, and that from eternity.

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5. How dreadful is it to lie under the stroke of an eternal God! His eternity is as great a terror to him that hates him, as it is a comfort to him that loves him; because he is the "living God, an everlasting king, the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation" (Jeremiah 10:10). Though God be least in their thoughts, and is made light of in the world, yet the thoughts of God's eternity, when he comes to judge the world, shall make the slights of him tremble. That the Judge and punisher lives forever, is the greatest grievance to a soul in misery, and adds an inconceivable weight to it, above what the infiniteness of God's executive power could do without that duration. His eternity makes the punishment more dreadful than his power; his power makes it sharp, but his eternity renders it perpetual; ever to endure, is the sting at the end of every lash. And how sad is it to think that God lays his eternity as a security for the punishment of obstinate sinners, and engageth it by an oath, that he will "whet his glittering sword," that his "hand shall take hold of judgment," that he will "render vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him;" a reward proportioned to the greatness of their offences, and the glory of an eternal God! "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever;" (Deuteronomy 32:40-41): 1:e., as surely as I live forever, I will whet my glittering sword. As none can convey good with a perpetuity, so none can convey evil with such a lastingness as God. It is a great loss to lose a ship richly laden in the bottom of the sea, never to be east upon the shore; but how much greater is it to lose eternally a sovereign God,

which we were capable of eternally enjoying, and undergo an evil as durable as that God we slighted, and were in a possibility of avoiding! The miseries of men after this life are not eased, but sharpened, by the life and eternity of God.

Use 2. Of comfort. What foundation of comfort can we have in any of God's attributes, were it not for his infiniteness and eternity, though he be "merciful, good, wise, faithful?" What support could there be, if they were perfections belonging to a corruptible God? What hopes of a resurrection to happiness can we have, or of the duration of it, if that God that promised it were not immortal to continue it, as well as powerful to effect it? His power were not Almighty, if his duration were not eternal.

1. If God be eternal, his covenant will be so. It is founded upon the eternity of God; the oath whereby he confirms it, is by his life. Since there is none greater than himself, he swears by himself (Hebrews 6:13), or by his own life, which he engageth together with his eternity for the full performance; so that if he lives forever, the covenant shall not be disannulled; it is an "immutable counsel" (ver. 16, 17). The immutability of his counsel follows the immutability of his nature. Immutability and eternity go hand in hand together. The promise of eternal life is as ancient as God himself in regard of the purpose of the promise, or in regard of the promise made to Christ for us. "Eternal life which God promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2): As it hath an ante-eternity, so it hath a post-eternity; therefore the gospel, which is the new covenant published, is termed the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6), which can no more be altered and perish, than God can change and vanish into nothing; he can as little morally deny his truth, as he can naturally desert his life. The covenant is there represented in a green color, to note its perpetual lushness; the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant "about the throne, was like to an emerald" (Rev. 4:3), a stone of a green color, whereas the natural rainbow hath many colors; this but one, to signify its eternity.

2. If God be eternal, he being our God in covenant, is an eternal good and possession. "This God is our God forever and ever" (Psalms 48:14): "He is a dwelling-place in all generations." We shall traverse the world awhile, and then arrive at the blessings Jacob wished for Joseph, "the blessings of the everlasting hills" (Genesis 49:26). If an estate of a thousand pound per annum render a man's life comfortable for a short term, how much more may the soul be swallowed up with joy in the enjoyment of the Creator, whose years never fail, who lives forever to be enjoyed, and can keep us in life forever to enjoy him! Death, indeed, will seize upon us by God's irreversible order, but the immortal Creator will make him disgorge his morsel, and land us in a glorious immortality; our souls at their dissolution, and our bodies at the resurrection, after which they shall remain forever, and employ the extent of that boundless eternity, in the fruition of the sovereign and eternal God; for it is impossible that the believer, who is united to the immortal God that is from everlasting to everlasting, can ever perish; for being in conjunction with him who is an ever flowing fountain of life, he cannot suffer him to remain in the jaws of death. While God is eternal, and always the same, it is not possible that those that partake of his spiritual life, should not also partake of his eternity. It is from the consideration of the endlessness of the years of God that the church comforts herself that "her children shall continue, and their seed be established forever" (Psalms 102:27-28). And from the eternity of God Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:12) concludes the eternity of believers, "Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die, O Lord." After they are retired from this world, they shall live forever with God, without any

change by the multitude of those imaginable years and ages that shall run forever. It is that God that hath neither beginning nor end, that is our God; who hath not only immortality in himself but immortality to give out to others. As he hath "abundance of spirit" to quicken them (Malachi 2:15), so he hath abundance of immortality to continue them. It is only in the consideration of this a man can with wisdom say, "Soul, take thy ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years" (Luke 12:19-20): to say it of any other possession is the greatest folly in the judgment of our Saviour. "Mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality;" "rivers of pleasure" shall be "for evermore." Death is a word never spoken there by any; never heard by any in that possession of eternity; it is forever put out as one of Christ's conquered enemies. The happiness depends upon the presence of God, with whom believers shall be forever present. Happiness cannot perish as long as God lives; he is the first and the last; the first of all delights, nothing before him; the last of all pleasures, nothing beyond him; a paradise of delights in every point, without a flaming sword.

3. The enjoyment of God will be as fresh and glorious after many ages, as it was at first. God is eternal, and eternity knows no change; there will then be the fullest possession without any decay in the object enjoyed. There can be nothing past, nothing future; time neither adds to it, nor detracts from it; that infinite fulness of perfection which flourisheth in him now, will flourish eternally, without any discoloring of it in the least, by those innumerable ages that shall run to eternity, much less any despoiling him of them: "He is the same in his endless duration" (Psalms 102:27). As God is, so will the eternity of him be, without succession, without division; the fulness of joy will be always present; without past to be thought of with regret for being gone; without future to be expected with tormenting desires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux; an entire possession of all together, without the passing away of pleasures that may be wished to return, or expectation of future joys which might be desired to hasten. Time is fluid, but eternity is stable; and after many ages, the joys will be as savory and satisfying as if they had been but that moment first tasted by our hungry appetites. When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon you, it shall be so far from ever setting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the sands on the seashore, the sun, in the light of whose countenance you shall live, shall be as bright as at the first appearance; he will be so far from ceasing to flow, that he will flow as strong, as full, as at the first communication of himself in glory to the creature. God, therefore, as sitting upon his throne of grace, and acting according to his covenant, is like a jasper-stone, which is of a green color, a color always delightful (Revelation 4:3); because God is always vigorous and flourishing; a pure act of life, sparkling new and fresh rays of life and light to the creature, flourishing with a perpetual spring, and contenting the most capacious desire; forming your interest, pleasure, and satisfaction; with an infinite variety, without any change or succession; he will have variety to increase delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite and eternal God: he is not a cistern, but a fountain, wherein water is always living, and never putrefies.

Discourse On the Power of God

Discourse On the Power of God by Stephen Charnock

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Instruct. 3. Inference from the doctrine. The blessedness of God is hence evidenced. If God be Almighty, he can lack nothing; all lack speaks weakness. If he doth what he will, he cannot be miserable; all misery consists in those things which happen contrary to our will. There is nothing can hinder his happiness, because nothing can resist his power. Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him, nothing can strip him of what he hath, of what he is. If he can do whatsoever he will, he cannot lack anything that he wills. He is as happy, as great, as glorious, as he will; for he hath a perfect liberty of will to will, and a perfect power to attain what he will; his will cannot be restrained, nor his power measured. It would be a defect in blessedness, to will what he were not able to do: sorrow is the result of a absence of power, with a presence of will. If he could will anything which he could not effect, he would be miserable, and no longer God: he can do whatsoever he pleases, and therefore can lack nothing that pleases him. He cannot be happy, the original of whose happiness is not in himself: nothing can be infinitely happy, that is limited and bounded.

Instruct. 4. Hence is the ground for the immutability of God. As he is incapable of changing his resolves, because of his infinite wisdom, so he is incapable of being forced to any change, because of his infinite power. Being almighty, he can be no more changed from power to weakness; than, being all-wise, he can be changed from wisdom to folly; or, being omniscient, from knowledge to ignorance. He cannot be altered in his purposes, because of his wisdom; nor in the manner and method of his actions, because of his infinite strength. Men, indeed, when their designs are laid deepest, and their purposes stand firmest, yet are forced to stand still, or change the manner of the execution of their resolves, by reason of some outward accidents that obstruct them in their course; for, having not wisdom to foresee future hindrances, they have not power to prevent them, or strength to remove them, when they unexpectedly interpose themselves between their desire and performance; but no created power has strength enough to be a bar against God. By the same act of his will that he resolves a thing, he can puff away any impediments that seem to rise up against him. He that lacks no means to effect his purposes, cannot be checked by anything that riseth up to stand in his way; heaven, earth, sea, the deepest places, are too weak to resist his will (Psalms 135:6). The purity of the angels will not, and the devil's malice cannot, frustrate his will; the one voluntarily obeys the beck of his hand, and the other is vanquished by the power of it. What can make him change his purposes? Who (if he please) can dash the earth against the heavens in the twinkling of an eye, untying the world from its centre, clap the stars and elements together into one mass, and blow the whole creation of men and devils into nothing? Because he is almighty, therefore he is immutable.

Instruct. 5. Hence is inferred the providence of God, and his government of the world. His power, as well as his wisdom, gives him a right to govern: nothing can equal him, therefore nothing can

share the command with him; since all things are his works, it is fittest they should be under his order: he that frames a work, is fittest to guide and govern it. God hath the most right to govern, because he hath knowledge to direct his power, and power to execute the results of his wisdom: he knows what is convenient to order, and hath strength to effect what he orders. As his power would be oppressive without goodness and wisdom, so his goodness and wisdom would be fruitless without power. An artificer that hath lost his hands may direct, but cannot make an engine: a pilot that hath lost his arms may advise the way of steerage, but cannot hold the helm; something is wanting in him to be a complete governor: but since both counsel and power are infinite in God, hence results an infinite right to govern, and an infinite fitness, because his will cannot be resisted, his power cannot be enfeebled or diminished; he can quicken and increase the strength of all means as he pleases. He can hold all things in the world together, and preserve them in those functions wherein he settled them, and conduct them to those ends for which he designed them. Every artificer, the more excellent he is, and the more excellency of power appears in his work, is the more careful to maintain and cherish it. Those that deny Providence, do not only tear away from him the inner springs of his goodness, but strip him of a main exercise of his power, and engender in men a suspicion of weariness and feebleness in him; as though his strength had been spent in making them, that none is left to guide them. They would make him headless in regard of his wisdom, and boweless in regard of his goodness, and armless in regard of his strength. If he did not, or were not able to preserve and provide for his creatures, his power in making them would be, in a great part, an invisible power; if he did not preserve what he made, and govern what he preserves, it would be a kind of strange and unskilled power, to make, and allow it to be dashed in pieces at the pleasure of others. If the power of God should relinquish the world, the life of things would be extinguished, the fabric would be confounded, and fall into a deplorable chaos. That, which is composed of so many various pieces, could not maintain its union, if there were not a secret virtue binding them together and maintaining those varieties of links. Well, then, since God is not only so good, that he cannot will anything but what is good; so wise, that he cannot err or mistake; but also so able, that he cannot be defeated or mated; he hath every way a full ability to govern the world: where those three are infinite, the right and fitness resulting from thence is unquestionable: and, indeed, to deny God this active part of his power, is to render him weak, foolish, cruel, or all.

Instruct. 6. Here is a ground for the worship of God. Wisdom and power are the grounds of the respect we give to men; they being both infinite in God, are the foundation of a solemn honor to be returned to him by his creatures. If a man makes a ingenious machine, we honor him for his skill; if another vanquish a vigorous enemy, we admire him for his strength: and shall not the efficacy of God's power in creation, government, redemption, enflame us with a sense of the honor of his name and perfections? We admire those princes that have vast empires, numerous armies, that have a power to conquer their enemies, and preserve their own people in peace. How much more ground have we to pay a mighty reverence to God, who, without trouble and weariness, made and manages this vast empire of the world by a word and gesture! What sensible thoughts have we of the noise the power of the sun, the storms of the sea! These things that have no understanding have struck men with such a reverence, that many have adored them as gods. What reverence and adoration doth this mighty power, joined with an infinite wisdom in God, demand at our hands! All religion and worship stands especially upon two pillars, goodness, and power in God; if either of these were defective, all religion would faint away. We can expect no entertainment with him

without goodness, nor any benefit from him without power. This God prefaceth to the command to worship him, the benefit his goodness had conferred upon them, and the, powerful manner of conveyance of it to them (2 Kings 17:36): "The Lord brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power, and an out-stretched arm; him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice." Because this attribute is a main foundation of prayer, the Lord's Prayer is concluded with a doxology of it, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." As he is rich, possessing all blessings; so he is powerful, to confer all blessings on us, and make them efficacious to us. The Jews repeat many times in their prayers, some say an hundred times, melech ha-olam, "The King of the world;" it is both an awe and an encouragement. We could not, without consideration of it, pray in faith of success; nay, we could not pray at all, if his power were defective to help us, and his mercy too weak: to relieve us. Who would humbly beg, or lie as a prostrate suppliant, to a feeble arm? Upon this ability of God, our Savior built his petitions (Hebrews 5:7): "He offered up strong cries unto Him that was able to save him from death." Abraham's faith hung upon the same string (Romans 4:21), and the captived church supplicates God to act according to the greatness of his power (Psalms 79:11). In all our addresses this is to be eyed and considered; God is able to help, to relieve, to ease me, let my misery be never so great, and my strength never so vigorous; (Matthew 8:2): "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," was the consideration the leper had when he came to worship Christ; he was clear in his power, and therefore worshipped him though he was not equally clear in his will. All worship is shot wrong that is not directed to, and conducted by, the thoughts of this attribute, whose assistance we need. When we beg the pardon of our sins, we should eye mercy and power; when we beg his righting us in any case where we are unjustly oppressed, we do not eye righteousness without power; when we plead the performance of his promise, we do not regard his faithfulness only without the prop of his power. As power ushers in all the attributes of God in their exercise and manifestation in the world, so should it be the target our eyes should be fixed upon in all our acts of worship: as without his power his other attributes would be useless, so without due apprehensions of his power our prayers will be faithless and comfortless. The title in the Lord's prayer directs us to a prospect both of his goodness and power; his goodness in the word Father, his greatness, excellency, and power, in the word Heaven. The heedless consideration of the infiniteness of this perfection roots up piety in the midst of us, and makes us so careless in worship. Did we more think of that Power that raised the world out of nothing, that orders all creatures by an act of his will, that performed so great an exploit as that of our redemption, when masterless sin had triumphed over the world, we should give God the honor and adoration which so great an excellency challengeth and deserves at our hands, though we ourselves had not been the work of his hands, or the monuments of his strength; how could any creature engross to itself that reverence from us which is due to the powerful Creator, of whom it comes infinitely short in strength as well as wisdom?

Instruct. 7. From this we have a ground for the belief of the resurrection. God aims at the glory of his power, as well as the glory of any other attribute. Moses else would not have culled out this as the main argument, in his pleading with God, for the sheathing the sword which he began to draw out against them in the wilderness (Numbers 14:16): "The nations will say, because the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which he swore to them," &c. As the finding out the particulars of the dust of our bodies discovers the vastness of his knowledge, so to raise them will manifest the glory of his power as much as creation; bodies that have mouldered away into

multitudes of atoms, been resolved into the elements, passed through varieties of changes, been sometimes the matter to lodge the form of a plant, or been turned into the substance of a fish or fowl, or vaped up into a cloud, and been part of that matter which hath compacted a thunderbolt, disposed of in places far distant, scattered by the winds, swallowed and concocted by beasts; for these to be called out from their different places of abode, to meet in one body, and be restored to their former consistency, in a marriage union, in the "twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52), it is a consideration that may justly amaze us, and our shallow understandings are too feeble to comprehend it. But is it not credible, since all the disputes against it may be silenced by reflections on Infinite Power, which nothing can oppose, for which nothing can be esteemed too difficult to effect, which doth not imply a contradiction in itself? It was no less amazing to the blessed virgin to hear a message that she should conceive a Son without knowing a man; but she is quickly answered, by the angel, with a "Nothing is impossible to God" (Luke 1:34, Luke 1:37). The distinct parts of our bodies cannot be hid from his all-seeing eye, wherever they are lodged, and in all the changes they pass through, as was discoursed when the Omniscience of God was handled; shall, then, the collection of them together be too hard for his invincible power and strength, and the uniting all those parts into a body, with new dispositions to receive their several souls, be too big and bulky for that Power which never yet was acquainted with any hindrance?

Instruct. 8. Since the power of God is so great and incomprehensible, how strange is it that it should be contemned and abused by the creatures as it is! The power of God is beaten down by some, outraged by others, blasphemed by many, under their sufferings. The stripping God of the honor of his creation, and the glory of his preservation of the world, falls under this charge: thus do they that deny his framing the world alone, or thought the first matter was not of God's creation, and such as fancied an evil principle, the author of all evil, as God is the author of all good, and so exempt from the power of God, that it could not be vanquished by him. These things have formerly found defenders in the world; but they are, in themselves, ridiculous and vain, and have no footing in common reason, and are not worthy of debate in a Christian auditory. In general, all idolatry in the world did arise from the lack of a due notion of this Infinite Power. The heathen thought one God was not sufficient for the managing all things in the world, and therefore they feigned several gods, that had several charges; as Ceres presided over the fruits of the earth; Esculapius over the cure of diseases; Mercury for merchandise and trade; Mars for war and battles; Apollo and Minerva for learning and ingenious arts; and fortune for casual things. Whence doth the other sort of idolatry, the adoring our bags and gold, our dependencies on, and trusting in, creatures for help arise, but from ignorance of God's power, or mean and slender apprehensions of it? First, there is a contempt of it. Secondly, An abuse of it.

1. It is contemned in every sin, especially in obstinacy in sin. All sin whatsoever is built upon some false notion or monstrous conception of one or other of God's perfections, and in particular of this. It includes a secret and lurking imagination, that we are able to grapple with Omnipotence, and enter the lists with Almighty; what else can be judged of the apostle's expression (1 Corinthians 10:22)," Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than he?" Do we think we have an arm too powerful for that justice we provoke, and can repel that vengeance we exasperate? Do we think we are an even match for God, and are able to despoil him of his Divinity? To despise his will, violate his order, practice what he forbids with a severe threatening,

and pawns his power to make it good, is to pretend to have an arm like God, and be able to thunder with a voice equal or superior to him, as the expression is (Job 40:9). All security in sin is of this strain; when men are not concerned at Divine threatenings, nor staggered in their sinful race, they intimate, that the declarations of Divine Power are but vain-glorious boastings; that God is not so strong and able as he reports himself to be; and therefore they will venture it, and dare him to try, whether the strength of his arm be as forcible as the words of his mouth are terrible in his threats; this is to believe themselves Creators, not creatures. We magnify God's power in our poverty, and debase it in our rebellions; as though Omnipotence were only able to supply our necessities, and unable to revenge the injuries we offer him.

2. This power is contemned in distrust of God. All distrust is founded in a doubting of his truth, as if he would not be as good as his word; or of his omniscience, as if he had not a memory to retain his word; or of his power, as if he could not be as great as his word. We measure the infinite power of God by the short line of our understandings, as if infinite strength were bounded within the narrow compass of our finite reason; as if he could do no more than we were able to do. How soon did those Israelites lose the remembrance of God's outstretched arm, when they uttered that atheistical speech (Psalms 78:19), "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?". As if he that turned the dust of Egypt into lice, for the punishment of their oppressors, could not turn the dust of the wilderness into corn, for the support of their bodies! As if he that had miraculously rebuked the Red Sea, for their safety, could not provide bread, for their nourishment! Though they had seen the Egyptians with lost lives in the morning, in the same place where their lives had been miraculously preserved in the evening, yet they disgrace that power which they had observed, by opposing to it the stature of the Anakims, the strength of their cities, and the height of their walls (Numbers 13:32). And (Numbers 14:3). "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword?" As though the giants of Canaan were too strong for Him, for whom they had seen the armies of Egypt too weak. How did they contract the almightiness of God into the littleness of a little man, as if he must needs sink under the sword of a Canaanite? This distrust must arise either from a flat atheism, a denial of the being of God, or his government of the world; or unworthy conceits of a weakness in him, that he had made creatures too hard for himself; that he were not strong enough to grapple with those mighty Anakims, and give them the possession of Canaan against so great a force. Distrust of him implies either that he was always destitute of power, or that his power is exhausted by his former works, or that it is limited, and near a period: it is to deny him to be the Creator that moulded heaven and earth. Why should we, by distrust, put a slight upon that power which he hath so often expressed, and which, in the tiniest works of his hands, surmount the force of the sharpest understanding?

3. It is contemned in too great a fear of man, which ariseth from a distrust of Divine power. Fear of man is a crediting the might of man with a dishonour of the arm of God, it takes away the glory of his might, and renders the creature stronger than God; and God more feeble than a mortal; as if the arm of man were a rod of iron, and the arm of God a brittle reed. How often do men tremble at the threatenings and hectorings of ruffians, yet will stand as stakes against the precepts and threatenings of God, as though he had less power to preserve us, than enemies had to destroy? With what disdain doth God speak to men infected with this attitude (Isaiah 51:12-13)? "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the Son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the

earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?" To fear man that is as grass, that cannot think a thought without a Divine concurrence, that cannot breathe, but by a Divine power, nor touch a hair without license first granted from heaven; this is forgetfulness, and consequently a slight of that Infinite Power, which hath been manifested in founding the earth and garnishing the heavens. All fear of man, in the way of our duty, doth in some sort thrust out the remembrance, and discredit the great actions of the Creator. Would not a mighty prince think it a disparagement to him, if his servant should decline his command for fear of one of his subjects? And hath not the great God just cause to think himself disgraced by us, when we deny him obedience for fear of a creature: as though he had but an infant ability too feeble to bear us out in duty, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh?

4. It is scorned by trusting in ourselves, in means, in man, more than in God. When in any distress we will try every creature refuge, before we have recourse to God; and when we apply ourselves to him, we do it with such slight and perfunctory frames, and with so much despondency, as if we despaired either of his ability or will to help us; and implore him with cooler affections than we solicit creatures: or, when in a disease we depend upon the virtue of the medicine, the ability of the physician, and reflect not upon that power that endued the medicine with that virtue, and supports the quality in it, and concurs to the operation of it. When we depend upon the activity of the means, as if they had power originally in themselves, and not derivatively; and do not eye the Power of God animating and assisting them. We cannot expect relief from anything with a neglect of God, but we render it in our thoughts more powerful than God: We acknowledge a greater fulness in a shallow stream, than in an eternal spring; we do, in effect, depose the true God, and create to ourselves a new one; we assert, by such a kind of acting, the creature, if not superior, yet equal with God, and independent on him. When we trust in our own strength, without begging his assistance; or boast of our own strength, without acknowledging his concurrence, as the Assyrian; "By the strength of my hand have I done this; I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man" (Isaiah 10:13). It is, as if the axe should boast itself against him that hews therewith, and thinks itself more mighty than the arm that wields it (ver. 15), when we trust in others more than in God. Thus God upbraids those by the prophet, that sought help from Egypt, telling them (Isaiah 31:3), "The Egyptians were men, and not gods; intimating, that by their dependence on them, they rendered them gods and not men, and advanced them from the state of creatures to that of almighty deities. It is to set a pile of dust, a heap of ashes, above Him that created and preserves the world. To trust in a creature, is to make it as infinite as God; to do that which is impossible in itself to be done. God himself cannot make a creature infinite, for that were to make him God. It is also contemned when we ascribe what we receive to the power of instruments, and not to the power of God. Men, in whatsoever they do for us, are but the tools whereby the Creator works. Is it not a disgrace to the draughtsman to admire his pencil, and not himself; to the mechanic, to admire his file and machines, and not his power? "It is not I," saith Paul, "that labor, but the grace, the efficacious grace of God, which is in me." Whatsoever good we do is from him, not from ourselves; to ascribe it to ourselves, or to instruments, is to overlook and condemn his power.

5. Unbelief of the gospel is a contempt and disowning Divine power. This perfection hath been discovered in the conception of Christ, the union of the two natures, his resurrection from the grave, the restoration of the world, and the conversion of men, more than in the creation of the world: then what a disgrace is unbelief to all that power that so severely punished the Jews for the

rejecting the gospel: turned so many nations from their beloved superstitions; humbled the power of princes and the wisdom of philosophers; chased devils from their temples by the weakness of fishermen; planted the standard of the gospel against the common notions and inveterate customs of the world! What a disgrace is unbelief to this power which hath preserved Christianity from being extinguished by the force of men and devils, and kept it flourishing in the midst of sword, fire, and executioners; that hath made the simplicity of the gospel overpower the eloquence of orators, and multiplied it from the ashes of martyrs, when it was destitute of all human assistances! Not heartily to believe and embrace that doctrine, which hath been attended with such marks of power, is a high reflection upon this Divine perfection, so highly manifested in the first publication, propagation, and preservation of it.

Secondly, The power of God is abused, as well as contemned. 1. When we make use of it to justify contradictions. The doctrine of transubstantiation is an abuse of this power. When the maintainers of it cannot answer the absurdities alleged against it, they have recourse to the power of God. It implies a contradiction, that the same body should be on earth and in heaven at the same instant of time; that it should be at the right hand of God, and in the mouth and stomach of a man; that it should be a body of flesh, and yet bread to the eye and to the taste; that it should be visible and invisible, a glorious body, and yet gnawn by the teeth of a creature; that it should be multiplied in a thousand places, and yet an entire body in every one, where there is no member to be seen, no flesh to be tasted; that it should be above us in the highest heavens, and yet within us in our lower bowels; such contradictions as these are an abuse of the power of God. Again, we abuse this power when we believe every idle story that is reported, because God is able to make it so if he pleased. We may as well believe Aesop's Fables to be true, that birds spake, and beasts reasoned, because the power of God can enable such creatures to such acts. God's power is not the rule of our belief of a thing without the exercise of it in matter of fact, and the declaration of it upon sufficient evidence.

2. The power of God is abused by presuming on it, without using the means he hath appointed. When men sit with folded arms, and make a confidence in his power a glorious title to their idleness and disobedience, they would have his strength do all, and his precept should move them to do nothing; this is a trust of his power against his command, a pretended glorifying his power with a slight of his sovereignty. Though God be almighty, yet, for the most part, he exerciseth his might in giving life and success to second causes and lawful endeavors. When we stay in the mouth of danger, without any call ordering us to continue, and against a door of providence opened for our rescue, and sanctuary ourselves in the power of God without any promise, without any providence conducting us; this is not to glorify the Divine might, but to neglect it, in neglecting the means which his power affords to us for our escape; to condemn it to our humors, to work miracles for us according to our wills, and against his own. God could have sent a worm to be Herod's executioner when he sought the life of our Saviour, or employed an angel from heaven to have tied his hands or stopped his breath, and not put Joseph upon a flight to Egypt with our Saviour; yet had it not been an abuse of the power of God, for Joseph to have neglected the precept, and slighted the means God gave him for the preserving his own life and that of the child's? Christ himself, when the Jews consulted to destroy him, presumed not upon the power of God to secure him, but used ordinary means for his preservation, by walking no more openly, but retiring himself into a city near the wilderness till the hour was come, and the call of his Father

manifest" (John 11:53-54). A rash running upon danger, though for the truth itself, is a presuming upon, and consequently an abuse of, this power; a proud challenging it to serve our turns against the authority of his will, and the force of his precept; a not resting in his ordinate power, but demanding his absolute power to pleasure our follies and presumptions; concluding and expecting more from it than what is authorized by his will.

Instruct. 9. If infinite power be a peculiar property of God, how miserable will all wicked rebels be under this power of God! Men may break his laws, but not impair his arm; they may slight his word, but cannot resist his power. If he swear that he will sweep a place with the besom of destruction, "as he hath thought, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand," (Isaiah 14:23-24). Rebels against an earthly prince may exceed him in strength, and be more powerful than their sovereign; none can equal God, much less exceed him. As none can exercise an act of hostility against him without his permissive will, so none can struggle from under his hand without his positive will. He hath an arm not to be moved, a hand not to be wrung aside. God is represented on his throne like a "jasper stone" (Revelation 4:3), as one of invincible power when he comes to judge; the jasper is a stone which withstands the greatest force. Though men resist the order of his laws, they cannot the sentence of their punishment, nor the execution of it. None can any more exempt themselves from the arm of his strength, than they can from the authority of his dominion. As they must bow to his sovereignty, so must they sink under his force. A prisoner in this world may make his escape, but a prisoner in the world to come cannot (Job 10:7). "There is none that can deliver out of thine hand." "There is none to deliver when he tears in pieces" (Psalms 50:22). His strength is uncontrollable; hence his throne is represented as a "fiery flame" (Daniel 7:9). As a spark of fire hath power to kindle one thing after another, and increase till it consumes a forest, a city, swallow up all combustible matter till it consumes a world, and many worlds, if they were in being, what power hath the tree to resist the fire, though it seems mighty, when it outbraves the winds? What man, to this day, hath been able to free himself from that chain of death God clapped upon him for his revolt? And if he be too feeble to rescue himself from a temporal, much less from an eternal death. The devils have, to this minute, groaned under the pile of wrath, without any success in delivering themselves by all their strength, which much surmounts all the strength of mankind, nor have they any hopes to work their rescue to eternity. How foolish is every sinner! Can we poor worms strut it out against Infinite Power? We cannot resist the meanest creatures when God commissions them, and puts a sword into their hands. They will not, no, not the worms, be startled at the glory of a king, when they have the Creator's warrant to be his executioners (Acts 12:23). Who can withstand him, when he commands the waves and inundations of the sea to leap over the shore; when he divides the ground in earthquakes, and makes it gape wide to swallow the inhabitants of it; when the air is corrupted to breed pestilences; when storms and showers, unseasonably falling, putrify the fruits of the earth; what created power can mend the matter, and, with a prevailing voice, say to him, What dost thou? There are two attributes God will make to shine in hell to the full; his wrath and his power (Romans 9:22): "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is wrath and power: both are joined together. It is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and not only that, for then it were well for the damned creature. To have many sharp blows, and from a strong arm, this may be without putting forth the highest strength a man hath; but in this God makes it his design to make his power known and conspicuous; he takes the

sword, as it were, in both hands, that he may show the strength of his arm in striking the harder blow; and therefore the apostles calls it (2 Thessalonians 1:9) "the glory of his power," which puts a sting into his wrath; and it is called (Revelation 19:15) "the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty." God will do it in such a manner as to make men sensible of his almightiness in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be, that is backed by all the strength of God! When there will be a powerful wrath, without a powerful compassion; when all his power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying; how irresistible will be the load of such a weighty hand! How can the dust of the balance break the mighty bars, or get out of the lists of a powerful vengeance, or hope for any grain of comfort? O, that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with Omnipotence! What force can any have to resist the presence of Him, before whom rocks melt, and the heavens, at length, shall be shrivelled up as a parchment by the last fire! As the light of God's face is too dazzling to be beheld by us, so the arm of his power is too mighty to be opposed by us. His almightiness is above the reach of our potsherd strength, as his infiniteness is above the capacity of our purblind understanding. God were not omnipotent, if his power could be rendered ineffectual by any.

Use II. A second use of this point, from the consideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort. As Omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be lacking to him that finds himself folded in the arms of Omnipotence? This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; "I am the Lord, your God;" therefore, that power, which is as essential to the Godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is, in the rights and extent of it, assured unto you. Nay, may we not say, it is made over more than any other, because it is that which animates every other perfection; and is the Spirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world. If God had expressed himself in particular, as, "I am a true God, a wise God, a loving God, a righteous God, I am yours;" what would all, or any of those, have signified, unless the other also had been implied, as, "I am an Almighty God, I am your God!" In God's making over himself in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which, all his other grants would be insignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hands of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never use his power to injure his confiding creature; if it were in our own hands, we might use it to injure ourselves. It is a power in the hands of an indulgent Father, not a hard-hearted tyrant; it is a just power; "His right hand is full of righteousness" (Psalms 48:10); because of his righteousness he can never use it ill, and because of his wisdom he can never use it unseasonably. Men that have strength, often misplace the actings of it, because of their folly; and sometimes employ it to base ends, because of their wickedness; but this power in God is always awakened by goodness, and conducted by wisdom; it is never exercised by self-will and passion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteousness. How comfortable is it to think, that you have a God that can do what he pleases; nothing so difficult but he can effect, nothing so strong but he can overrule! You need not dread men, since you have One to restrain them; nor fear devils, since you have One to chain them; no creature but is acted by this power; no creature but must fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation; it is not weakened by his preservation of things; he yet hath a fullness of power, and a residue of Spirit; for whom should that eternal arm of the Lord be displayed, and that incomprehensible thunder of his power be shot out, but for those for whose sake and for whose comfort it is revealed in his word?

In particular,

1. Here is comfort in all afflictions and distresses. Our evils can never be so great to oppress us, as his power is great to deliver us. The same power that brought a world out of a chaos, and constituted, and hath hitherto preserved, the regular motion of the stars, can bring order out of our confusions, and light out of our darkness. When our Saviour was in the greatest distress, and beheld the face of his Father frowning, while he was upon the cross, in his complaint to him, he exerciseth faith upon his power (Matthew 27:46): "Eli, Eli: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That this, My strong, my strong; El, is a name of power, belonging to God; he comforts himself in his power, while he complains of his frowns. Follow his pattern, and forget not that power that can scatter the clouds, as well as gather them together. The Psalmist's support in his distress, was in the creative power of God (Psalms 121:2): "My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

2. It is comfort in all strong and stirring corruptions and mighty temptations. It is by this we may arm ourselves, and "be strong in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10); by this we may conquer principalities and powers, as dreadful as hell, but not so mighty as heaven; by this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh; by this the devils that have possessed us may be cast out; the battered walls of our souls may be repaired; and the sons of Anak laid flat. That power that brought light out of darkness, and overmastered the deformity of the chaos, and set bounds to the ocean, and dried up the Red Sea by a rebuke, can quell the tumults in our spirits, and level spiritual Goliaths by his word. When the disciples heard that terrifying speech of our Saviour, concerning rich men, that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24), to entertain the gospel, which commanded self-denial; and that, because of the allurements of the world, and the strong habits in their soul; Christ refers them to the power of God (Matthew 19:26), who could expel those ill habits, and plant good ones: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." There is no resistance, but he can surmount; no strong-hold, but he can demolish; no tower, but he can level.

3. It is comfort from hence, that all promises shall be performed. Goodness is sufficient to make a promise, but power is necessary to perform a promise. Men that are honest, cannot often make good their words, because something may intervene that may shorten their ability: but nothing can disable God, without diminishing his godhead. He hath an infiniteness of power to accomplish his word, as well as an infiniteness of goodness to make and utter his word. That might whereby he made heaven and earth, and his keeping truth forever, are joined together (Psalms 146:5-6); his Father's faithfulness, and his creative power are linked together. It is upon this basis the covenant, and every part of it, is established, and stands as firm as the almightiness of God, whereby he sprung up the earth, and reared the heavens. "No power can resist his will" (Romans 9:19); "Who can disannul his purpose, and turn back his hand when it is stretched out" (Isaiah 14:27)? His word is unalterable, and his power is invincible. He could not deceive himself, for he knew his own strength when he promised: no unexpected event can chance his resolution, because nothing can happen without the compass of his foresight. No created strength can stop him in his action, because all creatures are ready to serve him at his command; not the devils in hell, nor all the wicked men on earth, since he hath strength to restrain them, and an arm to punish them. What can be too hard for Him that created heaven and earth? Hence it was, that when God promised an

anything anciently to his people, he used often the name of the Almighty, the Lord that created heaven and earth, as that which was an undeniable answer to any objection, against anything that might be made against the greatness and stupendousness of any promise; by that name, in all his works of grace, was he known to them (Exodus 6:3). When we are sure of his will, we need not question his strength, since he never over-engaged himself above his ability. He that could not be resisted by anything in creation, nor vanquished by devils in redemption, can never lack power to glorify his faithfulness in his accomplishment of whatsoever he hath promised.

4. From this infiniteness of power in God, we have ground of assurance for perseverance. Since conversion is resembled to the works of creation and resurrection, two great marks of his strength, he doth not surely employ himself in the first of changing the heart, to let any created strength baffle that power which he began and intends to glorify. It was this might that struck off the chain, and expelled that strong one that possessed you. What, if you are too weak to keep him out of his lost possession, will God lose the glory of his first strength, by suffering his foiled adversary to make a re-entry, and regain his former usurpation? His out-stretched arm will not do less by his spiritual, than it did by his national Israel: it guarded them all the way to Canaan, and left them not to shift for themselves after he had struck off the fetters of Egypt, and buried their enemies in the Red Sea (Deuteronomy 1:31). This greatness of the Father, above all, our Saviour makes the ground of believers' continuance forever, against the blasts of hell and engines of the world (John 10:29). "My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Our keeping is not in our own weak hands, but in the hands of Him who is mighty to save. That power of God keeps us which intends our salvation. In all fears of falling away, shelter yourselves in the power of God: "He shall be holden up," saith the apostle, speaking concerning one weak in faith; and no other reason is rendered by him but this, "For God is able to make him to stand" (Romans 14:4).

5. From this attribute of the infinite power of God, we have a ground of comfort in the lowest estate of the church. Let the state of the church be never so deplorable, the condition never so desperate, that Power that created the world, and shall raise the bodies of men, can create a happy state for the church, and raise her from an overwhelming grave; though the enemies trample upon her, they cannot upon the arm that holds her, which by the least motion of it, can lift her up above the heads of her adversaries, and make them feel the thunder of that Power that none can understand: by the "blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed" (Job 4:9); they "shall be scattered as chaff before the wind." If once he "draw his hand out of his bosom," all must fly before him, or sink under him (Psalms 74:11): and when there is and it none to help, his own arm sustains him, brings salvation, and his fury doth uphold him" (Isaiah 63:5). What if the church totter under the underminings of hell? What if it hath a sad heart and wet eyes? In what a little moment can he make the night turn into day, and make the Jews, that were preparing for death in Shushan, triumph over the necks of their enemies, and march in one hour with swords in their hands, that expected the last hour ropes about their necks (Esther 9:1, Esther 9:5)? If Israel be pursued by Pharaoh, the sea shall open its arms to protect them: if they be thirsty, a rock shall spout out water to refresh them: if they be hungry, heaven shall be their granary for manna: if Jerusalem be besieged, and hath not force enough to encounter Sennacherib, an angel shall turn the camp into an Aceldema, a field of blood. His people shall not lack deliverances, till God lacks a power of working miracles for their security: he is more jealous

of his power, than the church can be of her safety. And if we should need other arguments to press him, we may implore him by virtue of his power: for when there is nothing in the church as a motive to him to save it, there is enough in his own name, and "the illustration of his power" (Psalms 106:8). Who can grapple with the omnipotency of that God, who is jealous of, and zealous for, the honor of it? And therefore God, for the most part, takes such opportunities to deliver, wherein his almightiness may be most conspicuous, and his counsels most admirable. He awakened not himself to deliver Israel, till they were upon the brink of the Red Sea; nor to rescue the three children, till they were in the fiery furnace; nor Daniel, till he was in the lion's den. It is in the weakness of his creature that his strength is perfected, not in a way of addition of perfectness to it, but in a way of manifestation of the perfection of it; as it is the perfection of the sun to shine and enlighten the world, not that the sun receives an increase of light by the darting of his beams, but displays his glory to the admiration of men, and pleasure of the world. If it were not for such occasions, the world would not regard the mightiness of God, nor know what power were in him. It traverses the stage in its fulness and liveliness upon such occasions, when the enemies are strong, and their strength edged with an intense hatred, and but little time between the contrivance and execution. It is a great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the display of this attribute, and that the glory of God's omnipotence, and the church's security, are so closely linked together. It is a promise that will never be forgotten by God, and ought never to be forgotten by us, that "in this mountain the hand of the Lord shall rest" (Isaiah 25:10); that is, the power of the Lord shall abide; and Moab "shall be trodden under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." And the "plagues of Babylon shall come in one day, death, and mourning and famine; for strong is the Lord who judgeth her" (Revelation 18:8).

Use III. The third use is for exhortation.

1. Meditate on this power of God, and press it often upon your minds. We reason many things of God that we do not practically suck the comfort of, for lack of deep thoughts of it, and frequent inspection into it. We believe God to be true, yet distrust him; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understandings, are kept under covers by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought forth into the open air of our souls by meditation. If we will but search our hearts, we shall find it is the power of God we often doubt of. When the heart of Ahaz and his subjects trembled at the combination of the Syrian and Israelitish kings against him, for lack of a confidence in the power of God, God sends his prophet with commission to work a miraculous sign at his own choice, to rear up his fainting heart; and when he refused to ask a sign out of diffidence of that almighty Power, the prophet complains of it as an affront to his Master (Isaiah 7:12-13). Moses, so great a friend of God, was overtaken with this kind of unbelief, after all the experiences of God's miraculous acts in Egypt; the answer God gives him manifests this to be at the core: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short" (Numbers 11:23)? For lack of thoughts carried out into practise of this, we are many times turned from our known duty by the blast of a creature— as though man had more power to dismay us, than God hath to support us in his commanded way. The belief of God's power is one of the first steps to all religion; without settled thoughts of it, we cannot pray lively and believingly for the obtaining the mercies we need, or the averting the evils we fear; we should not love him, unless we are persuaded he hath a power to bless us; nor fear him, unless we were persuaded of his power to punish us. The frequent thoughts of this would render our faith more stable, and our

hopes more stedfast; it would make us more feeble to sin, and more careful to obey. When the virgin staggered at the message of the angel, that she should "bear a Son," he, in his answer, turns her to the creative power of God (Luke 1:35): "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;" which seems to be in allusion to the Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep, and bringing a comely world out of a confused mass. Is it harder for God to make a virgin conceive a Son by the power of his Spirit, than to make a world? Why doth he reveal himself so often under the title of Almighty, and press it upon us, but that we should press it upon ourselves? Any shall we be forgetful of that which every thing about us, everything within us, is a mark of? How come we by a power of seeing and hearing, a faculty, and act of understanding and will, but by this power framing us, this power assisting us? What though the thunder of his power cannot be understood, no more can any other perfection of his nature; shall we, therefore, seldom think of it? The sea cannot be fathomed, yet the merchant excuseth not himself from sailing upon the surface of it. We cannot glorify God without due consideration of this attribute; for his power is his glory as much is any other, and called both by the name of glory (Romans 6:4), speaking of Christ's resurrection by the glory of the Father; and also "the riches of his glory" (Ephesians 3:16). Those that have strong temptations in their course and over-pressing corruptions in their hearts, have need to think of it out of interest, since nothing but this can relieve them. Those that have experienced the working of it in their new creation, are obliged to think of it out of gratitude. It was this mighty power over himself that gave rise to all that pardoning grace already conferred, or hereafter expected; without it our souls had been consumed, the world overturned; we could not have expected a happy heaven, but have lain yelling in an eternal hell, had not the power of his mercy exceeded that of his justice, and his infinite power executed what his infinite wisdom had contrived for our redemption. How much also should we be raised in our admirations of God, and ravish ourselves in contemplating that might that can raise innumerable worlds in those infinite imaginary spaces outside this globe of heaven and earth, and exceed inconceivably what he hath done in the creation of this?

Discourse On the Wisdom of God

Discourse On the Wisdom of God by Stephen Charnock

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Use 2. If wisdom be the perfection of the Divine Majesty, how prodigious is the contempt of it in the world? In general, all sin strikes at this attribute, and is in one part or other a degrading of it: the first sin directed its venom against this. As the devils endeavored to equal their Creator in power, so man endeavored to equal him in wisdom: both indeed scorned to be ruled by his order; but man evidently exalted himself against the wisdom of God, and aspired to be a sharer with him in his infinite knowledge; would not let him be the only wise God, but cherished an ambition to be his partner. Just as if a beam were able to imagine it might be as bright as the sun; or a spark fancy it could be as full fraught with heat as the whole element of fire. Man would not submit to the infinite wisdom of God in the prohibition of one single fruit in the garden, when by the right of his sovereign authority, he might have granted him only the use of only the use of one. All presumptuous sins are of this nature; they are, therefore, called reproaches of God (Numbers 15:30) "the soul that doth ought presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord." All reproaches are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply either a weakness or unrighteousness in God: if unrighteousness, his holiness is denied; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished. In general, all sin strikes at this perfection two ways.

1. As it defaceth the wise workmanship of God. Every sin is a deforming and blemishing our own souls, which, as they are the prime creatures in the lower world, so they have greater characters of Divine wisdom in the fabric of them: but this image of God is ruined broken by sin. Though the spoiling of it be a scorn of his holiness, it is also an affront to his wisdom; for though his power was tile cause of the production of so fair a piece, yet his wisdom was the guide of his power, and his holiness the pattern whereby he wrought it. His power effected it, and his holiness was exemplified in it; but his wisdom contrived it. If a man had a curious clock or watch which had cost him many years pains and the strength of his skill to frame it; for another, after he had seen and considered it, to trample upon it, and crush it in pieces, would argue a contempt of the artificer's skill. God hath shown infinite art in the creation of man; but sin unbeautifies man, and ravisheth his excellency. It cuts and slasheth the image of God stamped by divine wisdom, as though it were an object only of scorn and contempt. The sinner in every sin acts, as if he intended to put himself in a better posture, and in a fairer dress, than the wisdom of God hath put him in by creation.

2. In the slighting his laws. The laws of God are highly rational; they are drawn from the depths of the Divine understanding, wherein there is no uncleanness, and no defect. As his understanding apprehends all things in their true reason, so his will enjoins all things for worthy and wise ends. His laws are contrived by his wisdom for the happiness of man, whose happiness, and the methods to it, he understands better than men or angels can do. His laws being the orders of the

wisest understanding, every breach of his law is a flying in the face of his wisdom. All human laws, though they are enforced by sovereign authority, yet they are, or ought to be, in the composing of them, founded upon reason, and should be particular applications of the law of nature to this or that particular emergency. The laws of God, then, who is summa ratio, are the birth of the truest reason; though the reason of every one of them may not be so clear to us. Every law, though it consists in an act of the will, yet doth presuppose an act of the understanding. The act of the Divine understanding in framing the law, must be supposed to precede the act of his will in commanding the observance of that law. So every sin against the law, is not only against the will of God commanding, but the reason of God contriving, and a cleaving to our own reason, rather than the understanding or mind of God: as if God had mistaken in making his law, and we had more understanding to frame a better, and more conducing to our happiness: as if God were not wise enough to govern us, and prescribe what we should do, and what we should avoid; as if he designed not our welfare but our misfortune. Whereas, the precepts of God are not tyrannical edicts, or acts of mere will, but the fruits of counsel; and, therefore, every breach of them is a real declamation against his discretion and judgment, and preferring our own imaginations, or the suggestions of the devil, as our rule, before the results of Divine counsel. While we acknowledge him wise in our opinion, we speak him foolish by our practice; when, instead of being guided by him, we will guide ourselves. No man will question, but it is a controlling Divine wisdom, to make alterations in his precepts; dogmatically, either to add some of their own, or expunge any of his: and is it not a crime of the like reflection to alter them practically? When we will observe one part of the law, and not another part; but pick and choose where we please ourselves, as our humors and carnal interest prompt us; it is to charge that part of the law with folly, which we refuse to conform unto. The more cunning any man is in sin, the more his sin is against Divine wisdom, as if he thought to outwit God. He that receives the promises of God, and the "testimony of Christ, sets to his seal, that God is true" (John 3:33). By the like strength of argument, it will undeniably follow, that he that refuseth obedience to his precepts, sets to his seal that God is foolish. Were they not rational, God would not enjoin them; and if they are rational, we are enemies to infinite wisdom, by not complying with them. If infinite prudence hath made the law, why is not every part of it observed; if it were not made with the best wisdom, why is any part of it observed? If the defacing of his image be any sin, as being a defaming his wisdom in creation, the breaking his law is no less a sin, as being a disgracing his wisdom in his administration. 'Tis upon this account, likely, that the Scripture so often counts sinners fools, since it is certainly inexcusable folly to contradict undeniable and infallible Wisdom; yet this is done in the least sin: and as he that breaks one little of the law, is deservedly accounted guilty of the breach of the whole (James 2:10), so he that despiseth the least stamp of wisdom in the minutes" part of the law, is deservedly counted as a contemner of it, in the frame of they whole statute book. But, in particular, the wisdom of God is affronted and invaded.

1. By introducing new rules and modes of worship, different from Divine institutions. Is not this a manifest reflection on this perfection of God, as though he had not been wise enough to provide for his own honor, and model his own service, but stood in need of our directions, and the caprices of our brains? Some have observed, that it is a greater sin in worship to do that we should not, than to omit what we should perform. The one seems to be out of weakness, because of the high exactness of the law; and the other out of impudence, accusing the wisdom of God of imperfection, and controlling it in its institutions. At best, it seems to be an imputation of human

bashfulness to the Supreme Sovereign; as if he had been ashamed to prescribe all that was necessary to his own honor, but had left something to the ingenuity and gratitude of men. Man has, ever since the foolish conceit of his old ancestor Adam, presumed he could be as wise as God; and if he who was created upright entertained such conceits, much more doth man now, under a mass of corruption, so capable to foment them. This hath been the continual practice of men; not so much to reject what once they had received as Divine, but add something of their own inventions to it. The heathens renounced not the sacrificing of beasts for the expiation of their offenses (which the old world had received by tradition from Adam, and the new world, after the deluge, from Noah). But they had blended that tradition with rites of their own, and offered creatures unclean in themselves, and not fit to be offered to an infinitely pure Being; for the distinction of clean and unclean was as ancient as Noah (Genesis 8:20), yea, before (Genesis 7:2). So the Jews did not discard what they had received from God, as circumcision, the Passover, and sacrifices; but they would mix a heap of heathenish rites with the ceremonies of Divine ordination, and practice things which he had not commanded, as well as things which he had enjoined them. And, therefore, it is observable, that when God taxeth them with sin, he doth not say, they brought in those things which he had forbidden into his worship; but those things which he had not commanded, and had given no order for, to intimate, that they were not to move a step without his rule (Jeremiah 7:31): "They have built the high palaces of Tophet, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart;" and (Leviticus 10:1); Nadab's and Abihu's strange fire was not commanded; so charging them with impudence and rashness in adding something of their own, after he had revealed to them the manner of his service, as if they were as wise as God. So loath is man to acknowledge the supremacy of Divine understanding, and be sensible of his own ignorance. So after the divulging of the gospel, the corrupters of religion did not fling off, but preserved the institutions of God, but painted and patched them up with pagan ceremonies; imposed their own dreams with as much force as the revelations of God. Thus hath the papacy turned the simplicity of the gospel into pagan pomp, and religion into politics; and revived the ceremonial law, and raked some limbs of it out of the grave, after the wisdom of God had rung her knell, and honorably interred her; and sheltered the heathenish superstitions in Christian temples, after the power of the gospel had chased the devils, with all their trumpery, from their ancient habitations. Whence should this proceed, but from a partial atheism, and a mean deceit of the Divine wisdom? As though God had not understanding enough to prescribe the form of his own worship; and not wisdom enough to support it, without the crutches of human prudence. Human prudence is too low to parallel Divine wisdom; it is an incompetent judge of what is fit for an infinite Majesty. It is sufficiently seen in the ridiculous and senseless rights among the heathens; and the cruel and devilish ones fetched from them by the Jews. What work will human wisdom make with divine worship, when it will presume to be the director of it, as a mate with the wisdom of God! Hence will it take its measures, but from sense, humor and fancy? As though what is graceful and comely to a depraved reason, were as beautiful to an unspotted and Infinite Mind. Do not such tell the world, that they were of God's cabinet council, since they will take upon them to judge, as well as God, what is well-pleasing to him? Where will it have the humility to stop, if it hath the presumption to add any one thing to revealed modes of worship? How did God tax the Israelites with making idols "according to their own understanding" (Hosea 13:2)! Imagining their own understandings to be of a finer make, and a perfecter mould than their Creator's; and that they had fetched more light from the chaos of their own brains, than God had from eternity in his own

nature. How slight will the excuse be, God hath not forbidden this, or that, when God shall silence men with the question, Where, or when did I command this, or that? There was no addition to be made under the law to the meanest instrument God had appointed in his service. The sacred perfume was not to have one ingredient more put into it, than what God had prescribed in the composition; nor was any man upon pain of death to imitate it nor would God endure that sacrifices should be consumed with any other fire than that which came down from heaven. So tender is God of any invasions of his wisdom and authority. In all things of this nature, whatsoever voluntary humility and respect to God they may be disguised with, there is a swelling of the fleshly mind against infinite understanding, which the apostle nauseates (Colossians 2:18). Such mixtures have not been blessed by God: as God never prospered the mixtures of several kinds of creatures, to form and multiply a new species, as being a dissatisfaction with his wisdom as Creator; so he doth not prosper mixtures in worship, as being a conspiracy against his wisdom as a Lawgiver. The destruction of the Jews was judged by some of their doctors to be, for preferring human traditions before the written word; which they ground on (Isaiah 29:13): "Their fear for me was taught by the precepts of men." The injunctions of men were the rule of their worship, and not the prescripts of my law. To conclude, such as make alterations in religion, different from the first institution, are intolerable busy bodies, that will not let God alone with his own affairs. Vain man would be wiser than his Maker, and be dabbling in that which is His sole prerogative.

2. In neglecting means instituted by God. When men have risings of heart against God's ordinances, "they reject the counsel of the Lord against themselves," or, in themselves (Luke 7:30), hJethsan They disannulled the wisdom of God, the spring of his ordinances. All neglects are disregards of Divine prescriptions, as impertinent and unavailing to that end for which they were appointed, as not being suited to the common dictates of reason; sometimes out of a voluntary humility, such as Peter's was, when he denied Christ's condescension to wash his feet (John 13:8), and thereby judged of the comeliness of his Master's intention and action. Such as continually neglect the great institution of the Lord's supper, out of a sense of unworthiness, are in the same rank with Peter, and do, as well as he, fall under the blame and reproof of Christ. Men would be saved, and use the means, but either means of their own appointment, or not at all the means of God's ordering. They would have God's wisdom and will condescend to theirs, and not theirs conformed to God's; as if our blind judgments were fittest to make the election of the paths to happiness. Like Naaman, who, when he was ordered by the prophet, for the cure of his leprosy, to "wash seven times in Jordan," would be the prophet's director, and have him touch him with his hand; as if a patient, sick of a desperate disease, should prescribe to his skillful physician what remedies he should order for, and make his own infirm reason, or his taste and palate, the rule, rather than the physician's skill. Men's inquiries are, "Who will show us any good?" They rather fasten upon any means than that which God hath ordained. We invert the order Divine wisdom hath established, when we would have God save us in our own way, not in his. It is the same thing as if we would have God nourish us without bread, and cure our disease without medicines, and increase our wealth without our industry, and cherish our souls without his word and ordinances. It is to demand of him an alteration of his methods, and a separation of that which he hath by his eternal judgment joined together. Therefore for a man to pray to God to save him when he will not use the means he hath appointed for salvation, when he slights the word, which is the instrument of salvation, is a contempt of the wisdom of Divine institutions. Also in omissions of prayer. When we consult not with God upon urgent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom than God's, and

imply that we stand not in need of his conduct, but have ability to direct ourselves, and accomplish our ends without his guidance. Not seeking God is, by the prophet, taxed to be a reflection upon this perfection of God (Isaiah 31:1-2): "They look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord" &c. And the like charge he brings against them (Hos. 8:9): "They are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God."

3. In censuring God's relations and actions, if they be not according to our schemes: when we will not submit to his plain will without penetrating into the unrevealed reason of it, nor adore his counsels without controlling them, as if we could correct both law and gospel, and frame a better method of redemption than that of God's contriving. Thus men slighted the wisdom of God in the gospel, because it did not agree with that philosophical wisdom and reason they had sucked in by education from their masters (1 Corinthians 1:21-22), contrary to their practice in their superstitious worship, where the oracles they thought divine were entertained with reverence, not with dispute, and though ambiguous, were not counted ridiculous by the worshipper. How foolish is man in this wherein he would be accounted wise! Adam, in innocence, was unfit to control the doctrine of God when the eye of his reason was clear; and much more are we, since the depravation of our natures. The revelations of God tower above reason in its much more above reason in its mud and earthiness. The rays of Divine wisdom are too bright for our human understandings, much more for our sinful understandings. It is base to set up reason, a finite principle, against an infinite wisdom; much baser to set up a depraved and purblind reason against an all-seeing and holy wisdom. If we would have a reason for all that God speaks, and all that God acts, our wisdom must become infinite as his, or his wisdom become finite as ours. All the censures of God's revelations arise from some biased opinions, or traditional maxims, that have enthroned themselves in our minds, which are made the standard whereby to judge the things of God, and receive or reject them as they agree with, or dissent from, those principles (Colossians 2:8). Hence it was that the philosophers, in the earliest times of the church, were the greatest enemies to the gospel: and the contempt of Divine wisdom, in making reason the supreme judge of Divine revelation, was the fruitful mother of the heresies in all ages springing up in the church, and especially of that Socinianism, that daily insinuates itself into the minds of men. This is a wrong to the wisdom of God. He that censures the words or actions of another, implies that he is, in his censure, wiser than the person censured by him. It is as insupportable to determine the truth of God's plain dictates by our reason, as it is to measure the suitableness or unsuitableness of his actions by the humor of our will. We may sooner think to span the sun, or grasp a star, or see a gnat swallow a Leviathan, than fully understand the debates of eternity. To this we may refer too curious inquiries into Divine methods, and "intruding into those things which are not revealed" (Colossians 2:18). It is to affect a wisdom equal with God, and an ambition to be of his cabinet council. We are not content to be creatures, that is, to be every way below God; below him in wisdom, as well as power.

4. In prescribing God's method of acting. When we pray for a thing without a due submission to God's will; as if we were his counselors, yea his tutors, and not his subjects, and God were bound to follow our humors, and be swayed according to the judgment of our ignorance; when we would have such a mercy which God thinks not fit to give, or have it in this method, which God designs to convey through another channel. Thus we would have the only wise God take his measures from our passions; such a controlling of God was Jonah's anger about a gourd (Colossians 4:1): "It

displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." We would direct Him how to dispose of us; as though he, that had infinite wisdom to contrive and rear the excellent fabric of the world, had not wisdom enough, without our discretions, to place us in a sphere proper for his own ends, and the use he intends us in the universe. All the speeches of men (would I had been in such an office, had such charge; would I had such a mercy, in such a method, or by such instruments,) are entrenchments upon God's wise disposal of affairs. This imposing upon God is a hellish disposition, and in hell we find it. The rich man in hell, that pretends some charity for his brethren on earth, would direct God a way to prevent their ruin, by sending one from the dead to school them, as a more effectual means than "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29-30). It is a temper also to be found on earth; what else was the language of Saul's saving the Amalekites' cattle against the plain command of God (1 Samuel 15:15)? As if God in his fury had overshot himself and overlooked his altar, in depriving it of so great a booty for its service; as if it were an unwise thing in God, to lose the prey of so many stately cattle, that might make the altar smoke with their entrails, and serve to expiate the sins of the people; and therefore he would rectify that which he thought to be an oversight in God, and so magnifies his own prudence and discretion above the Divine. We will not let God act as he thinks fit, but will be directing him, and "teaching him knowledge" (Job 21:22) As if God were a statue, an idol, that had eyes and saw not, hands, but acted not; and could be turned as an image may be, to what quarter of the heaven we please ourselves. The wisdom of God is unbiassed; the orders nothing but what is fittest for his end, and we would have our shallow brains the bias of God's acting. And will not God resent such an indignity, as a reflection upon his wisdom as well as authority, when we intimate that we have better heads than he, and that he comes short of us in understanding?

5. In murmuring and impatience. One demands a reason, why he hath this or that cross? Why he hath been deprived of such a comfort, lost such a venture, languisheth under such a sickness, is tormented with such pains, oppressed by tyrannical neighbors, is unsuccessful in such designs? In these, and such like, the wisdom of God is questioned and defamed. All impatience is a suspicion, if not a condemnation of the prudence of God's methods, and would make human feebleness and folly the rule of God's dealing with his creatures. This is a presuming to instruct God, and a reproving him for unreasonableness in his proceedings, when his dealings with us do not exactly answer our fancies and wishes; as if God, who made the world in wisdom, lacked skill for the management of his creatures in it (Job 40:2): "Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it." We that are not wise enough to know ourselves, and what is needful for us; presume to have wit enough to guide God in his dealing with us. The wisdom of God rendered Job more useful to the world by his afflictions, in making him a pattern of patience, than if he had continued him in a confluence of all worldly comforts, wherein he had been beneficial only in communicating his morsels to his poor neighbors. All murmuring is a fastening error upon unerring Wisdom.

6. In pride and haughtiness of spirit. No proud man, but sets his heart "as the heart of God" (Ezekiel 28:2-3). The wisdom of God hath given to men divers offices, set them in divers places; some have more honorable charges, some meaner. Not to give that respect their offices and places call for, is to quarrel with the wisdom of God, and overturn the rank and order wherein he hath placed things. It is unfit we should affront God in the disposal of his creatures, and insinuate to him by our behaviour, that he would have done more wisely in placing another, and that he hath

done foolishly in placing this or that man in such a charge. Sometimes men are unworthy the place they fill; they may be set there in judgment to themselves and others: but the wisdom of God in his management of things, is to be honored and regarded. It is an infringing the wisdom of God, when we have a vain opinion of ourselves, and are blind to others. When we think ourselves monarchs, and treat others as worms or flies in comparison of us. He who would reduce all things to his own honor, perverts the order of the world, and would constitute another order than what the wisdom of God hath established; and move them to an end contrary to the intention of God, and charges God with want of discretion and skill.

7. Distrust of God's promise is an impeachment of his wisdom. A secret reviling of it, as if he had not taken due consideration before he past his word; or a suspicion of his power, as if he could not accomplish his word. We trust the physician's skill with our bodies, and the lawyer's counsel with our estates; but are loath to rely upon God for the concerns of our lives. If he be wise to dispose of us, why do we distrust him? If we distrust him, why do we embrace an opinion of wisdom? Unbelief also is a contradiction to the wisdom of God in the gospel, &c., but that I have already handled in a discourse of the nature of unbelief.

Use 3. Of comfort. God hath an infinite wisdom, to conduct us in our affairs, rectify us in our mistakes, and assist us in our straits. It is an inestimable privilege to have a God in covenant with us; so wise, to communicate all good, to prevent all evil; who hath infinite ways to bring to pass his gracious intentions towards us. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33)! His judgments or decrees are incomprehensibly wise, and the ways of effecting them are as wise as his resolves effected by them. We can as little search into his methods of acting, as we can into his wisdom of resolving; both his judgments and ways are unsearchable.

1. Comfort in all straits and afflictions. There is a wisdom in inflicting them, and a wisdom in removing them. He is wise to suit his medicines to the humor of our disease, though he doth not to the humor of our wills: he cannot mistake the nature of our distemper, or the virtue of his own medicine. Like a skilful physician, he sometimes prescribes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials, according to the strength of the malady, and necessity of the patient, to reduce him to health. As nothing comes from him, but what is for our good, so nothing is acted by him in a rash and reckless way. His wisdom is as infinite as his goodness; and as exact in managing, as his goodness is plentiful in streaming out to us. He understands our griefs, weighs our necessities, and no remedies are beyond the reach of his contrivance. When our feeble wits are bewildered in a maze, and at the end of their line for a rescue, the remedies unknown to us are not unknown to God. When we know not how to prevent a danger, the wise God hath a thousand blocks to lay in the way; when we know not how to free ourselves from an oppressive evil, he hath a thousand ways of relief. He knows how to time our crosses, and his own blessings. The heart of a wise God, as well as the heart of a wise man, discerns both time and judgment (Ecclesiastes 8:5). There is as much judgment in sending them, as judgment in removing them. How comfortable is it to think, that our distresses, as well as our deliverances, are the fruits of infinite wisdom! Nothing is done by him too soon or too slow; but in the true point of time, with all its due circumstances, most conveniently for his glory and our good. How wise is God to bring the glory of our salvation out of the depths of a seeming ruin and make the evils of affliction subservient to the good of the afflicted.

2. In temptations, his wisdom is no less employed in permitting them, than in bringing them to a good issue. His wisdom in leading our Savior to be tempted of the devil, was to fit him for our succor; and his wisdom in suffering us to be tempted, is to fit us for his own service, and our salvation. He makes a thorn in the flesh to be an occasion of a refreshing grace to the spirit, and brings forth cordial grapes from those pricking brambles, and magnifies his grace by his wisdom, from the deepest subtilties of hell. Let Satan's intentions be what they will, he can be for him at every turn, to outwit him in his stratagems, to baffle him in his enterprises; to make him instrumental for our good, where he designs nothing but our hurt. The Lord hath his methods of deliverance from him (2 Peter 2:9) "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

3. In denials, or delays of answers of prayer. He is gracious to hear; but he is wise to answer in an acceptable time, and succor us in a day proper for our salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). We have partial affections to ourselves, ignorance is natural to us (Romans 8:26). We ask we know not what, because we ask out of ignorance. God grants what he knows, what is fit for him to do, and fit for us to receive; and the exact season wherein it is fittest for him to bestow a mercy. As God would have us bring forth our fruit in season, so he will send forth his mercies in season. He is wise to suit his remedy to our condition, to time it so, as that we shall have an evident prospect of his wisdom in it; that more of Divine skill, and less of human, may appear in the issue. He is ready at our call; but he will not answer, till he see the season fit to reach out his hand. He is wise to prove our faith, to humble us under the sense of our own unworthiness, to whet our affections, to set a better estimate on the blessings prayed for, and that he may double the blessing, as we do our devotion: but when his wisdom sees us fit to receive his goodness, he grants what we stand in need of. He is wise to choose the fittest time, and faithful to give the best covenant mercy.

4. In all evils threatened to the church by her enemies. He hath knowledge to foresee them, and wisdom to disappoint them (Job 5:13); "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." The church hath the wisdom of God, to enter the lists with the policy of hell. He defeated the serpent in the first net he laid, and brought a glorious salvation out of hell's rubbish, and is yet as skilful to disappoint the after-game of the serpentine brood. The policy of hell, and the subtilty of the world, are no better than folly with God (1 Corinthians 3:19). All creatures are fools, as creatures, in comparison with the Creator. The angels he chargeth with folly, much more us sinners. Depraved understandings are not fit mates for a pure and unblemished mind. Pharaoh, with his wisdom, finds a grave in the sea; and Achitophel's plots are finished in his own murder. He breaks the enemies by his power, and orders them by his skill to be a feast to his people (Psalms 74:14); "Thou breakest the head of the leviathan, and gavest him to be meat to the people in the wilderness." The spoils of the Egyptians carcasses, cast upon the shore, served the Israelites' necessities (or were as meat to them); as being a deliverance the church might feed upon in all ages, in a wilderness condition, to maintain their faith, the vital principle of the soul. There is a wisdom superior to the subtilties of men, which laughs at their follies, and "hath them in derision" (Psalms 2:4). "There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord" (Proverbs 21:30). You never question the wisdom of an artist to use his file, when he takes it into his hand. Wicked instruments are God's axes and files; let him alone, he hath skill enough to manage them: God hath too much affection to destroy his people, and wisdom enough to beautify them by the worst tools he uses. He can make all things conspire to a perfect harmony for his own ends, and his people's good, when they see no way to escape a danger feared, or attain a

blessing wanted.

Use 4: For Exhortation. 1. Meditate on the wisdom of God in creation and government. How little do we think of God when we behold his works! Our sense dwells upon the surface of plants and animals, beholds the variety of their colors, and the progress in their motion; our reason studies the qualities of them; our spirits seldom take a flight to the Divine wisdom which framed them. Our senses engross our minds from God, that we scarce have a thought free to bestow upon the Maker of them, but only on the by. The constancy of seeing things that are common stifles our admiration of God, due upon the sight of them. How seldom do we raise our souls as far as heaven, in our views of the order of the world, the revolutions of the seasons, the nature of the creatures that are common among us and the mutual assistance they give to each other! Since God hath manifested himself in them to neglect the consideration of them is to neglect the manifestation of God, and the way whereby he hath transmitted something of his perfections to our understanding. It renders men inexcusably guilty of not glorifying God (Romans 1:19-20). We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures, without a blemish cast upon the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea, so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them, but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God result from them. They are exposed to our view, that something of God may be lodged in our minds; that, as our bodies extract their quintessence for our nourishment, so our minds may extract a quintessence for the Maker's praise. Though God is principally to be praised, in and for Christ, yet, as grace doth not erase out the law of nature, so the operations of grace put not the dictates of nature to silence, nor suspend the homage due to God upon our inspection of his works. God hath given full testimonies of this perfection in the heavenly bodies, dispersing their light, and distributing their influences to every part of the world; in framing men into societies, giving them various dispositions for the preservation of governments; making some wise for counsel, others martial for action; changing old empires, and raising new. Which way soever we cut our eyes, we shall find frequent occasions to cry out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33)! To this purpose, we must not only look upon the bulk and outside of his works, but consider from what principles they were raised, in what order disposed, and the exact symmetry and proportion of their arts. When a man comes into a city or temple, and only considers the surface of the buildings, they will amaze his sense, but not better his understanding, unless he considers the methods of the work, and the art whereby it was erected.

(I.) This was an end for which they were created. God did not make the world for man's use only, but chiefly for his own glory; for man's use to enjoy his creatures, and for his own glory to acknowledged in his creatures, that we may consider his art in framing them, and his skill in disposing them, and not only gaze upon the glass without considering the image it represents, and acquainting ourselves whose image it is. The creatures were not made for themselves, but for the service of the Creator, and the service of man. Man was not made for himself, but for the service of the Lord that created him. He is to consider the beauty of the creation, that he may thereby glorify the Creator. He knows in art their excellency; the creatures themselves. do not. If, therefore, man be idle and unobservant of them, he deprives God of the glory of his wisdom, which he should have by his creatures. The inferior creatures themselves cannot observe it. If man regard it not, what becomes of it? His glory can only be handed to him by man. The other creatures cannot

be active instruments of his glory, because they know not themselves, and therefore cannot render him an active praise. Man is, therefore, bound to praise God for himself, and for all his creatures, because he only knows himself, and the perfections of the creatures, and the Author both of himself and them. God created such variety, to make a report of himself to us; we are to receive the report, and to reflect it back to him. To what purpose did he make so many things, not necessary, for the support and pleasure of our lives, but that we should behold him in them, as well as in the other? We cannot behold the wisdom of God in his own essence, and eternal ideas, but by the reflection of it in the creatures: as we cannot steadily behold the sun with our eye, but either through a glass, or by reflection of the image of it in the water. God would have us meditate on his perfections; he therefore chose the same day wherein he reviewed his work and rested from it, to be celebrated by man for the contemplation of him (Genesis 2:2-3), that we should follow his example, and rejoice, as himself did, in the frequent reviews of his wisdom and goodness in them. In vain would the creatures afford matter for this study, if they were wholly neglected. God offers something to our consideration in every creature. Shall the beams of God shine round about us, and strike our eyes, and not affect our minds? Shall we be like ignorant children, that view the pictures, or point to the letters in a book, without any sense and meaning? How shall God have the homage due to him from his works, if man hath no care to observe them? Psalms 148:1-14 is an exhortation to this. The view of them should often extract from us a wonder of the like nature of that of David's (Psalms 104:24): "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" The world was not created to be forgotten, nor man created to be unobservant of it.

(2.) If we observe not the wisdom of God in the views of the creatures, we do no more than brutes. To look upon the works of God in the world, is no higher an act than mere animals perform. The glories of heaven, and beauties of the earth, are visible to the sense of beasts and birds. A brute beholds the motion of a man, as it may see the wheels of a clock, but understands not the inward springs of motion; the end for which we move, or the soul that acts us in our motion; much less that Invisible Power which presides over the creatures, and conducts their motion. If a man do no more than this, he goes not a step beyond a brutish nature, and may very well acknowledge himself with Asaph, a foolish and ignorant beast before God (Psalms 73:22). The world is viewed by beasts, but the Author of it to be contemplated by man. Since we are in a higher rank than beasts, we owe a greater debt than beasts; not only to enjoy the creatures, as they do, but behold God in the creatures, which they cannot do. The contemplation of the reason of God in his works, is a noble and suitable employment for a rational creature: we have not only sense to perceive them, but souls to mind them. The soul is not to be without its operation: where the operation of sense ends, the work of the soul ought to begin. We travel over them by our senses, as brutes; but we must pierce further by our understandings, as men, and perceive and praise Him that lies invisible in his visible manufactures. Our senses are given us as servants to the soul, and our souls bestowed upon us for the knowledge and praise of their and our common Creator.

(3.) This would be a means to increase our humility. We should then relax our wings, and veil our sails, and acknowledge our own wisdom to be as a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun. We should have mean thoughts of the nothingness of our reason, when we consider the sublimity of the Divine wisdom. Who can seriously consider the sparks of infinite skill in the creature, without falling down at the feet of the Divine Majesty, and acknowledge himself a dark and foolish creature

(Psalms 8:4-5)? When the Psalmist considered the heavens, the moon, and stars, and God's ordination and disposal of them, the use that results from it is, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" We should no more think to equal him in prudence, or set up the spark of our reason to vie with the sun. Our reason would more willingly submit to the revelation, when the characters of Divine wisdom are stamped upon it, when we find his wisdom in creation incomprehensible to us.

(4.) It would help us in our acknowledgments of God, for his goodness to us. When we behold the wisdom of God in creatures below us, and how ignorant they are of what they possess, it will cause us to reflect upon the deeper impressions of wisdom in the frame of our own bodies and souls, an excellency far superior to theirs; this would make us admire the magnificence of his wisdom advancing us in dignity and goodness, sound forth his praise for a above other works of his hands, and stamping on us, by infinite art, a nobler image of himself. And by such a comparison of ourselves with the creatures below us, we should be induced to act excellently, according to the nature of our souls; not brutishly, according to the nature of the creatures God hath put under our feet.

(5.) By the contemplation of the creatures, we may receive some assistance in clearing our knowledge in the wisdom of redemption. Though they cannot of themselves inform us of it, yet since God hath revealed his redeeming grace, they can illustrate some particulars of it to us. Hence the Scripture makes use of the creatures, to set forth things of a higher orb to us: our Saviour is called a Sun, a Vine, and a Lion; the Spirit likened to a dove, fire, and water. The union of Christ and his church, is set forth by the marriage union of Adam and Eve. God hath placed in corporeal things the images of spiritual, and wrapped up in his creating wisdom the representations of his redeeming grace: whence some call the creatures, natural types of what was to be transacted in a new formation of the world, and allusions to what God intended in and by Christ.

(6.) The meditation of God's wisdom in the creatures is, in part, a beginning of heaven upon earth. No doubt but there will be a perfect opening of the model of Divine wisdom. Heaven is for making apparent what is now obscure, and a full revealing of what seems at present intricate (Psalms 36:9): "In his light shall we see light:" all the light in creation, government, and redemption. The wisdom of God in the new heavens, and the new earth, would be to little purpose if that also were not to be regarded by the inhabitants of them. As the saints are to be restored to the state of Adam, and; so they are to be restored to the employment of Adam, and higher: but his employment was, to behold God in the creatures. The world was so soon depraved, that God hid but little joy in, and man but little knowledge of his works. And since the wisdom of God in creation is so little seen by our ignorance here, would not God lose much of the glory of it, if the glorified souls should lose the understanding of it above? When their darkness shall be expelled, and their advantages improved; when the eye that Adam lost shall be fully restored, and with a greater clearness; when the creature shall be restored to its true end, and reason to its true perfection (Romans 8:21-22); when the fountains of the depths of nature and government shall be opened, knowledge shall increase, and according to the increase of our knowledge, shall the admiration of Divine wisdom increase also. The wisdom of God in creation was not surely intended to lie wholly unobserved in the greatest part of it; but since there was so little time for the full observation of it, there will be a time wherein the wisdom of God shall enjoy a resurrection, and be fully contemplated by his understanding and glorified creature.

God

God Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) In this section on the eternity of God, Charnock develops a thorough outline of his subject. His primary concern here is the extension of God's duration. In typically Puritan style he concludes the treatise with a section on the "use" of the doctrine, which is as valuable as the foregoing exposition because it shows how God is interested in applying doctrine to the life of the believer. Charnock points out, for example, the great psychological value of this doctrine, turning man's attention from temporal materialistic values to eternal verities.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psalms 90:2) The title of this psalm is a prayer; the author, Moses. Some think not only this, but the ten following psalms, were composed by him. The title wherewith he is dignified is, "The man of God," as also in Deuteronomy 33:1. One inspired by him to be his interpreter, and deliver his oracles; one particularly directed by him; one who as a servant did diligently employ himself in his master's business, and acted for the glory of God; he was the minister of the Old Testament, and the prophet of the New.

There are two parts of this Psalms 1:1-6. A complaint of the frailty of man's life in general (v. 36); and then a particular complaint of the condition of the church (Psalms 90:8-10). 2. A prayer (Psalms 90:12). But before he speaks of the shortness of human life, he fortifies them by the consideration of the refuge they had, and should find in God (Psalms 90:1): "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." We have had no settled abode in the earth, since the time of Abraham's being called out from Ur of the Chaldees. We have had Canaan in a promise, we have it not yet in possession; we have been exposed to the cruelties of an oppressing enemy, and the incommodities of a desert wilderness; we have wanted the fruits of the earth, but not the dews of heaven. `Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Abraham was under thy conduct; Isaac and Jacob under thy care; their posterity was multiplied by thee, and that under their oppressions. Thou hast been our shield against dangers, our security in the times of trouble; when we were pursued to the Red Sea, it was not a creature delivered us; and when we feared the pinching of our bowels in the desert, it was no creature rained manna upon us. Thou hast been our dwelling-place; thou hast kept open house for us, sheltered us against storms, and preserved us from mischief, as a house doth an inhabitant from wind and weather; and that not in one or two, but in all generations. Some think an allusion is here made to the ark, to which they were to have recourse in all emergencies. Our refuge and defence hath not been from created things; not from the ark, but from the God of the ark. Observe,

1. God is a perpetual refuge and security to his people. His providence is not confined to one generation; it is not one age only that tastes of his bounty and compassion. His eye never yet slept, nor hath he suffered the little ship of his church to be swallowed up, though it hath been tossed upon the waves; he hath always been a haven to preserve us, a house to secure us; he hath always had compassions to pity us, and power to protect us; he hath had a face to shine, when the world hath had an angry countenance to frown. He brought Enoch home by an

extraordinary translation from a brutish world; and when he was resolved to reckon with men for their brutish lives, he lodged Noah, the phoenix of the world, in an ark, and kept him alive as a spark in the midst of many waters, whereby to rekindle a church in the world; in all generations he is a dwelling-place to secure his people here, or entertain them above. His providence is not wearied, nor his care fainting; he never wanted will to relieve us, "for he hath been our refuge," nor ever can want power to support us, "for he is a God from everlasting to everlasting." The church never wanted a pilot to steer her, and a rock to shelter her, and dash in pieces the waves which threaten her.

2. How worthy is it to remember former benefits, when we come to beg for new. Never were the records of God's mercies so exactly revised, as when his people have stood in need of new editions of his power. How necessary are our wants to stir us up to pay the rent of thankfulness in arrear! He renders himself doubly unworthy of the mercies he wants, that doth not gratefully acknowledge the mercies he hath received. God scarce promised any deliverance to the Israelites, and they, in their distress, scarce prayed for any deliverance; but that from Egypt was mentioned on both sides, by God to encourage them, and by them to acknowledge their confidence in him. The greater our dangers, the more we should call to mind God's former kindness. We are not only thankful to acknowledge the mercies bestowed upon our persons, or in our age, but those of former times. "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Moses was not living in the former generations, yet he appropriates the former mercies to the present age. Mercies, as well as generations, proceed out of the loins of those that have gone before. All mankind are but one Adam; the whole church but one body. In the second verse he backs his former consideration. 1. By the greatness of his power in forming the world. 2. By the boundlessness of his duration: "From everlasting to everlasting." As thou hast been our dwelling-place, and expended upon us the strength of thy power and riches of thy love, so we have no reason to doubt the continuance on thy part, if we be not wanting on our parts; for the vast mountains and fruitful earth are the works of thy hands, and there is less power requisite for our relief, than there was for their creation; and though so much strength hath been upon various occasions manifested, yet thy arm is not weakened, for "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Thou hast always been God, and no time can be assigned as the beginning of thy being. The mountains are not of so long a standing as thyself; they are the effects of thy power, and therefore cannot be equal to thy duration; since they are the effects, they suppose the precedency of their cause. If we would look back, we can reach no further than the beginning of the creation, and account the years from the first foundation of the world; but after that we must lose ourselves in the abyss of eternity; we have no cue to guide our thoughts; we can see no bounds in thy eternity. But as for man, he traverseth the world a few days, and by thy order pronounced concerning all men, returns to the dust, and moulders into the grave. By mountains, some understand angels, as being creatures of a more elevated nature; by earth, they understand human nature, the earth being the habitation of men. There is no need to divert in this place from the letter to such a sense. The description seems to be poetical, and amounts to this: he neither began with the beginning of time, nor will expire with the end of it; he did not begin when he made himself known to our fathers, but his being did precede the creation of the world, before any created being was formed, and any time settled. "Before the mountains were brought forth," or before they were begotten or born; the word being used in those senses in Scripture; before they stood up higher than the rest of the earthly mass God had created. It seems that mountains were

not casually cast up by the force of the deluge softening the ground, and driving several parcels of it together, to grow up into a massy body, as the sea doth the sand in several places; but they were at first formed by God. The eternity of God is here described, 1. In his priority: "Before the world."

2. In the extension of his duration: "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends; he is not a temporary, but an eternal God; it takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after; though the eternity of God be one permanent state, without succession, yet the spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception, divides it into two parts; one past before the foundation of the world, another to come after the destruction of the world; as he did exist before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages. Many truths lie couched in the verse.

1. The world hath a beginning of being: it was not from eternity, it was once nothing; had it been of a very long duration, some records would have remained of some memorable actions done of a longer date than any extant. 2. The world owes its being to the creating power of God: "Thou hast formed it" out of nothing into being; Thou, that is, God; it could not spring into being of itself; it was nothing; it must have a former. 3. God was in being before the world: the cause must be before the effect; that word which gives being, must be before that which receives being. 4. This Being was from eternity: "From everlasting." 5. This Being shall endure to eternity: "To everlasting." There is but one God, one eternal: "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." None else but one hath the property of eternity; the gods of the heathen cannot lay claim to it.

Doct. God is of an eternal duration. The eternity of God is the foundation of the stability of the covenant, the great comfort of a Christian. The design of God in Scripture is, to set forth his dealing with men in the way of a covenant. The priority of God before all things begins the Bible: "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1). His covenant can have no foundation, but in his duration before and after the world: and Moses here mentions his eternity, not only with respect to the essence of God, but to his federal providence; as he is the dwelling-place of his people in all generations. The duration of God forever is more spoken of in Scripture than his eternity, á parte ante, though that is the foundation of all the comfort we can take from his immortality: if he had a beginning, he might have an end, and so all our happiness, hope and being would expire with him; but the Scripture sometimes takes notice of his being without beginning, as well as without end: "Thou art from everlasting" (Psalms 93:2); "Blessed be God from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalms 41:13); "I was set up from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:23): if his wisdom were from everlasting, himself was from everlasting: whether we understand it of Christ the Son of God, or of the essential wisdom of God, it is all one to the present purpose. The wisdom of God supposeth the essence of God, as habits in creatures suppose the being of some power or faculty as their subject. The wisdom of God supposeth mind and understanding, essence and substance. The notion of eternity is difficult; as Austin said of time, if no man will ask me the question, what time is, I know well enough what it is; but if any ask me what it is, I know not how to explain it; so may I say of eternity; it is easy in the word pronounced, but hardly understood, and more hardly expressed; it is better expressed by negative than positive words. Though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we may comprehend that there is an eternity; as, though we cannot comprehend the essence of God what he is, yet we may comprehend that he is; we may understand the notion of his existence, though we cannot understand the infiniteness of his nature; yet we may better

understand eternity than infiniteness; we can better conceive a time with the addition of numberless days and years, than imagine a Being without bounds; whence the apostle joins his eternity with his power; "His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20); because, next to the power of God, apprehended in the creature, we come necessarily by reasoning, to acknowledge the eternity of God. He that hath an incomprehensible power must needs have an eternity of nature; his power is most sensible in the creatures to the eye of man, and his eternity easily from thence deducible by the reason of man. Eternity is a perpetual duration, which hath neither beginning nor end; time hath both. Those things we say are in time that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts; eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state; a perfect possession of life without any variation; it comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages; it never begins; it endures after every duration of time, and never ceaseth; it doth as much outrun time, as it went before the beginning of it: time supposeth something before it; but there can be nothing before eternity; it were not then eternity. Time hath a continual succession; the former time passeth away and another succeeds: the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time; as the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity in an infinite immutable duration. Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, and is always one water; but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity. A thing is said to be eternal, or everlasting rather, in Scripture,

1. When it is of a long duration, though it will have an end; when it hath no measures of time determined to it; so circumcision is said to be in the flesh for an "everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:13); not purely everlasting, but so long as that administration of the covenant should endure. And so when a servant would not leave his master, but would have his ear bored, it is said, he should be a servant "forever" (Deuteronomy 15:17); i.e., till the jubilee, which was every fiftieth year: so the meat-offering they were to offer is said to be "perpetual" (Leviticus 6:20); Canaan is said to be given to Abraham for an "everlasting" possession (Genesis 17:8); when as the Jews are expelled from Canaan, which is given a prey to the barbarous nations. Indeed circumcision was not everlasting; yet the substance of the covenant whereof this was a sign, viz, that God would be the God of believers, endures forever; and that circumcision of the heart, which was signified by circumcision of the flesh, shall remain forever in the kingdom of glory: it was not so much the lasting of the sign, as of the thing signified by it, and the covenant sealed by it: the sign had its abolition; so that the apostle is so peremptory in it, that he asserts, that if any went about to establish it, he excluded himself from a participation of Christ (Galatians 5:2). The sacrifices were to be perpetual, in regard to the thing signified by them; viz, the death of Christ, which was to endure in the efficacy of it: and the passover was to be "forever" (Exodus 12:24), in regard of the redemption signified by it, which was to be of everlasting remembrance. Canaan was to be an everlasting possession, in regard of the glory of heaven typified, to be forever conferred upon the spiritual seed of Abraham.

2. When a thing hath no end, though it hath a beginning. So angels and souls are everlasting; though their being shall never cease, yet there was a time when their being began; they were nothing before they were something, though they shall never be nothing again, but shall live in endless happiness or misery. But that properly is eternal that hath neither beginning nor end; and thus eternity is a property of God. In this doctrine I shall show, I. How God is eternal, or in what

respects eternity is his property. II. That he is eternal, and must needs be so. III. That eternity is only proper to God, and not common to him with any creature. . . . The Manner of God's Eternity

I. How God is eternal, or in what respects he is so. Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any measures of time, as immensity is a denying of him any bounds of place. As immensity is the diffusion of his essence, so eternity is the duration of his essence; and when we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending, all flux and change. As the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time: as it is his immensity to be everywhere, so it is his eternity to be alway. As created things are said to be somewhere in regard of place, and to be present, past, or future, in regard of time; so the Creator in regard of place is everywhere, in regard of time is semper. His duration is as endless as his essence is boundless: he always was and always will be, and will no more have an end than he had a beginning; and this is an excellency belonging to the Supreme Being. As his essence comprehends all beings, and exceeds them, and his immensity surmounts all places; so his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them.

1. God is without beginning. "In the beginning" God created the world (Genesis 1:1). God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be set wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, so is God before all his creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the everlasting God (Genesis 21:33) the eternal God." It is opposed to the heathen gods, which were but of yesterday, new coined, and so new; but the eternal God was before the world was made. In that sense it is to be understood; `The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the everlasting God, make known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). The gospel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary god, but of that God that was before all ages: though the manifestation of it be in time, yet the purpose and resolve of it was from eternity. If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a Decreeer before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world he loved Christ as a Mediator; a fore-ordination of him was before the foundation of the world (John 17:24); a choice of men, and therefore a Chooser before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4); a grace given in Christ before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9), and therefore a Donor of that grace. From those places, saith Crellius, it appears that God was before the foundation of the world, but they do not assert an absolute eternity; but to be before all creatures is equivalent to his being from eternity. Time began with the foundation of the world; but God being before time, could have no beginning in time. Before the beginning of the creation, and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity; nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was without beginning. To be in time is to have a beginning; to be before all time is never to have a beginning, but always to be; for as between Creator and creatures there is no medium, so between time and eternity there is no medium. It is as easily deduced that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God. If he had a beginning, he must have it from another, or from himself; if from another, that from whom he received his being would be better than he, so more a God than he. He cannot be God that is not supreme; he cannot be supreme that owes his being to the power of another. He would not be said only to have immortality as he is (1 Timothy 6:16), if he had it dependent upon another; nor could he have a beginning from himself; if he had given

beginning to himself, then he was once nothing; there was a time when he was not; if he was not, how could he be the Cause of himself? It is impossible for any to give a beginning and being to itself: if it acts it must exist, and so exist before it existed. A thing would exist as a cause before it existed as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cause that he is; if, therefore, God doth exist, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity. Therefore, when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood that he hath no cause of existence without himself. Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called the "Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:9), as being before all days and time, and eminently containing in himself all times and ages. Though, indeed, God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh; but no creature can find out any beginning of God: it is impossible there should be any beginning of him.

2. God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what he is. He remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch him (James 1:17). He will continue in being as long as he hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add never so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end as from a beginning; for "the Lord shall endure forever" (Psalms 9:7). As it is impossible he should not be, being from all eternity, so it is impossible that he should not be to all eternity. The Scripture is most plentiful in testimonies of this eternity of God, á parte post, or after the creation of the world: he is said to "live forever" (Revelation 4:9, Revelation 4:10). The earth shall perish, but God shall "endure forever," and his "years shall have no end" (Psalms 102:27). Plants and animals grow up from small beginnings, arrive to their full growth, and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in God by all the revolutions of time. Hence some think the incorruptibility of the Deity was signified by the shittim, or cedar wood, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature (Exodus 25:10). That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what should make him cease to be what eternally he hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of his perfections? He cannot will his own destruction; that is against universal nature in all things to cease from being, if they can preserve themselves. He cannot desert his own being, because he cannot but love himself as the best and chiefest good. The reason that anything decays is either its own native weakness, or a superior power of something contrary to it. There is no weakness in the nature of God that can introduce any corruption, because he is infinitely simple without any mixture; nor can he be overpowered by anything else; a weaker cannot hurt him, and a stronger than he there cannot be; nor can he be outwitted or circumvented, because of his infinite wisdom. As he received his being from none, so he cannot be deprived of it by any: as he doth necessarily exist, so he doth necessarily always exist. This, indeed, is the property of God; nothing so proper to him as always to be. Whatsoever perfections any being hath, if it be not eternal, it is not divine. God only is immortal; he only is so by a necessity of nature. Angels, souls, and bodies too, after the resurrection, shall be immortal, not by nature, but grant; they are subject to return to nothing, if that word that raised them from nothing should speak them into nothing again. It is as easy with God to strip them of it, as to invest them with it; nay, it is impossible but that they should perish, if God should withdraw his power from preserving them, which he exerted in creating them; but God

is immovably fixed in his own being; that as none gave him his life, so none can deprive him of his life, or the least particle of it. Not a jot of the happiness and life which God infinitely possesses can be lost; it will be as durable to everlasting, as it hath been possessed from everlasting.

3. There is no succession in God. God is without succession or change. It is a part of eternity; "from everlasting to everlasting he is God," i.e., the same. God doth not only always remain in being, but he always remains the same in that being: "thou art the same" (Psalms 102:27). The being of creatures is successive; the being of God is permanent, and remains entire with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed, the first notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which notes to us the duration of a being in regard of its existence; but to have no succession, nothing first or last, notes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its essence. The creatures are in a perpetual flux; something is acquired or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of existence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him. Every day he acquires something till he comes to his maturity; every day he loseth something till he comes to his period. A man is not the same at night that he was in the morning; something is expired, and something is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his substance, a change in his accidents. But God hath his whole being in one and the same point, or moment of eternity. He receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he loseth nothing of what he was before, he is always the same excellency and perfection in the same infiniteness as ever. His years do not fail (Hebrews 1:12), his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to-morrow, or yesterday, with him. As nothing is past or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are present, so nothing is past or future in regard of his essence. He is not in his essence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now. All his perfections are most perfect in him every moment; before all ages, after all ages. As he hath his whole essence undivided in every place, as well as in an immense space, so he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time. Some illustrate the difference between eternity and time by the similitude of a tree, or a rock standing upon the side of a river, or shore of the sea; the tree stands always the same and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot. The flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverse respect and relation of presence to the various parts of the river as they flow. The waters of the river press on, and push forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the same the next. So are all sublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no substantial change, yet they have an accidental; for the actions of the angels this day are not the same individual actions which they performed yesterday: but in God there is no change; he always remains the same. Of a creature, it may be said he was, or he is, or he shall be; of God it cannot be said but only he is. He is what he always was, and he is what he always will be; whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now. As it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is a flame: but it is not the same individual flame as was before, nor is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more. While it continues it may be said there is a flame; yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts. So of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is. But God is the same, without any succession of parts and of time; of him it may be said, "He is." He is no more now than he was, and he shall be no more hereafter than he is. God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself. He sees all things sliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds

the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immovable nature. All other things pass from one state to another; from their original, to their eclipse and destruction; but God possesses his being in one indivisible point, having neither beginning, end, nor middle.

(1.) There is no succession in the knowledge of God. The variety of successions and changes in the world make not succession, or new objects in the Divine mind; for all things are present to him from eternity in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world, in regard of their existence. He doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he sees all things at once; "Known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18); but in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, there is yet no succession in God in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world; yet both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present to him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as if they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God; yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying and rising at the same time; so that there is succession in things when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come, in regard of their existence; but there is not past, present, and to come, in regard of God's knowledge of them, because he sees and knows not by any other, but by himself; he is his own light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees; beholding himself, he beholds all things.

(2.) There is no succession in the decrees of God. He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, so his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, so they are decreed at once; there is a succession in the execution of them; first grace, then glory; but the purpose of God for the bestowing of both, was in one and the same moment of eternity. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Ephesians 1:4): The choice of Christ, and the choice of some in him to be holy and to be happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is by the eternal counsel of God all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counsel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

(3.) God is his own eternity. He is not eternal by grant, and the disposal of any other, but by nature and essence. The eternity of God is nothing else but the duration of God; and the duration of God is nothing else but his existence enduring. If eternity were anything distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not God, necessary to perfect God. As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, so eternity is the choice perfection of God, yea, the gloss and lustre of all others. Every perfection would be imperfect, if it were not always a perfection. God is essentially whatsoever he is, and there is nothing in God but his essence. Duration or continuance in being in creatures, differs from their being; for they might exist but for one instant, in which case they may be said to have being, but not duration, because all

duration includes prius et posterius. All creatures may cease from being if it be the pleasure of God; they are not, therefore, durable by their essence, and therefore are not their own duration, no more than they are their own existence. And though some creatures, as angels, and souls, may be called everlasting, as a perpetual life is communicated to them by God; yet they can never be called their own eternity, because such a duration is not simply necessary, nor essential to them, but accidental, depending upon the pleasure of another; there is nothing in their nature that can hinder them from losing it, if God, from whom they received it, should design to take it away; but as God is his own necessity of existing, so he is his own duration in existing; as he doth necessarily exist by himself, so he will always necessarily exist by himself.

(4.) Hence all the perfections of God are eternal. In regard of the Divine eternity, all things in God are eternal; his power, mercy, wisdom, justice, knowledge. God himself were not eternal if any of his perfections, which are essential to him, were not eternal also; he had not else been a perfect God from all eternity, and so his whole self had not been eternal. If anything belonging to the nature of a thing be wanting, it cannot be said to be that thing which it ought to be. If anything requisite to the nature of God had been wanting one moment, he could not have been said to be an eternal God. The Essence of God's Eternity

II. God is eternal. The Spirit of God in Scripture condescends to our capacities in signifying the eternity of God by days and years, which are terms belonging to time, whereby we measure it (Psalms 102:27). But we must no more conceive that God is bounded or measured by time, and hath succession of days, because of those expressions, than we can conclude him to have a body, because members are ascribed to him in Scripture, to help our conceptions of his glorious nature and operations. Though years are ascribed to him, yet they are such as cannot be numbered, cannot be finished, since there is no proportion between the duration of God, and the years of men. "The number of his years cannot be searched out, for he makes small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof (Job 36:26-27). The numbers of the drops of rain which have fallen in all parts of the earth since the creation of the world, if subtracted from the number of the years of God, would be found a small quantity, a mere nothing, to the years of God. As all the nations in the world compared with God, are but as the "drop of a bucket, worse than nothing, than vanity" (Isaiah 40:15); so all the ages of the world, if compared with God, amount not to so much as the one hundred thousandth part of a minute; the minutes from the creation may be numbered, but the years of the duration of God being infinite, are without measure. As one day is to the life of man, so are a thousand years to the life of God. The Holy Ghost expresseth himself to the capacity of man, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to the capacity of man. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions four hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all those; for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years. Sometimes this eternity is expressed by parts, as looking backward and forward; by the differences of time, "past, present, and to come" (Revelation 1:8), "which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). Though this might be spoken of anything in being, though but for an hour, it was the last minute, it is now, and it will be the next minute; yet the

Holy Ghost would declare something proper to God, as including all parts of time; he always was, is now, and always shall be. It might always be said of him, he was, and it may always be said of him, he will be; there is no time when he began, no time when he shall cease. It cannot be said of a creature he always was, he always is what he was, and he always will be what he is; but God always is what he was, and always will be what he is; so that it is a very significant expression of the eternity of God, as can be suited to our capacities.

1. His eternity is evident, by the name God gives himself (Exodus 3:14): "And God said unto Moses, I am that I am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, 'I Am hath sent me unto you.'" This is the name whereby he is distinguished from all creatures; I Am, is his proper name. This description being in the present tense, shows that his essence knows no past, nor future; if it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be; but I Am; I am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore, at the greatest distance from not being, and that is eternal. So that it signifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability. As I Am speaks the want of no blessedness, so it speaks the want of no duration; and therefore the French, wherever they find this word Jehovah, in the Scripture, which we translate Lord, and Lord eternal, render it the Eternal,—I am always and immutably the same. The eternity of God is opposed to the volubility of time, which is extended into past, present and to come. Our time is but a small drop, as a sand to all the atoms and small particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded sea of being. "I Am that I Am"; i.e. an infinite life; I have not that now, which I had not formerly; I shall not afterwards have that which I have not now; I am that in every moment which I was, and will be in all moments of time; nothing can be added to me, nothing can be detracted from me; there is nothing superior to him, which can detract from him; nothing desirable that can be added to him. Now if there were any beginning and end of God, any succession in him, he could not be "I Am"; for in regard of what was past, he would not be; in regard of what was to come, he is not yet; and upon this account a heathen argues well; of all creatures it may be said they were, or they will be; but of God it cannot be said anything else but est, God is, because he fills an eternal duration. A creature cannot be said to be, if it be not yet, nor if it be not now, but hath been. God only can be called "I Am"; all creatures have more of not being, than being; for every creature was nothing from eternity, before it was made something in time; and if it be incorruptible in its whole nature, it will be nothing to eternity after it hath been something in time; and if it be not corruptible in its nature, as the angels, or in every part of its nature, as man in regard of his soul; yet it hath not properly a being, because it is dependent upon the pleasure of God to continue it, or deprive it of it; and while it is, it is mutable, and all mutability is a mixture of not being. If God therefore be properly "I Am," i.e. being, it follows that he always was; for if he were not always, he must, as was argued before, be produced by some other, or by himself; by another he could not; then he had not been God, but a creature; nor by himself, for then as producing, he must be before himself, as produced; he had been before he was. And he always will be; for being "I Am," having all being in himself, and the fountain of all being to everything else, how can he ever have his name changed to I am not.

2. God hath life in himself (John 5:26): "The Father hath life in himself"; he is the "living God"; therefore "steadfast forever" (Daniel 6:26). He hath life by his essence, not by participation. He is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives not light or life from anything; and therefore he hath an unlimited life, not a drop of life, but a fountain; not a spark of a limited life, but a life

transcending all bounds. He hath life in himself; all creatures have their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist; for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life. What doth necessarily exist therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence, without influence of any efficient cause. When God pronounced his name, "I Am that I Am," angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thousand four hundred years; Moses, to whom he then speaks, was in being; yet God only is, because he only hath the fountain of being in himself; but all that they were was a rivulet from him. He hath from nothing else, that he doth subsist; everything else hath its subsistence from him as their root, as the beam from the sun, as the rivers and fountains from the sea. All life is seated in God, as in its proper throne, in its most perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally. He is a pure act, nothing but vigor and act; he hath by his nature that life which others have by his grant; whence the Apostle saith (1 Timothy 6:16) not only that he is immortal, but he hath immortality in a full possession; free simple, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himself. He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be. He always was, because he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any space before he did exist, then there was something which made him to exist; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being would be God. And to say God sprung into being by chance, when we see nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath some cause of its existence, would be vain; for since God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth something; and by the same reason, that he sprung up by chance, he might totally vanish by chance. What a strange notion of a God would this be! such a God that had no life in himself but from chance! Since he hath life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence, he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itself, hath life without bounds, and can never desert it, nor be deprived of it; so that he lives necessarily, and it is absolutely impossible that he should not live; whereas all other things "live, and move, and have their being in him" (Acts 17:28); and as they live by his will, so they can return to nothing at his word.

3. If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatsoever begins, is changed in its passing from not being to being. It began to be what it was not; and if it ends, it ceaseth to be what it was; it cannot therefore be said to be God, if there were neither beginning or ending, or succession in it (Malachi 3:6): "I am the Lord, I change not"; (Job 37:23): "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." God argues here, saith Calvin, from his unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his purpose. Had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change from nothing to something. A change of essence is greater than a change of purpose. God is a sun glittering always in the same glory; no growing up in youth; no passing on to age. If he were not without succession, standing in one point of eternity, there would be a change from past to present, from present to future. The eternity of God is a shield against all kind of mutability. If anything sprang up in the essence of God that was not there before, he could not be said to be either an eternal, or an unchanged substance.

4. God could not be an infinitely perfect Being, if he were not eternal. A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Whatsoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot swallow up all perfections in itself. God hath an unsearchable perfection. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7) He cannot be found out: he is infinite, because he is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility ariseth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the short line of man's understanding. His essence in regard of its diffusion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehensible, as well as his action: if God, therefore, had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not possess the highest perfection; because a perfection might be conceived beyond it. If his being could fail, he were not perfect; can that deserve the name of the highest perfection, which is capable of corruption and dissolution? To be finite and limited, is the greatest imperfection, for it consists in a denial of being. He could not be the most blessed Being if he were not always so, and should not forever remain so; and whatsoever perfections he had, would be soured by the thoughts, that in time they would cease, and so could not be pure affections, because not permanent; but "He is blessed from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalms 41:13). Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfection without limitation; he would have been limited by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himself, and so more perfect than he: but since God is the most sovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined perfecter by the most capacious understanding, He is certainly "eternal"; being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be omnipotent, almighty, if he were not eternal. The title of almighty agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatsoever hath a beginning was once nothing; and when it was nothing, could act nothing: where there is no being there is no power. Neither doth the title of almighty agree with a perishing nature: he can do nothing to purpose, that cannot preserve himself against the outward force and violence of enemies, or against the inward causes of corruption and dissolution. No account is to be made of man, because "his breath is in his nostrils" (Isaiah 2:22); could a better account be made of God, if he were of the like condition? He could not properly be almighty, that were not always mighty; if he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him; he that hath all power, can have no hurt. If he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, nothing can make him miserable, since misery consists in those things which happen against our will. The almightiness and eternity of God are linked together: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8): almighty because eternal, and eternal because almighty.

6. God would not be the first cause of all if he were not eternal; but he is the first and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things: that which is the first cannot begin to be; it were not then the first; it cannot cease to be: whatsoever is dissolved, is dissolved into that whereof it doth consist, which was before it, and then it was not the first. The world might not have been; it was once nothing; it must have some cause to call it out of nothing: nothing hath no power to make itself something; there is a superior cause, by whose will and power it comes into being, and so gives all the creatures their distinct forms. This power cannot but be eternal; it must be before the world; the founder must be before the foundation; and his existence must be from eternity; or we must say nothing did exist from eternity: and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time. What we see, and what we are, must arise from itself or some other; it

cannot from itself: if anything made itself, it had a power to make itself; it then had an active power before it had a being; it was something in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of existence at the same time. Suppose it had a power to produce itself, this power must be conferred upon it by another; and so the power of producing itself, was not from itself, but from another; but if the power of being was from itself, why did it not produce itself before? why was it one moment out of being? If there be any existence of things, it is necessary that that which was the "first cause," should "exist from eternity." Whatsoever was the immediate cause of the world, yet the first and chief cause wherein we must rest, must have nothing before it; if it had anything before it, it were not the first; he therefore that is the first cause, must be without beginning; nothing must be before him; if he had a beginning from some other, he could not be the first principle and author of all things; if he be the first cause of all things, he must give himself a beginning, or be from eternity: he could not give himself a beginning; whatsoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing, it could do nothing; it could not give itself anything, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not. If he made himself in time, why did he not make himself before? what hindered him? It was either because he could not, or because he would not; if he could not, he always wanted power, and always would, unless it were bestowed upon him, and then he could not be said to be from himself. If he would not make himself before, then he might have made himself when he would: how had he the power of willing and filling without a being? Nothing cannot will or nill; nothing hath no faculties; so that it is necessary to grant some eternal being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny some eternal being, we must deny all being; our own being, the being of everything about us; unconceivable absurdities will arise. So, then, if God were the cause of all things, he did exist before all things, and that from eternity. The Uniqueness of God's Eternity

III. Eternity is only proper to God, and not communicable. It is as great a madness to ascribe eternity to the creature, as to deprive the Lord of the creature of eternity. It is so proper to God, that when the apostle would prove the deity of Christ, he proves it by his immutability and eternity, as well as his creating power: "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:10-12). The argument had not strength, if eternity belonged essentially to any but God; and therefore he is said only to have "immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16): all other things receive their being from him, and can be deprived of their being by him: all things depend on him; he of none: all other things are like clothes, which would consume if God preserved them not. Immortality is appropriated to God, i.e. an independent immortality. Angels and souls have an immortality, but by donation from God, not by their own essence; dependent upon their Creator, not necessary in their own nature: God might have annihilated them after he had created them; so that their duration cannot properly be called an eternity, it being extrinsical to them, and dependent upon the will of their Creator, by whom they may be extinguished; it is not an absolute and necessary, but a precarious immortality. Whatsoever is not God, is temporary; whatsoever is eternal, is God. It is a contradiction to say a creature can be eternal; as nothing eternal is created, so nothing created is eternal. What is distinct from the nature of God cannot be eternal, eternity being the essence of God. Every creature, in the notion of a creature, speaks a dependence on some cause, and therefore cannot be eternal. As it is repugnant to the nature of God not to be eternal, so it is repugnant to the nature of a creature to be eternal; for then a creature would be equal to the Creator, and the Creator, or the Cause, would not be before the creature, or effect. It would be all one to admit many gods, as many eternals; and all one to say, God can be created, as to say a creature can be uncreated,

which is to be eternal.

1. Creation is a producing something from nothing. What was once nothing, cannot therefore be eternal; not being was eternal; therefore its being could not be eternal, for it should be then before it was, and would be something when it was nothing. It is the nature of a creature to be nothing before it was created; what was nothing before it was, cannot be equal with God in an eternity of duration.

2. There is no creature but is mutable, therefore not eternal. As it had a change from nothing to something, so it may be changed from being to not being. If the creature were not mutable, it would be most perfect, and so would not be a creature, but God; for God only is most perfect. It is as much the essence of a creature to be mutable, as it is the essence of God to be immutable. Mutability and eternity are utterly inconsistent.

3. No creature is infinite, therefore not eternal: to be infinite in duration is all one as to be infinite in essence. It is as reasonable to conceive a creature immense, filling all places at once, as eternal, extended to all ages; because neither can be without infiniteness, which is the property of the Deity. A creature may as well be without bounds of places, as limitations of time.

4. No effect of an intellectual free agent can be equal in duration to its cause. The productions of natural agents are as ancient often as themselves; the sun produceth a beam as old in time as itself; but who ever heard of a piece of wise workmanship as old as the wise artificer? God produced a creature, not necessarily and naturally, as the sun doth a beam, but freely, as an intelligent agent. The sun was not necessary; it might be or not be, according to the pleasure of God. A free act of the will is necessary to precede in order of time, as the cause of such effects as are purely voluntary. Those causes that act as soon as they exist act naturally, necessarily, not freely, and cannot cease from acting. But suppose a creature might have existed by the will of God from eternity; yet, as some think, it could not be said absolutely, and in its own nature to be eternal, because eternity was not of the essence of it. The creature could not be its own duration; for though it were from eternity, it might not have been from eternity, because its existence depended upon the free will of God, who might have chose whether he would have created it or no. God only is eternal; "the first and the last, the beginning and the end"; who, as he subsisted before any creature had a being, so he will eternally subsist if all creatures were reduced to nothing.

God's Patience Abused

God's Patience Abused

Stephen Charnock "The Lord is slow to anger"—Nahum 1:3 Slowness to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the divine nature.

God's patience is seen in His providential works in the world: "He suffered the nations to walk in their own way"; and the witness of His providence to them was His "giving them rain, and fruitful seasons, filling their heart with food and gladness" (Acts 16:17). His patience is manifested to our first parents. His slowness to anger was evidenced in not directing His artillery against them when they attempted to rebel. God did not presently send that death upon man which he had merited, but continued his life to the space of 930 years. The earth did not swallow him up, nor a thunderbolt from heaven raze out the memory of him. Though he had deserved to be treated with such a severity for his ungrateful demeanor to his Creator and benefactor, and affecting an equality with Him, yet God continued him with a sufficiency for his content after he turned rebel, though not with such a liberality as when he had remained a loyal subject. And though He foresaw that he would not make an end of sinning but with an end of living, He used him not in the same manner as He had used the devils. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Gentiles. What they are, we need no other witness than the apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes (Romans 1:29-32). He does preface the catalog with a comprehensive expression, "being filled with all unrighteousness"; and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation, "They not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." All of them were plunged in idolatry and superstition, but God "winked at the times of that ignorance" (Acts 17:30). He winked as if he did not see them and would not deal so severely with them. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Israelites. You know how often they are called a stiff-necked people; they are said to do evil from their youth, i.e. from the time they were erected a nation. They scarce discontinued their revolting from God; they were a "grief to Him forty years together in the wilderness" (Psalms 95:10), yet "He suffered their manners" (Acts 13:18). He bore with their ill behaviour and sauciness towards Him; and no sooner was Joshua taken away, and the elders that were their conductors gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forsook God, and smutted themselves with idolatry of the nations (Judges 2:10). Their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final destruction as a commonwealth not till about forty years after the death of Christ; and all this while His patience did sometimes wholly restrain His justice, and sometimes let it fall upon them in some few drops, but made no total devastation of their country till the Roman conquest, wherein He put a period to them both as a church and state, He is long-suffering here, that His justice may be more public hereafter.

How is God's patience abused? The Gentiles abused those testimonies of it, which were written in showers and fruitful seasons. No nation was ever stripped of it, under the most provoking idolatries, till after multiplied spurns of it. Not a person among us has not been guilty of the abuse of it. Let us consider the ways in which slowness to anger is abused.

1. It is abused by misinterpretations of it, when men slander God's patience, to be only a carelessness and neglect of His providence; or when men, from His long-suffering, charge Him with impurity, as if His patience were a consent to their crimes; and because He suffered them without calling them to account, He were one of their partisans, and as wicked as themselves: (Psalms 50:21) "Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself."

2. His patience is abused by continuing in a course of sin under the influence of it. How much is it the practical language of men, Come, let us commit this or that iniquity, because divine patience has suffered worse than this at our hands! How often did the Israelites repeat their murmurings against Him, as if they would put His patience to the utmost proof, and see how far the line of it could extend? They were no sooner satisfied in one thing but they quarreled with Him about another, as if He had no other attribute to put in motion against them. They tempted Him as often as He relieved them, as though the declaration of His name to Moses to be "a God gracious and long-suffering" had been intended for no other purpose but a protection of them in their rebellions.

3. His patience is abused by repeating sin, after God has, by an act of His patience, taken off some affliction from men. As metals melted in the fire remain liquid under the operation of the flames, yet when removed from the fire they quickly return to their former hardness and sometimes grow harder than they were before, so men who, in their afflictions, seem to be melted, like Ahab confess their sins, lie prostrate before God, and seek Him early, yet if they be brought from under the power of their afflictions, they return to their old nature, and are as still against God, and resist the blows of the Spirit as much as they did before. Pharaoh was somewhat thawed under judgments, and frozen again under forbearance.

4. His patience is abused, by taking encouragement from it, to mount to greater degrees of sin. Because God is slow to anger, men are more fierce in sin, and not only continue in their old rebellions, but heap new upon them. If He spare them for "three transgressions" they will commit "four," as is intimated in Amos 1:1-15; Amos 2:1-16. "Men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). No encouragement is given to men by God's patience, but they force it by their presumption. But let it be considered,

1. That this abuse of patience is a high sin. As every act of forbearance obliges us to duty, so every act of it abused increases our guilt. The more frequent its solicitations of us have been, the deeper aggravations our sin receives by it. Every sin, after an act of divine patience, contracts a blacker guilt.

2. It is dangerous to abuse His patience. Though His Spirit strives with man, yet it "shall not always strive" (Genesis 6:3). Though there be a time wherein Jerusalem might "know the things that concerned her peace," yet there is another period wherein they should be "hid from their eyes," (Luke 19:42) "Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day." Nations have their day and persons have their day, and the day of most persons is shorter than the day of nations. And for particular persons the time of life whether shorter or longer, is the only time of long-suffering. It has no other stage than the present state of things to act upon. The time of patience ends with the first moment of the soul's departure from the body. This time only is the day of salvation. It is at His pleasure to shorten or lengthen our day, not at ours. It is not our long-suffering, but His; He has the command of it.

It is dangerous to abuse His patience, for God has wrath to punish as well as patience to bear. He has a fury to revenge the outrages done to His meekness; when His messages of peace, sent to reclaim men, are slighted, His sword shall be whetted, and His instruments of war prepared; (Hosea 5:8) "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah." As He deals gently like a father, so He can punish capitally as a judge. Though He holds His peace for a long time, yet at last He will go forth like a mighty man, and stir up jealousy as a man of war, to cut in pieces His enemies. It is not said, He has no anger, but that He is slow to anger, but sharp in it. He has a sword to cut, and a bow to shoot, and arrows to pierce (Psalms 12:13). And though He be long a-drawing the one out of the scabbard, and long a-fitting the other to His bow, yet when they are ready, He strikes home and hits the mark.

Though God a while was pressed with the murmurings of the Israelites, after their coming out of Egypt, and seemed desirous to give them all satisfaction upon their unworthy complaints, yet when they came to open hostility, in setting a golden calf in His throne, He commissions the Levites to "kill every man his brother and companion in the camp" (Exodus 32:27); and how desirous soever

He was to content them before, they never murmured afterwards, but they severely smarted for it. He planted by the apostles churches in the East, and when His goodness and long-suffering prevailed not with them, He tore them up by the roots. What Christians are to be found in those once famous parts of Asia, but what are overgrown with much error and ignorance? The more His patience is abused, the sharper will be the wrath He inflicts. All the time men are abusing His patience, God is whetting His sword, and the longer it is whetting the sharper will be the edge. When He puts an end to His abused patience, His wrath will make quick and sure work. He that is slow to anger, will be swift in the execution of it. The departure of God from Jerusalem is described with wings and wheels (Ezekiel 11:1-25). One stroke of His hand is irresistible; He that has spent so much time in waiting, needs but one minute to ruin; though it be long ere He draw His sword out of the scabbard, when once He does it, He dispatches men at a blow. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had a long time of patience and prosperity, but "now shall a month devour him with his portion" (Hosea 5:7). One fatal month puts a period to the many years' peace and prosperity of a sinful nation.

Though He defers His visible wrath, yet that very delay may be more dreadful than a quick punishment. He may forbear striking, and give the reins to the hardness and corruption of men's hearts. He may suffer them to walk in their own counsels, without any more striving with them, whereby they make themselves fitter fuel for His vengeance. This was the fate of Israel; when they would not hearken to His voice, "He gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:12). Though His sparing them had the outward aspect of patience, it was a wrathful one, and attended with spiritual judgments. Thus many abusers of patience may have their line lengthened, and the candle of prosperity to shine upon their heads, that they may increase their sins, and be the fitter mark at last for His arrows. They swim down the stream of their own sensuality with a deplorable security, till they fall into an unavoidable gulf, where at last it will be a greater part of their hell to reflect on the length of divine patience on earth, and their inexcusable abuse of it.

It is a vast comfort to any when God is pacified to them; but it is some comfort to all that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory sinner. It is a terror that God has anger, but it is a mitigation of that terror that God is slow to it. Patience, as long as it lasts, is a temporary defence to those that are under the wing of it; but to the believer it is a singular comfort. It is a comfort in that it is an argument of His grace to His people. If He has so rich a patience to exercise towards His enemies, He has a greater treasure to bestow upon His friends. If His slowness to anger be so great when His precept is slighted, His readiness to give what He has promised will be as great when His promise is believed. He was more ready to make the promise of redemption, after man's apostasy, than to execute the threatening of the law.

It is a comfort in infirmities. If He were not patient, He could not bear with so many peevishnesses and weaknesses in the hearts of His own. Were it not for His slowness to anger, He would stifle us in the midst of our prayers, wherein there are as many foolish thoughts to disgust Him as there are petitions to implore Him. The most patient angels would hardly be able to bear with the follies of good men in acts of worship.

Presume not upon God's patience. The exercise of it is not eternal; you are at present under His patience, yet while you are unconverted you are also under His anger: (Psalms 7:11) "God is angry with the wicked every day." You know not how soon His anger may turn His patience aside, and step before it. It may be His sword is drawn out of the scabbard, His arrows may be settled in His bow, and perhaps there is but a little time before you may feel the edge of the one or the point of the other, and then there will be no more time for patience in God to us, or petition from us to Him. If we die without repentance, He will have no longer mercy to pardon, nor patience to bear.

[Sinner, won't you come to the Saviour? Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Who knows when your soul will be required of you. The Lord is calling to all the earth, "come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Do you not have strength? He tells you that you are to take hold of his strength. "let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." The call goes forth "turn ye turn ye for why will ye die?" Call upon the name of the Lord and thou shalt be saved.]

God's Regard for His Own Glory, Seen in the Saving of Sinners

God's Regard for His Own Glory, Seen in the Saving of Sinners by Stephen Charnock

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."—1 Timothy 1:15

1. The glory of his patience. We wonder, when we see a notorious sinner, how God can let his thunders still lie by him, and his sword rust in his sheath. And, indeed, when such are converted, they wonder themselves that God did not draw his sword out, and pierce their bowels, or shoot one of his arrows into their hearts all this while. But God, by such a forbearance; shews himself to be God indeed, and something in this act infinitely above such a weak creature as man is: 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man,' Hosea 11:9. When God had reckoned up their sins before, and they might have expected the sentence after the reading the charge, God tells them, he would not destroy them, he would not execute them, because he was God. If he were not a God, he could not keep himself from pouring out a just vengeance upon them. If a man did inherit all the meekness of all the angels and all the men that ever were in the world, he could not be able to bear with patience the extravagances and injuries done in the world the space of one day; for none but a God, i.e. one infinitely longsuffering, can bear with them. Not a sin passed in the world before the coming of Christ in the flesh, but was a commendatory letter of God's forbearance, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,' Romans 3:25. And not a sin passed before the coming of Christ into the soul, but gives the same testimony, and bears the same record. And the greater number of sins, and great sins are passed, the more trophies there are erected to God's longsuffering; the reason why the grace of the gospel appeared so late in the world, was to testify God's patience. Our apostle takes notice of this long-suffering towards himself in bearing with such a persecutor. 'Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him,' 1 Timothy 1:16. This was Christ's end in letting him run so far, that he might shew forth not a few mites, grains, or ounces of patience, but all longsuffering, longsuffering without measure, or weight, by wholesale; and this as a pattern to all ages of the world; upotupwsin for a type: a type is but a shadow in respect of the substance. To shew, that all the ages of the world should not waste that patience, whereof he had then manifested but a pattern. A pattern, we know, is less than the whole piece of cloth from whence it is cut; and as an essay is but a short taste of a man's skill, and doth not discover all his art, as the first miracle Christ wrought, of turning water into wine, as a sample of what power he had, was less than those miracles which succeeded; and the first miracle God wrought in Egypt, in turning Aaron's rod into a serpent, was but a sample of his power which would produce greater wonders; so this patience to Paul was but a little essay of his meekness, a little patience cut off from the whole piece, which should always be dealing out to some sinners or other, and would never be cut wholly out till the world had left being. This sample or pattern was but of the extent of a few years; for Paul was but young, the Scripture terms him a young man, Acts 7:58, about thirty-six years of

age, yet he calls it all longsuffering. Ah, Paul! Some since have experienced more of this patience; in some it has reached not only to thirty, but forty, fifty, or sixty years.

2. Grace. It is partly for the admiration of this grace that God intends the day of judgment. It is a strange place: 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day,' 2 Thessalonians 1:10. What, has not Christ glory enough in heaven with his Father? Will he come on purpose to seek glory from such worthless creatures as his saints are? What is that which glorifies Christ in them? It is the gracious work he has wrought in them. For the word is, *endoxasqhnaì en agioiV*, to be inglorified in his saints, i.e. by something within them; for which they glorify Christ actively and objectively. As the creatures glorify the wisdom and power of God, by affording matter to men to do so, so does the work of God in saints afford matter of praise to angels, and admiration to devils. The apostle useth two words: glorified, that is, the work of angels and saints, who shall sing out his praises for it, as a prince, after a great conquest, receives the congratulations of all his nobility; admired, that the very devil and damned shall do; for, though their malice and condition will not suffer them to praise him, yet, his inexpressible love in making such black insides so beautiful, shall astonish them. In this sense those things under the earth shall bow down to that name of Jesus, a Saviour; a name which God gave him at first: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,' Php 2:9. And upon his exaltation did confirm, Hebrews 5:9, when he was made perfect, i.e. exalted, he became the author of eternal salvation, and had the power of saving, as well as the name conferred upon him. They shall confess that he is Lord, Php 2:11, i.e. that he acted like a Lord, when he prevailed over all the opposition which those great sinners made against him. The whole trial of the saints, and the sentence of their blessedness, shall be finished before that of the damned, Matthew 25:85, Matthew 25:44. That the whole scene of his love, and the wonders of the work of faith being laid open, might strike them with a vast amazement. And that this is the design of Christ, to be thus glorified in his grace and power, appears by the apostle's prayer, Matthew 25:11-12, that the Thessalonians might be in the number of those Christ should be thus glorified in. Therefore he prays, that God would 'fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness,' i.e. that grace he so pleased and delighted to manifest, and carry on the work of faith with power; 'that the name of Christ might be glorified in them,' as well as in the rest of his saints. Ordinary conversion is an act of grace; Barnabas so interprets it, Acts 11:21, Acts 11:23, when a great number believed; what abundance of grace then is expended in converting a company of extraordinary sinners!

It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence, Proverbs 19:11, i.e. it is a manifestation of a property which is an honour to him to be known to have. If it be thus an honour to pass by an offence simply, then the greater the offence is, and the more the offences are which he passeth by, the greater must the glory needs be, because it is a manifestation of such a quality in greater strength and vigour. So it must argue a more exceeding grace in God to remit many and great sins in man, than to forgive only some few and lesser offences.

(1.) Fulness of his grace. He shews hereby that there is more grace in him than there can be sin in us or the whole world. He lets some sinners run mightily upon his score, to manifest that though they are beggared, yet his grace is not; that though they have spent all their stock upon their swinish lusts, yet they have not drained his treasures; no more than the sun is emptied of its strength by exhaling the ill vapours of so many dunghills. This was his design in giving the moral

law, finis operis; that is, the event of the law was to increase the sin; but finis operantis, was thereby to glorify his grace; 'Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' Romans 5:20. When the law of nature was out of print, and so blurred that it could scarce be read, God brings the moral law (the counterpart of the law of nature) in a new edition into the world; and thereby sin hath new aggravations, as being rebellion against a clearer light, a swelling and breaking over this mighty bank of the law laid in its way. But this was serviceable to the fulness of his grace, which had more abundant matter hereby to work upon, and a larger field to sow its inexhaustible seed in, upereperisseusen, it did superabound. That grace should rise in its tide higher than sin, and bear it down before it, just as the rolling tide of the sea riseth higher than the streams of the river, and beats them back with all their mud and filth. It was mercy in God to create us; it is abundant mercy to make any new creatures, after they had forfeited their happiness, 1 Peter 1:3, which, according to his abundant mercy, kata to polu, according to his much mercy. But it was uperpleonazousa cariV, overflowing, exceeding abundant, more than full grace, to make such deformed creatures new creatures, 1 Peter 1:14 of this chapter.

(2.) Freeness of grace. None can entertain an imagination that Christ should be a debtor to sin, unless in vengeance, much less a debtor to the worst of sinners. But if Christ should only take persons of moral and natural excellencies, men might suspect that Christ were some way or other engaged to them, and that the gift of salvation were limited to the endowments of nature, and the good exercise and use of a man's own will. But when he puts no difference between persons of the least and those of the greatest demerit, but affecting the foulest monsters of sin, as well as the fairest of nature's children, he builds triumphal arches to his grace upon this rubbish, and makes men and angels admiringly gaze upon these infinitely free compassions, when he takes souls full of disease and misery into his arms. For it is manifest hereby that the God and Lord of nature is no more bound to his servant (as touching the gift of salvation), when she carries it the most smoothly with him, than when she rebels against him with the highest hand; and that Christ is at perfect liberty from any conditions but that of his own, viz. faith; and that he can and will embrace the dirt and mud, as well as the beauty and varnish of nature, if they believe with the like precious faith.

Therefore it is frequently God's method in Scripture, just before the offer of pardon, to sum up the sinner's debts, with their aggravations; to convince them of their insolvency to satisfy so large a score, and also to manifest the freeness and vastness of his grace: 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offering, &c., but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities,' Isaiah 43:22-24. When he had told them how dirtily they had dealt with him, and would have made him a very slave to their corrupt humours; at the conclusion, when they, nor no creature else, but would have expected fire-balls of wrath to be flung in their faces; and that God should have dipped his pen in gall, and have writ their mittimus to hell, he dips it in honey, and crosses the debt; 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,' Isaiah 43:25. Could there be anything of merit here, when the criminal, instead of favour, could expect nothing but severity, there being nothing but demerit in him?

It is so free, that the mercy we abuse, the name we have profaned, the name of which we have deserved wrath, opens its mouth with pleas for us; 'But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went,' Ezekiel 36:21. Not for their

sakes. It should be wholly free; for he repeats their profaning of his name four times. This name he would sanctify, i.e. glorify. How? In cleansing them from their filthiness, Ezekiel 36:25. His name, while it pleads for them, mentions their demerits, that grace might appear to be grace indeed, and triumph in its own freeness. Our sins against him cannot deserve more than our sufferings for him, and even they are not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed, Romans 8:18.

(3.) Extent of his grace. The mercy of God is called his riches, and exceeding riches of grace. Now as there is no end of his holiness, which is his honour, neither any limits set to his power, so there is no end of his grace, which is his wealth; no end of his mines; therefore the foulest and greatest sinners are the fittest for Christ to manifest the abundant riches of his graces upon; for it must needs argue a more vast estate to remit great debts, and many thousands of talents, than to forgive some fewer shillings or pence, than to pardon some smaller sins in men of a more unstained conversation. If it were not for turning and pardoning mountainous sinners, we should not know so much of God's estate; we should not know how rich he were, or what he were worth. He pardons iniquities for his name's sake; and who can spell all the letters of his name, and turn over all the leaves in the book of mercy? Who shall say to his grace, as he does to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further? As the heavens are of a vast extension, which, like a great circle, encompass the earth, which lies in the middle like a little atom, in comparison of that vast body of air and ether, so are our sins to the extent of God's mercy; 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,' Isaiah 55:9. Men's sins are innumerable, yet they are but ciphers to the vast sums of grace which are every day expended; because they are finite, but mercy is infinite; so that all sins in the world put together cannot be of so large an extent as mercy; because being every one of them finite, if all laid together, cannot amount to infinite. The gospel is entitled 'good-will to men;' to all sorts of men, with iniquities, transgressions, and sins of all sorts and sizes. God hath stores of mercy lying by him. His exchequer is never empty 'Keeps mercy for thousands,' Exodus 34:7, in a readiness to deal it upon thousand millions of sins as well as millions of persons. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all that were before, have not wasted it; and if God were to proclaim his name again, it is the same still, for his name as well as his essence is unchangeable. His grace is no more tied to one sin than it is to one person; he has mercy on whom he will, and his grace can pardon what sins he will; therefore he tells them, Isaiah 55:7, that he would multiply pardons. He will have mercy to suit every sin of thine, and a salve for every sore. Though thy sin has its heights and depths, yet he will heap mercy upon mercy, till he makes it to overtop thy sin. He will be as good at his merciful arithmetic as thou hast been at thy sinful, if thou dost sincerely repent and reform. Though thou multiply thy sins by thousands, where repentance goes before, remission of sin follows without limitation. When Christ gives the one, he is sure to second it with the other. Though aggravating circumstances be never so many, yet he will multiply his mercies as fast as thou canst the sins thou hast committed.

He hath a cleansing virtue and a pardoning grace for all iniquities and transgressions; 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me,' Jeremiah 33:8. It is three times repeated, to shew that his mercy should be as large as their sin, though there was not a more sinful nation upon the earth than they were. His justifying and sanctifying grace should have as vast an extension, for he would both pardon and cleanse them.

Why? Ver. 9, that it might be a name of joy and praise, and an honour to him before all the nations of the earth.

It is so great, that self-righteous persons murmur at it, that such swines should be preferred before them; as the eldest son was angry that his father should lavish out his kindness upon the prodigal more than upon himself, Luke 15:28.

(4.) Compassion of his grace. The formal nature of mercy is tenderness, and the natural effect of it is relief. The more miserable the object, the more compassionate human mercy is, and the more forward to assist. Now that mercy which in man is a quality, in God is a nature. How would the infinite tenderness of his nature be discovered, if there were no objects to draw it forth? It would not be known to be mercy, unless it were shed abroad; nor to be tender mercy, unless it relieved great and oppressing miseries; for mercy is a quality in man that cannot keep at home, and be stowed under a lock and key in a man's own breast; much less in God, in whom it is a nature. Now the greater the disease, the greater is that compassion discovered to be wherewith God is so fully stored. As his end in letting the devil pour out so many afflictions upon Job was to shew his pity and tender mercy in relieving him. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy, James 5:11; so, in permitting the devil to draw his elect to so many sins, it is the same end he drives at. And he is more pitiful to help men under sin than under affliction, because the guilt of one sin is a greater misery than the burden of a thousand crosses. If forgiveness be a part of tenderness in man, it is also so in God, who is set, Ephesians 4:32, as a pattern of the compassion we are to shew to others: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' The lower a man is brought, the more tender is that mercy that relieves him: 'Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low,' Psalms 79:8. To visit them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to pardon their sins, is called mercy, with this epithet of tender; 'Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,' Luke 1:77-79. And so it is indeed when he visits the most forlorn sinners.

(5.) Sincerity and pleasure of his grace. Ordinary pardon proceeds from his delight in mercy; 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy,' Micah 7:18. Therefore the more of his grace he lays out upon any one, the more excess of delight he hath in it, because it is a larger effect of that grace. If he were not sincere in it, he would never mention men's sins, which would scare them from him rather than allure them to him. If he were not sincere, he would never change the heart of an enemy, and shew kindness to him in the very act of enmity; for the first act of grace upon us is quite against our wills. And man is so far from being active in it, that he is contrary to it. In primo actionis, it is thus with a man, though not in primo actu; for in the first act of conversion man is willing, though not in the first moment of that act. But for God to bestow his grace upon us against our wills, and when he can expect no suitable recompence from us, evidences the purity of his affection; that when he endured so many contradictions of sinners against himself day by day, yet he is resolved to have them, and does seize upon them, though they struggle and fly in his face, and provoke him to fling them off.

It is so much his delight, that it is called by the very name of his glory: 'The glory of the Lord shall follow thee,' Isaiah 58:8; i.e. the mercy of the Lord shall follow them at the very heels. And when

they call, it should answer them; and when they cry, he would, like a watchful guardian servant, cry out, Here I am. So that he never lets a great sinner, when changed into a penitent, wait long for mercy, though he sometimes lets them wait long for a sense of it. This mercy is never so delightful to him as when it is most glorious, and it is most glorious when it takes hold of the worst sinners. For such black spots which mercy wears upon its face, makes it appear more beautiful.

Christ does not care for staying where he has not opportunities to do great cures, suitable to the vastness of his power, Mark 6:5. When he was in his own country, he could do no great work there, but only laid his hands upon a few sick people. He had not a suitable employment for that glorious power of working miracles. So when men come to Christ with lighter guilt, he has but an under opportunity given him, and with a kind of disadvantage, to manifest the greatness of his charity. Though he has so much grace and mercy, yet he cannot shew more than the nature and exigence of the opportunity will bear; and so his pleasure doth not swell so high as otherwise it would do, for little sins, and few sins, are not so fit an object for a grace that would ride in triumph. Free grace is God's darling, which he loves to advance; and it is never more advanced, than when it beautifies the most misshapen souls.

3. Power. The Scripture makes conversion a most wonderful work, and resembles it to creation, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead, &c.

(1.) Creation. Conversion, simply considered, is concluded by divines to be a greater work than creation; for God puts forth more power morally in conversion than he did physically in creation. The world was created by a word; but many words, and many acts, concur to conversion. The heavens are called the works of God's fingers, Psalms 8:8; but the gospel, in the effects of it, is called the arm of the Lord, Isaiah 53:1. Men put not their arm to a thing but when the work requires more strength than the fingers possess. It is 'the power of God to salvation;' and the faith it works is begun and fulfilled with power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. God created the world of nothing; nothing could not objectively contribute to his design, as matter does to a workman's intent; yet neither doth it oppose him, because it is nothing. As soon as God spake the word, this nothing brings forth sun, moon, stars, earth, trees, flowers, all the garnish of nature out of its barren womb. But sin is actively disobedient, disputes his commands, slights his power, fortifies itself against his entrance upon the heart, gives not up an inch of ground without a contest. There is not only a passive indisposition, but an active opposition. His creating power drew the world out of nothing, but his converting power frames the new creature out of something worse than nothing.

Naturally there is nothing but darkness and confusion in the soul. We have not the least spark of divine light, no more than the chaos had, when God, who commanded light to shine out of that darkness, 2 Corinthians 4:6, shined in our hearts. To bring a principle of light into the heart, and to set it up in spite of all the opposition that the devil and a man's own corruption makes, is greater than creation. As the power of the sun is more seen in scattering the thickest mists that triumph over the earth, and mask the face of the heavens, than in melting the small clouds compacted of a few vapours, so it must needs argue a greater strength to root out those great sins that were twisted and inlaid with our very nature, and become as dear to us as our right eye and right hand, than a few sins that have taken no deep root. Every man naturally is possessed with a hatred of God, and doth oppose everything which would restore God to his right; and being, since the fall filled with a desire of independency, which is daily strengthened with new recruits, and loath to

surrender himself to the power and direction of another, it is a more difficult thing to tame this unruly disposition in man's heart, I say more difficult, than to annihilate him, and new create him again; as it is more easy oftentimes for an artificer to make a new piece of work, than to repair and patch up an old one that is out of frame.

(2.) Resurrection. Conversion simply is so called: 'Quickened us when we were dead,' Ephesians 2:5. And the power that effects it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead; which was a mighty power, that could remove the stone from the grave, when Christ lay with all the sins of the world upon him, Ephesians 1:19-20; so the greater the stone is upon them, the greater is God's power to remove it. For if it be the power of God simply to regenerate nature, and put a new law into the heart, and to qualify the will with a new bias to comply with this law, and to make them that could not endure any thoughts of grace not to endure any thoughts of sin, it is a greater power sure to raise a man from that death wherein he has lain thirty or forty years rotten and putrefied in the grave; for if conversion in its own nature be creation and resurrection, this must needs be creation and resurrection with an emphasis. The more malignant any distemper is, and the more fixed in the vital parts, and complicated with other diseases, the greater is the power in curing it; for a disease is more easily checked at the first invasion, than when it has infected the whole mass of blood, and become chronic; so it is more to pull up a sin, or many sins, that have spread their roots deep, and stood against the shock of many blustering winds of threatenings, than that which is but a twig, and newly planted.

(3.) Traction or drawing. Drawing implies a strength. If conversion be a traction, then more strength is required to draw one that is bound to a post by great cables, than one that is only tied by a few pack-threads; one that has millions of weights upon him, than one that hath but a few pounds.

(4.) It is the only miracle Christ hath left standing in the world, and declares him more to be Christ than anything. When John sent to know what he was, Luke 7:20, he returns no other account but a list of his miracles; and that which brings up the rear as the greatest is, the poor euaggelizontai, are evangelised. It is not to be taken actively, of the preaching of the gospel; but passively, they were wrought upon by the gospel, and became an evangelised people, transformed into the mould of it; for else it would bear no analogy to the other miracles. The deaf heard, and the dead were raised; they had not only exhortations to hear, but the effects were wrought upon them. So these words import not only the preaching of the gospel to them, but the powerful operation of the gospel in them. It is not so great a work to raise many thousands killed in a battle, as to evangelise one dead soul. It is a miracle of power to transform a ravenous wolf into a gentle lamb, a furious lion into a meek dove, a nasty sink into a clear fountain, a stinking weed into a fragrant rose, a toad or viper into a man endued with rational faculties and moral endowments; and so to transform a filthy swine into a king and priest unto God. In conquests of this nature does divine power appear glorious. It is some strength to polish a rough stone taken out of the quarry, and hew it into the statue of a great prince; but more to make this statue a living man. Worse stones than these doth God make children, not only to Abraham, but to himself, even the Gentiles, who were accounted stones by the Jews; and are called stones in Scripture for the worshipping idols.

What power must that be which can stop the tide of the sea, and make it suddenly recoil back! What vast power must that be that can change a black cloud into a glorious sun? This and more doth God do in conversion. He doth not only take smooth pieces of the softest matter, but the

ruggedest timber full of knots, to plane and shew both his strength and art upon.

4. Wisdom. The work of grace being a new creation, is not only an act of God's power, but of his wisdom, as the natural creation was. As he did in contriving the platform of grace, and bringing Christ upon the stage, so also in particular distributions of it, he acts according to counsel, and that infinite too, even the counsel of his own will, Ephesians 1:11. The apostle having discoursed before, Ephesians 1:9, of God's making known the mystery of his will in and through Christ, and, Ephesians 1:11, of the dispensation of this grace, in bestowing an inheritance, 'being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will,' he doth not say God predestinated us according to the counsel of his own will, but refers it to all he had said before, viz., of his making known the mystery of Christ, and their obtaining an inheritance. And Ephesians 1:8, speaking before of the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, according to the riches of God's grace, wherein, saith he, 'he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom.' As there was abundance of grace set apart to be dealt out, so there was abundance of wisdom, even all God's wisdom, employed in the distribution of it. The restoring of God's image requires at least as much wisdom as the first creating of it. And the application of redemption, and bestowing of pardoning and converting grace, is as much an act of God's prudence as the contrivance of it was of his counsel.

Grace, or a gracious man in respect of his grace, is called God's workmanship, Ephesians 2:10, —*poiema*, not *ergon* work of his art as well as strength, and operation of his mind as well as his hand; his poem, not barely a work of omnipotency, but an intellectual spark. A new creature is a curious piece of divine art, fashioned by God's wisdom to set forth the praise of the framer, as a poem is, by a man's reason and fancy, to publish the wit and parts of the composer. It is a great skill of an artificer, with a mixture of a few sands and ashes, by his breath to blow up such a clear and diaphanous body as glass, and frame several vessels of it for several uses. It is not barely his breath that does it, for other men have breath as well as he; but it is breath managed by art. And is it not a marvellous skill in God to make a miry soul so pure and chrystalline on a sudden, to endue an irrational creature with a divine nature, and by a powerful word to frame so beautiful a model as a new creature is! The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is a man's ability in effecting it. The more desperate the wound is, the more honourable is the surgeon's ability in the cure. Christ's healing a soul that is come to the last gasp, and given over by all for lost, shews more of art than setting right an ordinary sinner. Our apostle takes notice of the wisdom of God in his own conversion here; for when he relates the history of it, he breaks out into an Hallelujah, and sends up a volley of praises to God for the grace he hath obtained. And in that doxology he puts an emphasis on the wisdom of God: 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever,' Ephesians 2:17. Only wise God; only, which he does not add to any other attribute he there gives him. This wisdom appears, (1.) In the subjects he chooseth. We will go no further than the example in our text. Our apostle seems to be a man full of heat and zeal. And the church had already felt the smart of his activity, insomuch that they were afraid to come at him after his change, or to admit him into their company, imagining that his fury was not changed, but disguised, and he of an open persecutor turned trepanner, Acts 9:26. None can express better what a lion he was than he doth himself: 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every

synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities,' Acts 26:10-11. He seems also to have been a man of high and ambitious spirit. This persecuting probably was acted so vigorously by him to ingratiate himself with the chief priests, and as a means to step into preferment, for which he was endued with parts and learning, and would not want zeal and industry to attain it. He seems to be of a proud spirit, by the temptation which he had: 'Lest I should be exalted above measure,' 2 Corinthians 12:7. He speaks it twice in that verse, intimating that his natural disposition led him to be lifted up with any excellency he had; and usually God doth direct his battery to beat down that which is the sin of our constitution.

He was a man of a very honest mind, and was forward in following every point his conscience directed him to; for what he did against Christ, he did according to the dictates of his conscience, as then informed: 'I verily thought with myself,' Acts 26:9, i.e. in my conscience, 'that I ought,' not that I might, but that it was his duty. His error commanded with the same, power that truth does where it reigns. Now it discovers the wisdom of God to lay hold of this man thus tempered, who had honesty to obey the dictates of a rightly-informed conscience, as well as those of an erroneous one; zeal to execute them, and height of spirit to preserve his activity from being blunted by any opposition, and parts and prudence for the management of all these. I say, to turn these affections and excellencies to run in a heavenly channel, and to guide this natural passion and heat for the service and advancement of that interest which before he endeavoured to destroy, and for the propagation of that gospel which before he persecuted, is an effect of a wonderful wisdom; as it is a rider's skill to order the mettle of a headstrong horse for his own use to carry him on big journey.

(2.) This wisdom appears in the time. As man's wisdom consists as well in timing his actions as contriving the models of them, so doth God's. He lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his wonderful providences upon the stage. He hath his set time to deliver his church from her enemies, Psalms 102:13; and he hath his set time also to deliver every particular soul, that he intends to make a member of his church from the devil. He waits the fittest season to manifest his grace: 'Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you,' Isaiah 30:18. Why? 'For the Lord is a God of judgment,' i.e. a God of wisdom; therefore will time things to the best advantage, both of his glory and the sinner's good. His timing of his grace was excellent in the conversion of Paul.

[a.] In respect of himself. There could not be a fitter time to glorify his grace than when Paul was almost got to the length of his chain; almost to the sin against the Holy Ghost. For if he had had but a little more light, and done that out of malice which he did out of ignorance, he had been lost for ever. He obtained mercy. Why? Because he did it ignorantly, Isaiah 30:13. As I said before, he followed the dictates of his conscience; for if he had had knowledge suitable to his fury, it had been the unpardonable sin. Christ suffered him to run to the brink of hell before he laid hold upon him.

[b.] In respect of others. He is converted at such a time when he went as full of madness as a toad of poison, to spit it out against the poor Christians at Damascus, armed with all the power and credential letters the high priest could give him, who without question promised himself much from his industry; and when he was almost at his journey's end, ready to execute his commission, And

as he journeyed, he came near Damascus,' Acts 9:3, about half a mile from the city, as Gulielmus Tyrius thinks, at this very time Christ grapples with him, and overcomes all his mad principles, secures Paul from hell, and his disciples from their fears of him. Behold the nature of this lion changed, just as he was going to fasten upon his prey. Christ might have converted Paul sooner, either when Paul had heard of some of his miracles, for perhaps Paul was resident at Jerusalem at the time of Christ's preaching in Judea, for he was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts 13:3, who was one of the council, Acts 5:24. He might have converted him when he heard Stephen make that elegant and convincing oration in his own defence, Acts 7:1-60; or when he saw Stephen's constancy, patience, and charity in his suffering, which might somewhat have startled a moral man as Paul was, and made him look about him. But Christ omits the doing of it at all these opportunities, and suffers him to kick against the pricks of miracles, admonitions, and arguments of Stephen and others, yet hath his eye upon him all along in a special manner, Acts 7:58. He is there named when none else are: 'And the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul.' And 'Saul was consenting to his death,' Acts 8:1. Was there none else that had a hand in it? The Spirit of God takes special notice of Saul here. He runs in God's mind, yet God would not stop his fury: 'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church,' Acts 8:3. Did nobody else shew as much zeal and cruelty as Saul? Sure he must have some instrument with him. Yet we hear none named but Saul: and 'Saul yet breathing,' &c., Acts 9:1; yet, as much as to say, he shall not do so long. I shall have a fit time to meet with him presently. And was it not a fit time, when the devil hoped to rout the Christians by him, when the high priests assured themselves success from this man's passionate zeal, when the church travailed with throws of fear of him? But Christ sent the devil sneaking away for the loss of such an active instrument, frustrates all the expectations of the high priests, and calms all the stormy fears of his disciples; for Christ sets him first a preaching at Damascus in the very synagogues which were to assist him in his cruel design: 'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, and increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ,' Acts 9:20-22. Did not Christ shew himself to be a God of judgment here? He sat watching in heaven for this season to turn Paul with the greatest advantage. His wisdom answers many ends at once, and killed so many birds with one stone. He struck dead at one blow Paul's sin, his people's fears, the high priests' expectations, and the devil's hopes. He triumphs over his enemies, secures his friends, saves Paul's soul, and promotes his interest by him he disappoints the devil of his expectations, and hell of her longing.

(3.) This wisdom appears to keep up the credit of Christ's death. The great excellence of Christ's sacrifice, wherein it transcends the sacrifices under the law, is because it perfectly makes an atonement for all sins; it first satisfies God, and then calms the conscience, which they could not do, Hebrews 10:1-2, for there was a conscience of sin after their sacrifices. The tenor of the covenant of grace which God makes with his people, is upon the account of this sacrifice, 'This is the covenant I will make with them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,' Hebrews 10:16-17. 'Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,' Hebrews 10:18. This covenant extends not only to little sins, for there is no limitation; great sins are included; therefore Christ satisfied for great sins, or else, if ever they be pardoned, there must be another sacrifice, either of himself or some other, which the apostle, upon the account of this covenant, asserts there need not be, because this sacrifice was complete, otherwise there would be a remembrance of sin; as the covenant implied the completeness of Christ's satisfaction, so the

continual fulfilling or application of the tenor of the covenant implies the perpetual favour and force of this sacrifice.

And, indeed, when God delivered him up, he intended it for the greatest sins: 'He was delivered for our offences,' Romans 4:25, which signifies not stumbling, but falling. Not a light, but a great transgression. Now, if Christ's death be not satisfactory for great debts, Christ must be too weak to perform what God intended by him, and so infinite wisdom was frustrate of its intention, which cannot, nor ought not, to be imagined. Now, therefore, God takes the greatest sinners, to shew,

[a.] First, the value of this sacrifice. If God should only entertain men of a lighter guilt, Christ's death would be suspected to be too low a ransom for monstrous enormities; and that his treasure was sufficient for the satisfaction of smaller debts, but a penury of merit to discharge talents; which had not been a design suitable to the grandeur of Christ, or the infiniteness of that mercy God proclaims in his word. But now the conversion of giant-like sinners does credit to the atonement which Christ made, and is a great renewed approbation of the infinite value of it, and its equivalency to God's demands; for it bears some analogy to the resurrection of Christ, which was God's general acquittance to Christ, to evidence the sufficiency of his payment. And the justification of every sinner is a branch of that acquittance given to Christ at his resurrection; 'Raised again for our justification,' Romans 4:25; and a particular acquittance to Christ for that particular soul he had the charge of from his Father.

All that power that works in the first creation of grace, or the progress of regeneration, bears some proportion to the acquitting and approving power manifested in Christ's resurrection: 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,' Ephesians 1:19, Ephesians 1:20. In Ephesians 1:17-18, the apostle prays for the carrying on the work of grace and regeneration begun in them, that they might more clearly understand that power which wrought in Christ, viz., that approving power of what Christ has done, which he exerts daily in conversion, and in the effects of it. For by raising any soul from a death in sin, God doth evidence the particular value of Christ's blood for that soul, as he did, in raising Christ, evidence the general fulness of that satisfaction. And this he will do even to the end of the world; raised us up together with Christ; 'kindness through Christ Jesus,' Ephesians 2:6-7. All his grace in all ages, even to the end of the world, shall run through this channel, to put credit and honour upon Christ. Now the greater the sin is that is pardoned, and the greater the sinner is that is converted, the more it shews the sufficiency of the price Christ paid.

[b.] The virtue of this sacrifice. He is a 'priest for ever,' Hebrews 7:17 and therefore the virtue as well as the value of his sacrifice remains for ever he hath 'obtained an eternal redemption,' Hebrews 9:12, i.e. a redemption of an eternal efficacy. As long as men receive any venom from the fiery serpent, they may be healed by the antitype of the brazen one, though it were so many years since he was lifted up. And those who were stung all over, as well as those who are bitten but in one part, may, by a believing looking upon him, draw virtue from him as diffusive as their sin.

Now the new conversion of men of extraordinary guilt proclaims to the world, that the fountain of his blood is inexhaustible; that the virtue of it is not spent and drained, though so much hath been drawn out of it for these five thousand years and upwards, for the cleansing of sins past before his coming, and sins since his death. This evidences that his priesthood now is of as much efficacy as

his sufferings on earth were valuable; and that his merit is as much in virtue above our iniquity, as his person is in excellency above our nothingness. He can wash the tawny American, as well as the moral heathen; and make the black Ethiopian as white as the most virtuous philosopher. God fastens upon the worst of men sometimes, to adorn the cross of Christ; and maketh them eminent testimonies of the power of Christ's death: 'He made his grave with the wicked,' Isaiah 53:9. God shall make man, wallowing in sinful pleasures, tied to the blandishments and profits of the world, to come to Christ, and comply with him, to be standing testimonies in all ages of the virtue of his sufferings.

(4.) For the fruitfulness of this grace in the converts themselves. The most rugged souls prove most eminent in grace upon their conversion, as the most orient diamonds in India, which are naturally more rough, are most bright and sparkling when cut and smoothed. Men usually sprout up in stature after shattering agues.

Life and Character of Charnock

Life and Character of Charnock (1628-1670) by William Symington

We have it on high authority, that "the memory of the just is blessed, and that the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." It follows that exertions ought to be made to record and transmit the virtues and the doings of those who are the excellent ones of the earth. Contemporaries may, from personal knowledge, be enabled to cherish, with affectionate regard, the characters of those valued friends whom death has snatched from their embrace; and, by consecrating a portion of time to the recollection of their worth, they may contrive at once to maintain communion with the land of spirits, and to cause, for a time at least, the excellencies of the wise and the good to survive the grave. It is, however, desirable that, if possible, such also as live at a greater distance of time should have it in their power to profit by acquaintance with those who have gone before them, and, for their sakes, some more permanent memorials require to be constructed. Hence the origin of biographical compositions,—a species of writing to which no small importance attaches, being equally edifying and delightful.

If general history may be described as philosophy teaching by fact, what is religious biography but piety instructing by example? A well-written piece of this kind is just an account of the progress of an immortal being through time to eternity, and therefore cannot fail to supply an object of interest to every reflective mind. Nor is it calculated to be more interesting than improving. In scrutinizing the life and character of a fellow-creature, we are irresistibly led, by the comparisons, contrasts, and analogies that are suggested, to review our own. "As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." The knowledge of others is, in this way, rendered subservient to the knowledge of ourselves; and in proportion as we are led to institute a vigorous process of self-examination, so as to become acquainted with our own excellencies and defects, are we placed in more favourable circumstances for taking those steps by which we may advance in the scale of intelligence, holiness, and piety. The very sympathy that is awakened in our bosoms with the joys and griefs, the cares and struggles, the dangers and deliverances of others, has a direct tendency, in regard to ourselves, to transform the mind, to purify the heart, to strengthen the moral habits, and to elevate the tone and widen the sphere of religious experience.

It may be questioned whether there ever was a body of men whose characters, whether on their own account or that of posterity, were more worthy of being preserved and transmitted than those of the non-conforming divines of the seventeenth century. Men of undoubted talent, of extraordinary learning, of prodigious acquirements both in theology and general science, of uncompromising principle, of sleepless activity, and of sublime devotion, it were alike a scandal to ourselves and an injury to succeeding ages to suffer their memory to die. If ever lives deserved to escape the oblivion of the grave, they were theirs. Nor have their descendants been altogether insensible to this obligation. There are many memorials extant of their doings and sufferings, their sacrifices and worth,—some more and others less ample, but all of them teeming with pleasing

reminiscences of the noblest achievements. and fragrant with the perfume of the most excellent Christian graces. We owe a deep debt of gratitude, in particular, to Calamy and Palmer, for their laborious researches in this field, and for the valuable materials they have collected. In some cases they have given us full-length portraits, every feature being brought prominently out, and the minutest shades accurately filled in with the most delicate touches. In other cases they have produced only humble miniatures, or rather rude sketches, in short, mere outlines; while of many they have been enabled to supply little more than the names; their history and characters having been irretrievably lost, from want of more timely care to secure them.

Unfortunately for us, the individual whose life and character we are now required to give, is one of those of whom there exist but scanty memorials. The whole of what is to be found, in some of the collections above referred to, occupies but a few pages. Nor, at such a distance of time from the period when the subject of the biography lived, is it possible to supply the deficiency. The duty of the biographer being of such a nature as to preclude altogether the exercise of the creative faculty, there is nothing left but to fall back on the labours of others, whatever these may have been. We can honestly say, that we have spared no pains in ransacking all known or supposable sources of information within our reach. The result we lay at our readers' feet, in the hope that they will give us full credit for having done all in our power to furnish them with a knowledge of one of the most useful and gifted of the Puritan Divines,—a man, whose general excellence, theological attainments, and fervent piety, entitle him to every mark of respect that can be strewn to the memory of the great and the good.

Stephen Charnock, B.D., was born in the year 1628, in the parish of St. Katharine Cree, London. His father, Mr. Richard Charnock, practiced as a solicitor in the Court of Chancery, and was descended from a family of some antiquity in Lancashire. Stephen, after a course of preparatory study, entered himself, at an early period of life, a student in Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was placed under the immediate tuition of the celebrated Dr. William Sancroft, who became afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Although there is too much reason to fear that colleges seldom prove the spiritual birthplaces of the youth that attend them, it was otherwise in this case. The Sovereign Spirit, who worketh where and how he wills, had determined that this young man, while prosecuting his early studies, should undergo that essential change of heart which, besides yielding an amount of personal comfort, could not fail to exert a salutary influence on all his future inquiries, sanctify whatever learning he might hereafter acquire, and fit him for being eminently useful to thousands of his fellow-creatures. To this all-important event we may safely trace the eminence to which, both as a Preacher and as a Divine, he afterwards attained,—as he had thus a stimulus to exertion, a motive to vigorous and unremitting application, which could not otherwise have existed. On his leaving the University he spent some time in a private family, either as a preceptor or for the purpose of qualifying himself the better for discharging the solemn and arduous duties of public life, on which he was about to enter. Soon after this, just as the Civil War broke out in England, he commenced his official labours as a minister of the gospel of peace, somewhere in Southwark. He does not appear to have held this situation long; but short as was his ministry there, it was not altogether without fruit. He who had made the student himself, while yet young, the subject of saving operations, was pleased also to give efficacy to the first efforts of the youthful pastor to win souls to Christ. Several individuals in this his first charge were led to own him as their spiritual father. Nor is this a solitary instance of the

early ministry of an individual receiving that countenance from on high which has been withheld from the labours of his riper years. A circumstance this, full of encouragement to those who, in the days of youth, are entering with much fear and trembling on service in the Lord's vineyard. At the time when they may feel impelled to exclaim with most vehemence, Who is sufficient for these things? God may cheer them with practical confirmations of the truth, that their sufficiency is of God. In 1649, Charnock removed from Southwark to Oxford, where, through favour of the Parliamentary Visitors, he obtained a fellowship in New College; and, not long afterwards, in consequence of his own merits, was incorporated Master of Arts. His singular gifts, and unwearied exertions, so attracted the notice and gained the approbation of the learned and pious members of the University, that, in 1652, he was elevated to the dignity of Senior Proctor,—an office which he continued to hold till 1656, and the duties of which he discharged in a way which brought equal honor to himself and benefit to the community. When the period of his proctorship expired, he went to Ireland, where he resided in the family of Mr. Henry Cromwell, who had been appointed by his father, the Protector, to the government of that country. It is remarkable how many of the eminent divines, both of England and Scotland, have spent some part of their time in Ireland, either as chaplains to the army or as refugees from persecuting bigotry. Charnock seems to have gone thither in the capacity of chaplain to the Governor, an office which, in his case at least, proved no sinecure. During his residence in Dublin, he appears to have exercised his ministry with great regularity and zeal. He preached, we are told, every Lord's day, with much acceptance, to an audience composed of persons of different religious denominations, and of opposite grades in society. His talents and worth attracted the members of other churches, and his connection with the family of the Governor secured the attendance of persons of rank. By these his ministrations were greatly esteemed and applauded; and it is hoped that to some of them they were also blessed. But even many who had no respect for his piety, and who reaped no saving benefits from his preaching, were unable to withhold their admiration of his learning and his gifts. Studying at once to be an "ensample to the flock," and to "walk within his house with a perfect heart," his qualities, both public and private, his appearances, whether in the pulpit or the domestic circle, commanded the esteem of all who were privileged to form his acquaintance. It is understood that the honorary degree of Bachelor in Divinity, which he held, was the gift of Trinity College, Dublin, conferred during his residence in that city. The restoration of Charles, in 1660, put an end to Charnock's ministry in Ireland, and hindered his resuming it elsewhere for a considerable time. That event, leading, as it could not but do, to the re-establishment of arbitrary power, was followed, as a natural consequence, by the ejection of many of the most godly ministers that ever lived. Among these was the excellent individual of whom we are now speaking. Accordingly, although on his return to England he took up his residence in London, he was not permitted to hold any pastoral charge there. Nevertheless, he continued to prosecute his studies with ardour, and occasionally exercised his gifts in a private way for fifteen years, during which time he paid some visits to the continent, especially to France and Holland. At length, in 1675, when the restrictions of the government were so far relaxed, he accepted a call from a congregation in Crosby Square, to become co-pastor with the Rev. Thomas Watson, the ejected minister of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, who, soon after the Act of Uniformity, had collected a church in that place. Mr. Watson was an eminent Presbyterian divine, and the society which he was instrumental in founding became afterwards, under the ministry of Dr. Grosvenor, one of the most flourishing in the city, in respect both of numbers and of wealth. It may not be uninteresting here to insert a few brief notices

respecting the place of worship which this congregation occupied, being the scene of Charnock's labours during a principal part of his ministry, and that in connection with which he closed his official career. The place in which this humble Presbyterian congregation assembled was a large hall of Crosby House, an ancient mansion on the east side of Bishopgate Street, erected by Sir John Crosby, Sheriff and Alderman of London, in 1470. After passing through the hands of several occupants, and, among others, those of Richard III., who thought it not unfit for being a royal residence, it became, about the year 1640, the property of Alderman Sir John Langham, a staunch Presbyterian and Loyalist. A calamitous fire afterwards so injured the building, as to render it unsuitable for a family residence; but the hall, celebrated for its magnificent oaken ceiling, happily escaped the conflagration, and was converted into a meeting-house for Mr. Watson's congregation, of which the proprietor is supposed to have been a member. The structure, though greatly dilapidated, still exists, and is said to be regarded as one of the most perfect specimens of the domestic architecture of the fifteenth century now remaining in the metropolis. But, as an illustration of the vicissitudes such edifices are destined to undergo, it may be stated that Crosby Hall, after having witnessed the splendours of royalty, and been consecrated to the solemnities of divine worship, was lately—perhaps it is still—dedicated to the inferior, if not ignoble, uses of a wool-packer.

After saying so much about the building, a word or two respecting the congregation which assembled for years under its vaulted roof, may not be deemed inappropriate. It was formed, as we have already said, by the Rev. Thomas Watson, the ejected minister of St. Stephen's, Walbrook. This took place in 1662, and Charnock was Mr. Watson's colleague for five years. Mr. Watson was succeeded by the son of an ejected minister, the Rev. Samuel Slater, who discharged the pastoral duties with great ability and faithfulness for twenty-four years, and closed his ministry and life with this solemn patriarchal sentence addressed to his people:—"I charge you before God, that you prepare to meet me at the day of judgment, as my crown of joy; and that not one of you be wanting at the right hand of God." Dr. Benjamin Grosvenor succeeded Mr. Slater. His singular acumen, graceful utterance, lively imagination, and fervid devotion, are said to have secured for the congregation a greater degree of prosperity than it had ever before enjoyed. A pleasing recollection has been preserved, of perhaps one of the most touching discourses ever composed, having been delivered by him in this Hall, on The Temper of Christ. In this discourse the Saviour is introduced, by way of illustrating his own command that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," as giving the Apostles directions how they are to proceed in carrying out this requirement. Amongst other things, he is represented as saying to them:—"Go into all nations and offer this salvation as you go; but lest the poor house of Israel should think themselves abandoned to despair, the seed of Abraham, mine ancient friend; as cruel and unkind as they have been, go, make them the first offer of grace; let them that struck the rock, drink first of its refreshing streams; and they that drew my blood, be welcome to its healing virtue. Tell them, that as I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so, if they will be gathered, I will be their shepherd still. Though they despised my tears which I shed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, tell them 'twas for their sakes I shed both; that by my tears I might soften their hearts towards God, and by my blood I might reconcile God to them.....Tell them, you have seen the prints of the nails upon my hands and feet, and the wounds of the spear in my side; and that those marks of their cruelty are so far from giving me vindictive thoughts, that, if they will but repent, every wound they have given me speaks in their behalf, pleads with the

Father for the remission of their sins, and enables me to bestow it.....Nay, if you meet that poor wretch that thrust the spear into my side, tell him there is another way, a better way, of coming at my heart. If he will repent, and look upon him whom he has pierced, and will mourn, I will cherish him in that very bosom he has wounded; he shall find the blood he shed an ample atonement for the sin of shedding it. And tell him from me, he will put me to more pain and displeasure by refusing this offer of my blood, than when he first drew it forth." In Dr. Grosvenor's old age, notwithstanding that he was assisted, from time to time, by eminent divines, the congregation began to decline. After his death, the pastoral charge was held by Dr. Hodge and Mr. Jones successively, but, under the ministry of the latter, the church had become so enfeebled, that, on the expiration of the lease in 1769, the members agreed to dissolve, and were gradually absorbed in other societies. From this digression we return, only to record the last circumstance necessary to complete this brief sketch. The death of Charnock took place July 27, 1680, when he was in the fifty-third year of his age. The particulars that have come down to us of this event, like those of the other parts of his history, are scanty, yet they warrant us to remark that he died in a frame of mind every way worthy of his excellent character and holy life. He was engaged, at the time, in delivering to his people, at Crosby Hall, that series of Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God, on which his fame as a writer chiefly rests. The intense interest which he was observed to take in the subjects of which he treated, was regarded as an indication that he was nearly approaching that state in which he was to be "filled with all the fulness of God." Not unfrequently was he heard to give utterance to a longing desire for that region for which he gave evidence of his being so well prepared. These circumstances were, naturally enough, looked upon as proofs that his mighty mind, though yet on earth, had begun to "put off its mortality," and was fast ripening for the paradise of God. From his death taking place in the house of Mr. Richard Tymns, in the parish of Whitechapel, London, it may be inferred that his departure was sudden. The body was immediately after taken to the meeting-house at Crosby Square, which had been so often the scene of his prayers and preaching. From thence, accompanied by a long train of mourners, it was conveyed to St. Michael's Church, Cornhill, where it was deposited hard by the Tower under the belfrey. The funeral sermon was preached by his early friend and fellow-student at Cambridge, Mr. John Johnson, from these apposite words:—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Such is an outline of the facts, as far as they are known, of the life of this great man. There are none, it is true, of those striking occurrences and marvellous incidents in the narrative, which attract the notice of the multitude, and which are so gratifying to those who are in quest of excitement more than of edification. But, let it not be thought that, for this reason, the narrative must be destitute of the materials of personal improvement. If the advantages to be derived from a piece of biography are at all proportioned to the degree in which the character and circumstances of the subject resemble those of the reader, a greater number, at least, may be expected to obtain benefit from a life, the incidents of which are more common, inasmuch as there are but comparatively few, the events of whose history are of an extraordinary and dazzling description. "When a character," to use the language of a profound judge of human nature, "selected from the ordinary ranks of life, is faithfully and minutely delineated, no effort is requisite to enable us to place ourselves in the same situation; we accompany the subject of the narrative, with an interest undiminished by distance, unimpaired by dissimilarity of circumstances; and, from the efforts by which he surmounted difficulties and vanquished temptations, we derive the most useful practical

lessons. He who desires to strengthen his virtue and purify his principles, will always prefer the solid to the specious; will be more disposed to contemplate an example of the unostentatious piety and goodness which all men may obtain, than of those extraordinary achievements to which few can aspire; nor is it the mark of a superior, but rather a vulgar and superficial taste, to consider nothing as great or excellent but that which glitters with titles, or is elevated by rank."

Let us endeavour to portray the character of Charnock. The mental qualities by which he was most distinguished as a man, were judgment and imagination. The reasoning faculty, naturally strong, was improved by diligent training and habitual exercise. In tracing the relations and tendencies of things, he greatly excelled; he could compare and contrast with admirable ease and beautiful discrimination; and his deductions, as was to be expected, were usually sound and logical. Judgment was, indeed, the presiding faculty in his, as it ought to be in all minds. The more weighty qualities of intellect were in him united to a brilliant fancy. By this means he was enabled to adorn the more solid materials of thought with the attractive hues of inventive genius. His fine and teeming imagination, ever under the strict control of reason and virtue, was uniformly turned to the most important purposes. This department of mental phenomena, from the abuses to which it is liable, is apt to be undervalued; yet, were this the proper place, it would not be difficult to show that imagination is one of the noblest faculties with which man has been endowed—a faculty, indeed, the sound and proper use of which is not only necessary to the existence of sympathy and other social affections, but also intimately connected with those higher exercises of soul, by which men are enabled to realize the things that are not seen and eternal. Charnock's imagination was under the most cautious and skilful management—the handmaid, not the mistress of his reason—and, doubtless, it tended, in no small degree, to free his character from that cold and contracted selfishness which is apt to predominate in those who are deficient in this quality; to impart a generous warmth to his intercourse with others; and to throw over his compositions as an author an animating and delightful glow.

These qualities of mind were associated with habits of intense application and persevering diligence, which alike tended to invigorate his original powers, and enabled him to turn them all to the best account. To the original vigour of his powers must be added that which culture supplied. Charnock was a highly educated man. As remarked by the first editors of his works, he was not only "a person of excellent parts, strong reason, great judgment, and curious fancy," but "of high improvements and general learning, as having been all his days a most diligent and methodical student." An alumnus of both the English universities, he may be said to have drawn nourishment from each of these generous mothers. He had the reputation of being a general scholar; his acquisitions being by no means limited to the literature of his profession. Not only was his acquaintance with the original languages of Scripture great, but he had made considerable attainments in the study of medicine; and, indeed, there was scarcely any branch of learning with which he was unacquainted. All his mental powers were thus strengthened and refined by judicious discipline, and, as we shall see presently, he knew well how to devote his treasures, whether original or acquired, to the service of the Redeemer; and to consecrate the richest stores of natural genius and educational attainment, by laying them all at the foot of the Cross. But that which gave the finish to Charnock's intellectual character, was not the predominance of any one quality so much as the harmonious and nicely balanced union of all. Acute perception, sound judgment, masculine sense, brilliant imagination, habits of reflection, and a complete mastery over

the succession of his thoughts, were all combined in that comely order and that due proportion which go to constitute a well-regulated mind. There was, in his case, none of that disproportionate development of any one particular faculty, which, in some cases, serves, like an overpowering glare, to dim, if not almost to quench the splendour of the rest. The various faculties of his soul, to make use of a figure, rather shone forth like so many glittering stars, from the calm and clear firmament of his mind, each supplying its allotted tribute of light, and contributing to the serene and solemn lustre of the whole. As has been said of another, so may it be said of him—"If it be rare to meet with an individual whose mental faculties are thus admirably balanced, in whom no tyrant faculty usurps dominion over the rest, or erects a despotism on the ruins of the intellectual republic; still more rare is it to meet with such a mind in union with the far higher qualities of religious and moral excellence." Nor were Charnock's moral qualities less estimable than his intellectual. [He was a pre-eminently holy man, distinguished at once by personal purity, social equity, and habitual devotion. Early the subject of saving grace, he was in his own person an excellent example of the harmony of faith, with the philosophy of the moral feelings. Strongly he felt that while "not without law to God," he was nevertheless "under law to Christ." The motives from which he acted in every department of moral duty were evangelical motives; and so entirely was he imbued with the spirit, so completely under the power of the gospel, that whatever he did, no matter how humble in the scale of moral duty, he "served the Lord Christ." The regulating principle of his whole life is embodied in the apostolical injunction:—"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." The various talents with which he was gifted by the God of nature, were all presided over by an enlightened and deep-toned piety, for which he was indebted to the sovereign grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was this that struck the key-note of the intellectual and moral harmony to which we have adverted as a prominent feature in his character. This at once directed each faculty to its proper object, and regulated the measure of its exercise. Devotion was the very element in which he lived and breathed, and had his being. Devout communion with Supreme Excellence, the contemplation of celestial themes, and preparation for a higher state of being, constituted the truest pleasures of his existence, elevated him far above the control of merely sentient and animal nature, and secured for him an undisturbed repose of mind, which was itself but an antepast of what awaited him in the unclouded region of glory. Nor was his devotion transient or occasional merely; it was habitual as it was deep, extending its plastic and sanctifying influence to every feature of character, and every event of life; dictating at once ceaseless efforts for the welfare of man, and intensest desires for the glory of God; and securing that rarest perhaps of all combinations, close communion with the future and the eternal, and the busy and conscientious discharge of the ordinary duties of everyday life. His natural temper appears to have been reserved, and his manners grave. Regarding the advantages to be derived from general society as insufficient to compensate for the loss of those to be acquired by retirement, he cultivated the acquaintance of few, and these few the more intelligent and godly, with whom, however, putting aside his natural backwardness, he was wont to be perfectly affable and communicative. But his best and most highly cherished companions were his books, of which he had contrived to secure a valuable though select collection. With these he held frequent and familiar intercourse. Great part of his time, indeed, was spent in his study; and when the calls of unavoidable duty compelled him to leave it, so bent was he on redeeming time, that, not content with appropriating the hours usually devoted to sleep, he cultivated the habit of thinking while walking along the streets. So successful was he in his efforts of abstraction, that,

amid the most crowded and attractive scenes, he could withdraw his mind easily from the vanities which solicited his attention, and give himself up to close thinking and useful meditation. The productions of his pen, and the character of his pulpit services, bore ample evidence that the hours of retirement were given neither to frivolous vacuity nor to self-indulgent sloth, but to the industrious cultivation of his powers, and to conscientious preparation for public duty. He was not content, like many, with the mere reputation of being a recluse; on the contrary, he was set on bringing forth the fruits of a hard student. There was always one day in the week in which he made it to appear that the others were not misspent. His Sabbath ministrations were not the loose vapid effusions of a few hours' careless preparation, but were rather the substantial, well-arranged, well-compacted products of much intense thought and deep cogitation. "Had he been less in his study," says his editors quaintly, "he would have been less liked in the pulpit." To a person of these studious habits it may easily be conceived what distress it must have occasioned to have his library swept away from him. In that dreadful misfortune which befell the metropolis in 1666, ever since known as "the fire of London," the whole of Charnock's books were destroyed. The amount of calamity involved in such an occurrence can be estimated aright only by those who know from experience the strength and sacredness of that endearment with which the real student regards those silent but instructive friends which he has drawn around him by slow degrees; with which he has cultivated a long and intimate acquaintance; which are ever at hand with their valuable assistance, counsel and consolation, when these are needed; which, unlike some less judicious companions, never intrude upon him against his will; and with whose very looks and positions, as they repose in their places around him, he has become so familiarized, that it is no difficult thing for him to call up their appearance when absent, or to go directly to them in the dark without the risk of a mistake. Some may be disposed to smile at this love of books. But where is the scholar who will do so? Where is the man of letters who, for a single moment, would place the stately mansions and large estates of the "sons of earth" in comparison with his own well-loaded shelves? Where the student who, on looking round upon the walls of his study, is not conscious of a satisfaction greater and better far than landed proprietor ever felt on surveying his fields and lawns—a satisfaction which almost unconsciously seeks vent in the exclamation, "My library! a dukedom large enough!" Such, and such only, can judge what must have been Charnock's feelings, when he found that his much cherished volumes had become a heap of smouldering ashes. The sympathetic regret is only rendered the more intense, when it is thought that, in all probability, much valuable manuscript perished in the conflagration.

Charnock excelled as a Preacher. This is an office which, whether as regards its origin, nature, design, or effects, it will be difficult to overrate. The relation in which it stands to the salvation of immortal souls, invests it with an interest overwhelmingly momentous. Our former remarks will serve to show how well he of whom we now speak was qualified for acting in this highest of all the capacities in which man is required to serve. His mental and moral endowments, his educational acquirements, his habitual seriousness, his sanctified imagination, and his vigorous faith, pre-eminently fitted him for discharging with ability and effect the duties of a herald of the Cross. Of his style of preaching we may form a pretty accurate idea from the writings he has left, which were all of them transcribed from the notes of his sermons. We hence infer that his discourses, while excelling in solid divinity and argumentative power, were not by any means deficient in their practical bearing, being addressed not more to the understandings than to the hearts of his hearers. "Nothing," it has been justly remarked, "can be more vigorous than his reasoning, nothing

more affecting than his applications." While able to unravel with great acuteness and judgment the intricacies of a subtle question in polemics, he could with no less dexterity and skill address himself to the business of the Christian life, or to the casuistry of religious experience. Perspicuous plainness, convincing cogency, great wisdom, fearless honesty, and affectionate earnestness, are the chief characteristics of his sermons. To this it must be added that his preaching was eminently evangelical. So deeply imbued with gospel truth were his discourses, that, like the Book of the Law of old, they might be said to be sprinkled with blood, even the blood of atonement. The cross was at once the basis on which he rested his doctrinal statements, and the armoury from which he drew his most forcible and pointed appeals to the conscience. His aim seems never once to have been to catch applause to himself by the enticing words of man's wisdom, by arraying his thoughts in the motley garb of an affected and gorgeous style, or by having recourse to the tricks of an inflated and meretricious oratory. His sole ambition appears to have been to "turn sinners from the error of their ways;" and for this end he wisely judged nothing to be so well adapted as "holding forth the words of eternal life" in their native simplicity and power, and in a spirit of sincere and ardent devotion. His object was to move his hearers, not towards himself, but towards his Master; not to elicit expressions of admiration for the messenger, but to make the message bear on the salvation of those to whom it was delivered; not to please, so much as to convert, his hearers; not to tickle their fancy, but to save the soul from death, and thus to hide a multitude of sins. The character of his preaching, it is true, was adapted to the higher and more intelligent classes; yet was it not altogether unsuited to those of humbler rank and pretensions. He could handle the mysteries of the gospel with great perspicuity and plainness, using his profound learning for the purpose, not of mystifying, but of making things clear, so that persons even in the ordinary walks of life felt him to be not beyond their capacity. The energy, gravity, and earnestness of his manner, especially when young, contributed to render him a great favourite with the public, and accordingly he drew after him large and deeply interested audiences—a circumstance which, we can suppose, was valued by him, not because of the incense which it ministered to a spirit of vanity, but of the opportunity it afforded him of winning souls to the Redeemer. When more advanced in life, this kind of popularity, we are told, declined, in consequence of his being compelled from an infirmity of memory to read his sermons, with the additional disadvantage of requiring to supply defect of sight by the use of a glass. But an increasing weight and importance in the matter, fully compensated for any deficiency in the manner of his preaching. If the more flighty of his hearers retired, others—among whom were many of his brethren in the ministry—who knew how to prefer solidity to show, crowded to supply their places. Reckoning it no ordinary privilege to be permitted to sit devoutly at the feet of one so well qualified to initiate them into the knowledge of the deep things of God, they continued to listen to his instructions with as much admiration and profit as ever.

It is as a Writer, however, that Charnock is best known, and this, indeed, is the only character in which we can now come into contact with him. His works are extensive, but, with a single exception, posthumous. The only thing published by himself was the piece on "The Sinfulness and Cure of Thoughts," which appeared originally in the Supplement to the Morning Exercise at Cripplegate. Yet such was the quantity of manuscript left behind him at his death, that two large folio volumes were soon transcribed, and published by his friends, Mr. Adams and Mr. Veal, to whom he had committed his papers. The Discourse on Providence was the first published; it appeared in 1680. The Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God came next, in 1682. There followed in succession the treatises on Regeneration, Reconciliation, The Lord's Supper,

&c. A second edition of the whole works, in two volumes, folio, came out in 1684, and a third in 1702—no slight proof of the estimation in which they were held. Several of the treatises have appeared from time to time in a separate form, especially those on Divine Providence, on Man's Enmity to God, and on Mercy for the Chief of Sinners. The best edition of Charnock's works is that published in 1815, in nine volumes, royal 8vo; with a prefatory Dedication, and a Memoir of the Author, by the Rev. Edward Parsons of Leeds.

All Charnock's writings are distinguished for sound theology, profound thinking, and lively imagination. They partake of that massive divinity for which the Puritan Divines were in general remarkable, and are of course orthodox in their doctrinal statements and reasonings. Everywhere the reader meets with the evidences and fruits of deep thought, of a mind, indeed, of unusual comprehension and energy of grasp, that could penetrate with ease into the very core, and fathom at pleasure the profoundest depths of the most abstruse and obscure subjects; while, from the rich stores of an exuberant and hallowed fancy, he was enabled to throw over his compositions the most attractive ornaments, and to supply spontaneously such illustrations as were necessary to render his meaning more clear, or his lessons more impressive. In a word, for weight of matter, for energy of thought, for copiousness of improving reflection, for grandeur and force of illustration, and for accuracy and felicitousness of expression, Charnock is equalled by few, and surpassed by none of the writers of the age to which he belonged. The eulogy pronounced by a competent judge on the Treatise on the Attributes, applies with equal justice to all his other writings:—"Perspicuity and depth; metaphysical subtlety and evangelical simplicity; immense learning, and plain but irrefragable reasoning, conspire to render that work one of the most inestimable productions that ever did honor to the sanctified judgment and genius of a human being." [Toplady] The correctness of the composition, in these works, is remarkable, considering that they were not prepared for the press by the author himself, and that they must have been originally written amid scenes of distraction and turmoil, arising out of the events of the times. The latter circumstance may account for the manly vigor by which they are characterized, but it only renders their accuracy and polish the more wonderful. Refinement of taste and extensive scholarship can alone explain the chasteness, ease, and elegance of style, so free from all verbosity and clumsiness, which mark these productions. There were giants in literature in those days, and STEPHEN CHARNOCK was not the least of the noble fraternity.

Charnock may not have all the brilliancy of Bunyan, nor all the metaphysical acumen and subtle analysis of Howe, nor all the awful earnestness of Baxter; but he is not less argumentative, while he is more theological than any of them, and his theology, too, is more sound than that of some. "He was not," say the original editors of his works, "for that modern divinity which is so much in vogue with some, who would be counted the only sound divines; having tasted the old, he did not desire the new, but said the old is better." There is, therefore, not one of all the Puritan Divines whose writings can with more safety be recommended to the attention of students of divinity and young ministers. It is one of the happy signs of the times in which we live, that a taste for reading such works is beginning to revive; and we can conceive no better wish for the interests of mankind in general, and of our country in particular, than that the minds of our young divines were thoroughly impregnated with the good old theology to be found in such writings as those which we now take the liberty to introduce and recommend. "If a preacher wishes to recommend himself by the weight of his doctrines," to use the language of Mr Parsons, "he will find in the writings of

Charnock the great truths of Scripture illustrated and explained in the most lucid and masterly manner. If he wishes to be distinguished by the evangelical strain of his discourses, and by the continual exhibition of Christ and him crucified, he will here find the characters of Christ, and the adaptation of the gospel to the circumstances and wants of man as a fallen creature, invariably kept in view. If he wishes for usefulness in the Church of God, here he has the brightest example of forcible appeals to the conscience, and of the most impressive applications of Scripture truth, to the various conditions of mankind. And, finally, if he reads for his own advantage as a Christian, his mind will be delighted with the inexhaustible variety here provided for the employment of his enlightened faculties, and his improvement in every divine attainment."

It is a circumstance resulting from their having been originally sermons, that all Charnock's Treatises arise out of particular passages of Scripture. In every case, accordingly, after the fashion of the times, there is an elaborate analysis of the text and context, fitted to bring out the grand doctrinal proposition which is afterwards confirmed, illustrated, and enforced with much copiousness and power. This preliminary analysis is always clear and satisfactory, affording abundant evidence of the author's critical skill and philosophical discrimination, without ever being so unduly protracted as to bring him within the censure implied in the remark of the good woman, who said of some other of the Puritan Fathers, that "he was so long laying the cloth, that she almost despaired of the dinner." The preliminary arrangement is often itself a high treat, and such as rather to whet the reader's appetite for the rich and wholesome repast that follows. To attempt a criticism of Charnock's writings individually is here out of the question. But we cannot resist giving a few sentences from the original preface which his friends Adams and Veal prefixed to the treatise On the Existence and Attributes of God. "The sublimeness, variety, and rareness," say they, "of the truths handled, together with the elegance of the composure, neatness of the style, and whatever is wont to make any book desirable, all concur in the recommendation of it.....It is not a book to be played with or slept over, but read with the most intense and serious mind; for, though it afford much pleasure for the fancy, yet much more work for the heart, and hath indeed in it enough to busy all the faculties. The dress is complete and decent, yet not garish nor theatrical; the rhetoric masculine and vigorous, such as became a pulpit, and was never borrowed from the stage. The expressions full, clear, apt, and such as are best suited to the weightiness and spirituality of the truths here delivered. He is not like some school writers who attenuate and rarify the matter they discourse of to a degree bordering upon annihilation; at least beat it so thin that a puff of breath may blow it away; spin their thread so fine that the cloth when made up proves useless; solidity dwindles into niceties, and what we thought we had gained by their assertions we lose by their distinctions. But if our author have some subtleties and superfine notions in his argumentations, yet he condenseth them again and consolidates them into substantial corollaries in his application."

Next in importance to that on the Attributes is the Treatise on Providence. A subject of great difficulty and delicacy is here handled with much discrimination and judgment, as well as with great copiousness, power, and beauty. In no part of his works do the peculiar excellencies of the writer shine forth with greater brightness. Difficulties are unravelled with the hand of a master; confirmations from the word of God are multiplied with a profusion that bespeaks the presence of one who is "mighty in the Scriptures;" and illustrations drawn from the kingdom of nature and the treasures of history, are scattered with all the ravish prodigality of wealth. We know, indeed, of no

treatise on the subject which can be compared with this in regard to fulness, variety, satisfactory solution of difficulties, or abundance of consolatory reflection. Take a single specimen, selected from that part of the discourse in which he shews that all evil things are over-ruled for the good of the Church:—"God often lays the sum of his amazing providences in very dismal afflictions; as the draughtsman first puts on the dusky colours on which he intends to draw the portraiture of some illustrious beauty. The oppression of Israel, immediately before their deliverance, was the dusky colour on whereupon God drew those gracious lines of their salvation from Egypt, the pattern of all the after-deliverances of the Church in all ages, and a type of our spiritual redemption by Christ. The humiliation, persecution, and death of the Son of God, was the dusky colour on which God drew that amazing piece of divine love and wisdom in man's salvation, which the eyes of saints and angels will be fixed on with ravishing admiration to all eternity. All addictions in the world, with which God exercises the Church, are parts of his providence, and are like mournful notes in music, which make the melody of the time more pleasant, and set off those sweeter airs following them. Afflictions here cause the joys of heaven to appear more glorious in the eyes of glorified saints. The persecutions of the martyrs did but heighten their graces, send them to the place of rest, and enlarge their robes of glory. God many times saves his people by sufferings, and brings them to the shore on the planks of a broken ship, and makes that which was the occasion of their loss to be the means of their safety. Herod's murdering the children to destroy him that was born King of the Jews, made his birth more conspicuous in the world.

Snuffing the candle makes it burn the clearer.....The church grows by tears, and withers by smiles. God's vine thrives the better for pruning. He makes our persecutions fit us for that for which we are persecuted. God uses persecutors as lances which, while they wound us, let out the purulent and oppressive matter. When the Israelites were most oppressed in Egypt, the more they multiplied. When the dragon's fury did most swell against the woman, she brought forth a man-child. When the Roman empire was at the highest, and was most inflamed against the Christians; when the learning of the philosophers, the witchcrafts of heretics, the power of the emperors, and the strength of the whole world was set against them, the Christians grew more flourishing and numerous by those very means which were used to destroy them. Not only a new succession of saints sprang up from the ashes of martyrs, but their flames were the occasion of warming some so much with a heavenly fire, that some persecutors have become preachers. Their very bonds for the truth have sometimes a virtue in them to bring men to faith in Christ; the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel." But it were endless to proceed in this manner. Respecting the pieces included in the present publication, it may be remarked, that they have been selected more on account of their brevity and practical bearing than of their intrinsic superiority over others. One of these is that which, as before observed, was published by the author during his lifetime, and may therefore be concluded to be as finished a composition as any of the rest. The first, on Mercy for the Chief of Sinners is probably not surpassed, in point of true excellence, by any thing which the author has written. Mr Veal informs us, that it was brought to light "by the unwearied diligence of Mr Ashton, one of the laborious transcribers of the first volume of this author's works." It will be observed that two doctrinal propositions had been founded on the text (1 Timothy 1:15), although only the latter is here illustrated, the discourse on the other having been lost. "The text was fruitful, and bore twins," says the original editor, in his own peculiar style, "whereof the younger only survives, the other is dead without recovery." We know nothing better calculated to lead men to admire the riches of

sovereign grace, or to induce awakened souls, sinking under an oppressive sense of guilt, to betake in faith to Him who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, and whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Nor does the writer fail to warn the presumptuous against abusing the doctrine here set forth for continuing or increasing in sin, but expostulates with them freely on the danger, the folly, the ingratitude of thus turning the grace of God into licentiousness.

We beg to remind our readers, that what they have in this little volume*** forms but a small portion of the writings of the author. It is fondly hoped that the perusal of these minor pieces may induce them to seek access to the more elaborate productions of his pen. In the quaint language of the original editors:—"Thou hast here, reader, a specimen of the strain and spirit of this holy man, this being his familiar and holy way of preaching; if thou like this cluster, fear not but the vintage will be answerable; if this little earnest be good metal, the whole sum will be no less current."

Happy shall we be, if what we have written shall, by the blessing of God, prove the means of producing or reviving a taste for reading the works of our author, being fully convinced with a former editor, that, "while talent is respected, or virtue revered—while holiness of conversation, consistency of character, or elevation of mind, are considered as worthy of imitation—while uniform and strenuous exertion for the welfare of man is honoured, and constant devotedness to the glory of God admired, the memory of CHARNOCK shall be held in grateful remembrance."

Annfield Place, Glasgow, June 1846.

On God as a Deliverer

A Discourse upon the fifth of November or On God as a Deliverer by Stephen Charnock

1628-1680 The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Exodus 15:9-10 An anniversary commemoration of a memorable deliverance falling upon this day, hath caused a diversion of my thoughts, to look back not only upon a mercy never to be forgotten, but to look forward to that deliverance which is to come, parallel to this in the text. Israel was a type of the church, Pharaoh a type of the church's enemies in all ages, of the world, both of the spiritual enemy Satan, and of the temporal, his instruments. The deliverance was a type of the deliverance that Christ wrought upon the cross by his blood; also of that Christ works upon his throne, the one from the reign of sin, the other from the empire of antichrist. This was the exemplar of all the deliverances the church was to have. As the Assyrian should 'lift up a staff against Jerusalem, after the manner of Egypt,' so the Lord should lift his rod up for them 'upon the sea, after the manner of Egypt,' when 'the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing,' Isaiah 10:26-27, when the power of the enemies shall be destroyed by the strength of Christ. The Lord himself makes it his pattern in those victories he is to gain for his people. When he calls upon his arm to 'awake as in the ancient days,' when he 'cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over,' Isaiah 51:9-11, then 'the redeemed of the, Lord shall come with singing unto Sion,' the song of Moses, while they stand upon a sea of glass, a brittle, frail, and stormy world, Revelation 15:3. And our Redeemer makes this his pattern and rule when he comes to tread the wine-press in wrath, and make them drunk with his fury, that then he would 'remember the days of old, Moses and his people, when he divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name,' Isaiah 63:1-2, Isaiah 63:11., that his power may be as glorious in the latter as it was in the former, and all deliverances of the church from the beginning to the end be knit together to be an everlasting matter of praise to his name. This historical narration is to have a more universal accomplishment; the deliverance from Egypt is promised to be fulfilled a second time, and God would act the same part over again, as also their deliverance from Og king of Bashan, after the ascension of Christ: Psalms 6:22, "The Lord said, 'I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring., my people from the depths of the sea.'" This is after he ascended, Exodus 15:18; when he came to 'wound the head of his enemies,' Exodus 15:21. So Isaiah 11:15, 'The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams; and make men go over dry-shod.' Nilus with its seven streams was the glory of Egypt, and Rome with its seven hills is the glory of the papacy, Revelation 17:9. So Zechariah 10:10, 'I will bring them again out of the land of Egypt, and they shall pass through the sea with affliction, and the depths of the river shall dry up.' Pharaoh and his army cannot revive and stand up in their former ranks, but there shall be deliverances with resemblances to that, when the enemies shall be as arrogant and furious as Pharaoh, and the church as dejected and straitened as Israel. The text is a part of Moses his song;

a carmen [Hebrew word], a song after victory, a panegyric; the praise of God, attended with dancing, at the sight of the Egyptian wrecks, Exodus 15:20.

1. It was then real; the Israelites then sang it.

2. It is typical ; the conquerors of antichrist shall again triumph in the same manner, Revelation 15:8. .

3. It .was an earnest of future deliverance to the Israelites. When God appeared for them in their first exit, he would not fail in that work which should conduce so much to his glory; it was a pledge that his purchased people should pass over, and be planted in the mountain of his inheritance, Exodus 15:16-17. There is in the words, 1. A description of the enemy. 2. His defeat. The enemy is introduced laying his counsel, and vaunting his resolution, by an elegant climax, and, orderly proceeding: 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied,' &c. They laid the foundation deep in counsel, built their resolves high in power, and then applaud themselves in their insolence.

I will pursue. Had he no rejections upon his former successful attempts to keep the Israelites in slavery? Or could he with any reason hope to reduce them with his baffled strength to that yoke which had been broken by a powerful arm? Had he not reason freshly to remember his own inability to remove one of the plagues sent upon them, to promote Israel's rescue? Was that high arm which brought them out of Egypt broken, God's weapons blunted, his magazine of plaguing ammunition wasted, and his strength too feeble to preserve those he had by a strong hand redeemed? These things be obvious to Pharaoh's thoughts. Yet, I will still pursue. How heady and rash are the church's enemies! Infatuation is the usher to destruction. When you find the church's enemies lose their wits, you may quickly expect they will lose their strength and lives.

I will divide the spoil. He promiseth them this victory before the conflict, encourages his soldiers with hopes of the prey, which was the recovery of their jewels, which the Israelites had borrowed by God's order, and the Egyptians had lent them by a secret impression, and the flocks and herds of the poor Israelites to boot.

How great is the pride of the church's enemies! They strut without thinking of a superior. power to curb them, and promise themselves the accomplishment of their designs, without fearing the check of Providence. Thus did Sisera's mother triumph in a presumptuous hope before a victory, Judges 5:30, and sing Te Deum before a conquest. *Ventosa et insolens natio*, is the title Pliny gives the Egyptian nation. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. [Hebrew phrase], my soul shall be satisfied. How revengefully do they express themselves! They apprehend themselves cheated of their jewels by the Israelites: such an apprehension would increase rage and animosity.

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy, [Hebrew word], my hand shall disinherit them. I will reduce them like a company of fearful fugitives, by brandishing a drawn sword, that. they shall quickly return to their former bondage, and become the perpetual inheritance of the Egyptians. How secure are the church's enemies! The sight of a glittering sword, and an edict for a return, they thought, would quell their spirits. It is true they had to deal with an unarmed people, unprovided for defence, whose late slavery had rendered them unfit for military exercises, an unequal match for a numerous and disciplined army. But what if they were? Had they not the same power to protect them in their march, which had brought them out of their bondage? This the

enemies never reflected on. Pride and security are always twins. In Exodus 14:10 you, have their defeat. The sea quenched the fire of their rage, and laid flat the towers of their proud confidence. God blows with his wind, the strong east wind, Exodus 14:21, a strength added to its natural fierceness, which made the meeting of the floods more swift and fierce. Some think thunders and lightnings burst out of the pillar of fire in the cloud, when 'God looked upon them,' Exodus 14:24.

They 'sank like lead,' suddenly, easily, irrecoverably; they were lashed before, now executed. Other plagues had a mixture of patience, this is a pure cup of the indignation of God. The defeat is described, 1. By the author: 'Thou didst blow.'

2. Instrument: 'Thy wind, the sea;' wind and the sea conspire together against the enemies, when God orders them.

3. Victory, or success of this order: 'The sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.'

General observations.

1. The greatest idolaters are the fiercest enemies against the church of God. It is the Egyptian is the enemy. No nation had more and more sordid idols. The Persians adored the sun, the greatest benefactor to the world, in the rank of inanimate creatures; other nations several stars, but none did so much abuse the reason of man as that accursed nation. Onions, garlic, cats, oxen, flies, and crocodiles; those dunghill creatures were their adored deities. And how much better adoration is the swaddling cloths [cloths] of our Saviour, or the straw which was in the manger, or the tail of the ass he rode upon, and so many splinters of the cross, which, if put together, would make a Colossus! For this, among the rest, may the church professing such worship be called spiritual Egypt.

2. The church's enemies are not for her correction, but her destruction: 'I will pursue; my hand shall destroy them.' They breathe out nothing but slaughters; 'My hand shall destroy them;' down with it, down with it even to the ground, and 'men are famous as they can lift up axes upon the thick trees,' Psalms 74:5.

3. How desperate are sometimes the straits of God's Israel in the eye of man! How low their spirits before deliverance! They here behold. a deep sea before them and a raging enemy behind them; bear a confused noise of women and children in the midst of them; feel the pantings of their own hearts, and perhaps see a consternation in the faces of their governors; they see themselves disarmed of weapons, lying almost at the mercy of an oppressor with a well-furnished army; they repent of what God had done for them, and are more ambitious of slavery than liberty; quarrel with Moses, (and, as one of their historians saith, were about to stone him), Exodus 14:10-12. Without doubt they then thought him a liar, and it is likely had no more honorable thoughts at that time of God; for when they saw the happy success in the miraculous overthrow of the Egyptians, then 'they believed God and his servant Moses,' Exodus 14:31, as if they gave credit to neither of them before. They had a pillar of fire and a cloud, the chariot of God, a greater argument to establish them than the preparation of their enemies to terrify them. But what a faithless creature is man under the visible guard of heaven, and so far naturally from living by. faith that he will hardly draw establishments from sense!

4. God orders the lusts of men for his own praise. He had forced Pharaoh to let the people go; he had stopped the streams of his fury; when he removes his hand and pulls up the dam, Pharaoh returns to his former temper with more violence, thereby giving occasion for God's glory in his own destruction. He serves himself of the desperate malice of his enemies, to make his wisdom and other attributes more triumphant.

5. The nearer the deliverance of the church is, the fiercer are God's judgments on the enemies of it, and the higher the enemies' rage. The former plagues were but small gashes in the Egyptian state; but when the time approached of the Israelites' perfect deliverance, then the firstborn in every house, the delight and strength of the parents, is cut off; and at the completing of it, the glory, power, and strength of Egypt buried in the sea. The fuller beams of mercy on the one are attended with more scorching darts of judgment on the other.

6. All creatures are absolutely under the sovereignty of God, and are acted by his power in all their services. 'Thy wind': all are subject to his conduct, and are the guardians of his people, and the conquerors of his enemies. How easy is it for the arm of Omnipotency to demolish the strongest preparations against his Israel, and with a blast reduce their power to nothing! The sea suffers violence to preserve his people, and the liquid element seems transformed into a wall of brass. God can make the meanest creatures ministers of his judgments, raise troops of flies to rout the Roman army, as it was in Trajan's siege of the Agarenes.

7. By the same means God saves his people, whereby he destroys his enemies: the one sank, the other passed thorough. That which makes one balance sink, makes the other rise the higher. The Red Sea was the guardian of Israel and the executioner of Egypt, the Israelites' gallery to Canaan and the Egyptians' grave. The cloud that led the Israelites through the Red Sea blinded the Egyptians; the waters that were fifteen cubits high above the mountains kept the ark from dashing against them, whereby Noah might be endangered, and drowned the enemies, though never so high according to human stature.

8. The strength and glory of a people is more wasted by opposing the interests of the church than in conflicts with any other enemy. Had the Egyptian arms been turned against any other enemy, they might have prospered, or at least retired with a more partial defeat, or saved their lives though under chains; but when they would prepare them against God's Israel, they meet with a total defeat where they expected victory, and find their graves where Israel found their bulwarks: the choicest of their youth, the flower of their nobility, the strongest of their chariots and horses, at one blow overthrown by, God.

9. We may take notice of the folly of the church's enemies. Former plagues might have warned them of the power of God, they had but burned their own fingers by pinching her, yet they would set their force against almighty power, that so often had worsted them; it is as if men would pull down a steeple with a string. But the observations I shall treat of are,

1. When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury and resolution, and the church in the greatest extremity and dejection, then is the fittest time for God to work her deliverance fully and perfectly. When the enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,' &c. then 'God blowed with his wind,' then 'they sank.'

2. God is the Author of all the deliverances of the church, whosoever are the instruments. 'Thou didst blow with thy wind; who its like unto the Lord among the gods?'

1. For the first, When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury, &c. Great resolutions against God meet with great disappointments. The church's straits are the enemies' hopes, but God's opportunity. When their fury is highest, God's love is nearest.

There are four seasons on the part of the enemy God takes hold of.

(1.) Flourishing prosperity. Here is Pharaoh in the head of a gallant army, the Israelites in a pound, at his mercy. The Egyptians' prosperity is a forerunner of their destruction, the adversity of the other of their salvation. Haman is in the top of his favour when the Jews are marked out for slaughter, and then himself is marked out for ruin. Prosperity, like rain, makes the weeds of pride and atheism to grow up, and the -n they are fit matter for God's sickle to cut down. When 'the clusters of the vine of the earth are ripe,' full of an outward glory and sweetness, then 'the angel thrusts in his sharp sickle,' Revelation 14:18. There is an [Hebrew word] set them. When 'the great city is clothed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious; stones,' Revelation 18:16, and come to the highest point of its glory and prosperity, then shall God thicken the clouds of his vengeance, and bring their riches to nought in one hour.

(2.) Swelling pride: 'I will pursue,' &c. Pride is provoking, because it is self-deifying, and sets up the creature as God's mate. God stands upon his honour, and loves to attack those that would equal themselves with him. Pride sunk the glory of the fallen angels into, misery, and so it will that of the serpent's seed. This is the immediate forerunner of destruction, Proverbs 16:18. Men have their hairy scalp, the prime of their strength, and pride of their hearts, when God wounds them, Psalms 68:21. Egypt was become Rahab, pride itself, as the word signifies, and so God called it by that name, Isaiah 51:9. When Egypt mounted to Rahab, to the top of pride,. then God cut it. When the dragon bristled, and erected his stately head to seize upon the prey, then God wounded him, put an end to Egypt's pride and the Israelites' fear. He loves to beat down the pride of the one, and raise up the lowliness of the other. When Herod will assume the title of a god, given him by that acclamations of the people, an angel shall immediately, make him a banquet for worms, Acts 11:22, Acts 11:28. When Sennacherib had prospered in his conquest of Judea, had taken many strong towns, closely beleaguered Jerusalem, thundered out blasphemies against God, and threatenings against his people, then comes an angel, makes an horrible slaughter in a night, sends him back to his own country, where, after the loss of his army, he lost his life by the hands of his own children. A greater pride cannot be expressed than what the apostle predicts of the man of sin, and that hath been extant for some time in the world : 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 'Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,' in additions to the word, clipping the institutions of God, and adding new, and canonizing new mediators of intercession; who sits in the temple of God in a profession of Christianity, shewing himself that he is God, assuming the name of God and the title of God in being called most holy. And perhaps it will yet amount to a higher step than it hath yet done before he be consumed by the brightness of the Lord's coming, since all that yet lets and hinders is not taken out of the way. The higher the pride, the nearer the fall. When Goliath shall, defy the God of Israel, a stone from a sling, thrown by the hand of David, our great David the antitype, shall lay him vomiting out his soul and blasphemies on the earth. We are many times more beholding to the enemies' insolence than our own innocence: Deuteronomy 32:27, 'Were it

not that God feared the wrath of, the enemy,' i.e. in their pride, lest 'their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and say, Our hand is high,' a sinful Israel should not have so many preservations. When they will 'ascend into heaven, and exalt their throne above the stars of God;' when they will ascend above the heights of the clouds, and be like the Most High; then shall they be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit," Isaiah 14:13-15. The highest towers are the fairest marks for thunder, and the readiest tinder for the lightning of heaven.. When Tyrus had set her heart as the heart of God, then would God defile her 'brightness, and make her die the death of them that are slain in the midst of the sea, Ezekiel 28:6-8.

(3.) Eager malice. Nothing would satisfy the Egyptians here but the blood of the Israelites. 'My hand shall, destroy them ;' they were under a cruel bondage, attended with anguish of spirit, before God began their rescue. The serpent's seed I have the same principles of craft and malice sown in their nature, that are resident in his; ever since the beginning, he endeavoured to shape men. into the same form and temper with himself ; their rage would raze out the very foundation of Israel, and not suffer the name to be had any more in remembrance,' Psalms 83:7 Psalms 83:4. They love. to be drunk with the blood of the saints, and are no more satisfied with blood than the grave with carcases; they repair their arrows, and watch for an opportunity to discharge them, and never want poison but opportunity. This is God's time to deliver. When Pharaoh would pollute the land with the blood of the Hebrew males,. and ordain them to be dragged from the womb to the slaughter, then God raises up himself to attempt the rescue of Israel; yet he bears with his insolence, punisheth him, but not destroys him. But when he would be still stiff against a sense of the multitude of plagues, and a greater mercy of patience in them; when he would arm for the field against that God the smart of whose force he had felt, and resolves to destroy or bring back the Israelites upon the point of his sword, God would then bear no longer, but make the water his sepulchre. When Haman designs the ruin of the Jews, procures the king's commission, sends despatches to all the governors of the provinces, sets up a gibbet for Mordecai, and wants nothing but an opportunity to request the execution, he tumbles down to exchange his prince's favours for an exaltation. on the gallows, Esther 6:4, Esther 7:10. When the serpent increased his malicious cruelty, and cast out a flood against the church, God makes the earth, the carnal world, to give her assistance, and repel the force that Satan used against her: Revelation 12:5, Revelation 12:16, 'The earth helped the woman.' When I multitudes shall gather together in the valley of decision, 'then shall I the Lord roar out of Sion, and be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel,' Joel 3:14, Joel 3:16. And when spiritual Egypt shall make a war against Christ, who sits upon the white horse, and combine all their force for the destruction of his people, then shall the beast and the false prophet be taken and brought to their final ruin, and their force be broken in a lake of fire, as that of Egypt was in a sea of water, Revelation 19:19-20. The time of their greatest fierceness shall be the time of Christ's fury; he will strike them sorest when he finds them cruellest; their rage shall rouse up his revenge. When the men of Sodom, to which the antichristian state is likened, shall be resolutely bent to wickedness, they shall be struck with blindness, and that blindness succeeded by destructions; then will God set bounds to the outrageous waves, and snatch the prey out of the teeth of the lions.

(4.) Confident security. 'I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them.' God lets the enemy 'come in like a flood' and torrent, with a confidence to carry all before him, before he 'lifts up a standard against him,' Isaiah 59:19. Then shall the Spirit of the Lord stir up himself gloriously

in the principles and actions of his people, and the Redeemer shall come to Sion. God will get his force against their confidence, and break their impetuosity by his own power. When the enemies of the church think they have entangled it in such a snare, reduced it to so low a condition as to be secure of her ruin with a blast and puff, then God will 'arise and set her in safety from them that puff at her,' Psalms 12:5. This will be the case of Babylon, when she shall say, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,' then 'shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine,' for then God will stir up his strength to judge her, Revelation 18:7. It is in the time of the antichristian polity, and mutual congratulations with the highest security for their happy success triumphing over the dead bodies of the witnesses, that they shall stand again upon their feet (the same persons, if politically dead, others witnessing the same doctrine, if they were corporeally dead), and damp all their mirth and triumph, and turn their security into fears; then shall glory be given to the God of heaven, and the ark of his testament be seen in his temple, and the power of the Lord be magnified, Revelation 11:10-11. When they shall all be gathered together to the battle of the great day of the Lord, the place is called Armageddon, Revelation 16:14, Revelation 16:16, &c., [Hebrew word] and [Hebrew word]. A cursed troop, an army under God's anathema when they have the greatest confidence. When Jerusalem shall be penned up by a siege, it shall be 'a cup of trembling in the hands of her enemies,' Zechariah 12:2. Fear shall seize upon them in the midst of their confidence. The sun was risen upon Sodom just before the devouring shower of fire and brimstone. With what derision would they have entertained any messenger, that should have assured them of such a shower in so clear a day! No doubt but the Egyptian horses went prancing into the sea, and their riders confident of catching their prey; when they saw the waters congealed, they had not the least suspicion but that the division of the sea as made in their favour, till the chariot wheels were taken off, and the waters ready to roll upon them, Exodus 14:23, Exodus 14:25.

2. As something on the part of the church's enemies forwards the deliverance, so there is some regard God hath to the church's straits: cum duplicantur lateres, venit Moses. It is God's usual method to let the church be in great distress before he commands deliverance. The distress of the church was great in the concern of this day, though it was not sensible, the deliverance being known near as soon as the danger. The church is to be in the depths of the sea before she be fully delivered, Psalms 68:22. The Jews were to pass through the sea with affliction before the pride of Assyria should be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt; depart away; after that, he would strengthen them in the Lord, and they should walk up and down in his name, Zechariah 10:11-12. The sharpest pangs precede deliverance; it was so when Christ came in the flesh, it will be so at every new rising of Christ in his Spirit. When things were at a low ebb; when the sun set in the greatest darkness of error, idolatry, and profaneness; when the Jews, the only spot of ground God had, was as a wilderness, almost barren of any grace; when the great predictions of the prophets were unminded, and less understood; when Urim and Thummim had ceased, and the spirit of prophecy was shut up: then Christ comes in the fulness of time to work an universal relief for mankind. When the day of vengeance is in the heart of the Redeemer, he shall look and find none to help, he shall wonder to find none to uphold; therefore his own arm shall bring salvation, Isaiah 63:5. This has always been God's method. With his Son, the powers of darkness had their hour, and triumphed when they had laid him in the grave, before he was raised by the glory of his Father. The witnesses must be killed by the hand of their enemies, before they stand upon their feet, and ascend up into heaven, in the sight of their adversaries, Revelation 11:7. When the

church shall walk in darkness, 'grope for the wall like the blind, mourn like doves, look for salvation, and it shall seem far off,' then will the Lord 'put on a helmet of salvation on his head, and the garments of vengeance for clothing, and be clad with zeal as a cloak,' Isaiah 59:9-11, Isaiah 59:17. The break of day is ushered in by a thicker darkness than that which clouded the night before. The sharpest persecution that ever the church had, was in the time of Diocletian, a little before Christianity was to rule his empire in the exaltation of Constantine. Abraham was in hardship, out of his country, when he received the promises of the Messiah; and Israel in the wilderness, when the oracles of God were delivered to them. Confusion of the church precedes always the communication of light. The reasons of the doctrine are these.

1. This makes for God's glory. The creature cannot in this condition challenge any share in the honour of the deliverance, or pare off so much as a splinter of his glory. Had the Israelites been armed, and drawn into a strong battalion, and so defeated the Egyptian army, the victory would rather have been challenged by them than ascribed to God; but neither the strength of their multitude nor the wisdom of their guides were able to protect them. Counsel failed, and heads were feeble. Then did God get himself a name, when they were upon the point of a remediless ruin. It was manifest the name of the Lord got David the victory, since he encountered unarmed with Goliath, who could have crushed him like a fly had he been in his fingers. The time of the church's depression is the time of God's exaltation. He waits for the extremity to lift up himself. When paleness is upon the face of his people, when the cedars of Lebanon hang their heads, when the church's beauty seems a lamentable deformity, and Sharon is like a wilderness, then will God arise, Isaiah 33:9, Isaiah 33:10. God never builds up Sion, but he ordains all things in a method for his appearance in the greatest glory: Psalms 102:16, 'When the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in his glory,' that is, when the church is destitute, Psalms 102:17.

(1.) God exalts his power. His right hand then becomes 'glorious in power,' Exodus 15:6. He loves to appear in his dress as a Creator when there is no fitness in the subject to answer his end but what he bestows upon it. When Jerusalem becomes 'a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' it is an act of creating power: Isaiah 65:18, 'For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,' When the creature can give them not the least assistance, then will they be sensible of God's unbounded sufficiency, and their own necessary dependence. God never had too little help from his creature in a deliverance; he hath sometimes complained of too much, and disbanded some of the church's forces, as in the case of Gideon, Judges 7:1-25. As Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, so doth God's power most visibly in the midst of distresses. A physician's skill is most conspicuous when the disease is most dangerous and most complicated, and nature at the lowest ebb. It is more glory to God to quench the fire in its fullest rage than to extinguish it in its first smoke and sparkles. God loves the fairest mark to shoot at, and will rather down with Goliath than with the ordinary Philistines, grapple with the great rather than with a light danger, that the Lord may appear to be 'a man of war,' Exodus 15:3. As God shews his mercy in his people's redemption, he will shew his strength in their conduct, Exodus 15:13. He that made this deliverance a standing monument of his power, entitles himself by it, Isaiah 43:16, 'Thus saith the Lord, which makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.'

(2.) His kindness to, and care of .his people. When the straits are remediless, and the counsels whereby the projects are laid not to be defeated by human skill; when God seems to have forgot, then in a seasonable deliverance he shows himself the careful watchman of Israel. When the ship

is in a raging storm, and Christ asleep, he will leave his own ease to keep his word, and content his people. When the church thinks God hath forgotten his mercies, and they have forgotten their dependence; when the misery is so pressing that there is no faith of a deliverance left: then Christ comes, when faith is scarcely to be found upon the earth, Luke 18:8, to exalt his mercy in the depths of their misery, and work terrible. things they looked not for, Isaiah 64:8. The Israelites would not have understood God's care in their protection without this or the like strait. God had a new opportunity to shew his watchfulness over them, to turn the cloud, which went before them as their guide, behind them for their defence, Exodus 14:19. The scoffs of the enemy at the church's misery are God's motive to help her: 'I Will restore health to thee, because they called thee an outcast,' Jeremiah 30:17. It is in straits we see God's salvation, not man's: Exodus 14:13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.'

(3.) His justice. He lets the church be encompassed with miseries, and the enemies in a combination against her, that he may overthrow them at once. God makes a quicker dispatch with the Egyptians when they were united than when they had assaulted Israel with a smaller body. His righteousness gets glory at one blow, when he makes them to lie down together, Isaiah 43:17. His justice is unblemished in striking when their wickedness is visibly ripe; the equity of it must needs be subscribed, that when the enemy's malice is greatest, when they have no mixture of compassion, it is the clearest righteousness to crush them without any mixture of mercy. God brings things to that pass that he may honour both his justice and mercy in the highest; that the black horses and the white horses may march firm together, Zechariah 6:6 ; the black horses that brought death and judgment northward to Babylon, where the church was captive; the white horses that followed them, and brought deliverance to his people: the one to be instruments of his judgments, the other of his mercies. God loves to glorify those two attributes together, he did so in the redemption of mankind by the death of his Son, and he doth so in the deliverance of his church. There is a conformity of the church to Christ in her distress, that there may be a conformity of God's glory in temporal to his glory in eternal salvation. God singles out a full crop to be an harvest for both. A wicked man is said to be 'waited for' by the sword, Job 15:22. God attends the best season for revenge, when mercy to the one shall appear most glorious, and vengeance on his enemies most equitable, and all disputes against his proceedings be silenced.

2.. It makes to the church's advantage. God had a work to do upon mount Sion and on Jerusalem, before he would 'punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks,' Isaiah 10:12. His end shall be attained in the correction of his church, before his glory shall be exalted in the destruction of her enemies. There are enemies in the hearts of his people to be conquered by his grace, before the enemies to her peace and prosperity shall be defeated by his power. He will let them be in the fire till, like gold, they may have a purer honour in a brighter lustre.

(1.) Humiliation is gained hereby. God would not presently raze out the Canaanites, lest the wild beasts should increase upon them, Deuteronomy 7:22. Too quick deliverances may be occasions to multiply the wild beasts of pride, security, and wantonness in the heart; humility would have but little footing. There is need of a sharp winter to destroy the vermin before we can expect a fruitful spring. Without humiliation, the church knows not how to receive nor how to improve any mercy. The enemies hasten their own ruin by increasing. the measure of their sins, and Israel's deliverance by being instruments to humble their hearts. The sooner the plaster hath drawn out

the corrupt matter, the sooner it is cast into the fire. God hereby prevents the growth of weeds in that ground he intends to enrich with new mercies.

(2.) A spirit of prayer is excited. Slight troubles make but drooping prayers; great straits make it gash out, as the more the bladder is squeezed the higher the water springs. We hear not of the Israelites crying to the Lord after their coming out of Egypt, till they had a sight of the formidable army: Exodus 14:1-31, 'They were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.' Prayer gains mercies, but scarce springs up free without sense of distress. We then have recourse to God's power, whereby he is able to relieve us, when we are sensible of our own weakness, whereby we are unable to relieve ourselves. Men will scarce seek to God, or trust him, while any creature, though but a reed, remains for their support; they are destitute before they pray, or believe God regards their prayers : Psalms 102:17, 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' Distress causes importunity, and God will do much for importunity's sake, Luke 11:8.

(3.) Discovery of sincerity. Hereby God discovers who are his people, and who are not; who are in the highest form of Christianity, and who are not in the school, or at least but in the lowest form. He separates the good corn from the useless chaff. No question but there were some among the Israelites that, in this extremity, acted faith upon the remembrance of the wonders God had wrought for them in Egypt before their departure. Certainly they did not all murmur against Moses. Were there no Calebs and Joshuas that followed God fully in a way of faith and submission? Their faith and courage had not been conspicuous without this extremity. Thunderings and lightnings, and terrible things in righteousness, are to prove us, whether the fear of God be before our faces that we sin not, Exodus 20:18, Exodus 20:20. God separates the dross. You never know a new building without pulling down, to separate the rubbish and rotten rafters from the sound materials. Abraham was put upon hard work, the imbruing his hands in the blood of his only son, to prove his integrity. When God sees his sincerity, he diverts the blow; not only delivers him from his grief, his son from his danger, but renews the promise of the Messiah to him as a reward. Deliverance then comes when God hath separated the corn from the stubble.

(4.) A standing encouragement for future faith. When the straits are greatest from whence God delivers us, there is a stronger foundation for a future trust. When the distress is inconsiderable, faith afterwards will be more feeble. A large experience heartens and strengthens faith in the promise. When gloomy clouds are blown over, the brighter and thinner will not be much feared. When we see the sun melt the thickest over our heads, we shall not doubt its force to dissolve the lesser vapours which may afterwards assemble. When the ship hath escaped a raging storm, we shall not doubt it in a less. God often pits them in mind of their deliverance in the Red Sea, to strengthen their faith and dependence on him. It must needs be an establishment to faith, for deliverances from great straits are some kind of obligation on the honour of God. When the Israelites had provoked God by murmuring, and wished they had died in Egypt, and not in the wilderness, Moses intercedes, with this argument, The Egyptians shall hear of it, from whom God brought up Israel with a strong hand; and it would disparage God's power and tax him with an inability to bring his people into the land he intended. Then God grants their pardon, Numbers 14:13-15.

(5.) Engagement to future obedience. It is upon this account God preface the law with his mercy in delivering them out of Egypt. The strongest vows are made in the greatest straits. Many obligations there are when the extremity forces us to cry. When we are in the jaws of death, God may have his terms of us; when we are at some distance, we will have our own. The lower a person is, the more readily will he bend to any condition; hope of deliverance will make him stoop. And when God snatches his people as firebrands out of the fire, they are more obliged to him from common ingenuity and must be more ashamed of breaking their vows than if their mercies were of a great alloy. If common patience leads to repentance, a rescue from an amazing danger is a stronger cord to draw us to repentance and obedience. And it is certain that when the church in sincerity makes vows to God, it will not be long before God puts her into a condition to pay them, and furnish her with incentives to a holy ingenuity.

(6.) The greater thankfulness. The more straitened, the greater thankfulness for enlargements As we hear not of the Israelites' prayers, after they came out of Egypt, till they were in the pound, so we read of none of their songs, though they had matter enough for them, in their first departure, till God had dashed in pieces the enemy, and, 'thrown the horse and the rider into the sea.' Then, and not till then, had they a deep sense, how 'glorious God was in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,' Exodus 15:11. Great mercies unveil God's face more to the view of his people. When Israel inherits great salvation then the Lord shall inherit the praise of Israel. When we have less mercies, we take little notice of the author. God hears the language of but one of our bones; but when he 'delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, and spoils him, then all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?'

(7.) To prevent future mischief to the church. The destruction of the greatest enemies is a disarming the less. God, by this destruction, struck a terror into those nations, upon whose confines Israel was to march into Canaan, who, without so remarkable a rebuke of providence, would have been desirous to finger some of their prey. Then 'trembling took hold of the mighty men of Moab. All the inhabitants of Canaan did melt away; fear and dread fell upon them by the greatness of the arm of God, that they should be as still as a stone, till they passed over the river,' Exodus 15:15-16. Their present deliverance was a passport for their future security in their journey; and no one was troubled them in the way but those upon whom God had a mind to show his power.

How doth God deliver when the season is thus?

1. Suddenly. They sank like lead in the mighty waters, which quickly reaches the bottom. Judgment comes like lightning. Death. and hell are said to 'ride upon horses,' Revelation 6:8. They are too swift for God's enemies, and will easily win the race of them. Destruction comes, 'as travail upon a woman with child,' 1 Thessalonians 5:3. How suddenly did God turn the Assyrian camp into an Aceldama [place of blood], overthrow a powerful army, and make their tents their tombs in the space of a night! He will dash them 'in pieces like a potter's vessel,' Psalms 2:9, all in bits at a stroke. He comes suddenly; he 'rides upon a cherub,' Psalms 18:10. But because the motion of an angel is not so intelligible, he adds another metaphor from the nimblest of sensible things; 'he flies upon the wings of the wind,' to assist his people in extremity. The enemy comes like a 'whirlwind,' ['They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me.' Habakkuk 3:14] and God comes forth as a 'whirlwind of fury' Jeremiah 30:28. The whirlwind of his judgments shall be as quick as

the whirlwind of their malice; a continual Whirlwind, when the other is vanishing;. it 'shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked,' when the other shall be as fruitless as a snowball against a wall of brass. The enemy beholds him not till he be upon him; for the 'clouds are as dust under his feet,' Nahum 1:8, and obscure his appearance, as the raising the dust doth the march, of a troop. He comes unawares upon them. in a cloud. The execution is sudden. They shall be 'cut down as grass,' Psalms 37:2, which this moment faceth the Sun, triumphing in its natural bravery, and the next moment is cut off from its root with one shave of a scythe. He quencheth them as tow [a wick] is quenched in water, Isaiah 43:17, as the snuff of a candle is quenched by being bruised by the fingers. He cuts them off as foam, the excrement of the water, Hosea 10:7, which bursts in pieces like a bubble, on the sudden. Vengeance comes upon Tyre and Sidon swiftly and speedily, Joel 3:4. Tyre comes of [Hebrew word] which signifies to afflict, to straiten. Sidon of [Hebrew word]; the word signifies to pursue. All persecutors are threatened in Tyre and Sidon with a swift destruction. God delays the time to try the faith and patience of his people, to make the expected deliverance more sweet and welcome, and mercy more singular. He may have some of the seed of Christ in the loins of some of his enemies. But when he doth draw his sword, he gives a sudden blow before the enemy fears it, or his people expect it. The Jews in Babylon, when the chains of their captivity were unloosed, were like those that dream, they could scarce believe they were freed when the enemy felt himself punished. In all other plagues, God sent Moses as an herald, with warning to Pharaoh; but in this God surprised him, and hurried him to destruction, without giving him any caution. Like 'chaff that the tempest carrieth away, and is seen no more,' Job 21:18 so shall the plagues of spiritual Egypt 'come in one day,' Revelation 18:8; yea, 'in one hour,' Revelation 18:17. And the church shall be like a lily, which, by the assistance of the dew, flourisheth in the morning, when over night it looked as if it were withered.

2. Magnificently. Sometimes in deliverance God puts the frame of nature in confusion. 'He melts the mountains, cleaves the valleys, as wax before the fire, and as waters poured down a steep place,' Micah 1:4, i.e. he wastes the strength and riches of his enemies when he comes to judge. When he appears in the generation of the righteous, he shall appear in such glory, as to make the adversaries in great fear, and strike a terror into them, Psalms 14:5. God will perform it in a prodigious and unusual way. God might have taken off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots before they had entered the gap of the sea, and hindered them from approaching so near his beloved people; he might have afflicted their hands with the palsy, and rendered them incapable to manage their weapons; or might have sent a spirit of emulation among them, and made them sheathe their swords in one another's bowels. But though this had secured his people, it would not have rendered his operation so illustrious, as the making that which was a means of his people's security to be his enemies' destruction, and the waters at once indulgent to the Israelites, and severe to the Egyptians. He magnifies his judgments and mercies by one and the same yoke, and drowns the enemies in the sea, whereby he delivers the Israelites. So be preserved Daniel in the midst of those lions which devoured his accusers. The more contrary things are to an eye of reason, the fitter subjects they are for the exaltation of God. As Christ, the head, so the church, the body, is raised out of the grave by the glory of God the Father, Romans 6:4. His right hand shall find his enemies, Psalms 45:8; his right hand shall teach him terrible things Psalms 45:4. Then shall he come with a shout, as one refreshed with wine, recruited with new spirits, and risen from sleep, Psalms 78:65. He calls upon all creatures to be assistant to Cyrus in the design of his people's deliverance, Isaiah 45:8. He will perfect it by a way of creation, ('I have created

righteousness' to deliverance) with the manifestation of his, and he makes thing serve against their natural order appointed by God. Thus, when God shall appear for the final overthrow of spiritual Egypt, he shall come with voices, thunders, and lightnings, an earthquake out of the temple, and appear as magnificently in the garb of a judge as he did on Sinai in that of a lawgiver, Revelation 16:19, and make the ten horns, which were the support of the beast, to be the instruments of her desolation, Revelation 17:16.

3. Severely. They sank to the bottom like lead in the mighty waters. God sends out the greatest judgments against those that deal sharply with his people, greater than against any other part of the world, Zechariah 6:6. The black horses, the instrument of the execution of his anger, were sent towards Babylon, where his people were in captivity; but the bay horses, of a mixed colour, noting a mixture of mercy and judgments, are sent towards other parts of the world, to walk, not to run, signifying the patience of God to those parts which had not yet oppressed his people. God deals not so smartly with those, as with them that are enemies to Israel. In such concerns he answers his people 'by terrible things in righteousness.' When he appears as a God of salvation to his people, he appears terrible to his righteousness to his enemies: Psalms 65:5, 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.' His judgments shall be as terrible as they are righteous. The executioners of his vengeance ride upon horses, to show their readiness to any warlike engagement; upon red horses, of a bloody colour to shew the severity of their commission against the enemies of God, Zechariah 1:8. He will pay all arrears together, that they shall be forced to say, God is true to the word of his threatening, as Well as that of his promise; as the Amalekites, in Samuel's time, paid the scores of their ancestors in the time of the Israelites' travel through the wilderness : 1 Samuel 15:2, 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for them in the way when they came up from Egypt. So when God reckons with Babylon for all the blood of the saints and prophets, —Revelation 18:20, 'The blood of all the prophets and saints that were slain upon the earth, shall be found upon her skirts, and avenged on her,' —he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath ; all that she hath done shall come into his remembrance, Revelation 16:19. And how severe it shall be is expressed, Revelation 14:19-20; she shall be cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God, as grapes braised with the greatest strength, and crushed in pieces, both skin and stones. And to express it more sensibly to our understandings, he speaks of the flowing of the 'blood out of the wine-press into the horses' bridles,' by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs, two hundred miles; not that we should understand it literally, but the Spirit of God is so particular in describing the height of the deluge of blood to the bridles of the horses, the length of the flood to the space of two hundred miles, to set before our apprehension the severity of the wrath that shall be poured out upon them. And as God never repented of his judgments upon Egypt, so never will he of those which are to come upon Babylon.

4. Universally, and therefore severely. 'The horse and the rider did God cast into the sea ;' the chariots, the host, and the chosen captains were drowned there, Exodus 15:1, Exodus 15:4. The waters covered the enemy, there was not one of them left, Psalms 60:11, Exodus 14:28. Not a messenger to carry back the news; their floating bodies 'and wrecks were the first that gave notice of the defeat to their remaining countrymen. God throws off all tenderness, his bowels are silent, he strikes like a wrathful enemy, lanceth [cuts] not like a tender chirurgeon [surgeon]; so shall it be with the partners of their sins, every man that worships the beast and his image, shall drink of the

wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and whoever receiveth the mark of his name, Revelation 14:9 - 1 Kings The sun, the political power that defends it, shall be darkened; the rivers, whereby their traffic and riches come into them, shall be dried up; all that have any dependence on them, recourse to them, stand in the defence of the power of Egypt, shall fall under the indignation of God.

5. Totally, irrecoverably. They sank as lead. God will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up a second time, Nahum 1:9-10. He overtakes them when they are drunk in the height of their pleasure, while they are making their confederacies against the church, while they are folden [folded] together like thorns, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dry. [Hebrew phrase]: Luke 18:7, 'He will avenge his own; he will avenge them speedily;' he will act so as if wrath were his only and proper work; he will do it to purpose, and perfectly. The Egyptian carcasses lay as trophies of the victory, Exodus 14:80. Their former plagues had something of patience; punishment was inflicted, but life preserved ; judgments sent, but, upon promise of reformation, quite removed. Now patience folds her hands, and stands spectator, while justice opens hers, and becomes a sole actor; mercy runs on the side of Israel, and wrath marcheth without any impediment against the Egyptians. As they like lead, so irrecoverably shall Babylon fall like a millstone in the depths of the sea, and shall be found no more at all; all her mirth and jollity shall for ever cease, Revelation 18:21-23. When things fall to the bottom of the sea, they are entombed there for ever; no skill can restore them to their former station ; when judgment turneth the key, and locks them in, there is no more opening the door.

6. And all this justly. Pharaoh had commanded that the Hebrew male children should be exposed to the mercy of the river, to find their death in the water as soon as they had breathed in the air, Exodus 1:22; and God makes them perish in that element to which they had adjudged the harmless infants. Now God pays the law-maker and his counsellors with the same coin, and makes the malefactors food for the inhabitants of the deep, who had before fed the crocodiles with the blood of the innocent. God shall reward Babylon as she hath rewarded his people, and double unto her the cup she hath filled for others, Revelation 18:6. Upon this account shall praise be given to God, that he hath given them blood to drink who have shed the blood of his saints and prophets, Revelation 16:6. 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus.' As she hath kindled fires to consume the witnesses of Christ, so God shall kindle a fire to consume her, Revelation 17:16: 'She shall be utterly burnt with fire,' Revelation 18:8. Some think Rome will at length be consumed with fire from heaven. She is indeed spiritual Sodom, Revelation 11:8; and as she answers it in carnal and spiritual sins, she may partake of the same visible and spiritual judgments. Whether the punishment, will be the same for kind I know, not, but certainly it will be such a kind of punishment whereby the judgments of God shall be read, both in proportion and kind of it, as a retaliation for her sins; and the Scripture speaks of fire coming down from God out of heaven upon the last enemies of the church that shall afflict the beloved city, alluding to the fire upon Sodom, and that which descended upon the persecutors of Elijah, Revelation 20:9.

7. Wisely. He cuts off the spirits of princes, as he took off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, Psalms 76:12, either by infatuating their counsels, or turning them as the rivers of waters into other channels. He stripped the Egyptians first of their wealth, and now spoils them of their strength; he kept a bridle upon the waters till the enemies were got into the midst of them, and then commands the sea to swallow them up in the depths of her bowels. When men lay their counsels deep,

second them by an invincible strength, have almost brought them to their imagined period ready to bring forth, God disappoints their hopes, baffles their counsels, renders their projects frothy, raiseth a storm and blows the ship from its harbour, contrary to its intended course, and glorifies his wisdom by overthrowing their designs when they have brought them to a birth. He watches upon the evil, to divert it from the innocent object upon the malicious actor. As God watches for the fittest season to bring evil upon his people, Daniel 9:14, he will be as diligent to watch for the fittest opportunity to bring judgment on his enemies. God hath promised vengeance, but he hath reserved the knowledge of the 'due time' to himself, when he will make their foot to slide, Deuteronomy 32:35. Every mercy is then most seasonable. Usually God lets men bring the ball almost to the goal, and then kicks it from them, and them from it; and the wisdom of God hath been, and will be, glorious in the overthrow of the remaining enemies of the church, in making them which were horns to defend the beast to be carpenters to ruin him, Revelation 17:16.

Use 1. Of comfort. How dear is the church to God! When God was engaged in the Deliverance of his people, he sinks the strength of Egypt rather than one hair of the Israelites' heads should perish; they went safe over, while no man or horse of the enemies escaped. God gave Egypt for Israel's ransom, Isaiah 43:8; and the sea should have drowned the whole land, rather than the enemies have hurt his people. So did the contrivers of the powder plot come to destruction, when not one hair of a head was lost or one splinter of the place they intended was shaved off, by the prepared gunpowder site in heaven and laughs at the little petty designs of men, Psalms 2:4. God that is infinite to countermine them, infinitely powerful to defeat them, hath them in derision. Christ in glory mocks at the folly of earth-worms. The decree of God, which settles Christ a king, assures him a kingdom, and secures his people as it did his person, Psalms 2:7. God is 'a sun and shield,' Psalms 84:11 ; a shield to defend them, and a sun to extinguish the fire of the enemy's fury by shining upon it. God values no nation for the purity of his people. The Babylonians, a warlike nation, shall sink under the army of Cyrus, for the restoration of the captive Jews, Isaiah 43:4, 'I will give men for thee, and people for thy life.' He had, given Egypt for their ransom before, and Ethiopa and Seba in the time of Asa; and still, in after ages, God was of the same mind. God is as gracious to his people as terrible to his enemies; he is light to the one, when he is fire to the souls and bodies of the other, Isaiah 10:17. Christ still sits the Watchman of Ephraim with God, Hosea 9:8. He inspects his church, waits to bring the day of visitation upon his enemies. The covenant is of special force with God to move him to deliver his people: Isaiah 63:8, 'He said, Surely they are my people ; so he was their Saviour.' It seems to refer to the deliverance from Egypt. Shall I have so little regard to the league I have entered into with their fathers, as to be unconcerned in their misery? There is hope in Israel till God forgets his covenant, and Christ strip himself of the name of a Saviour. Christ hath his priestly habit in heaven for his people, but eyes as flames of fire, quick and piercing, to consume the very hearts of his enemies, and feet like fine brass to trample upon them, Revelation 1:13-15. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to tear his enemies, as well as a Lamb slain, to expiate the sins of his people. He hath meekness for his friends, and terrible majesty for his enemies: Psalms 45:4, 'In thy majesty ride prosperously, because of meekness.' His kindness to big people makes him ride in majesty against the others. God will not be at rest till he hath revenged the cause of his people. Egypt will be drowned; Babylon will fall, Revelation 18:2. Christ can have no satisfaction without it. The executioners of his judgments in the north country, which was Babylon, lying northward. from Jerusalem, do quiet his Spirit, both as tending to the glory of his justice and the manifestation of his mercy to his people, Zechariah 6:8. Christ

will, stain his garments in the blood of Edom and Bozrah, Isaiah 63:2, Isaiah 63:8: Edom, the posterity of Esau; Bozrah, a city of Moab, types of the church's enemies. The Jewish doctors, by Edom in the prophets, understand Rome. Christ sits in heaven till his enemies be made his footstool. All the time of his sitting, God is acting and preparing things for a final issue. There is a strong cry of blood, and a file of prayers; the one will be revenged, and the other will be answered. Their own pride and cruelty witness against them. God hath a noise of petitions every day for a full end; a combined importunity will prevail. But clouds now hang over us; a gloomy storm seems to threaten us. God may indeed blow over the cloud. Our Saviour hath the command of the storms and winds in heaven, as well as he had upon the earth. The pillar of the cloud, which hath hitherto conducted us, may be our guardian in the rear to defend us. But yet, if he doth suffer them to prevail, they shall be but as whisks to brush off the dust, wisps of straw to cleanse the filthy pot. You know what is to be done with them when their work is done. Their language indeed is, Let Sion be defiled; but they understand not the counsel of the Lord, who in time will make the horn of Sion iron, and her hoofs brass, Micah 4:11. Though the beasts that ascend out of the bottomless pit do kill God's people, Revelation 11:7, yet, even in this victory of theirs, Satan himself shall be overcome. As when Christ was taken out from among the living by Satan's means, it was but for a time, but himself was cast out for ever, so, after this victory, the church shall overcome, Rev. xi., and God shall break the head of the leviathan in, the waters; and when he doth, by his wisdom, contrive ways of salvation, he will, by his power, execute them, and save in such a way as may most glorify himself, and witness that the salvation was the immediate work of his arm : Hosea 2:7, 'I will save them by the Lord their God.'

2. Remember former deliverances in time of straits. In our plenty of mercies, we should not be unmindful how near we were to the pit, nor let the impression of God's power, wisdom, and mercy wear off from our hearts. The Israelites were apt to forget the most signal mercies, though they had seen them, and had more sensibly tasted the sweetness of them than their posterity. God, therefore, often puts them in mind of them; the Lord that brought them out of the land of Egypt; out of the iron furnace, Deuteronomy 4:20 : Hosea 12:9, 'I the Lord your God from the land of Egypt.' It was the more fit to be remembered by them, because many of them were fitter subjects for God's wrath with the Egyptians than for his delivering kindness, since she committed whoredoms in Egypt in her youth, i.e. had been guilty of the Egyptian idolatry, Ezekiel 23:3. Unmindfulness of former experiences may make you hopeless of future deliverances., The remembrance of former mercies is a ground of confidence in God for the like mercies for the future. God recalls to his people's minds, in their afflictions, the memorable defeat of the Moabites by his sole power, in the time of Jehoshaphat's reign; they should, from that deliverance, hope for as great from the hands of God in their straits. And, Zechariah 10:11, God would have them consider their deliverance at the Red Sea as a ground of hope in the time of their distress.

8. Thankfully remember former deliverances. If we have not some praise for God, we may suspect ourselves. It is observed that the city Shushan, the royal seat of the Persian monarchy, was portrayed upon the east gate of the temple, not because of the Persian command, or because of their fear; of that king, as some think, but to have a thankful remembrance of the wonderful deliverance of Purim, which was wrought in Shushan, Esther 9:26. If it had been only by the Persians' command, it would have been defaced after the fall of that monarchy, which held but thirty-four years after the building of the second temple. The 136th Psalm is a good copy, where is

a threefold exhortation to thankfulness in the beginning, and one at the end; and in the record of every mercy, the burden of every verse is, 'his mercy endureth for ever.' How should we imitate the psalmist! He broke the teeth of the invincible leviathan in '88, and sent a strong wind to disperse the fleet, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God prevented the dreadful blast of gunpowder, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God sent the light of the gospel into England, and freed it from the yoke of antichrist's tyranny, 'for his mercy endures for ever.' God hath been a wall of fire about Ireland, in the protection of it, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' Let mercy receive the praise of what our own wisdom and power could not effect. The way to overcome the same enemies we fear, is to praise God for what he hath before acted against them. The strength of a people consists in praises, as well as praying: Psalms 8:2, Psalms 8:1 Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength ;' in the evangelist, 'thou hast perfected praise,' Matthew 21:16. The more hallelujahs we put up, the more occasion God may give us for them. If we have any fears of the overflowing deluge God formerly delivered us from, our non-improvement of those deliverances, the fruits whereof we enjoy this day, may strengthen our fears. When Israel was idolatrous in Jeroboam's reign, yet God delivered them from the Syrians, because he saw their affliction was bitter, and there was no helper; yet when they did not thankfully improve it to a reformation, God denounced judgments against them for their idolatry: 2 Kings 14:26, 2 Kings 14:27, 'The Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel;' so that he had not yet denounced it, for he waited to see the improvement of this mercy. But before the end of Jeroboam's reign, by the prophet Hosea, who began to prophesy in his time, he declared their final captivity, from whence they are not restored to this day. Praise for former mercies is a means to gain future ones; the music of voices in Jehoshaphat's camp, praising the beauty of holiness, was a prologue of a deliverance from a formidable army, 2 Chronicles 20:21-22, and more successful than the warlike music of drums and trumpets.

4. Exercise faith on the power of God manifested in deliverances in the time of straits. It is not for want of ability in God, but for want of faith in us, that we at any time go groaning under misery. Faith would quiet the soul. When David relied upon God, and found by experience God sustaining him, he would not then be afraid of ten thousand, Psalms 3:5-6. Let that be our carriage which is recorded of the Israelites after this memorable defeat: Exodus 14:31, 'They believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.' We must never expect to see God's arm bare without faith in him. Christ can do no great work where unbelief is predominant, Unbelief doth not strip God of his power and mercy, but it stops the streams and effluxes [outflow] of it. Unbelief against experience is a double sin. It is gross when against a bare word, worse when against the word confirmed by a witness. Israel was past thoughts of any relief in this strait, but expected to perish by the hand of their enemies, yet God brought them into straits in mercy, to bring them out of straits with power. He makes their distress a snare to their enemies, and a scaffold for their faith. That deliverance ought to be a foundation for our trust in God, though bestowed upon another nation; yet not so much upon them as a state, but as a church, and a type of those future ones under the gospel which are yet expected. Well, then, trust upon this foundation. Great trust in God is a sort of obligation upon God. Men, out of generosity, will do much for them that depend upon them. Dependence on God magnifies his attributes; this will bring deliverance, whereby God will magnify himself. Do not distrust him, till you meet with an enemy too strong for him to quell, a Red Sea too deep for him to divide, an affliction too sturdy for him to rebuke, an Egyptian too proud for him to master; then part with your faith, but not till God hath parted with his power, which he hath formerly evidenced.

5. Expect and provide for sharp conflicts. God brings into straits before he delivers. Another deliverance is yet to come; the church's distresses are not come to a period; Babylon hath another game to play. The right of the devil to tyrannise over the mystical body was taken away at the death of the head, yet he still bruise Christ's heel, and bites, though he cannot totally overcome. As long as Christ's enemies are not made his footstool, as long as there is the seed of the serpent in the world, as long as Christ's members want a conformity to the head, Satan's pinches must be expected; as long as the beast is in being, he will make war with the followers of the Lamb; his power is to continue forty-two months, to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, Revelation 13:5, Revelation 13:7. Forty-two months, of years; it is like the time is not expired. One thousand six hundred and twenty years, which make forty-two months; no ending since he first had his power. When his time draws near to an end, he will bite sharpest. This deliverance from Egypt is yet again to be acted over, and that must be at the end, when the whole Israel of God shall be freed from Antichrist, the antitype of Pharaoh.

6. Yet let us not be afraid. Apostasies may be great. There will be but two witnesses; not two in number, but in regard of the fewness of those that shall bear testimony to the doctrine of Christ. There may be no advocate for the church. Sion may be an outcast, cast out of the affection of many that served or favoured her; but the sharpest convulsions in the world are presages of an approaching redemption, Luke 21:28, and the gospel will shine clearer, as the sun doth after it hath been muffled with a thick cloud. The words in the mouths of the witnesses will be most killing and convincing. Fear not a natural above a supernatural power. Was not all the church God had in the world in as low a condition at the Red Sea? Not a soul that we read of exempt (or but few, as Job, and some few others in other parts), yet the church was then delivered for a pattern, to shew forth the power of God in the ages to come. What though there may be a want of instruments? Are not all instruments outlived by God? Has God dismissed the care of his people? Is he not always the church's guardian?

He must be dethroned before he can be disarmed. While heaven is too high for human hands to reach, the church is too well guarded for them to conquer. Fear not, till Christ lets his scepter fall out of his hands, and ceases to rule in the midst of his enemies, and flings away the keys of death and hell; fear not till God strips himself of his strength wherewith he is clothed; he is clothed with strength, Psalms 93:1. Though there be little strength in the church, there is an almighty one in their confederate. it is no matter what the enemy resolves against what God ordains. Pharaoh intended to destroy, God intended to deliver. God will have his will, and Pharaoh's lust goes, unsatisfied. When the enemies are most numerous, God shall darken their glory and strength and then shall he be the hope and strength of his people, Joel 3:14-16. The valley of Achor, the valley of the sharpest trouble, shall be a door of hope, Hosea 2:15. That God that can create a world out of nothing, can create deliverance when there is no visible means to produce it. What can be too hard for him that can work without materials, that can make matter when it is wanting, and call non-entities into being? He created the world with a word, and can destroy the sturdiest men in the world with a look. The strongest devil trembles before him, and the whole seed of the serpent is but as the dust of the balance before the breath of his mouth. He looked. the Egyptian host into disorder, and their chariot wheels into a falling sickness, Exodus 14:24. He, created the world by a word; he restored Jerusalem by a word, Isaiah 44:26-27, dispirited Egypt by a look. There is no need of ail arm; a word, and a look of omnipotency, will be efficacious both for the one and the

other; one royal edict from him will perform it: Psalms 44:4, 'Thou art my King, command deliverance for Jacob.' He hath authority as a king, engagement as the church's king. As he hath right of dominion, so he hath an office of protection, which the church of right may claim. And is it Jacob that wants, deliverance? Be not afraid, but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, Isaiah 8:12, Isaiah 8:18. To trust in his power is to sanctify his name, and regard him as the sovereign of all creatures, and the Lord of hosts. If we sanctify his name by relying on his power, he will sanctify his name by engaging his power.

7. To this end study the promises God hath made to his church, and what predictions are upon record. It is a title of the faithful, that they are such as keep the sayings of the book of the Revelation, Revelation 22:9. The angel that came to John owns himself his fellow-servant, and of the prophets, and those that keep the sayings of that book. See God's bond, and behold his witness ; compare the promise, the prophecy, and performance. See his mercy in making them, his truth in performing them; let these be as the Hur and Aaron to support the glory of God in our souls. This will be a matter of praise, and furnish us with arguments to spread before God. Daniel first looked into the book for the set time of the Jews' return from Babylon, Daniel 9:2, and took his rise for pleas from thence. You may have need of this food; a divine promise is the best cordial at a stake or gibbet, or when a sword is at your breast.

8. When a time of straits comes, wait patiently upon God. Let not hope, sink when reason is nonplussed by storms, and sees nothing but wrecks. Wait upon God in the way of his judgments, Isaiah 26:8, in his storms as well as calms. God waits to be gracious, and therefore we should wait to be gratified. Not to wait, is to be partners in that sin which brought destruction upon the church's enemies, viz. pride. It concerns God more in point of his glory to hasten deliverance in its due time, than us in point security; but there is as much danger in coming too soon as too late. By waiting, we imitate the highest pattern, who waits with patience for the reformation of his enemies, and Christ, who waits for the total victory. The longer God keeps the church at any time under. the enemy's chains, the sweeter will be his mercy to the one, and the severer his justice on the other. The Israelites waited, and God followed Pharaoh with plagues, as he followed them with hardens, and took his time to out off their oppressors, with most glory to himself, and most comfort to them. The vision hath its appointed time. Impatience will not make God break the chains of his resolves, but patience will bring down the blessing with great success, and big with noble births. God is not out of the way of his wisdom and grace, and we can never keep in our way but by patience in waiting; by this we give him the honour of his wisdom; by too much hastiness we check and control him, and will not let him be the master and conductor of his own blessings. We many times get more good by waiting than we do by enjoying a mercy. Such a posture keeps the soul humble and believing, whereas. many times, when we receive a mercy too hastily with one hand, we let go faith and humility with the other. Sincere souls have the strongest and most heavenly raptures in a time of waiting: Isaiah 40:31, 'They mount up with wings like eagles.'

9. In times of such straits, be found only in a way of duty. If our straits should ever prove as hard as the Israelites' at the Red Sea, i.e. have something of a resemblance to their case, let us follow Moses his counsel to them: Exodus 14:18, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.' Let us not anticipate God's gracious designs. If we will have our finger where God only will have his arm, God may withdraw this arm, and leave us to the weakness of our own fingers. Let them that want a God to relieve them use sinful and unworthy shifts. for their deliverance. If any success be found

out of the way of duty, it may be attended with a curse, and want that favour of God which only can sanctify it. We may purchase a present deliverance with a more durable plague at the end of it, because we forfeit that favour which only can work a real freedom. Sinful ways do not glorify God, but disparage him. Our actions at such a time particularly should adorn the gospel, not discredit it, for. it is by the sword of his mouth that such enemies will be destroyed, and every sword cuts best when it is sharpest and cleanest, not when it is blunt and rusty. Not but that lawful means may, nay, they must be used. Noah,. though he went into the ark by God's command, and was not to stir out without his order, yet he sets open the windows, and sends forth a raven and a dove, to bring him notice when the waters were dried up. It is a foolish thing to offend God, who only can help us in our straits, and by our sin to hold his sword in his sheath, which, upon our obedience, would be drawn for our relief. We know not how soon we may need him, and our distress be such, that none but he can bring salvation. Let no sin be a bar in the way.

10. Be much in prayer. Israel cried unto the Lord before God did relieve, Exodus 14:10. The persecuted church cried, travailing in birth, and found a security both for herself and her offspring, Revelation 12:2, &c. The distress of the time is an argument to be used: Psalms 123:3-4, 'Have mercy upon us, Lord, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.' When enemies are high, and access to God free, it is an high contempt of God not to use the privilege he allows us, and it is to trust in an arm of flesh rather than an arm of omnipotence; to think him either inexorable or unable. And for encouragement, consider you have Christ armed against his spouse's enemies, and provided with merit to make her prayers successful. Our prayers may at last be turned into praises, and we may say with David, Psalms 9:6, 'O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.'

On God's Being a Spirit

ON GOD'S BEING A SPIRIT John 4:24.—God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The words are part of the dialogue between our Saviour and the Samaritan woman. [Note: Amarant. Paraph. sur Jean.] Christ, intending to return from Judea to Galilee, passed through the country of Samaria, a place inhabited not by Jews, but a mixed company of several nations, and some remainders of the posterity of Israel, who escaped the captivity, and were returned from Assyria; and being weary with his journey, arrived about the sixth hour or noon (according to the Jews' reckoning the time of the day), at a well that Jacob had digged, which was of great account among the inhabitants for the antiquity of it, as well as the usefulness of it, in supplying their necessities: he being thirsty, and having none to furnish him wherewith to draw water, at last comes a woman from the city, whom he desires to give him some water to drink. The woman, perceiving him by his language or habit to be a Jew, wonders at the question, since the hatred the Jews bore the Samaritans was so great, that they would not vouchsafe to have any commerce with them, not only in religious, but civil affairs, and common offices belonging to mankind. Hence our Saviour takes occasion to publish to her the doctrine of the gospel; and excuseth her rude answer by her ignorance of him; and tells her, that if she had asked him a greater matter, even that which concerned her eternal salvation, he would readily have granted it, notwithstanding the rooted hatred between the Jews and Samaritans; and bestowed a water of a greater virtue, the “water of life.” [Note: John 4:10; or “living water.”] The woman is no less astonished at his reply than she was at his first demand. It was strange to hear a man speak of giving living water to one of whom he had begged the water of that spring, and had no vessel to draw any to quench his own thirst. She therefore demands whence he could have this water that he speaks of, [Note: John 4:11] since she conceived him not greater than Jacob, who had digged that well and drank of it. Our Saviour, desirous to make a progress in that work he had begun, extols the water he spake of, above this of the well, from its particular virtue fully to refresh those that drank of it, and be as a cooling and comforting fountain within them, of more efficacy than that without. [Note: John 4:13-14.] The woman, conceiving a good opinion of our Saviour, desires to partake of this water, to save her pains in coming daily to the well, not apprehending the spirituality of Christ's discourse to her: [Note: John 4:15.] Christ finding her to take some pleasure in his discourse, partly to bring her to a sense of her sin, before he did communicate the excellency of his grace, bids her return back to the city and bring her husband with her to him. [Note: John 4:16.] She freely acknowledges that she had no husband; whether having some check of conscience at present for the unclean life she led, or loth to lose so much time in the gaining this water so much desired by her: [Note: John 4:17.] our Saviour takes an occasion from this to lay open her sin before her, and to make her sensible of her own wicked life and the prophetic excellency of himself; and tells her she had had five husbands, to whom she had been false, and by whom she was divorced, and the person she now dwelt with was not her lawful husband, and in living with him she violated the rights of marriage, and increased guilt upon her conscience. [Note: John 4:18.] The woman being affected with this discourse, and knowing him to be a stranger that could not be certified of those things but in an extraordinary way, begins to have a high esteem of

him as a prophet. [Note: John 4:19.] And upon this opinion she esteems him able to decide a question, which had been canvassed between them and the Jews, about the place of worship. [Note: John 4:20.] Their fathers worshiping in that mountain, and the Jews affirming Jerusalem to be a place of worship, she pleads the antiquity of the worship in this place, Abraham having built an altar there (Genesis 12:7), and Jacob, upon his return from Syria. And, surely, had the place been capable of an exception, such persons as they, and so well acquainted with the will of God, would not have pitched upon that place to celebrate their worship. Antiquity hath, too, too often bewitched the minds of men, and drawn them from the revealed will of God. Men are more willing to imitate the outward actions of their famous ancestors, than conform themselves to the revealed will of their Creator. The Samaritans would imitate the patriarchs in the place of worship, but not in the faith of the worshippers. Christ answers her, that this question would quickly be resolved by a new state of the church, which was near at hand; and neither Jerusalem, which had now the precedency, nor that mountain, should be of any more value in that concern, than any other place in the world: [Note: John 4:21.] but yet, to make her sensible of her error and that of her countrymen, tells her, that their worship in that mountain was not according to the will of God, he having long after the altars built in this place, fixed Jerusalem as the place of sacrifices; besides, they had not the knowledge of that God which ought to be worshipped by them, but the Jews had the “true object of worship,” and the “true manner of worship, according to the declaration God had made of himself to them.” [Note: John 4:22.] But all that service shall vanish, the veil of the temple shall be rent in twain, and that carnal worship give place to one more spiritual; shadows shall fly before substance, and truth advance itself above figures; and the worship of God shall be with the strength of the Spirit: such a worship, and such worshippers doth the Father seek; [Note: John 4:23.] for “God is a Spirit: and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” The design of our Saviour is to declare, that God is not taken with external worship invented by men, no, nor commanded by himself; and that upon this reason, because he is a spiritual essence, infinitely above gross and corporeal matter, and is not taken with that pomp which is a pleasure to our earthly imaginations.

Πνεῦμα ■ θεός. Some translate it just as the words lie: “Spirit is God.” [Note: Vulgar Lat. *Illyre. Clav.*] But it is not unusual, both in the Old and New Testament languages, to put the predicate before the subject, as Psalms 5:9, “Their throat is an open sepulchre;” in the Hebrew, “A sepulchre open their throat;” so Psalms 111:3, “His work is honorable and glorious;” Heb. “Honor and glory is his work;” and there wants not one example in the same evangelist (John 1:1), “And the Word was God;” Greek, “And God was the Word:” in all, the predicate, or what is ascribed, is put before the subject to which it is ascribed. One tells us, and he, a head of a party that hath made a disturbance in the church of God, [Note: *Episcop. Institut. lib. iv. c. 3.*] that this place is not aptly brought to prove God to be a Spirit; and the reason of Christ runs not thus,—God is of a spiritual essence, and therefore must be worshipped with a spiritual worship; for the essence of God is not the foundation of his worship, but his will; for then we were not to worship him with a corporeal worship, because he is not a body; but with an invisible and eternal worship, because he is invisible and eternal. But the nature of God is the foundation of worship; the will of God is the rule of worship; the matter and manner is to be performed according to the will of God. But is the nature of the object of worship to be excluded? No; as the object is, so ought our devotion to be, spiritual as he is spiritual. God, in his commands for worship, respected the discovery of his own nature; in the law, he respected the discovery of his mercy and justice, and therefore commanded

a worship by sacrifices; a spiritual worship without those institutions would not have declared those attributes which was God's end to display to the world in Christ; and though the nature of God is to be respected in worship, yet the obligations of the creature are to be considered. God is a Spirit, therefore must have a spiritual worship; the creature hath a body as well as a soul, and both from God; and therefore ought to worship God with the one as well as the other, since one as well as the other is freely bestowed upon him. The spirituality of God was the foundation of the change from the Judaical carnal worship to a more spiritual and evangelical.

God is a Spirit; that is, he hath nothing corporeal, no mixture of matter, not a visible substance, a bodily form. [Note: Melanethon.] He is a Spirit, not a bare spiritual substance, but an understanding, willing Spirit, holy, wise, good, and just. Before, Christ spake of the Father, [Note: John 4:23.] the first person in the Trinity; now he speaks of God essentially: the word Father is personal, the word God essential; so that our Saviour would render a reason, not from any one person in the blessed Trinity, but from the Divine nature, why we should worship in spirit, and therefore makes use of the word God, the being a Spirit being common to the other persons with the Father. This is the reason of the proposition (John 4:23.), "Of a spiritual worship." Every nature delights in that which is like it, and distastes that which is most different from it. If God were corporeal, he might be pleased with the victims of beasts, and the beautiful magnificence of temples, and the noise of music; but being a Spirit, he cannot be gratified with carnal things; he demands something better and greater than all those,—that soul which he made, that soul which he hath endowed, a spirit of a frame suitable to his nature. He indeed appointed sacrifices, and a temple, as shadows of those things which were to be most acceptable to him in the Messiah, but they were imposed only "till the time of reformation." [Note: Hebrews 9:10.]

Must worship him; not they may, or it would be more agreeable to God to have such a manner of worship; but they must. It is not exclusive of bodily worship; for this were to exclude all public worship in societies, which cannot be performed without reverential postures of the body. [Note: Terniti.] The gestures of the body are helps to worship, and declarations of spiritual acts. We can scarcely worship God with our spirits without some tincture upon the outward man; but he excludes all acts inerealy corporeal, all resting upon an external service and devotion, which was the crime of the Pharisees, and the general persuasion of the Jews as well as heathens, who used the outward ceremonies, not as signs of better things, but as if they did of themselves please God, and render the worshippers accepted with him, without any suitable frame of the inward man. [Note: Amirald, in loc.] It is as if he had said, Now you must separate yourselves from all carnal modes to which the service of God is now tied, and render a worship chiefly consisting in the affectionate motions of the heart, and accommodated more exactly to the condition of the object, who is a Spirit. In spirit and truth. [Note: Amirald, in loc] The evangelical service now required has the advantage of the former; that was a shadow and figure, this the body and truth. [Note: Muscul.] Spirit, say some, is here opposed to the legal ceremonies; truth, to hypocritical services; or, rather truth is opposed to shadows, [Note: Chemnit.] and an opinion of worth in the outward action; it is principally opposed to external rites, because our Saviour saith (John 4:23.): "The hour comes, and now is," &c. Had it been opposed to hypocrisy, Christ had said no new thing; for God always required truth in the inward parts, and all true worshippers had served him with a sincere conscience and single heart. The old patriarchs did worship God in spirit and truth, as taken for sincerity; such a worship was always, and is perpetually due to God, because he always was, and

eternally will be a Spirit. [Note: Muscul.] And it is said, “The Father seeks such to worahip him,” not, shall seek; he always sought it; it always was performed to him by one or other in the world: and the prophets had always rebuked them for resting upon their outward solemnities (Isaiah 53:7, and Micah 6:8): but a worship without legal rites was proper to an evangelical state and the times of the gospel, God having then exhibited Christ, and brought into the world the substance of those shadows, and the end of those institutions; there was no more need to continue them when the true reason of them was ceased. All laws do naturally expire when the true reason upon which they were first framed is changed. Or by spirit may be meant, such a worship as is kindled in the heart by the breath of the Holy Ghost. Since we are dead in sin, a spiritual light and flame in the heart, suitable to the nature of the object of our worship, cannot be raised in us without the operation of a supernatural grace; and though the fathers could not worship God without the Spirit, yet in the gospel-times, there being a fuller effusion of the Spirit, the evangelical state is called, “the administration of the Spirit,” and “the newness of the Spirit,” in opposition to the legal economy, entitled the “oldness of the letter.” [Note: 2 Corinthians 3:8; Romans 7:6.] The evangelical state is more suited to the nature of God than any other; such a worship God must have, whereby he is acknowledged to be the true sanctifier and quickener of the soul. The nearer God doth approach to us, and the more full his manifestations are, the more spiritual is the worship we return to God. The gospel pares off the rugged parts of the law, and heaven shall remove what is material in the gospel, and change the ordinances of worship into that of a spiritual praise. In the words there is: 1. A proposition,—“God is a Spirit;” the foundation of all religion. 2. An inference,—“They that worship him,” &c. As God, a worship belongs to him; as a Spirit, a spiritual worship is due to him: in the inference we have, 1. The manner of worship, “in spirit and truth;” 2. The necessity of such a worship, “must” The proposition declares the nature of God; the inference, the duty of man. The observations lie plain.

Obs. 1. God is a pure spiritual being: “he is a Spirit.” 2. The worship due from the creature to God must be agreeable to the nature of God, and purely spiritual. 3. The evangelical state is suited to the nature of God.

I. For the first: “God is a pure spiritual being.” It is the observation of one, [Note: Episcop. Institut. lib. iv. c. 3.] that the plain assertion of God’s being a Spirit is found but once in the whole Bible, and that is in this place; which may well be wondered at, because God is so often described with hands, feet, eyes, and ears, in the form and figure of a man. The spiritual nature of God is deducible from many places; but not anywhere, as I remember, asserted totidem verbis, but in this text: some allege that place (2 Corinthians 3:17), “The Lord is that Spirit,” for the proof of it; but that seems to have a different sense: in the text, the nature of God is described; in that place, the operations of God in the gospel. “It is not the ministry of Moses, or that old covenant, which communicates to you that Spirit it speaks of; but it is the Lord Jesus, and the doctrine of the gospel delivered by him, whereby this Spirit and liberty is dispensed to you; he opposes here the liberty of the gospel to the servitude of the law; [Note: Amirald, in loc.] it is from Christ that a divine virtue difuseth itself by the gospel; it is by him, not by the law, that we partake of that Spirit. The spirituality of God is as evident as his being. [Note: Suarez. de Deo, vol. i. p. 9, Colossians 2:1-23.] If we grant that God is, we must necessarily grant that, he cannot be corporeal, because a body is of an imperfect nature. It will appear incredible to any that acknowledge God the first Being and Creator of all things, that he should be a massy, heavy body, and have eyes and ears, feet and

hands, as we have.—For the explication of it,

1. Spirit is taken various ways in Scripture. It signifies sometimes an aerial substance, as Psalms 11:6; a horrible tempest (Heb. a spirit of tempest); sometimes the breath, which is a thin substance (Genesis 6:17): “All flesh, wherein is the breath of life” (Heb. spirit of life). A thin substance, though it be material and corporeal, is called spirit; and in the bodies of living creatures, that which is the principle of their actions is called spirit, the animal and vital spirits. And the finer part extracted from plants and minerals we call spirit, those volatile parts separated from that gross matter wherein they were immersed, because they come nearest to the nature of an incorporeal substance; and from this notion of the word, it is translated to signify those substances that are purely immaterial, as angels and the souls of men. Angels are called spirit (Psalms 104:4) “Who makes his angels spirit;” [Note: Hebrews 1:14.] and not only good angels are so called, but evil angels (Mark 1:27); souls of men are called spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14.); and the soul of Christ is called so (John 19:30; whence God is called “the God of the spirit of all flesh” (Numbers 22:16). And spirit is opposed to flesh (Isaiah 31:3): “The Egyptians are flesh, and not spirit.” And our Saviour gives us the notion of a spirit to be something above the nature of a body (Luke 24:39), “not having flesh and bones,” extended parts, loads of gross matter. It is also taken for those things which are active and efficacious; because activity is of the nature of a spirit: Caleb had another spirit (Numbers 14:24), an active affection. The vehement motions of sin are called spirit (Hosea 4:12): “the spirit of whoredoms,” in that sense that Proverbs 29:11, “a fool utters all his mind,” all his spirit; he knows not how to restrain the vehement motions of his mind. So that the notion of a spirit is, that it is a fine, immaterial substance, an active being, that act itself and other things. A mere body cannot act itself; as the body of man cannot move without the soul, no more than a ship can move itself without wind and waves. So God is called a Spirit, as being not a body, not having the greatness, figure, thickness, or length of a body, wholly separate from anything of flesh and matter. We find a principle within us nobler than that of our bodies; and, therefore, we conceive the nature of God, according to that which is more worthy in us, and not according to that which is the vilest part of our natures. God is a most spiritual Spirit, more spiritual than all angels, all souls. [Note: Gerhard. μονοτρ■πως] As he exceeds all in the nature of being, so he exceeds all in the nature of spirit: he hath nothing gross, heavy, material, in his essence.

2. When we say God is a Spirit, it is to be understood by way of negation. There are two ways of knowing or describing God: by way of affirmation, affirming that of him by way of eminency, which is excellent in the creature, as when we say God is wise, good; the other, by way of negation, when we remove from God in our conceptions what is tainted with imperfection in the creature. [Note: Gamaeheus, Tom. I. Q. 3. c. i. p. 42.] The first ascribes to him whatsoever is excellent; the other separates from him whatsoever is imperfect. The first is like a limning, which adds one color to another to make a comely picture; the other is like a carving, which pares and cuts away whatsoever is superfluous, to make a complete statue. This way of negation is more easy; we better understand what God is not, than what he is; and most of our knowledge of God is by this way; as when we say God is infinite, immense, immutable, they are negatives; he hath no limits, is confined to no place, admits of no change. [Note: Coccei, Sum. Theol. c. 8.] When we remove from him what is inconsistent with his being, we do more strongly assert his being, and know more of him when we elevate him above all, and above our own capacity. And when we say God is a Spirit, it is a negation; he is not a body; he consists not of various parts, extended one without and

beyond another. He is not a spirit, so as our souls are, to be the form of any body; a spirit, not as angels and souls are, but infinitely higher. We call him so, because, in regard of our weakness, we have not any other term of excellency to express or conceive of him by; we transfer it to God in honor, because spirit is the highest excellency in our nature: yet we must apprehend God above any spirit, since his nature is so great that he cannot be declared by human speech, perceived by human sense, or conceived by human understanding.

II. The second thing, that "God is a Spirit." Some among the heathens imagined God to have a body; [Note: Thes. Sedan. Part IL p. 1000.] some thought him to have a body of air; some a heavenly body; some a human body; [Note: Vossius Idolol. lib. ii. c. 1. Forbes, Instrument. lib. i. c. 36.] and many of them ascribed bodies to their gods, but bodies without blood, without corruption, bodies made up of the finest and thinnest atoms; such bodies, which, if compared with ours, were as no bodies. The Sadducees also, who denied all spirits, and yet acknowledged a God, must conclude him to be a body, and no spirit. Some among Christians have been of that opinion. Tertullian is charged by some, and excused by others; and some monks of Egypt were so fierce for this error, that they attempted to kill one Theophilus, a bishop, for not being of that judgment. But the wiser heathens were of another mind, [Note: Οὐκ ἰστίον] and esteemed it an unholy thing to have such imaginations of God. [Note: Plntareh, incorporalis ratio divinus epiritus. Seneca.] And some Christians have thought God only to be free from anything of body, because he is omnipresent, immutable, he is only incorporeal and spiritual; all things else, even the angels, are clothed with bodies, though of a neater matter, and a more active frame than ours; a pure spiritual nature they allowed to no being but God. Scripture and reason meet together to assert the spirituality of God. Had God had the lineaments of a body, the Gentiles had not fallen under that accusation of changing his glory into that of a corruptible man. [Note: Romans 1:23.] This is signified by the name God gives himself (Exodus 3:14): "I am that I am;" a simple, pure, uncompounded being, without any created mixture; as infinitely above the being of creatures as above the conceptions of creatures (Job 37:23); "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." He is so much a Spirit, that he is the "Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9). The Almighty Father is not of a nature inferior to his children. The soul is a spirit; it could not else exert actions without the assistance of the body, as the act of understanding itself, and its own nature, the act of willing, and willing things against the incitements and interest of the body. It could not else conceive of God, angels, and immaterial substances; it could not else be so active, as with one glance to fetch a compass from earth to heaven, and by a sudden motion, to elevate the understanding from an earthly thought, to the thinking of things as high as the highest heavens. If we have this opinion of our souls, which, in the nobleness of their acts, surmount the body, without which the body is but a dull inactive piece of clay, we must needs have a higher conception of God, than to clog him with any matter, though of a finer temper than ours: we must conceive of him by the perfections of our souls, without the vileness of our bodies. If God made man according to his image, we must raise our thoughts of God according to the noblest part of that image, and imagine the exemplar or copy not to come short, but to exceed the thing copied by it. God were not the most excellent substance if he were not a Spirit. Spiritual substances are more excellent than bodily; the soul of man more excellent than other animals; angels more excellent than men. They contain, in their own nature, whatsoever dignity there is in the inferior creatures; God must have, therefore, an excellency above all those, and, therefore, is entirely remote from the conditions of a body. It is a gross conceit, therefore, to think that God is such a spirit as the air is; for that is to be a body as the air is,

though it be a thin one; and if God were no more a spirit than that, or than angels, he would not be the most simple being. [Note: Calov. Socin. Proflig. pp. 129, 130.] Yet some think that the spiritual Deity was represented by the air in the ark of the testament. [Note: Amiraldu Sup. Heb. ix. p. 146, &c.] It was unlawful to represent him by any image that God had prohibited. Everything about the ark had a particular signification. The gold and other ornaments about it signified something of Christ, but were unfit to represent the nature of God: a thing purely invisible, and falling under nothing of sense, could not represent him to the mind of man. The air in the ark was the fittest; it represented the invisibility of God, air being imperceptible to our eyes. Air diffuseth itself through all parts of the world; it glides through secret passages into all creatures; it fills the space between heaven and earth. There is no place wherein God is not present. To evidence this,

1. If God were not a Spirit, he could not be Creator. All multitude begins in, and is reduced to unity. As above multitude there is an absolute unity, so above mixed creatures there is an absolute simplicity. You cannot conceive number without conceiving the beginning of it in that which was not number, viz. a unit. You cannot conceive any mixture, but you must conceive some simple thing to be the original and basis of it. The works of art done by rational creatures have their foundation in something spiritual. Every artificer, watchmaker, carpenter, hath a model in his own mind of the work he designs to frame: the material and outward fabric is squared according to an inward and spiritual idea. A spiritual idea speaks a spiritual faculty as the subject of it. God could not have an idea of that vast number of creatures he brought into being, if he had not had a spiritual nature. [Note: Amyrant, Morale. Tom. I. p. 282.] The wisdom whereby the world was created could never be the fruit of a corporeal nature; such natures are not capable of understanding and comprehending the things which are within the compass of their nature, much less of producing them; and therefore beasts which have only corporeal faculties move to objects by the force of their sense, and have no knowledge of things as they are comprehended by the understanding of man. All acts of wisdom speak an intelligent and spiritual agent. The effects of wisdom, goodness, power, are so great and admirable, that they bespeak him a more perfect and eminent being than can possibly be beheld under a bodily shape. Can a corporeal substance put "wisdom in the inward parts, and give understanding to the heart?" [Note: Job 38:36.]

2. If God were not a pure Spirit, he could not be one. If God had a body, consisting of distinct members, as ours; or all of one nature, as the water and air are, yet he were then capable of division, and therefore could not be entirely one. Either those parts would be finite or infinite: if finite, they are not parts of God; for to be God and finite is a contradiction; if infinite, then there are as many infinite as distinct members, and therefore as many Deities. Suppose this body had all parts of the same nature, as air and water hath, every little part of air is as much air as the greatest, and every little part of water is as much water as the ocean; so every little part of God would be as much God as the whole; as many particular Deities to make up God, as little atoms to compose a body. What can be more absurd? If God had a body like a human body, and were compounded of body and soul, of substance and quality, he could not be the most perfect unity; he would be made up of distinct parts, and those of a distinct nature, as the members of a human body are. Where there is the greatest unity, there must be the greatest simplicity; but God is one. As he is free from any change, so he is void of any multitude (Deuteronomy 6:4): "The Lord our God is one Lord."

3. If God had a body as we have, he would not be invisible. Every material thing is not visible: the air is a body yet invisible, but it is sensible; the cooling quality of it is felt by us at every breath, and we know it by our touch, which is the most material sense. Everybody that hath members like to bodies, is visible; but God is invisible. [Note: Daille, in Tim.] The apostle reckons it amongst his other perfections (1 Timothy 1:17): "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible." He is invisible to our sense, which beholds nothing but material and colored things; and incomprehensible to our understanding, that conceives nothing but what is finite. God is therefore a Spirit incapable of being seen, and infinitely incapable of being understood. If he be invisible, he is also spiritual. If he had a body, and hid it from our eyes, he might be said not to be seen, but could not be said to be invisible. When we say a thing is visible, we understand that it hath such qualities which are the objects of sense, though we may never see that which is in its own nature to be seen. God hath no such qualities as fall under the perception of our sense. His works are visible to us, but not his Godhead. [Note: Romans 1:20.] The nature of a human body is to be seen and handled; Christ gives us such a description of it (Luke 24:39): "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have;" but man hath been so far from seeing God, "that it is impossible he can see him" (1 Timothy 6:16). There is such a disproportion between an infinite object and a finite sense and understanding, that it is utterly impossible either to behold or comprehend him. But if God had a body more luminous and glorious than that of the sun, he would be as well visible to us as the sun, though the immensity of that light would dazzle our eyes, and forbid any close inspection into him by the virtue of our sense. We have seen the shape and figure of the sun, but "no man hath ever seen the shape of God." [Note: John 5:37.] If God had a body, he were visible, though he might not perfectly and fully be seen by us; [Note: Goulart. de Dieu, p. 94.] as we see the heavens, though we see not the extension, latitude, and greatness of them. Though God hath manifested himself in a bodily shape (Genesis 18:1), and elsewhere Jehovah appeared to Abraham, yet the substance of God was not seen, no more than the substance of angels was seen in their apparitions to men. A body was formed to be made visible by them, and such actions done in that body, that spake the person that did them to be of a higher eminency than a bare corporeal creature. Sometimes a representation is made to the inward sense and imagination, as to Micaiah, [Note: 1 Kings 22:19.] and to Isaiah (6:1); but they saw not the essence of God, but some images and figures of him proportioned to their sense or imagination. The essence of God no man ever saw, nor can see. John 1:18. Nor doth it follow that God hath a body, [Note: Goulart. de Dieu, p. 95, 96.] because Jacob is said to "see God face to face" (Genesis 32:30); and Moses had the like privilege (Deuteronomy 34:10). This only signifies a fuller and clearer manifestation of God by some representations offered to the bodily sense, or rather to the inward spirit. For God tells Moses he could not see his face (Exodus 33:20); and that none ever saw the similitude of God (Deuteronomy 4:15). Were God a corporeal substance, he might in some measure be seen by corporeal eyes.

4. If God were not a Spirit, he could not be infinite. All bodies are of a finite nature; everybody is material, and every material thing is terminated. The sun, a vast body, hath a bounded greatness; the heavens, of a mighty bulk, yet have their limits. If God had a body he must consist of parts, those parts would be bounded and limited, and whatsoever is limited is of a finite virtue, and therefore below an infinite nature. Reason therefore tells us, that the most excellent nature, as God is, cannot be of a corporeal condition; because of the limitation and other actions which belong to every body. God is infinite, "for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him" (2 Chronicles

2:6). The largest heavens, and those imaginary spaces beyond the world, are no bounds to him. He hath an essence beyond the bounds of the world, and cannot be included in the vastness of the heavens. If God be infinite, then he can have no parts in him; if he had, they must be finite or infinite: finite parts can never make up an infinite being. A vessel of gold, of a pound weight, cannot be made of the quantity of an ounce. Infinite parts they cannot be, because then every part would be equal to the whole, as infinite as the whole, which is contradictory. We see in all things every part is less than the whole bulk that is composed of it; as every member of a man is less than the whole body of man. If all the parts were finite, then God in his essence were finite; and a finite God is not more excellent than a creature: so that if God were not a Spirit, he could not be infinite.

5. If God were not a Spirit, he could not be an independent being. Whatsoever is compounded of many parts depends either essentially or integrally upon those parts; as the essence of a man depends upon the conjunction and union of his two main parts, his soul and body; when they are separated, the essence of a man ceaseth: and the perfection of a man depends upon every member of the body; so that if one be wanting the perfection of the whole is wanting: as if a man hath lost a limb, you call him not a perfect man, because that part is gone upon which his perfection as an entire man did depend. If God therefore had a body, the perfection of the Deity would depend upon every part of that body; and the more parts he were compounded of, the more his dependency would be multiplied according to the number of those parts of the body: for that which is compounded of many parts is more dependent than that which is compounded of fewer. And because God would be a dependent being if he had a body, he could not be the first being; for the compounding parts are in order of nature before that which is compounded by them; as the soul and body are before the man which results from the union of them. If God had parts and bodily members as we have, or any composition, the essence of God would result from those parts, and those parts be supposed to be before God. For that which is a part, is before that whose part it is. As in artificial things you may conceive it: all the parts of a watch or clock are in time before that watch which is made by setting those parts together. In natural things you must suppose the members of a body framed before you can call it a man; so that the parts of this body are before that which is constituted by them. We can conceive no other of God, if he were not a pure, entire, unmixed Spirit. If he had distinct parts, he would depend upon them; those parts would be before him; his essence would be the effect of those distinct parts, and so he would not be absolutely and entirely the first being; but he is so (Isaiah 44:6): "I am the first, and I am the last." He is the first; nothing is before him. Whereas, if he had bodily parts, and those finite, it would follow, God is made up of those parts which are not God; and that which is not God, is in order of nature before that which is God. So that we see if God were not a Spirit he could not be independent.

6. If God were not a Spirit, he were not immutable and unchangeable. His immutability depends upon his simplicity. He is unchangeable in his essence, because he is a pure and unmixed spiritual Being. Whatsoever is compounded of parts may be divided into those parts, and resolved into those distinct parts which make up and constitute the nature. Whatsoever is compounded is changeable in its own nature, though it should never be changed. Adam, who was constituted of body and soul, had he stood in innocence, had not died; there had been no separation made between his soul and body whereof he was constituted, and his body had not resolved into those

principles of dust from whence it was extracted. Yet in his own nature he was dissoluble into those distinct parts whereof he was compounded; and so the glorified saints in heaven, after the resurrection, and the happy meeting of their souls and bodies in a new marriage knot, shall never be dissolved; yet in their own nature they are mutable and dissoluble, and cannot be otherwise, because they are made up of such distinct parts that may be separated in their own nature, unless sustained by the grace of God: they are immutable by will, the will of God, not by nature. God is immutable by nature as well as will: as he hath a necessary existence, so he hath a necessary unchangeableness (Malachi 3:6), "I, the Lord, change not." He is as unchangeable in his essence as in his veracity and faithfulness: they are perfections belonging to his nature. But if he were not a pure Spirit, he could not be immutable by nature.

7. If God were not a pure Spirit, he could not be omnipresent. He is in heaven above, and the earth below; [Note: Deuteronomy 4:39.] he fills heaven and earth. [Note: Jeremiah 23:24.] The divine essence is at once in heaven and earth; but it is impossible a body can be in two places at one and the same time. Since God is everywhere, he must be spiritual. Had he a body, he could not penetrate all things; he would be circumscribed in place. He could not be everywhere but in parts, not in the whole; one member in one place, and another in another; for to be confined to a particular place, is the property of a body: but, since he is diffused through the whole world, higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, broader than the sea, [Note: Job 11:8.] he hath not any corporeal matter. If he had a body wherewith to fill heaven and earth, there could be no body besides his own: it is the nature of bodies to bound one another, and hinder the extending of one another. Two bodies cannot be in the same place in the same point of earth: one excludes the other; and it will follow hence that we are nothing, no substances, mere illusions; there could be no place for anybody else. [Note: Gamacheus, Theol. Tom. I. Quos 3. c. i.] If his body were as big as the world, as it must be if with that he filled heaven and earth, there would not be room for him to move a hand or a foot, or extend a finger; for there would be no place remaining for the motion.

8. If God were not a Spirit, he could not be the most perfect being. The more perfect anything is in the rank of creatures, the more spiritual and simple it is, as gold is the more pure and perfect that hath least mixture of other metals. If God were not a Spirit, there would be creatures of a more excellent nature than God, as angels and souls, which the Scripture call spirits, in opposition to bodies. There is more of perfection in the first notion of a spirit than in the notion of a body. God cannot be less perfect than his creatures, and contribute an excellency of being to them which he wants himself. If angels and souls possess such an excellency, and God want that excellency, he would be less than his creatures, and the excellency of the effect would exceed the excellency of the cause. But every creature, even the highest creature, is infinitely short of the perfection of God; for whatsoever excellency they have is finite and limited; it is but a spark from the sun—a drop from the ocean; but God is unboundedly perfect, in the highest manner, without any limitation; and therefore above spirits, angels, the highest creatures that were made by him: an infinite sublimity, a pure act, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken. "In him there is light and no darkness," [Note: 1 John 1:5.] spirituality without any matter, perfection without any shadow or taint of imperfection. Light pierceth into all things, preserves its own purity, and admits of no mixture of anything else with it.

Question. It may be said, If God be a Spirit, and it is impossible he can be otherwise than a Spirit, how comes God so often to have such members as we have in our bodies ascribed to him, not only a soul, but particular bodily parts, as heart, arms, hands, eyes, ears, face, and back parts? And how is it that he is never called a Spirit in plain words, but in this text by our Saviour?

Answer. It is true, many parts of the body, and natural affections of the human nature, are reported of God in Scripture. Head, [Note: Daniel 7:9.] eyes and eye-lids, [Note: Psalms 11:4.] apple of the eye, mouth, &c.; our affections also, grief, joy, anger, &c. But it is to be considered,

1. That this is in condescension to our weakness. God being desirous to make himself known to man, whom he created for his glory, humbles, as it were, his own nature to such representations as may suit and assist the capacity of the creature; since by the condition of our nature nothing erects a notion of itself in our understanding, but as it is conducted in by our sense. [Note: "Loquitur lex secund. ling. filiorum hominum," was the Heathen saying.] God hath served himself of those things which are most exposed to our sense, most obvious to our understandings, to give us some acquaintance with his own nature, and those things which otherwise we were not capable of having any notion of. As our souls are linked with our bodies, so our knowledge is linked with our sense; that we can scarce imagine anything, at first, but under a corporeal form and figure, till we come, by great attention to the object, to make, by the help of reason, a separation of the spiritual substance from the corporeal fancy, and consider it in its own nature. We are not able to conceive a spirit, without some kind of resemblance to something below it, nor understand the actions of a spirit, without considering the operations of a human body in its several members. As the glories of another life are signified to us by the pleasures of this; so the nature of God, by a gracious condescension to our capacities, is signified to us by a likeness to our own. The more familiar the things are to us which God uses to this purpose, the more proper they are to teach us what he intends by them.

2. All such representations are to signify the acts of God, as they bear some likeness to those which we perform by those members he ascribes to himself. So that those members ascribed to him rather note his visible operations to us, than his invisible nature; and signify that God doth some works like to those which men do by the assistance of those organs of their bodies. So the wisdom of God is called his eye, because he knows that with his mind which we see with our eyes. [Note: Amiral de Trin. pp. 218, 219.] The efficiency of God is called his hand and arm; because as we act with our hands, so doth God with his power. The divine efficacies are signified:—by his eyes and ears, we understand his omniscience; by his face, the manifestation of his favor; by his mouth, the revelation of his will; by his nostrils, the acceptance of our prayers; by his bowels, the tenderness of his compassion; by his heart, the sincerity of his affections; by his hand, the strength of his power; by his feet, the ubiquity of his presence. And in this, he intends instruction and comfort: by his eyes, he signifies his watchfulness over us; by his ears, his readiness to hear the cries of the oppressed; [Note: Psalms 34:16.] by his arm, his power—an arm to destroy his enemies, and an arm to relieve his people. [Note: Isaiah 51:9.] All those are attributed to God to signify divine actions, which he doth without bodily organs as we do with them.

3. Consider also, that only those members which are the instruments of the noblest actions, and under that consideration, are used by him to represent a notion of him to our minds. Whatsoever is perfect and excellent is ascribed to him, but nothing that savors of imperfection. [Note: Episcop.

institut. lib. iv. § 3. c. 3.] The heart is ascribed to him, it being the principle of vital actions, to signify the life that he hath in himself; watchful and discerning ayes, not sleepy and lazy ones; a mouth to reveal his will, not to take in food. To eat and sleep are never ascribed to him, nor those parts that belong to the preparing or transmitting nourishment to the several parts of the body, as stomach, liver, reins, nor bowels under that consideration, but as they are significant of compassion; but only those parts are ascribed to him whereby we acquire knowledge, as eyes and ears, the organs of learning and wisdom; or to communicate it to others, as the mouth, lips, tongue, as they are instruments of speaking, not of tasting; or those parts which signify strength and power, or whereby we perform the actions of charity for the relief of others; taste and touch, senses that extend no farther than to corporeal things, and are the grossest of all the senses, are never ascribed to him.

4. It were worth consideration, “whether this describing God by the members of a human body were so much figuratively to be understood, as with respect to the incarnation of our Saviour, who was to assume the human nature, and all the members of a human body?” [Note: It is Zanchie’s observation, Tom. II. De Natura Dei, lib. i. c. 4. Thes. 9.] Asaph, speaking in the person of God (Psalms 78:1), “I will open my mouth in parables;” in regard of God it is to be understood figuratively, but in regard of Christ literally, to whom it is applied (Matthew 13:34-35); and that apparition (Isaiah 6:1-13.) which was the appearance of Jehovah, is applied to Christ (John 12:40-41). After the report of the creation, and the forming of man, we read of God’s speaking to him, but not of God’s appearing to him in any visible shape. [Note: Amyraut Morale. Tom. I. pp. 293, 294.] A voice might be formed in the air to give man notice of his duty; some way of information he must have what positive laws he was to observe, besides that law which was engraves in his nature, which we call the law of nature; and without a voice the knowledge of the divine will could not be so conveniently communicated to man. Though God was heard in a voice, he was not seen in a shape; but after the fall we several times read of his appearing in such a form; though we read of his speaking before man’s committing of sin, yet not of his walking, which is more corporeal, till afterwards. [Note: Genesis 3:8.] “Though God would not have man believe him to be corporeal, yet he judged it expedient to give some prenotices of that divine incarnation which he had promised.” [Note: Amiral.]

5. Therefore, we must not conceive of the visible Deity according to the letter of such expressions, but the true intent of them. Though the Scripture speaks of his eyes and arm, yet it denies them to be “arms of flesh.” [Note: Job 10:4; 2 Chronicles 32:8.] We must not conceive of God according to the letter, but the design of the metaphor. When we hear things described by metaphorical expressions, for the clearing them up to our fancy, we conceive not of them under that garb, but remove the veil by an act of our reason. When Christ is called a sun, a vine, bread, is any so stupid as to conceive him to be a vine with material branches, and clusters, or be of the same nature with a loaf? But the things designed by such metaphors are obvious to the conception of a mean understanding. If we would conceive God to have a body like a man, because he describes himself so, we may conceit him to be like a bird, because he is mentioned with wings; [Note: Psalms 36:7.] or like a lion, or leopard, because he likens himself to them in the acts of his strength and fury. [Note: Hosea 13:7-8.] He is called a rock, a horn, fire, to note his strength and wrath; if any be so stupid as to think God to be really such, they would make him not only a man but worse than a monster. Onkelos, the Chaldee paraphrast upon parts of the Scripture, was so

tender of expressing the notion of any corporeity in God, that when he meets with any expressions of that nature, he translates them according to the true intent of them; as when God is said to descend (Genesis 11:5), which implies a local motion, a motion from one place to another, he translates it, "And God revealed himself." [Note: Maimon. More Nevoc. par. 1. c. 27.] We should conceive of God according to the design of the expressions; when we read of his eyes, we should conceive his omniscience; of his hand, his power; of his sitting, his immutability; of his throne, his majesty; and conceive of him as surmounting, not only the grossness of bodies, but the spiritual excellency of the most dignified creatures; something so perfect, great, spiritual, as nothing can be conceived higher and purer. "Christ," with one, "is truly Deus figuratus; and for his sake, was it more easily permitted to the Jews to think of God in the shape of a man." [Note: Mores conjectura Cabalistica, p: 122.] Use. If God be a pure spiritual being, then

1. Man is not the image of God, according to his external bodily form and figure. The image of God in man consisted not in what is seen, but in what is not seen; not in the conformation of the members, but rather in the spiritual faculties of the soul; or, most of all, in the holy endowments of those faculties (Ephesians 4:24): "That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." [Note: Colossians 3:10.] The image which is restored by redeeming grace, was the image of God by original nature. The image of God cannot be in that part which is common to us with beasts, but rather in that wherein we excel all living creatures, in reason, understanding, and an immortal spirit. God expressly saith, that none "saw a similitude" of him (Deuteronomy 4:15-16); which had not been true, if man, in regard of his body, had been the image and similitude of God, for then a figure of God had been seen every day, as often as we saw a man or beheld ourselves. Nor would the apostle's argument stand good (Acts 17:29), "That the Godhead is not like to stone graven by art," if we were not the offspring of God, and bore the stamp of his nature in our spirits rather than our bodies. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. I. lib. ii. c. 1. p. 104.] It was a fancy of Eugubinus, that when God set upon the actual creation of man, he took a bodily form for an exemplar of that which he would express in his work, and therefore that the words of Moses [Note: Genesis 1:26.] are to be understood of the body of man; because there was in man such a shape which God had then assumed. To let alone God's forming himself a body for that work as a groundless fancy, man can in no wise be said to be the image of God, in regard of the substance of his body; but beasts may as well be said to be made in the image of God, whose bodies have the same members as the body of man for the most part, and excel men in the acuteness of the senses and swiftness of their motion, agility of body, greatness of strength, and in some kind of ingenuities also, wherein man hath been a scholar to the brutes, and beholden to their skill. The soul comes nearest the nature of God, as being a spiritual substance; yet considered singly, in regard of its spiritual substance, cannot well be said to be the image of God; a beast, because of its corporeity, may as well be called the image of a man, for there is a greater similitude between man and a brute, in the rank of bodies, than there can be between God and the highest angels in the rank of spirits. If it doth not consist in the substance of the soul, much less can it in any similitude of the body. This image consisted partly in the state of man, as he had dominion over the creatures; partly in the nature of man, as he was an intelligent being, and thereby was capable of having a grant of that dominion; but principally in the conformity of the soul with God, in the frame of his spirit, and the holiness of his actions; not at all in the figure and form of his body, physically, though morally there might be, as there was a rectitude in the body as an instrument to conform to the holy motions of the soul, as the holiness of the soul sparkled in the

actions and members of the body. If man were like God because he hath a body, whatsoever hath a body hath some resemblance to God, and may be said to be in part his image; but the truth is, the essence of all creatures cannot be an image of the immense essence of God.

2. If God be a pure Spirit, "it is unreasonable to frame any image or picture of God." [Note: Iamblic. Protrept. cap. 21. Symb. 24.] Some heathens have been wiser in this than some Christians; Pythagoras forbade his scholars to engrave any shape of him upon a ring, because he was not to be comprehended by sense, but conceived only in our minds: our hands are as unable to fashion him, as our eyes to see him. [Note: Austin de Civitat. Del, lib. iv. cap 31. out of Varro.] The ancient Romans worshipped their gods one hundred and seventy years before any material representations of them; [Note: Tacitus.] and the ancient idolatrous Germans thought it a wicked thing to represent God in a human shape; yet some, and those no Romanists, labor to defend the making images of God in the resemblance of maji, because he is so represented in Scripture: "He may be," saith one, [Note: Gerhard, loc. Comun. Vol. IV. Exegesis de Natura Dei, cap. 8. § 1.] "conceived so in our minds, and figured so to our sense." If this were a good reason, why may he not be pictured as a lion, horn, eagle, rock, since he is under such metaphors shadowed to us? The same ground there is for the one as for the other. What though man be a nobler creature, God hath no more the body of a man than that of an eagle; and some perfections in other creatures represent some excellencies in his nature and actions which cannot be figured by a human shape, as strength by the lion, swiftness and readiness by the wings of the bird. But God hath absolutely prohibited the making "any image" whatsoever of him, and that with terrible threatenings (Exodus 20:5): "I, the Lord, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon their children," and Deuteronomy 5:8-9. After God had given the Israelites the commandment wherein he forbade them to have any other gods before him, he forbids all figuring of him by the hand of man; [Note: Amyraut. Morale Chrétienne, Tom. I. p. 294.] not only images, but any likeness of him, either by things in heaven, in the earth, or in the water. How often doth he discover his indignation by the prophets, against them that offer to mould him in a creature form! This law was not to serve a particular dispensation, or to endure a particular time, but it was a declaration of his will, invariable in all places and all times; being founded upon the immutable nature of his being, and therefore agreeable to the law of nature, otherwise not chargeable upon the heathens; and therefore when God had declared his nature and his works in a stately and majestic eloquence, he demands of them, "To whom they would liken him, or what likeness they would compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:18); where they could find anything that would be a lively image and resemblance of his infinite excellency? founding it upon the infiniteness of his nature, which necessarily implies the spirituality of it, God is infinitely above any statue: and those that think to draw God by a stroke of a pencil, or form him by the engravings of art, are more stupid than the statues themselves. To show the unreasonableness of it, consider,

1. It is impossible to fashion any image of God. If our more capacious souls cannot grasp his nature, our weaker sense cannot frame his image; it is more possible, of the two, to comprehend him in our minds, than to frame him in an image to our sense. He inhabits inaccessible light; as it is impossible for the eye of man to see him, it is impossible for the art of man to paint him upon walls, and carve him out of wood. None knows him but himself, none can describe him but himself. [Note: Cocceius Sum. Theol. c. 9. p. 47. § 35.] Can we draw a figure of our own souls, and express that part of ourselves, wherein we are most like to God? Can we extend this to any bodily

figure, and divide it into parts? How can we deal so with the original copy, whence the first draught of our souls was taken, and which is infinitely more spiritual than men or angels? No corporeal thing can represent a spiritual substance; there is no proportion in nature between them. God is a simple, infinite, immense, eternal, invisible, incorruptible being; a statue is a compounded, finite, limited, temporal, visible, and corruptible body. God is a living spirit; but a statue nor sees, nor hears, nor perceives anything. But suppose God had a body, it is impossible to mould an image of it in the true glory of that body; can the statue of an excellent monarch represent the majesty and air of his countenance, though made by the skilfullest workman in the world? If God had a body in some measure suited to his excellency, were it possible for man to make an exact image of him, who cannot picture the light, heat, motion, magnitude, and dazzling property of the sun? The excellency of any corporeal nature of the (east creature, the temper, instinct, artifice, are beyond the power of a carving tool; much more is God.

2. To make any corporeal representations of God is unworthy of God. It is a disgrace to his nature. Whosoever thinks a carnal corruptible image to be fit for a representation of God, renders God no better than a carnal and a corporeal being. It is a kind of debasing an angel, who is a spiritual nature, to represent him in a bodily shape, who is as far removed from any fleshliness as heaven from earth; much more to degrade the glory of the divine nature to the lineaments of a man. The whole stock of images is but a lie of God (Jeremiah 10:8; Jeremiah 10:14); a doctrine of vanities and falsehood; it represents him in a false garb to the world, and sinks his glory into that of a corruptible creature. [Note: Romans 1:25.] It impairs the reverence of God in the minds of men, and by degrees may debase men's apprehensions of God, and be a means to make them believe he is such a one as themselves; and that not being free from the figure, he is not also free from the imperfections of the bodies. [Note: Romans 1:22.] Corporeal images of God were the fruits of base imaginations of him; and as they sprung from them, so they contribute to a greater corruption of the notions of the divine nature: the heathens begun their first representations of him by the image of a corruptible man, then of birds, till they descended not only to four-footed beasts but creeping things, even serpents, as the apostle seems to intimate in his enumeration (Romans 1:23): it had been more honorable to have continued in human representations of him, than have sunk so low as beasts and serpents, the baser images; though the first had been infinitely unworthy of him, he being more above a man, though the noblest creature, than man is above a worm, a toad, or the most despicable creeping thing upon the earth. To think we can make an image of God of a piece of marble, or an ingot of gold, is a greater debasing of him, than it would be of a great prince, if you should represent him in the statue of a frog. When the Israelites represented God by a calf it is said "they sinned a great sin" (Exodus 32:31): and the sin of Jeroboam, who intended only a representation of God by the calves at Dan and Bethel, is called more emphatically, [Note: Hosea 10:15.] "the wickedness of your wickedness," the very scum and dregs of wickedness. As men debased God by this, so God debased men for this; he degraded the Israelites into captivity, under the worst of their enemies, and punished the heathens with spiritual judgments, as uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts (Romans 1:24); which is repeated again in other expressions (Romans 1:26-27), as a meet recompense for their disgracing the spiritual nature of God. Had God been like to man, they had not offended in it; but I mention this, to show a probable reason of those base lusts which are in the midst of us, that have scarce been exceeded by any nation, viz., the unworthy and unspiritual conceits of God, which are as much a debasing of him as material images were when they were more rife in the world; and may be as well the cause of spiritual

judgments upon men, as the worshipping molten and carve images were the cause of the same upon the heathen.

3. Yet this is natural to man. Wherein we may see the contrariety of man to God. Though God be a Spirit, yet there is nothing man is more prone to, than to represent him under a corporeal form. The most famous guides of the heathen world have fashioned him, not only according to the more honorable images of men, but bestialized him in the form of a brute. The Egyptians, whose country was the school of learning to Greece, were notoriously guilty of this brutishness in worshipping an ox for an image of their God; and the Philistines their Dagon, in a figure composed of the image of a woman and a fish: [Note: Daillé, super Cor. i. 10, Ser. III.] such representations were ancient in the oriental parts. The gods of Laban, that he accuseth Jacob of stealing from him, are supposed to be little figures of men. [Note: Genesis 31:30-34.] Such was the Israelites' golden calf; their worship was not terminated on the image, but they worshipped the true God under that representation; they could not be so brutish as to call a calf their deliverer, and give him so great a title ("These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," Exodus 32:4): or that which they knew belonged to the true God, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [Note: Genesis 3:16-17.] They knew the calf to be formed of their ear-rings, but they had consecrated it to God as a representation of him; though they chose the form of the Egyptian idol, yet they knew that Apis, Osiris, and Isis, the gods of the Egyptians adored in that figure, had not wrought their redemption from bondage, but would have used their force, had they been possessed of any, to have kept them under the yoke, rather than have freed them from it; the feast also which they celebrated before that image, is called by Aaron the feast of the Lord (Exodus 32:5); a feast to Jehovah, the incommunicable name of the creator of the world; it is therefore evident, that both the priest and the people pretended to serve the true God, not any false divinity of Egypt; that God who had rescued them from Egypt, with a mighty hand, divided the Red Sea before them, destroyed their enemies, conducted them, fed them by miracle, spoken to them from Mount Sinai, and amazed them by his thunderings and lightnings when he instructed them by his law; a God whom they could not so soon forget. And with this representing God by that image, they are charged by the Psalmist (Psalms 106:19-20), "they made a calf in Horeb, and changed their glory into a similitude of an ox that eateth grass:" they changed their glory, that is, God, the glory of Israel; so that they took this figure for the image of the true God of Israel, their own God; not the God of any other nation in the world. Jeroboam intended no other by his calves, but symbols of the presence of the true God; instead of the ark and the propitiatory which remained among the Jews. We see the inclination of our natures in the practice of the Israelites; a people chosen out of the whole world to bear up God's name, and preserve his glory; and in that the images of God were so soon set up in the Christian church; and to this day, the picture of God, in the shape of an old man, is visible in the temple of the Romanists. It is prone to the nature of man,

4. To represent God by a corporeal image; and to worship him in and by that image, is idolatry. Though the Israelites did not acknowledge the calf to be God, nor intended a worship to any of the Egyptian deities by it; but worshipped that God in it, who had so lately and miraculously delivered them from a cruel servitude; and could not in natural reason judge him to be clothed with a bodily shape, much less to be like an ox that eateth grass; yet the apostle brings no less a charge against them than that of idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:7); he calls them idolaters, who before that calf kept a feast to Jehovah, citing Exodus 32:5. Suppose we could make such an image of God as might

perfectly represent him; yet since God hath prohibited it, shall we be wiser than God? He hath sufficiently manifested himself in his works without images: He is seen in the creatures, more particularly in the heavens, which declare his glory His works are more excellent representations of him, as being the works of his own hands, than anything that is the product of the art of man. His glory sparkles in the heavens, sun, moon, and stars, as being magnificent pieces of his wisdom and power; yet the kissing the hand to the sun or the heavens, as representatives of the excellency and majesty of God, is idolatry in Scripture account, and a denial of God; [Note: Job 31:26-28. Chin. Predict. Part II. p. 252.] a prostituting the glory of God to a creature. Either the worship is terminated on the image itself, and then it is confessed by all to be idolatry, because it is a giving that worship to a creature which is the sole right of God, or not terminated in the image, but in the object represented by it; it is then a foolish thing; we may as well terminate our worship on the true object without, as with an image. [Note: Lawson, Body Divin. p. 161.] An erected statue is no sign or symbol of God's special presence, as the ark, tabernacle, temple were. It is no part of divine institution; has no authority of a command to support it; no cordial of a promise to encourage it; and the image being infinitely distant from, and below the majesty and spirituality of God, cannot constitute one object of worship with him. To put a religious character upon any image formed by the corrupt imagination of man, as a representation of the invisible and spiritual Deity, is to think the Godhead to be like silver and gold, or stone graven by art and man's device. [Note: Acts 17:29.]

III. This doctrine will direct us in our conceptions of God, as a pure perfect Spirit, than which nothing can be imagined more perfect, more pure, more spiritual.

1. We cannot have an adequate or suitable conception of God: He dwells in inaccessible light; inaccessible to the acuteness of our fancy, as well as the weakness of our sense. If we could have thoughts of him, as high and excellent as his nature, our conceptions must be as infinite as his nature. All our imaginations of him cannot represent him, because every created species is finite; it cannot therefore represent to us a full and substantial notion of an infinite Being. We cannot speak or think worthily enough of him, who is greater than our words, vaster than our understandings. Whatsoever we speak or think of God, is handed first to us by the notice we have of some perfection in the creature, and explains to us some particular excellency of God, rather than the fulness of his essence. No creature, nor all creatures together, can furnish us with such a magnificent notion of God, as can give us a clear view of him. Yet God in his word is pleased to step below his own excellency, and point us to those excellencies in his works, whereby we may ascend to the knowledge of those excellencies which are in his nature. But the creatures, whence we draw our lessons, being finite, and our understandings being finite, it is utterly impossible to have a notion of God commensurate to the immensity and spirituality of his being. "God is not like to visible creatures, nor is there any proportion between him and the most spiritual." [Note: Amyraut. Morale. Tom. 1. p. 289.] We cannot have a full notion of a spiritual nature, much less can we have of God, who is a Spirit above spirits. No spirit can clearly represent him: the angels, that are great spirits, are bounded in their extent, finite in their being, and of a mutable nature. Yet though we cannot have a suitable conception of God, we must not content ourselves without any conception of him. It is our sin not to endeavor after a true notion of him: it is our sin to rest in a mean and low notion of him, when our reason tells us we are capable of having higher: but if we ascend as high as we can, though we shall then come short of a suitable notion of him, this is not

our sin, but our weakness. God is infinitely superior to the choicest conceptions, not only of a sinner, but of a creature. If all conceptions of God below the true nature of God were sin, there is not a holy angel in heaven free from sin; because, though they are the most capacious creatures, yet they cannot have such a notion of an infinite Being as is fully suitable to his nature, unless they were infinite as he himself is.

2. But, however, we must by no means conceive of God under a human or corporeal shape. Since we cannot have conceptions honorable enough for his nature, we must take heed we entertain not any which may debase his nature; though we cannot comprehend him as he is, we must be careful not to fancy him to be what he is not. It is a vain thing to conceive him with human lineaments: we must think higher of him than to ascribe to him so mean a shape we deny his spirituality when we fancy him under such a form. He is spiritual, and between that which is spiritual and that which is corporeal, there is no resemblance. [Note: Episco. Institut. lib. iv. § 2. c. 10.] Indeed, Daniel saw God in a human form (Daniel 7:9): "The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hairs of his head like pure wool:" he is described as coming to judgment; it is not meant of Christ probably, because Christ (Daniel 7:13) is called the Son of Man coming near to the Ancient of days. This is not the proper shape of God, for no man hath seen his shape. It was a vision wherein such representations were made, as were accommodated to the inward sense of Daniel; Daniel saw him in a rapture or ecstasy, wherein outward senses are of no use. God is described, not as he is in himself, of a human form, but in regard of his fitness to judge: "white," notes the purity and simplicity of the Divine nature; "Ancient of days," in regard of his eternity; "white hair," in regard of his prudence and wisdom, which is more eminent in age than youth, and more fit to discern causes and to distinguish between right and wrong. Visions are riddles, and must not be understood in a literal sense. We are to watch against such determinate conceptions of God. Vain imaginations do easily infest us; tinder will not sooner take fire than our natures kindle into wrong notions of the Divine Majesty. We are very apt to fashion a god like ourselves; we must therefore look upon such representations of God, as accommodated to our weakness: and no more think them to be literal descriptions of God, as he is in himself, than we will think the image of the sun in the water, to be the true sun in the heavens. We may, indeed, conceive of Christ as man, who hath in heaven the vestment of our nature, and is Deus figuratus, though we cannot conceive the godhead under a human shape.

1. To have such a fancy is to disparage and wrong God. A corporeal fancy of God is as ridiculous in itself, and as injurious to God, as a wooden statue. The caprices of our imagination are often more mysterious than the images which are the works of art; it is as irreligious to measure God's essence by our line, his perfections by our imperfections, as to measure his thoughts and actings by the weakness and unworthiness of our own. This is to limit an infinite essence, and pull him down to our scanty measures, and render that which is unconceivably above us, equal with us. It is impossible we can conceive God after the manner of a body, but we must bring him down to the proportion of a body, which is to diminish his glory, and stoop him below the dignity of his nature. God is a pure Spirit, he hath nothing of the nature and tincture of a body; whosoever, therefore, conceives of him as having a bodily form, though he fancy the most beautiful and comely body, instead of owning his dignity, detracts from the super-eminent excellency of his nature and blessedness. When men fancy God like themselves in their corporeal nature, they will soon make a progress, and ascribe to him their corrupt nature; and while they clothe him with their bodies,

invest him also in the infirmities of them. God is a jealous God, very sensible of any disgrace, and will be as much incensed against an inward idolatry as an outward: that command which forbade corporeal images, [Note: Exodus 20:4.] would not indulge /carnal imaginations; since the nature of God is as much wronged by unworthy images, erected in the fancy, as by statues carved out of stone or metals: one as well as the other is a deserting of our true spouse, and committing adultery; one with a material image, and the other with a carnal notion of God. Since God humbles himself to our apprehensions, we should not debase him in thinking him to be that in his nature, which he makes only a resemblance of himself to us.

2. To have such fancies of God, will obstruct and pollute our worship of him. How is it possible to give him a right worship, of whom we have so debasing a notion? We shall never think a corporeal deity worthy of a dedication of our spirits. The hating instruction, and casting God's word behind the back, is charged upon the imagination they had, that "God was such a one as themselves" (Psalms 50:17; Psalms 50:21). Many of the wiser heathens did not judge their statues to be their gods, or their gods to be like their statues; but suited them to their politic designs; and judged them a good invention to keep people within the bounds of obedience and devotion, by such visible figures of them, which might imprint a reverence and fear of those gods upon them; but these are false measures; a despised and undervalued God is not an object of petition or affection. Who would address seriously to a God he has low apprehensions of? The more raised thoughts we have of him, the viler sense we shall have of ourselves; they would make us humble and self-aborrent in our supplications to him (Job 42:6): "wherefore I abhor myself," &c.

3. Though we must not conceive of God, as of a human or corporeal shape; yet we cannot think of God, without some reflection upon our own being. We cannot conceive him to be an intelligent being, but we must make some comparison between him and our own understanding nature to come to a knowledge of him. Since we are enclosed in bodies, we apprehend nothing but what comes in by sense, and what we in some sort measure by sensible objects. And in the consideration of those things which we desire to abstract from sense, we are fain to make use of the assistance of sense and visible things: and therefore when we frame the highest notion, there will be some similitude of some corporeal thing in our fancy; and though we would spiritualize our thoughts, and aim at a more abstracted and raised understanding, yet there will be some dregs of matter sticking to our conceptions; yet we still judge by argument and reasoning, what the thing is we think of under those material images. A corporeal image will follow us, as the shadow doth the body. [Note: Nazianzen.] While we are in the body, and surrounded with fleshly matter, we cannot think of things without some help from corporeal representations: something of sense will interpose itself in our purest conceptions of spiritual things; [Note: Amyraut, Morale, Tom I. p. 180, &c.] for the faculties which serve for contemplation, are either corporeal, as the sense and fancy, or so allied to them, that nothing passes into them but by the organs of the body; so that there is a natural inclination to figure nothing but under a corporeal notion, till by an attentive application of the mind and reason to the object thought upon, we separate that which is bodily from that which is spiritual, and by degrees ascend to that true notion of that we think upon, and would have a due conception of in our mind. Therefore God tempers the declaration of himself to our weakness, and the condition of our natures. He condescends to our littleness and narrowness, when he declares himself by the similitude of bodily members. As the light of the sun is tempered, and difuseth itself to our sense through the air and vapors, that our weak eyes may not be too much dazzled with it;

without it we could not know or judge of the sun, because we could have no use of our sense, which we must have before we can judge of it in our understanding; so we are not able to conceive of spiritual beings in the purity of their own nature, without such a temperament, and such shadows to usher them into our minds. And therefore we find the Spirit of God accommodates himself to our contracted and teddered capacities, and uses such expressions of God as are suited to us in this state of flesh wherein we are. And therefore because we cannot apprehend God in the simplicity of his own being, and his undivided essence, he draws the representations of himself from several creatures and several actions of those creatures: as sometimes he is said to be angry, to walk, to sit, to fly; not that we should rest in such conceptions of him, but take our rise from this foundation, and such perfections in the creatures, to mount up to a knowledge of God's nature by those several steps, and conceive of him by those divided excellencies, because we cannot conceive of him in the purity of his own essence. We cannot possibly think or speak of God, unless we transfer the names of created perfections to him; [Note: Lessius.] yet we are to conceive of them in a higher manner when we apply them to the Divine nature, than when we consider them in the several creatures formally, exceeding those perfections and excellencies which are in the creature, and in a more excellent manner: "as one saith, though we cannot comprehend God without the help of such resemblances, yet we may, without making an image of him; so that inability of ours excuseth those apprehensions of him from any way offending against his Divine nature." [Note: Towerson on the Commandments, p. 112.] These are not notions so much suite to the nature of God as the weakness of man. They are helps to our meditations, but ought not to be formal conceptions of him. We may assist ourselves in our apprehensions of him, by considering the subtilty and spirituality of air; and considering the members of a body, without thinking him to be air, or to have any corporeal member. Our reason tells us, that whatsoever is a body, is limited and bounded; and the notion of infiniteness and bodiliness, cannot agree and consist together: and therefore what is offered by our fancy should be purified by our reason.

4. Therefore we are to elevate and refine all our notions of God, and spiritualize our conceptions of him. Every man is to have a conception of God; therefore he ought to have one of the highest elevation. Since we cannot have a full notion of him, we should endeavor to make it as high and as pure as we can. Though we cannot conceive of God, but some corporeal representations or images in our minds will be conversant with us, as motes in the air when we look upon the heavens, yet our conceptions may and must rise higher. As when we see the draught of the heavens and earth in a globe, or a kingdom in a map, it helps our conceptions, but doth not terminate them: we conceive them to be of a vast extent, far beyond that short description of them. So we should endeavor to refine every representation of God, to rise higher and higher, and have our apprehensions still more purified; separating the perfect from the imperfect, casting away the one, and greatening the other; conceive him to be a Spirit diffused through all, containing all, perceiving all. All the perfections of God are infinitely elevated above the excellencies of the creatures; above whatsoever can be conceived by the clearest and most piercing understanding. The nature of God as a Spirit is infinitely superior to whatsoever we can conceive perfect in the notion of a created spirit. Whatsoever God is, he is infinitely so: he is infinite Wisdom, infinite Goodness, infinite Knowledge, infinite Power, infinite Spirit; infinitely distant from the weakness of creatures, infinitely mounted above the excellencies of creatures: as easy to be known that he is, as impossible to be comprehended what he is. Conceive of him as excellent, without any imperfection; a Spirit without parts; great without quantity; perfect without quality; everywhere

without place; powerful without members; understanding without ignorance; wise without reasoning; light without darkness; infinitely more excelling the beauty of all creatures, than the light in the sun, pure and unviolated, exceeds the splendor of the sun dispersed and divided through a cloudy and misty air: and when you have risen to the highest, conceive him yet infinitely above all you can conceive of spirit, and acknowledge the infirmity of your own minds. And whatsoever conception comes into your minds, say, This is not God; God is more than this: if I could conceive him, he were not God; for God is incomprehensibly above whatsoever I can say, whatsoever I can think and conceive of him.

Inference 1. If God be a Spirit, no corporeal thing can defile him. Some bring an argument against the omnipresence of God, that it is a disparagement to the Divine essence to be everywhere, in nasty cottages as well as beautiful palaces and garnished temples. What place can defile a spirit? Is light, which approaches to the nature of spirit, polluted by shining upon a dunghill, or a sunbeam tainted by darting upon a quagmire? Doth an angel contract any soil, by stepping into a nasty prison to deliver Peter? What can steam from the most noisome body to pollute the spiritual nature of God? As he is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," [Note: Hebrews 1:13.] so he is of a more spiritual substance than to contract any physical pollution from the places where he doth diffuse himself. Did our Saviour, who had a true body, derive any taint from the lepers he touched, the diseases he cured, or the devils he expelled? God is a pure Spirit; plungeth himself into no filth; is dashed with no spot by being present with all bodies. Bodies only receive defilement from bodies.

Inference 2. If God be a Spirit, he is active and communicative. He is not clogged with heavy and sluggish matter, which is cause of dulness and inactivity. The more subtle, thin, and approaching nearer the nature of a spirit anything is, the more diffusive it is. Air is a gliding substance; spreads itself through all regions, pierceth into all bodies; it fills the space between heaven and earth; there is nothing but partakes of the virtue of it. Light, which is an emblem of spirit, insinuates itself into all places, refresheth all things. As spirits are fuller, so they are more overflowing, more piercing, more operative than bodies. The Egyptian horses were weak things, because they were "flesh, and not spirit." [Note: Isaiah 31:3.] The soul being a spirit, conveys more to the body than the body can to it. What cannot so great a spirit do for us? What cannot so great a spirit work in us? God, being a spirit above all spirits, can pierce into the centre of all spirits; make his way into the most secret recesses; stamp what he pleases. It is no more to him to turn our spirits, than to make a wilderness become waters, and speak a chaos into a beautiful frame of heaven and earth. He can act our souls with infinite more ease than our souls can act our bodies; he can fix in us what motions, frames, inclinations he pleases; he can come and settle in our hearts with all his treasures. It is an encouragement to confide in him, when we petition him for spiritual blessings: as he is a spirit, he is possessed with "spiritual blessings." [Note: Ephesians 1:3.] A spirit delights to bestow things suitable to its nature, as bodies do to communicate what is agreeable to theirs. As he is a Father of spirits, we may go to him for the welfare of our spirits; he being a Spirit, is as able to repair our spirits as he was to create them. As he is a Spirit, he is indefatigable in acting. The members of the body tire and flag; but who ever heard of a soul wearied with being active? who ever heard of a weary angel? In the purest simplicity, there is the greatest power, the most efficacious goodness, the most reaching justice to affect the spirit, that can insinuate itself everywhere to punish wickedness without weariness, as well as to comfort goodness. God is active, because he is spirit; and if we be like to God, the more spiritual we are, the more active we

shall be.

Inference 3. God being a Spirit, is immortal. His being immortal, and being invisible, are joined together. [Note: 1 Timothy 1:17.] Spirits are in their nature incorruptible; they can only perish by that hand that framed them. Every compounded thing is subject to mutation; but God, being a pure and simple Spirit, is without corruption, without any shadow of change. [Note: James 1:17.] Where there is composition, there is some kind of repugnancy of one part against the other; and where there is repugnancy, there is a capability of dissolution. God, in regard of his infinite spirituality, hath nothing in his own nature contrary to it; can have nothing in himself which is not himself. The world perishes; friends change and are dissolved; bodies moulder, because they are mutable. God is a Spirit in the highest excellency and glory of spirits; nothing is beyond him; nothing above him; no contrariety within him. This is our comfort, if we devote ourselves to him; this God is our God; this Spirit is our Spirit; this is our all, our immutable, our incorruptible support; a Spirit that cannot die and leave us.

Inference 4. If God be a Spirit, we see how we can only converse with him by our spirits. Bodies and spirits are not suitable to one another: we can only see, know, embrace a spirit with our spirits. He judges not of us by our corporeal actions, nor our external devotions by our masks and disguises: he fixes his eye upon the frame of the heart, bends his ear to the groans of our spirits. He is not pleased with outward pomp. He is not a body; therefore the beauty of temples, delicacy of sacrifices, fumes of incense, are not grateful to him; by those, or any external action, we have no communion with him. A spirit, when broken, is his delightful sacrifice; [Note: Psalms 51:17.] we must therefore, have our spirits fitted for him, "be renewed in the spirit of our minds," [Note: Ephesians 4:23.] that we may be in a posture to live with him, and have an intercourse with him. We can never be united to God but in our spirits: bodies unite with bodies, spirits with spirits. The more spiritual anything is, the more closely doth it unite. Air hath the closest union; nothing meets together sooner than that, when the parts are divided by the interposition of a body.

Inference 5. If God be a Spirit, he can only be the true satisfaction of our spirits: spirit can only be filled with spirit: content flows from likeness and suitableness. As we have a resemblance to God in regard of the spiritual nature of our soul, so we can have no satisfaction but in him. Spirit can no more be really satisfied with that which is corporeal, than a beast can delight in the company of an angel. Corporeal things can no more fill a hungry spirit, than pure spirit can feed an hungry body. God, the highest Spirit, can only reach out a full content to our spirits. Man is lord of the creation: nothing below him can be fit for his converse; nothing above him offers itself to his converse but God. We have no correspondence with angels. The influence they have upon us, the protection they afford us, is secret and undiscerned; but God, the highest Spirit, offers himself to us in his Son, in his ordinances, is visible in every creature, presents himself to us in every providence; to him we must seek; in him we must rest. God had no rest from the creation till he had made man; and man can have no rest in the creation till he rests in God. God only is our dwelling place; [Note: Psalms 90:1.] our souls should only long for him: [Note: Psalms 63:1.] our souls should only wait upon him. The spirit of man never riseth to its original glory, till it be carried up on the wings of faith and love to its original copy. The face of the soul looks most beautiful, when it is turned to the face of God, the Father of spirits; when the derived spirit is fixed upon the original Spirit, drawing from it life and glory. Spirit is only the receptacle of spirit. God, as Spirit, is our principle; we must therefore live upon him. God, as Spirit, hath some resemblance to us as his image; we must,

therefore, only satisfy ourselves in him.

Inference 6. If God be a Spirit, we should take most care of that wherein we are like to God. Spirit is nobler than body; we must, therefore, value our spirits above our bodies. The soul, as spirit, partakes more of the divine nature, and deserves more of our choicest cares. If we have any love to this Spirit, we should have a real affection to our own spirits, as bearing a stamp of the spiritual Divinity, the chiefest of all the works of God; as it is said of behemoth (Job 40:19). That which is most the image of this immense spirit, should be our darling; so David calls his soul (Psalms 35:17). Shall we take care of that wherein we partake not of God, and not delight in the jewel which hath his own signature upon it? God was not only the Framer of spirits, and the End of spirits; but the Copy and Exemplar of spirits. God partakes of no corporeity; he is pure Spirit. But how do we act, as if we were only matter and body! We have but little kindness for this great Spirit as well as our own, if we take no care of his immediate offspring, since he is not only Spirit, but the Father of spirits. [Note: Hebrews 12:9.]

Inference 7. If God be a Spirit, let us take heed of those sins which are spiritual. Paul distinguisheth between the filth of the flesh, and that of the spirit. [Note: 2 Corinthians 7:1.] By the one we defile the body; by the other we defile the spirit, which, in regard of its nature, is of kin to the Creator. To wrong one who is near of kin to a prince, is worse than to injure an inferior subject. When we make our spirits, which are most like to God in their nature, and framed according to his image, a stage to act vain imaginations, wicked desires, and unclean affections, we wrong God in the excellency of his work, and reflect upon the nobleness of the pattern; we wrong him in that part where he hath stamped the most signal character of his own spiritual nature; we defile that whereby we have only converse with him as a Spirit, which he hath ordered more immediately to represent him in this nature, than all corporeal things in the world can, and make that Spirit with whom we desire to be joined unfit for such a knot. God's spirituality is the root of his other perfections. We have already heard he could not be infinite, omnipresent, immutable, without it. Spiritual sins are the greatest root of bitterness within us. As grace in our spirits renders us more like to a spiritual God, so spiritual sins bring us into a conformity to a degraded devil. [Note: Ephesians 2:2-3.] Carnal sins change us from men to brutes, and spiritual sins divest us of the image of God for the image of Satan. We should by no means make our spirits a dunghill, which bear upon them the character of the spiritual nature of God, and were made for his residence. Let us, therefore, behave ourselves towards God in all those ways which the spiritual nature of God requires us.

On God's Dominion

ON GOD'S DOMINION Psalms 103:19.—The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all. The Psalm begins with the praise of God, wherein the penman excites his soul to a right and elevated management of so great a duty (Psalms 103:1): "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name:" and because himself and all men were insufficient to offer up a praise to God answerable to the greatness of his benefits, he summons in the end of the psalm the angels, and all creatures, to join in concert with him. Observe,

1. As man is too shallow a creature to comprehend the excellency of God, so he is too dull and scanty a creature to offer up a due praise to God, both in regard of the excellency of his nature, and the multitude and greatness of his benefits.

2. We are apt to forget Divine benefits: our souls must therefore be often jogged, and roused up. "All that is within me," every power of my rational, and every affection of my sensitive part: all his faculties, all his thoughts. Our souls will hang back from God in every duty, much more in this, if we lay not a strict charge upon them. We are so void of a pure and entire love to God, that we have no mind to those duties. Wants will spur us on to prayer, but a pure love to God can only spirit us to praise. We are more ready, to reach out a hand to receive his mercies, than to lift up our hearts to recognize them after the receipt. After the Psalmist had summoned his own soul to this task, he enumerates the Divine blessings received by him, to awaken his soul by a sense of them to so noble a work. He begins at the first and foundation mercy to himself, the pardon of his sin and justification of his person, the renewing of his sickly and languishing nature (Psalms 103:3): "Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases." His redemption from death, or eternal destruction; his expected glorification thereupon, which he speaks of with that certainty, as if it were present (Psalms 103:4): "Who redeems thy life from destruction, who crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." He makes his progress to the mercy manifested to the church in the protection of it against, or delivery of it from, oppressions (Psalms 103:6): "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." In the discovery of his will and law, and the glory of his merciful name to it (Psalms 103:7-8): "He made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy:" which latter words may refer also to the free and unmerited spring of the benefits he had reckoned up: viz., the mercy of God, which he mentions also (Psalms 103:10): "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;" and then extols the perfection of Divine mercy, in the pardoning of sin (Psalms 103:11-12); the paternal tenderness of God (Psalms 103:13); the eternity of his mercy (Psalms 103:17); but restrains it to the proper object (Psalms 103:11, Psalms 103:17), "to them that fear him;" i. e. to them that believe in him. Fear being the word commonly used for faith in the Old Testament, under the legal dispensation, wherein the spirit of bondage was more eminent than the spirit of adoption, and their fear more than their confidence. Observe,

1. All true blessings grow up from the pardon of sin (Psalms 103:3): "Who forgives all thine iniquities." That is the first blessing, the top and crown of all other favors, which draws all other blessings after it, and sweetens all other blessings with it. The principal intent of Christ was expiation of sin, redemption from iniquity; the purchase of other blessings was consequent upon it. Pardon of sin is every blessing virtually, and in the root and spring it flows from the favor of God, and is such a gift as cannot be tainted with a curse, as outward things may.

2. Where sin is pardoned, the soul is renewed (Psalms 103:3): "Who heals all thy diseases." Where guilt is remitted, the deformity and sickness of the soul is cured. Forgiveness is a teeming mercy; it never goes single; when we have an interest in Christ, as bearing the chastisement of our peace, we receive also a balsam from his blood, to heal the wounds we feel in our nature. (Isaiah 3:5): "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." As there is a guilt in sin, which binds us over to punishment, so there is a contagion in sin, which fills us with pestilent diseases; when the one is removed, the other is cured. We should not know how to love the one without the other. The renewing the soul is necessary for a delightful relish of the other blessings of God. A condemned malefactor, infected with a leprosy, or any other loathsome distemper, if pardoned, could take little comfort in his freedom from the gibbet without a cure of his plague.

3. God is the sole and sovereign Author of all spiritual blessings: "Who forgives all thy iniquities, and heals all thy diseases." He refers all to God, nothing to himself in his own merit and strength. All, not the pardon of one sin merited by me, not the cure of one disease can I owe to my own power, and the strength of my freewill, and the operations of nature. He, and he alone is the Prince of pardon, the Physician that restores me, the Redeemer that delivers me; it is a sacrilege to divide the praise between God and ourselves. God only can knock off our fetters, expel our distempers, and restore a deformed soul to its decayed beauty.

4. Gracious souls will bless God as much for sanctification as for justification. The initials of sanctification (and there are no more in this life) are worthy of solemn acknowledgment. It is a sign of growth in grace when our hymns are made up of acknowledgments of God's sanctifying, as well as pardoning grace. In blessing God for the one, we rather show a love to ourselves; in blessing God for the other, we cast out a pure beam of love to God: because, by purifying grace, we are fitted to the service of our Maker, prepared to every good work which is delightful to him; by the other, we are eased in ourselves. Pardon fills us with inward peace, but sanctification fills us with an activity for God. Nothing is so capable of setting the soul in a heavenly tune, as the consideration of God as a pardoner and as a healer.

5. Where sin is pardoned, the punishment is remitted (Psalms 103:3-4): "Who forgives all thy iniquities, and redeems thy life from destruction." A malefactor's pardon puts an end to his chains, frees him from the stench of the dungeon, and fear of the gibbet. Pardon is nothing else but the remitting of guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment as a penal debt for sin. A creditor's tearing a bond frees the debtor from payment and rigor.

6. Growth in grace is always annexed to true sanctification. So that "thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalms 103:5). Interpreters trouble themselves much about the manner of the eagle's renewing its youth, and regaining its vigor: he speaks best that saith, the Psalmist speaks only according to the opinion of the vulgar, and his design was not to write a natural history. [Note:

Amyrald. in loc.] Growth always accompanies grace, as well as it doth nature in the body; not that it is without its qualms and languishing fits, as children are not, but still their distempers make them grow. Grace is not an idle, but an active principle. It is not like the Psalmist means it of the strength of the body, or the prosperity and stability of his government, but the vigor of his grace and comfort, since they are spiritual blessings here that are the matter of his song. The healing the disease conduceth to the sprouting up and flourishing of the body. It is the nature of grace to go from strength to strength.

7. When sin is pardoned, it is perfectly pardoned. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalms 103:11-12). The east and west are the greatest distance in the world; the terms can never meet together. When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return, than east can become west, or west become east.

8. Obedience is necessary to an interest in the mercy of God. "The mercy of the Lord is to them that fear him, to them that remember his commandments, to do them" (Psalms 103:17). Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them.

After the Psalmist had enumerated the benefits of God, he reflects upon the greatness of God, and considers him on his throne encompassed with the angels, the ministers of his providence. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all" (Psalms 103:19). He brings in this of his dominion just after he had largely treated of his mercy. Either,

1. To signify, That God is not only to be praised for his mercy, but for his majesty, both for the height and extent of his authority.

2. To extol the greatness of his mercy and pity. What I have said now, O my soul, of the mercy of God, and his paternal pity, is commended by his majesty; his grandeur hinders not his clemency though his throne be high, his bowels are tender. He looks down upon his meanest servants from the height of his glory. Since his majesty is infinite, his mercy must be as great as his majesty. It must be a greater pity lodging in his breast, than what is in any creature, since it is not damped by the greatness of his sovereignty.

3. To render his mercy more comfortable. The mercy I have spoken of, O my soul, is not the mercy of a subject, but of a sovereign. An executioner may torture a criminal, and strip him of his life, and a vulgar pity cannot relieve him, but the clemency of the prince can perfectly pardon him. It is that God who hath none above him to control him, none below him to resist him, that hath performed all the acts of grace to thee. If God by his supreme authority pardons us, who can reverse it? If all the subjects of God in the world should pardon us, and God withhold his grant, what will it profit us? Take comfort, O my soul, since God from his throne in the highest, and that God who rules over every particular of the creation, hath granted and sealed thy pardon to thee. What would his grace signify, if he were not a monarch, extending his royal empire over everything, and swaying all by his sceptre?

4. To render the Psalmist's confidence more firm in any pressures. Psalms 103:15-16. He had considered the misery of man in the shortness of his life; his place should know him no more; he should never return to his authority, employ menu, opportunities, that death would take from him;

but, howsoever, the mercy and majesty of God were the ground of his confidence. He draws himself from poring upon any calamities which may assault him, to heaven, the place where God orders all things that are done on the earth. He is able to protect us from our dangers, and to deliver us from our distresses; whatsoever miseries thou mayest be under, O my soul, cast thy eye up to heaven, and see a pitying God in a majestic authority: a God who can perform what he hath promised to them that fear him, since he hath a throne above the heavens, and bears sway over all that envy thy happiness, and would stain thy felicity: a God whose authority cannot be curtailed and dismembered by any. When the prophet solicits the sounding of the Divine bowels, he urgeth him by his dwelling in heaven, the habitation of his holiness (Isaiah 63:15). His kingdom ruleth over all: there is none therefore hath any authority to make him break his covenant, or violate his promise.

5. As an incentive to obedience. The Lord is merciful, saith he, to them “that remember his commandments to do them” (Psalms 103:17-18): and then brings in the text as an encouragement to observe his precepts. He hath a majesty that deserves it from us, and an authority to protect us in it. If a king in a small spot of earth is to be obeyed by his subjects, how much more is God, who is more majestic than all the angels in heaven, and monarchs on earth; who hath a majesty to exact our obedience, and a mercy to allure it! We should not set upon the performance of any duty, without an eye lifted up to God as a great king. It would make us willing to serve him; the more noble the person, the more honorable and powerful the prince, the more glorious is his service. A view of God upon his throne will make us think his service our privilege, his precepts our ornaments, and obedience to him the greatest honor and nobility. It will make us weighty and serious in our performances: it would stake us down to any duty. The reason we are so loose and unmannerly in the carriage of our souls before God, is because we consider him not as a “great King” (Malachi 1:14). “Our Father, which art in heaven,” in regard of his majesty, is the preface to prayer.

Let us now consider the words in themselves. “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.” The Lord hath prepared.—The word signifies “established,” as well as “prepared,” and might so be rendered. Due preparation is a natural way to the establishment of a thing: hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes, 1. The infiniteness of his authority. He prepares it, none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature: none can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority. 2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his throne: he is not at a loss; he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people; he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures and axes, the great marks of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His “mercy he keeps by him for thousands” (Exodus 34:7). His “arrows” he hath prepared by him for rebels (Psalms 7:13). 3. Wise management of it. It is prepared; preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do. 4. Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an immovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and

devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. It is established above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself, abides forever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand, and “he will do all his pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). His throne in the heavens.—This is an expression to signify the authority of God; for as God hath no member properly, though he be so represented to us, so he hath properly no throne. It signifies his power of reigning and judging. A throne is proper to royalty, the seat of majesty in its excellency, and the place where the deepest respect and homage of subjects is paid, and their petitions presented. That the throne of God is in the heavens, that there he sits as Sovereign, is the opinion of all that acknowledge a God; when they stand in need of his authority to assist them, their eyes are lifted up, and their heads stretched out to heaven; so his Son Christ prayed; he “lifted up his eyes to heaven,” as the place where his Father sat in majesty, as the most adorable object (John 17:1). Heaven hath the title of his “throne,” as the earth hath that of his “footstool” (Isaiah 64:1.) And, therefore, heaven is sometimes put for the authority of God (Daniel 4:26). “After that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule,” i. e. that God, who hath his throne in the heavens, orders earthly princes and sceptres as he pleases, and rules over the kingdoms of the world. His throne in the heavens notes, 1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation. His majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid (Psalms 19:1). The heavens speak out with a full mouth his glory. It is therefore called “the habitation” of his “holiness and of his glory” (Isaiah 63:15). There is the greater glister and brightness of his glory. The whole earth, indeed, is full of his glory, full of the beams of it; the heaven is full of the body of it; as the rays of the sun reach the earth, but the full glory of it is in the firmament. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels standing at his beck, and by their readiness and swiftness obeying his commands, going and returning as a flash of lightning (Ezekiel 1:14). His throne may well be said to be in the heavens, since his dominion is not disputed there by the angels that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him. 2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him; it is in the heavens his majesty and dignity are so sublime, that they are elevated above all earthly empires. 3. Peculiarity of this dominion.. He rules in the heavens alone. There is some shadow of empire in the world. Royalty is communicated to men as his substitutes. He hath disposed a vicarious dominion to men in his footstool, the earth; he gives them some share in his authority; and, therefore, the title of his name (Psalms 82:6): “I have said, ye are gods;” but in heaven he reigns alone without any substitutes; his throne is there. He gives out his orders to the angels himself; the marks of his immediate sovereignty are there most visible. He hath no vicars-general of that empire. His authority is not delegated to any creature; he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature. 4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens; what is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger? much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens; it is but a little point or atom to what is visible; the sun is vastly bigger than it, and several stars are supposed to be of a greater bulk than the earth; and how many, and what heavens are beyond, the ignorance of man cannot understand. If the “throne” of God be there, it is a larger circuit he rules in than can well be conceived. You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles there are in the earth; and if all put together be but as one point to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which “excel in strength” those “hosts” of his “which do his pleasure,”

in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly; multitudes of them encircle his throne, and listen to his orders without roving, and execute them without disputing. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow, that all things under the heaven are parts of his dominion; his throne being in the highest place, the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below: because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world, the immediate thing the earth doth naturally address to for corn, wine, and oil, above which there is no superior but the Lord (Hosea 2:21-22): "The earth hears the corn, wine, and oil; the heavens hear the earth, and the Lord hears the heavens." 5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a pure and clear eye to behold things below it. Had the sun an eye, nothing could be done in the open air out of its ken. The "throne" of God being in heaven, he easily looks from thence upon all the children of men (Psalms 14:2): "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand." He looks not down from heaven as if he were in regard of his presence confined there: but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority, not as the look of a bare spectator, but the look of a governor, to pass a sentence upon them as a judge. His being in the heavens renders him capable of doing "whatsoever he pleases" (Psalms 114:3). His "throne" being there, he can by a word, in stopping the motions of the heavens, turn the whole earth into confusion. In this respect, it is said, "He rides upon the heaven in thy help" (Deuteronomy 33:26); discharges his thunders upon men, and makes the influences of it serve his people's interest. By one turn of a cock, as you see in grottoes, he can cause streams from several parts of the heavens to refresh, or ruin the world. 6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible; his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. Earthly empires have their decays and dissolutions. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world. His kingdom rules over all.—He hath an absolute right over all things within the circuit of heaven and earth; though his throne be in heaven, as the place where his glory is most eminent and visible, his authority most exactly obeyed, yet his kingdom extends itself to the lower parts of the earth. He doth not muffle and cloud up himself in heaven, or confine his sovereignty to that place, his royal power extends to all visible, as well as invisible things: he is proprietor and possessor of all (Deuteronomy 10:14): "The heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that is there." He hath right to dispose of all as he pleases. He doth not say, his kingdom rules all that fear him, but, "over all," so that it is not the kingdom of grace he here speaks of, but his natural and universal kingdom. Over angels and men; Jews and Gentiles; animate and inanimate things. The Psalmist considers God here as a great monarch and general, and all creatures as his hosts and regiments under him, and takes notice principally of two things. 1. The establishment of his throne together with the seat of it. He hath prepared his throne in the heavens. 2. The extent of his empire.—His kingdom rules over all. This text, in all the parts of it, is a fit basis for a discourse upon the dominion of God, and the observation will be this.

Doctrine.—God is sovereign Lord and King, and exerciseth a dominion over the whole world, both heaven and earth. This is so clear, that nothing is more spoken of in Scripture. The very name, "Lord," imports it; a name originally belonging to gods, and from them translated to others. And he is frequently called "the Lord of Hosts," because all the troops and armies of spiritual and corporeal creatures are in his hands, and at his service: this is one of his principal titles. And the angels are called his "hosts" (Psalms 103:21, following the text) his camp and militia: but more plainly (1

Kings 22:19), God is presented upon his throne, encompassed with all the “hosts of heaven” standing on his right hand and on his left, which can be understood of no other than the angels, that wait for the commands of their Sovereign, and stand about, not to counsel him, but to receive his orders. The sun, moon, and stars, are called his “hosts” (Deuteronomy 4:19); appointed by him for the government of inferior things: he hath an absolute authority over the greatest and the least creatures; over those that are most dreadful, and those that are most beneficial; over the good angels that willingly obey him, over the evil angels that seem most incapable of government. And as he is thus “Lord of hosts,” he is the “King of glory,” or a glorious King (Psalms 24:10). You find him called a “great King,” the “Most High” (Psalms 92:1), the Supreme Monarch, there being no dignity in heaven or earth but what is dim before him, and infinitely inferior to him; yea, he hath the title of “Only King” (1 Timothy 6:15). The title of royalty truly and properly only belongs to him: you may see it described very magnificently by David, at the free-will offering for the building of the temple (1 Chronicles 29:11-12): “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; thine is the kingdom, O God, and thou art exalted as Head above all: both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all.” He hath an eminency of power or authority above all: all earthly princes received their diadems from him, yea, even those that will not acknowledge him, and he hath a more absolute power over them than they can challenge over their meanest vassals: as God hath a knowledge infinitely above our knowledge, so he hath a dominion incomprehensibly move any dominion of man; and, by all the shadows drawn from the authority of one man over another, we can have but weak glimmerings of the authority and dominion of God.

There is a threefold dominion of God. 1. Natural, which is absolute over all creatures, and is founded in the nature of God as Creator. 2. Spiritual, or gracious, which is a dominion over his church as redeemed, and founded in the covenant of grace. 3. A glorious kingdom, at the winding up of all, wherein he shall reign over all, either in the glory of his mercy, as over the glorified saints, or in the glory of his justice, in the condemned devils and men. The first dominion is founded in nature; the second in grace; the third in regard of the blessed in grace; in regard of the damned, in demerit in them, and justice in him. He is Lord of all things, and always in regard of propriety (Psalms 24:1): “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein.” The earth, with the riches and treasures in the bowels of it; the habitable world, with everything that moves upon it, are his; he hath the sole right, and what right soever any others have is derived from him. In regard also of possession (Genesis 14:22): “The Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth:” in respect of whom, man is not the proprietary nor possessor, but usufructuary at the will of this grand Lord. In the prosecution of this, I. I shall lay down some general propositions for the clearing and confirming it. II. I shall show wherein this right of dominion is founded. III. What the nature of it is. IV. Wherein it consists; and how it is manifested.

I. Some general propositions for the clearing and confirming of it.

1. We must know the difference between the might or power of God and his authority. We commonly mean by the power of God the strength of God, whereby he is able to effect all his purposes; by the authority of God, we mean the right he hath to act what he pleases: omnipotence is his physical power, whereby he is able to do what he will; dominion is his moral power, whereby it is lawful for him to do what he will. Among men, strength and authority are two distinct things; a

subject may be a giant, and be stronger than his prince, but he hath not the same authority as his prince: worldly dominion may be seated, not in a brawny arm, but a sickly and infirm body. As knowledge and wisdom are distinguished; knowledge respects the matter, being, and nature of a thing; wisdom respects the harmony, order, and actual usefulness of a thing; knowledge searcheth the nature of a thing, and wisdom employs that thing to its proper use: a man may have much knowledge, and little wisdom; so a man may have much strength, and little or no authority; a greater strength may be settled in the servant, but a greater authority resides in the master; strength is the natural vigor of a mail: God hath an infinite strength, he hath a strength to bring to pass whatsoever he decrees; he acts without fainting and weakness (Isaiah 40:28), and impairs not his strength by the exercise of it: as God is Lord, he hath a right to enact; as he is almighty, he hath a power to execute; his strength is the executive power belonging to his dominion: in regard of his sovereignty, he hath a right to command all creatures; in regard of his almightiness, he hath power to make his commands be obeyed, or to punish men for the violation of them: his power is that whereby he subdues all creatures under him; his dominion is that whereby he hath a right to subdue all creatures under him. This dominion is a right of making what he pleases, of possessing what he made, of disposing of what he doth possess; whereas his power is an ability to make what he hath a right to create, to hold what he doth possess, and to execute the manner wherein he resolves to dispose of his creatures.

2. All the other attributes of God refer to this perfection of dominion. They all bespeak him fit for it, and are discovered in the exercise of it (which hath been manifested in the discourses of those attributes we have passed through hitherto). His goodness fits him for it, because he can never use his authority but for the good of the creatures, and conducting them to their true end: his wisdom can never be mistaken in the exercise of it; his power can accomplish the decrees that flow from his absolute authority. What can be more rightful than the placing authority in such an infinite Goodness, that hath bowels to pity, as well as a sceptre to sway his subjects? that hath a mind to contrive, and a will to regulate his contrivances for his own glory and his creatures' good, and an arm of power to bring to pass what he orders? Without this dominion, some perfections, as justice and mercy, would lie in obscurity, and much of his wisdom would be shrouded from our sight and knowledge.

3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all. The high priest was to "waive the offering," or shake it to and fro (Exodus 29:24), which the Jews say was customarily from east to west, and from north to south, the four quarters of the world, to signify God's sovereignty over all the parts of the world; and some of the heathens, in their adorations, turned their bodies to all quarters, to signify the extensive dominion of God throughout the whole earth. That dominion did of right pertain to the Deity, was confessed by the heathen in the name "Baal," given to their idols, which signifies Lord; and was not a name of one idol, adored for a god, but common to all the eastern idols. God hath interwoven the notion of his sovereignty in the nature and constitution of man, in the noblest and most inward acts of his soul,—in that faculty or act which is most necessary for him, in his converse in this world, either with God or man: it is stamped upon the conscience of man, and flashes in his face in every act of self judgment conscience passes upon a man: every reflection of conscience implies an obligation of man to some law "written in his heart" (Romans 2:15). This law cannot be without a legislator, nor this legislator without a sovereign dominion; these are but natural and easy consequences in the mind

of man from every act of conscience. The indelible authority of conscience in man, in the whole exercise of it, bears a respect to the sovereignty of God, clearly proclaims not only a supreme Being, but a supreme Governor, and points man directly to it, that a man may as soon deny his having such a reflecting principle within him, as deny God's dominion over him, and consequently over the whole world of rational creatures.

4. This notion of sovereignty is inseparable from the notion of a God. To acknowledge the existence of a God, and to acknowledge him a rewarder, are linked together (Hebrews 6:6). To acknowledge him a rewarder, is to acknowledge him a governor; rewards being the marks of dominion. The very name of God includes in it a supremacy and an actual rule. He cannot be conceived as God, but he must be conceived as the highest authority in the world. It is as possible for him not to be God as not to be supreme. Wherein can the exercise of his excellencies be apparent, but in his sovereign rule? To fancy an infinite power without a supreme dominion, is to fancy a mighty senseless statue, fit to be beheld, but not fit to be obeyed; as not being able or having no right to give out orders, or not caring for the exercise of it. God cannot be supposed to be the chief being, but he must be supposed to give laws to all, and receive laws from none. And if we suppose him with a perfection of justice and righteousness (which we must do, unless we would make a lame and imperfect God) we must suppose him to have an entire dominion, without which he could never be able to manifest his justice. And without a supreme dominion he could not manifest the supremacy and infiniteness of his righteousness.

(1.) We cannot suppose God a Creator, without supposing a sovereign dominion in him. No creature can be made without some law in its nature; if it had not law, it would be created to no purpose, to no regular end. It would be utterly unbecoming an infinite wisdom to create a lawless creature, a creature wholly vain; much less can a rational creature be made without a law: if it had no law, it were not rational: for the very notion of a rational creature implies reason to be a law to it, and implies an acting by rule. If you could suppose rational creatures without a law, you might suppose that they might blaspheme their Creator, and murder their fellow-creatures, and commit the most abominable villainies destructive to human society, without sin; for "where there is no law, there is no transgression." [Note: Maccov. Colleg. Theolog. 10 Disput. 18, pp. 6, 7, or thereabout.] But those things are accounted sins by all mankind, and sins against the Supreme Being: so that a dominion, and the exercise of it, is so fast linked to God, so entirely in him, so intrinsic in his nature, that it cannot be imagined that a rational creature can be made by him, without a stamp and mark of that dominion in his very nature and frame; it is so inseparable from God in his very act of creation.

(2.) It is such a dominion as cannot be renounced by God himself. It is so intrinsic and connatural to him, so inlaid in the nature of God, that he cannot strip himself of it, nor of the exercise of it, while any creature remains. It is preserved by him, for it could not subsist of itself; it is governed by him, it could not else answer its end. It is impossible there can be a creature, which hath not God for its Lord. Christ himself, though in regard of his Deity equal with God, yet in regard of his created state, and assuming our nature, was God's servant, was governed by him in the whole of his office, acted according to his command and directions; God calls him his servant (Isaiah 42:1): and Christ, in that prophetic psalm of him, calls God his Lord (Psalms 16:2): "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." It was impossible it should be otherwise; justice had been so far from being satisfied, that it had been highly incensed if the order of things in the due

subjection to God had been broke, and his terms had not been complied with. It would be a judgment upon the world if God should give up the government to any else, as it is when he gives “children to be princes” (Isaiah 3:4); i. e. children in understanding.

(3.) It is so inseparable, that it cannot be communicated to any creature. No creature is able to exercise it; every creature is unable to perform all the offices that belong to this dominion. No creature can impose laws upon the consciences of men: man knows not the inlets into the soul, his pen cannot reach the inwards of man. What laws he hath power to propose to conscience, he cannot see executed; because every creature wants omniscience; he is not able to perceive all those breaches of the law which may be committed at the same time in so many cities, so many chambers. Or, suppose an angel, in regard to the height of his standing, and the insufficiency of walls, and darkness, and distance to obstruct his view, can behold men’s actions, yet he cannot know the internal acts of men’s minds and wills, without some outward eruption and appearance of them. And if he be ignorant of them, how can he execute his laws? If he only understand the outward fact without the inward thought, how can he dispense a justice proportionable to the crime? he must needs be ignorant of that which adds the greatest aggravation sometimes to a sin, and inflicts a lighter punishment upon that which receives a deeper tincture from the inward posture of the mind, than another fact may do, which in the outward act may appear more base and unjust; and so while he intends righteousness, may act a degree of injustice. Besides, no creature can inflict a due punishment for sin; that which is due to sin, is a loss of the vision and sight of God; but none can deprive any of that but God himself; nor can a creature reward another with eternal life, which consists in communion with God, which none but God can bestow. [Note: Maecov. Colleg. Theolog. Disput. 18, pp. 12, 13.] II. Wherein the dominion of God is founded.

1. On the excellency of his nature. Indeed, a bare excellency of nature bespeaks a fitness for government, but doth not properly convey a right of government. Excellency speaks aptitude, not title: a subject may have more wisdom than the prince, and be fitter to hold the reins of government, but he hath not a title to royalty. A man of large capacity and strong virtue is fit to serve his country in parliament, but the election of the people conveys a title to him. Yet a strain of intellectual and moral abilities beyond others, is a foundation for dominion. And it is commonly seen that such eminences in men, though they do not invest them with a civil authority, or an authority of jurisdiction, yet they create a veneration in the minds of men; their virtue attracts reverence, and their advice is regarded as an oracle. Old men by their age, when stored with more wisdom and knowledge by reason of their long experience, acquire a kind of power over the younger in their dictates and councils, so that they gain, by the strength of that excellency, a real authority in the minds of those men they converse with, and possess themselves of a deep respect for them. God therefore being an incomprehensible ocean of all perfection, and possessing infinitely all those virtues that may lay a claim to dominion, hath the first foundation of it in his own nature. His incomparable and unparalleled excellency, as well as the greatness of his work, attracts the voluntary worship of him as a sovereign Lord (Psalms 86:8): “Among the gods, there is none like unto thee; neither are there any works like unto thy work. All nations shall come and worship before thee.” Though his benefits are great engagements to our obedience and affection, yet his infinite majesty and perfection requires the first place in our acknowledgements and adorations. Upon this account God claims it (Isaiah 46:9): “I am God, and there is none like me; I will do all my pleasure:” and the prophet Jeremiah upon the same account acknowledgeth it

(Jeremiah 10:7): "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as there is none like unto thee." And this is a more noble title of dominion, it being an uncreated title, and more eminent than that of creation or preservation. This is the natural order God hath placed in his creatures, that the more excellent should rule the inferior. [Note: Raynaud, Theolog. Nat. p. 757.] He committed not the government of lower creatures to lions and tigers, that have a delight in blood, but no knowledge of virtue; but to man, who had an eminence in his nature above other creatures, and was formed with a perfect rectitude, and a height of reason to guide the reins over them. In man, the soul being of a more sublime nature, is set of right to rule over the body; the mind, the most excellent faculty of the soul, to rule over the other powers of it: and wisdom, the most excellent habit of the mind, to guide and regulate that in its determinations; and when the body and sensitive appetite control the soul and mind, it is an usurpation against nature, not a rule according to nature. The excellency, thereof, of the Divine nature is the natural foundation for his dominion. He hath wisdom to know what is fit for him to do, and an immutable righteousness whereby he cannot do any thing base and unworthy: he hath a foreknowledge whereby he is able to order all things to answer his own glorious designs and the end of his government, that nothing can go awry, nothing put him to a stand, and constrain him to meditate new counsels. So that if it could be supposed that the world had not been created by him, that the parts of it had met together by chance, and been compacted into such a body, none but God, the supreme and most excellent Being in the world, could have merited, and deservedly challenged the government of it; because nothing had an excellency of nature to capacitate it for it, as he hath, or to enter into a contest with him for a sufficiency to govern. [Note: Camero. p. 371. Amyrald. Dissert. pp. 72, 73.]

2. It is founded in his act of creation. He is the sovereign Lord, as he is the almighty Creator. The relation of an entire Creator induceth the relation of an absolute Lord; he that gives being, motion, that is the sole cause of the being of a thing, which was before nothing, that hath nothing to concur with him, nothing to assist him, but by his sole power commands it to stand up into being, is the unquestionable Lord and proprietor of that thing that hath no dependence but upon him; and by this act of creation, which extended to all things, he became universal Sovereign over all things and those that waive the excellency of his nature as the foundation of his government, easily acknowledge the sufficiency of it upon his actual creation. His dominion of jurisdiction results from creation. When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty (Job 38:1-41.). his chief arguments are drawn from creation; and (Psalms 95:3; Psalms 95:5), "The Lord is a great King above all gods; the sea is his, and he made it:" and so the apostle, in his sermon to the Athenians. As he "made the world, and all things therein," he is styled, "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24). His dominion, also, of property stands upon this basis: "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them" (Psalms 89:11). Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their service to him as their Sovereign: "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant, I have formed thee: thou art my servant, O Israel" (Isaiah 44:21). The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being. It depends not upon the election of men; God hath a natural dominion over us as creatures, before he hath a dominion by consent over us as converts: as soon as ever anything began to be a creature, it was a vassal to God, as a

Lord. Every man is acknowledged to have a right of possessing what he hath made, and a power of dominion over what he hath framed: he may either cherish his own work, or dash it in pieces; he may either add a greater comeliness to it, or deface what he hath already imparted. He hath a right of property in it: no other man can, without injury, pilfer his own work from him. The work hath no propriety in itself; the right must be in the immediate framer, or in the person that employed him. The first cause of everything hath an unquestionable dominion of propriety in it upon the score of justice. By the law of nations, the first finder of a country is esteemed the rightful possessor and lord of that country, and the first inventor of an art hath a right of exercising it. If a man hath a just claim of dominion over that thing whose materials were not of his framing, but from only the addition of a new figure from his skill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the colors wherewith he draws it were never endued by him with their distinct qualities, but only he applies them by his art, to compose such a figure; much more hath God a rightful claim of dominion over his creatures, whose entire being, both in matter and form, and every particle of their excellency, was breathed out by the word of his mouth. He did not only give the matter a form, but bestowed upon the matter itself a being; it was formed by none to his hand, as the matter is on which an artist works. He had the being of all things in his own power, and it was at his choice whether he would impart it or no; there can be no juster and stronger ground of a claim than this. A man hath a right to a piece of brass or gold by his purchase, but when by his engraving he hath formed it into an excellent statue, there results an increase of his right upon the account of his artifice. God's creation of the matter of man gave him a right over man; but his creation of him in so eminent an excellency, with reason to guide him, a clear eye of understanding to discern light from darkness, and truth from falsehood, a freedom of will to act accordingly, and an original righteousness as the varnish and beauty of all; here is the strongest foundation, for a claim of authority over man, and the strongest obligation on man for subjection to God. If all those things had been past over to God by another hand, he could not be the supreme Lord, nor could have an absolute right to dispose of them at his pleasure: that would have been the invasion of another's right. Besides, creation is the only first discovery of his dominion. Before the world was framed there was nothing but God himself, and, properly, nothing is said to have dominion over itself; this is a relative attribute, reflecting on the works of God. [Note: Stoughton's "Righteous Man's Plea," Sermon VI. p. 28.] He had a right of dominion in his nature from eternity, but before creation he was actually Lord only of a nullity; where there is nothing it can have no relation; nothing is not the subject of possession nor of dominion. There could be no exercise of this dominion without creation: what exercise can a sovereign have without subjects? Sovereignty speaks a relation to subjects, and none is properly a sovereign without subjects. To conclude: from hence doth result God's universal dominion; for being Maker of all, he is the ruler of all, and his perpetual dominion; for as long as God continues in the relation of Creator, the right of his sovereignty as Creator cannot be abolished.

3. As God is the final cause, or end of all, he is Lord of all. The end hath a greater sovereignty in actions than the actor itself: the actor hath a sovereignty over others in action, but the end for which any one works hath a sovereignty over the agent himself: a limner hath a sovereignty over the picture he is framing, or hath framed, but the end for which he framed it, either his profit he designed from it, or the honor and credit of skill he aimed at in it, hath a dominion over the limner himself: the end moves and excites the artist to work; it spirits him in it, conducts him in his whole business, possesses his mind, and sits triumphant in him in all the progress of his work; it is the

first cause for which the whole work is wrought. [Note: Vid. Lessium de Perfect. Divin. pp. 77, 78.] Now God, in his actual creation of all, is the sovereign end of all; “for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11); “The Lord hath made all things for himself” (Proverbs 16:4). Man, indeed, is the subordinate and immediate end of the lower creation, and therefore had the dominion over other creatures granted to him: but God being the ultimate and principal end, hath the sovereign and principal dominion; all things as much refer to him, as the last end, as they flow from him as the first cause. So that, as I said before, if the world had been compacted together by a jumbling chance, without a wise hand, as some have foolishly imagined, none could have been an antagonist with God for the government of the world; but God, in regard of the excellency of his nature, would have been the Rector of it, unless those atoms that had composed the world had had an ability to govern it. Since there could be no universal end of all things but God, God only can claim an entire right to the government of it; for though man be the end of the lower creation, yet man is not the end of himself and his own being; he is not the end of the creation of the supreme heavens; he is not able to govern them; they are out of his ken, and out of his reach. None fit in regard of the excellency of nature, to be the chief end of the whole world but God; and therefore none can have a right to the dominion of it but God: in this regard God’s dominion differs from the dominion of all earthly potentates. All the subjects in creation were made for God as their end, so are not people for rulers, but rulers made for people for their protection, and the preservation of order in societies.

4. The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. (Psalms 95:3-4); “The Lord is a great King above all gods:” why? “In his hand are all the deep places of the earth.” While his hand holds things, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air, exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that Divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, Adonai, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx; the word coming of **אֲדֹנָי**, which signifies a basis or pillar, that supports a building. God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word. The sun hath a sovereign dominion over its own beams, which depend upon it, so that if he withdraws himself, they all attend him, and the world is left in darkness. God maintains the vigor of all things, conducts them in their operations; so that nothing that they are, nothing that they have, but is owing to his preserving power. The Master of this great family may as well be called the Lord of it, since every member of it depends upon him for the support of that being he first gave them, and holds of his empire. As the right to govern resulted from creation, so it is perpetuated by the preservation of things.

5. The dominion of God is strengthened by the innumerable benefits he bestows upon his creatures: the benefits he confers upon us after creation, are not the original ground of his dominion. A man hath not authority over his servant from the kindness he shows to him, but his authority commenceth before any act of kindness, and is founded upon a right of purchase, conquest, or compact. Dominion doth not depend upon mere benefits; then inferiors might have dominions over superiors. A peasant may save the life of a prince to whom he was not subject; he hath not therefore a right to step up into his throne and give laws to him: and children that maintain their parents in their poverty, might then acquire an authority over them which they can never climb to; because the benefits they confer cannot parallel the benefits they have received from the

authors of their lives. The bounties of God to us add nothing to the intrinsic right of his natural dominion; they being the effects of that sovereignty, as he is a rewarder and governor; as the benefits a prince bestows upon his favorite increases not that right of authority which is inherent in the crown, but strengthens that dominion as it stands in relation to the receiver, by increasing the obligation of the favorite to an observance of him, not only as his natural prince, but his gracious benefactor. The beneficence of God adds, though not an original right of power, yet a foundation of a stronger upbraiding the creature, if he walks in a violation and forgetfulness of those benefits, and pull in pieces the links of that ingenuous duty they call for; and an occasion of exercising of justice in punishing the delinquent, which is a part of his empire (Isaiah 1:2): "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished children, and they have rebelled against me." Thus the fundamental right as Creator is made more indisputable by his relation as a benefactor, and more as being so after a forfeiture of what was enjoyed by creation. The benefits of God are innumerable, and so magnificent that they cannot meet with any compensation from the creature; and, therefore, do necessarily require a submission from the creature, and an acknowledgment of Divine authority. But that benefit of redemption doth add a stronger right of dominion to God; since he hath not only as a Creator given them being and life as his creatures, but paid a price, the price of his Son's blood, for their rescue from captivity; so that he hath a sovereignty of grace as well as nature, and the ransomed ones belong to him as Redeemer as well as Creator (1 Corinthians 6:19-20): "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price;" therefore your body and your spirit are God's. By this he acquired a right of another kind, and bought us from that uncontrollable lordship we affected over ourselves by the sin of Adam, that he might use us as his own peculiar for his own glory and service. By this redemption there results to God a right over our bodies, over our spirits, over our services, as well as by creation; and to show the strength of this right, the apostle repeats it, "you are bought;" a purchase cannot be without a price paid; but he adds price also, "bought with a price." To strengthen the title, purchase gave him a new right, and the greatness of the price established that right. The more a man pays for a thing, the more usually we say, he deserves to have it, he hath paid enough for it; it was, indeed, price enough, and too much for such vile creatures as we are.

III. The third thing is, The nature of this dominion.

1. This dominion is independent. His throne is in the heavens; the heavens depend not upon the earth, nor God upon his creatures. Since he is independent in regard of his essence, he is so in his dominion, which flows from the excellency and fulness of his essence; as he receives his essence from none, so he derives his dominion from none; all other dominion except paternal authority is rooted originally in the wills of men. The first title was the consent of the people, or the conquest of others by the help of those people that first consented; and in the exercise of it, earthly dominion depends upon assistance of the subjects, and the members being joined with the head carry on the work of government, and prevent civil dissensions; in the support of it, it depends upon the subjects' contributions and taxes; the subjects in their strength are the arms, and in their purses the sinews of government; but God depends upon none in the foundation of his government; he is not a Lord by the votes of his vassals. [Note: Raynaud, Theolog. Natural, pp. 760–762.] Nor is it successively handed to him by any predecessor, nor constituted by the power of a superior; nor forced he his way by war and conquest, nor precariously attained it by suit or flattery, or bribing promises. He holds not the right of his empire from any other; he hath no superior to hand him to

his throne, and settle him by commission; he is therefore called “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” having none above him; “A great King above all gods” (Psalms 95:3): needing no license from any when to act, nor direction how to act, or assistance in his action; he owes not any of those to any person; he was not ordered by any other to create, and therefore received not orders from any other to rule over what he hath created. He received not his power and wisdom from another, and therefore is not subject to any for the rule of his government. He only made his own subjects, and from himself hath the sole authority; his own will was the cause of their beings, and his own will is the director of their actions. He is not determined by his creatures in any of his motions, but determines the creatures in all; his actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature. It is impossible he can have any rule without himself, because there is nothing superior to himself, nor doth he depend upon any in the exercise of his government; he needs no servants in it, when he uses creatures: it is not out of want of their help, but for the manifestation of his wisdom and power. What he doth by his subjects, he can do by himself: “The government is upon his shoulder” (Isaiah 9:6), to show that he needs not any supporters. All other governments flow from him, all other authorities depend upon him; *Dei Gratiâ*, or *Dei Providentiâ*, is in the style of princes. As their being is derived from his power, so their authority is but a branch of his dominion. They are governors by Divine providence; God is governor by his sole nature. All motions depend upon the first heaven, which moves all; but that depends upon nothing. The government of Christ depends upon God’s uncreated dominion, and is by commission from him; Christ assumed not this honor to himself, “But he that said unto him, Thou art my Son,” bestowed it upon him. “He put all things under his feet,” but not himself (1 Corinthians 15:27). “When he saith, All things are put under him, he is excepted, which did put all things under him.” He sits still as an independent governor upon his throne.

2. This dominion is absolute. If his throne be in the heavens, there is nothing to control him. If he be independent, he must needs be absolute; since he hath no cause in conjunction with him as Creator, that can share with him in his right, or restrain him in the disposal of his creature. His authority is unlimited; in this regard the title of “Lord” becomes not any but God properly. Tiberius, though none of the best, though one of the subtlest princes, accounted the title of “Lord” a reproach to him: since he was not “absolute.” [Note: Sueton. de Tiberio, cap. 27.]

1st. Absolute in regard of freedom and liberty. (1.) Thus creation is a work of his mere sovereignty; he created, because it was his pleasure to create (Revelation 4:11). He is not necessitated to do this or that. He might have chosen whether he would have framed an earth and heavens, and laid the foundations of his chambers in the waters. He was under no obligation to reduce things from nullity to existence. (2.) Preservation is the fruit of his sovereignty. When he had called the world to stand out, he might have ordered it to return into its dark den of nothingness, ripped up every part of its foundation, or have given being to many more creatures than he did. If you consider his absolute sovereignty, why might he not have divested Adam presently of those rational perfections wherewith he had endowed him? And might he not have metamorphosed him into some beast, and elevated some beast into a rational nature? Why might he not have degraded an angel to a worm, and advanced a worm to the nature and condition of an angel? Why might he not have revoked that grant of dominion, which he had passed to man over all creatures? It was free to him to permit sin to enter into the earth, or to have excluded it out of the earth, as he doth out of heaven. (3.) Redemption is a fruit of his sovereignty. By his absolute sovereignty he might have

confirmed all the angels in their standing by grace, and prevented the revolt of any of their members from him; and when there was a revolt both in heaven and earth, it was free to him to have called out his Son to assume the angelical, as well as the human, nature, or have exercised his dominion in the destruction of men and devils, rather than in the redemption of any; he was under no obligation to restore either the one or the other. (4.) May he not impose what terms he pleases? May he not impose what laws he pleases, and exact what he will of his creature without promising any rewards? May he not use his own for his own honor, as well as men use for their credit what they do possess by his indulgence? (5.) Affliction is an act of his sovereignty. By this right of sovereignty, may not God take away any man's goods, since they were his doles? As he was not indebted to us when he bestowed them, so he cannot wrong us when he removes them. He takes from us what is more his own than it is ours, and was never ours but by his gift, and that for a time only, not forever. By this right he may determine our times, put a period to our days when he pleases, strip us of one member, and lop off another. Man's being was from him, and why should he not have a sovereignty to take what he had a sovereignty to give? Why should this seem strange to any of us, since we ourselves exercise an absolute dominion over those things in our possession, which have sense and feeling, as well as over those that want it? Doth not every man think he hath an absolute authority over the utensils of his house, over his horse, his dog, to preserve or kill him, to do what he please with him, without rendering any other reason than, It is my own? May not God do much more? Doth not his dominion over the work of his hands transcend that which a man can claim over his beast that he never gave life unto? He that dares dispute against God's absolute right, fancies himself as much a god as his Creator: understands not the vast difference between the Divine nature and his own; between the sovereignty of God and his own, which is all the theme God himself discourseth upon in those stately chapters (Job 38:1-41; Job 39:1-30, &c.); not mentioning a word of Job's sin, but only vindicating the rights of his own authority. Nor doth Job, in his reply (Job 40:4), speak of his sin, but of his natural vileness as a creature in the presence of his Creator. By this right, God unstops the bottles of heaven in one place, and stops them in another, causing it "to rain upon one city, and not upon another" (Amos 4:7); ordering the clouds to move to this or that quarter where he hath a mind to be a benefactor or a judge. (6.) Unequal dispensations are acts of his sovereignty. By this right he is patient toward those whose sins, by the common voice of men, deserve speedy judgments, and pours out pain upon those that are patterns of virtue to the world. By this he gives sometimes the worst of men an ocean of wealth and honor to swim in, and reduceth an useful and exemplary grace to a scanty poverty. By this he "rules the kingdoms of men," and sets a crown upon the head of the basest of men (Daniel 4:17), while he deposeth another that seemed to deserve a weightier diadem. This is, as he is the Lord of the ammunition of his thunders, and the treasures of his bounty. (7.) He may inflict what torments he pleases. Some say, by this right of sovereignty he may inflict what torments he pleaseth upon an innocent person; which, indeed, will not bear the nature of a punishment as an effect of justice, without the supposal of a crime; but a torment, as an effect of that sovereign right he hath over his creature, which is as absolute over his work as the "potter's" power is "over his own clay" (Jeremiah 18:6; Romans 9:21). May not the potter, after his labor, either set his "vessel" up to adorn his house, or knock it in pieces, and fling it upon the dunghill; separate it to some noble use, or condemn it to some sordid service? [Note: Lessius de Perfeet. Divin. pp. 66, 67.] Is the right of God over his creatures less than that of the potter over his vessel, since God contributed all to his creature, but the potter never made the clay, which is the

substance of the vessel, nor the water which was necessary to make it tractable, but only moulded the substance of it into such a shape? The vessel that is framed, and the potter that frames it, differ only in life: the body of the potter, whereby he executes his authority, is of no better a mould than the clay, the matter of his vessel. Shall he have so absolute a power over that which is so near him, and shall not God over that which is so infinitely distant from him? The "vessel," perhaps, might plead for itself that it was once part of the body of a man, and as good as the "potter" himself; whereas no creature can plead it was part of God, and as good as God himself. Though there be no man in the world but deserves affliction, yet the Scripture sometimes lays affliction upon the score of God's dominion, without any respect to the sin of the afflicted person. Speaking of a sick person (James 5:10), "If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him;" whereby is implied, that he might be struck into sickness by God, without any respect to a particular sin, but in a way of trial; and that his affliction sprung not from any exercise of Divine justice, but from his absolute sovereignty; and so, in the case of the blind man, when the disciples asked for what sin it was, whether for his "own," or his "parents sin," he was born blind? (John 9:3), "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents;" which speaks, in itself, not against the whole current of Scripture; but the words import thus much, that God, in this blindness from the birth, neither respected any sin of the man's own, nor of his parents, but he did it as an absolute sovereign, to manifest his own glory in that miraculous cure which was wrought by Christ. Though afflictions do not happen without the desert of the creature, yet some afflictions may be sent without any particular respect to that desert, merely for the manifestation of God's glory, since the creature was made for God himself, and his honor, and therefore may be used in a serviceableness to the glory of the Creator.

2d. His dominion is absolute in regard of unlimitedness by any law without him. He is an absolute monarch that makes laws for his subjects, but is not bound by any himself, nor receives any rules and laws from his subjects, for the management of his government. But most governments in the world are bounded by laws made by common consent. But when kings are not limited by the laws of their kingdoms, yet they are bounded by the law of nature, and the providence of God. But God is under no law without himself, his rule is within him, the rectitude and righteousness of his own nature; he is not under that law he hath prescribed to man. The law was not made for a "righteous man" (1 Timothy 1:9), much less for a righteous God. God is his own law; his own nature is his rule, as his own glory is his end; himself is his end, and himself is his law. He is moved by nothing without himself; nothing hath the dominion of a motive over him but his own will, which is his rule for all his actions in heaven and earth. (Daniel 4:32), "He rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will." And, (Romans 9:18,) "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;" as all things are wrought by him according to his own eternal ideas in his own mind, so all is wrought by him according to the inward motive in his own will, which was the manifestation of his own honor. The greatest motives, therefore, that the best persons have used, when they have pleaded for any grant from God, was his own glory, which would be advanced by an answer of their petition.

3d. His dominion is absolute in regard of supremacy and uncontrollableness. None can implead him, and cause him to render a reason of his actions. He is the sovereign King, "Who may say unto him, What dost thou?" (Ecclesiastes 8:4.) It is an absurd thing for any to dispute with God. (Romans 11:20), "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Thou, a man, a piece of dust, to argue with a God incomprehensibly above thy reason, about the reason of his works! Let the

potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but “not with Him that fashioned them” (Isaiah 45:9). In all the desolations he works, he asserts his own supremacy to silence men. (Psalms 46:10), “Be still, and know that I am God!” Beware of any quarrelling motions in your minds; it is sufficient that I am God, that is supreme, and will not be impeached, and censured, or worded with by any creature about what I do. He is not bound to render a reason of any of his proceedings. Subjects are accountable to their princes, and princes to God, God to none; since he is not limited by any superior, his prerogative is supreme.

4th. His dominion is absolute in regard of irresistibleness. Other governments are bounded by law; so that what a governor hath strength to do, he hath not a right to do; other governors have a limited ability, that what they have a right to do, they have not always a strength to do; they may want a power to execute their own counsels. But God is destitute of neither; he hath an infinite right, and an infinite strength; his word is a law; he commands things to stand out of nothing, and they do so. “He commanded,” or spake, $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota$, “light to shine out of darkness” (2 Corinthians 4:6). There is no distance of time between his word: “Let there be light; and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Magistrates often use not their authority, for fear of giving occasion to insurrections, which may overturn their empire. But if the Lord will work, “who shall let it?” (Isaiah 43:19): and if God will not work, who shall force him? He can check and overturn all other powers; his decrees cannot be stopped, nor his hand held back by any: if he wills to dash the whole world in pieces, no creature can maintain its being against his order. He sets the ordinances of the heavens, and the dominion thereof in the earth; and sends lightnings, that they may go, and say unto him, “Here we are” (Job 38:33-34).

3. Yet this dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical, but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If his throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good: because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since he is his own rule, and his nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, he cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom, justice, and purity. In all the exercises of his sovereign right, he is never unattended with those perfections of his nature. Might not God, by his absolute power, have pardoned men’s guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of his creatures? But in regard of his truth pawned in his threatening, and in regard of his justice, which demanded satisfaction, he would not. Might not God, by his absolute sovereignty, admit a man into his friendship, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to his wisdom and holiness, he will not. May he not, by his absolute power, refuse to accept a man that desires to please him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of his goodness and righteousness, he will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God’s sovereignty, that he should love it; but in regard of his goodness it is necessary, and he will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of his power, so he never exerts the utmost of his sovereignty: because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render him perfectly adorable to the creature. As no intelligent creature, neither angel nor man, can be framed without a law in his nature, so we cannot imagine God without a law in his own nature, unless we would fancy him a rude, tyrannical, foolish being, that hath nothing of holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom. If he “made the heavens in wisdom” (Psalms 136:5), he made them by some rule, not by a mere will, but a rule within himself, not without. A wise work is never the result of an absolute unguided will.

(1.) This dominion is managed by the rule of wisdom. What may appear to us to have no other spring than absolute sovereignty, would be found to have a depth of amazing wisdom, and accountable reason, were our short capacities long enough to fathom it. When the apostle had been discoursing of the eternal counsels of God, in seizing upon one man, and letting go another, in neglecting the Jews, and gathering in the Gentiles, which appears to us to be results only of an absolute dominion, yet he resolves not those amazing acts into that, without taking it for granted that they, were governed by exact wisdom, though beyond his ken to see and his line to sound. "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33)! There are some things in matters of state, that may seem to be acts of mere will, but if we were acquainted with the arcana imperii, the inward engines which moved them, and the ends aimed at in those undertakings, we might find a rich vein of prudence in them, to incline us to judge otherwise than bare arbitrary proceedings. The other attributes of power and goodness are more easily perceptible in the works of God than his wisdom. The first view of the creation strikes us with this sentiment, that the Author of this great fabric was mighty and beneficial; but his wisdom lies deeper than to be discerned at the first glance, without a diligent inquiry; as at the first casting our eyes upon the sea, we behold its motion, color, and something of its vastness, but we cannot presently fathom the depth of it, and understand those lower fountains that supply that great ocean of waters. It is part of God's sovereignty, as it is of the wisest princes, that he hath a wisdom beyond the reach of his subjects; it is not for a finite nature to understand an Infinite Wisdom, nor for a foolish creature that hath lost his understanding by the fall, to judge of the reason of the methods of a wise Counsellor. Yet those actions that savor most of sovereignty, present men with some glances of his wisdom. Was it mere will, that he suffered some angels to fall? But his wisdom was in it for the manifestation of his justice, as it was also in the case of Pharaoh. Was it mere will, that he suffered sin to be committed by man? Was not his wisdom in this for the discovery of his mercy, which never had been known without that, which should render a creature miserable? "He hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32). Though God had such an absolute right, to have annihilated the world as soon as ever he had made it, yet how had this consisted with his wisdom, to have erected a creature after his own image one day, and despised it so much the next, as to cashier it from being? What wisdom had it been to make a thing only to destroy it; to repent of his work as soon as ever it came out of his hands, without any occasion offered by the creature? If God be supposed to be Creator, he must be supposed to have an end in creation; what end can that be but himself and his own glory, the manifestation of the perfections of his nature? What perfection could have been discovered in so quick an annihilation, but that of his power in creating, and of his sovereignty in snatching away the being of his rational creature, before it had laid the methods of acting. What wisdom to make a world, and a reasonable creature for no use; not to praise and honor him, but to be broken in pieces, and destroyed by him?

(2.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of righteousness. Worldly princes often fancy tyranny and oppression to be the chief marks of sovereignty, and think their sceptres not beautiful till died in blood, nor the throne secure till established upon slain carcasses. But "justice and judgment" are the foundation of the throne of God (Psalms 89:14); alluding perhaps to the supporters of arms and thrones, which among princes are the figures of lions, emblems of courage, as Solomon had (1 Kings 10:19). But God makes not so much might, as right, the support of his. He sits on a "throne of holiness" (Psalms 47:8). As he reigns over the heathens,

referring to the calling of the Gentiles after the rejecting of the Jews; the Psalmist here praising the righteousness of it, as the Apostle had the unsearchable wisdom of it (Romans 11:33). "In all his ways he is righteous" (Psalms 145:17): in his ways of terror as well as those of sweetness; in those works wherein little else but that of his sovereignty appears to us. It is always linked with his holiness, that he will not do by his absolute right anything but what is conformable to it: since his dominion is founded upon the excellency of his nature, he will not do anything but what is agreeable to it, and becoming his other perfections. Though he be an absolute sovereign, he is not an arbitrary governor; "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 18:25)? i. e. it is impossible but he should act righteously in every punctilio of his government, since his righteousness capacitates him to be a judge, not a tyrant, of all the earth. The heathen poets represented their chief god Jupiter with Themis, or Right, sitting by him upon his throne in all his orders. God cannot by his absolute sovereignty command some things, because they are directly against unchangeable righteousness; as to command a creature to hate or blaspheme the Creator, not to own him nor praise him. It would be a manifest unrighteousness to order the creature not to own him, upon whom he depends both in its being and well-being; this would be against that natural duty which is indispensably due from every rational creature to God. This would be to order him to lay aside his reason, while he retains it; to disown him to be the Creator, while man remains his creature. This is repugnant to the nature of God, and the true nature of the creature; or to exact anything of man, but what he had given him a capacity, in his original nature, to perform. If any command were above our natural power, it would be unrighteous; as to command a man to grasp the globe of the earth, to stride over the sea, to lave out the waters of the ocean; these things are impossible, and become not the righteousness and wisdom of God to enjoin. There can be no obligation on man to an impossibility. God had a free dominion over nullity before the creation; he could call it out into the being of man and beast, but he could not do anything in creation foolishly, because of his infinite wisdom; nor could he by the right of his absolute sovereignty make man sinful, because of his infinite purity. As it is impossible for him not to be sovereign, it is impossible for him to deny his Deity and his purity. It is lawful for God to do what he will, but his will being ordered by the righteousness of his nature, as infinite as his will, he cannot do anything but what is just; and therefore in his dealing with men, you find him in Scripture submitting the reasonableness and equity of his proceedings to the judgment of his depraved creatures, and the inward dictates of their own conscience. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard" (Isaiah 5:3). Though God be the great Sovereign of the world, yet he acts not in a way of absolute sovereignty. He rules by law; he is a "Lawgiver" as well as a "King" (Isaiah 33:22). It had been repugnant to the nature of a rational creature to be ruled otherwise; to be governed as a beast, this had been to frustrate those faculties of will and understanding which had been given him. To conclude this: when we say, God can do this or that, or command this or that, his authority is not bounded and limited properly. Who can reasonably detract from his almightiness, because he cannot do anything which savors of weakness; and what detracting is it from his authority, that he cannot do anything unseemly for the dignity of his nature? It is rather from the infiniteness of his righteousness than the straitness of his authority; at most it is but a voluntary bounding his dominion by the law of his own holiness.

(3.) His sovereignty is managed according to the rule of goodness. Some potentates there have been in the world, that have loved to suck the blood, and drink the tears, of their subjects; that would rule more by fear than love; like Clearchus, the tyrant of Heraclea, who bore the figure of a

thunderbolt instead of a sceptre, and named his son Thunder, thereby to tutor him to terrify his subjects. [Note: Causin, Poly-Histor. lib. iv. cap. 22.] But as God's throne is a throne of holiness, so it is a "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), a throne encircled with a rainbow: "In sight like to an emerald" (Revelation 4:3): an emblem of the covenant, that hath the pleasantness of a green color, delightful to the eye, betokening mercy. Though his nature be infinitely excellent above us, and his power infinitely transcendent over us, yet the majesty of his government is tempered with an unspeakable goodness. He acts not so much as an absolute Lord, as a gracious Sovereign and obliging Benefactor. He delights not to make his subjects slaves; exacts not from them any servile and fearful, but a generous and cheerful, obedience. He requires them not to fear, or worship him so much for his power, as his goodness. He requires not of a rational creature anything repugnant to the honor, dignity, and principles of such a nature; not anything that may shame, disgrace it, and make it weary of its own being, and the service it owes to its Sovereign. He draws by the cords of a man; his goodness renders his laws as sweet as honey or the honey-comb to an unvitiated palate and a renewed mind. And though it be granted he hath a full dispose of his creature, as the potter of his vessel, and might by his absolute sovereignty inflict upon an innocent an eternal torment, yet his goodness will never permit him to use this sovereign right to the hurt of a creature that deserves it not. If God should cast an innocent creature into the furnace of his wrath, who can question him? But who can think that his goodness will do so, since that is as infinite as his authority? As not to punish the sinner would be a denial of his justice, so to torment an innocent would be a denial of his goodness. A man hath an absolute power over his beast, and may take away his life, and put him to a great deal of pain; but that moral virtue of pity and tenderness would not permit him to use this right, but when it conduceth to some greater good than that can be evil; either for the good of man, which is the end of the creature, or for the good of the poor beast itself, to rid him of a greater misery; none but a savage nature, a disposition to be abhorred, would torture a poor beast merely for his pleasure. It is as much against the nature of God to punish one eternally, that hath not deserved it, as it is to deny himself, and act anything foolishly and unbeseeming his other perfections, which render him majestic and adorable. To afflict an innocent creature for his own good, or for the good of the world, as in the case of the Redeemer, is so far from being against goodness, that it is the highest testimony of his tender bowels to the sons of men. God, though he be mighty, "withdraws not his eyes," i. e. his tender respect, "from the righteous" (Job 36:5; Job 36:7-10). And if he "bind them in fetters," it is to "show them their transgressions," and "open their ear to discipline," and renewing commands, in a more sensible strain, "to depart from iniquity." What was said of Fabritius, "You may as soon remove the sun from its course, as Fabritius from his honesty," may be of God: you may as soon dash in pieces his throne, as separate his goodness from his sovereignty.

4. This sovereignty is extensive over all creatures. He rules all, as the heavens do over the earth. He is "King of worlds, King of ages," as the word translated "eternal" signifies (1 Timothy 1:17), **τὸν αἰῶνα** **ἀρχόντων**; and the same word is so translated (Hebrews 1:2), "By whom also he made the worlds." The same word is rendered "worlds" (Hebrews 11:3): "The worlds were framed by the Word of God." God is King of ages or worlds, of the invisible world and the sensible; of all from the beginning of their creation, of whatsoever is measured by a time. It extends over angels and devils, over wicked and good, over rational and irrational creatures; all things bow down under his hand; nothing can be exempted from him: because there is nothing but was extracted by him from nothing into being. All things essentially depend upon him; and, therefore, must be essentially

subject to him; the extent of his dominion flows from the perfection of his essence; since his essence is unlimited, his royalty cannot be restrained. His authority is as void of any imperfection as his essence is; it reaches out to all points of the heaven above, and the earth below. Other princes reign in a spot of ground. Every worldly potentate hath the confines of his dominions. The Pyrenean mountains divide France from Spain, and the Alps, Italy from France. None are called kings absolutely, but kings of this or that place. But God is the King; the spacious firmament limits not his dominion; if we could suppose him bounded by any place, in regard of his presence, yet he could never be out of his own dominion; whatsoever he looks upon, wheresoever he were, would be under his rule. Earthly kings may step out of their own country into the territory of a neighbor prince; and as one leaves his country, so he leaves his dominion behind him; but heaven and earth, and every particle of both, is the territory of God. "He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all."

(1.) The heaven of angels, and other excellent creatures, belong to his authority. He is principally called "The Lord of Hosts," in relation to his entire command over the angelical legions: therefore, Psalms 103:21, following the text, they are called his "hosts," and "ministers that do his pleasure." Jacob called him so before (Genesis 32:1-2). When he met the angels of God, he calls them "the host of God;" and the Evangelist, long after, calls them so (Luke 2:13): "A multitude of the heavenly host, praising God;" and all this host he commands (Isaiah 45:12): "My hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." He employs them all in his service; and when he issues out his orders to them to do this or that, he finds no resistance of his will. And the inanimate creatures in heaven are at his beck; they are his armies in heaven, disposed in an excellent order in their several ranks (Psalms 147:4): "He calls the stars by name;" they render a due obedience to him as servants to their master, when he singles them out, "and calls them by name," to do some special service; he calls them out to their several offices, as the general of an army appoints the station of every regiment in a battalia. Or "he calls them by name," i. e. he imposeth names upon them, a sign of dominion: the giving names to the inferior creatures being the first act of Adam's derivative dominion over them. These are under the sovereignty of God. The stars, by their influences, fight against Sisera (Judges 5:20). And the sun holds in its reins, and stands stone still, to light Joshua to a complete victory (Joshua 10:12). They are all marshalled in their ranks to receive his word of command, and fight in close order, as being desirous to have a share in the ruin of the enemies of their Sovereign. And those creatures which mount up from the earth, and take their place in the lower heavens, vapors, whereof hail and snow are formed, are part of the army, and do not only receive, but fulfil, his word of command (Psalms 148:8). These are his stores and magazines of judgment against a time of trouble, and "a day of battle and war" (Job 38:22-23). The sovereignty of God is visible in all their motions, in their going and returning. If he says, Go, they go; if he say, Come, they come; if he say, do this, they gird up their loins, and stand stiff to their duty.

(2.) The hell of devils belong to his authority. They have cast themselves out of the arms of his grace into the furnace of his justice; they have, by their revolt, forfeited the treasure of his goodness, but cannot exempt themselves from the sceptre of his dominion; when they would not own him as a Lord Father, they are under him as a Lord Judge; they are cast out of his affection, but not freed from his yoke. He rules over the good angels as his subjects, over the evil ones as his rebels. In whatsoever relation he stands, either as a friend or enemy, he never loses that of a

Lord. A prince is the lord of his criminals as well as of his loyalest subjects. By this right of his sovereignty, he uses them to punish some, and be the occasion of benefit to others: on the wicked he employs them as instruments of vengeance; towards the godly, as in the case of Job, as an instrument of kindness for the manifestation of his sincerity against the intention of that malicious executioner. Though the devils are the executioners of his justice, it is not by their own authority, but God's; as those that are employed either to rack or execute a malefactor, are subjects to the prince not only in the quality of men, but in the execution of their function. The devil, by drawing men to sin, acquires no right to himself over the sinner: for man by sin offends not the devil, but God, and becomes guilty of punishment under God. [Note: Suarez. Vol. II. lib. viii. cap, 20. p. 736.] When, therefore, the devil is used by God for the punishment of any, it is an act of his sovereignty for the manifestation of the order of his justice. And as most nations use the vilest persons in offices of execution, so doth God those vile spirits. He doth not ordinarily use the good angels in those offices of vengeance, but in the preservation of his people. When he would solely punish, he employs "evil angels" (Psalms 78:49), a troop of devils. His sovereignty is extended over the "deceiver and the deceived" (Job 12:16); over both the malefactor and the executioner, the devil and his prisoner. He useth the natural malice of the devils for his own just ends, and by his sovereign authority orders them to be the executioners of his judgments upon their own vassals, as well as sometimes inflictors of punishments upon his own servants.

(3.) The earth of men and other creatures belongs to his authority (Psalms 47:7). God is King of "all the earth," and rules to the "ends" of it (Psalms 59:13). Ancient atheists confined God's dominion to the heavenly orbs, and bounded it within the circuit of the celestial sphere (Job 22:14): "He walks in the circuit of heaven," i. e. he exerciseth his dominion only there. Pedum positio was the sign of the possession of a piece of land, and the dominion of the possessor of it; and land was resigned by such a ceremony, as now, by the delivery of a twig or turf [Note: Bolduc. in loc.] But his dominion extends,

1st. Over the least creatures. All the creatures of the earth are listed in Christ's muster-roll, and make up the number of his regiments. He hath an host on earth as well as in heaven (Genesis 2:1): "The heavens and earth were finished, and all the host of them." And they are "all his servants" (Psalms 119:91), and move at his pleasure. And he vouchsafes the title of his army to the locust, caterpillar, and palmer worm (Joel 2:25); and describes their motions by military words, "climbing the walls, marching, not breaking their ranks" (Joel 2:7). He hath the command, as a great general, over the highest angel and the meanest worm; all the kinds of the smallest insects he presseth for his service. By this sovereignty he muzzled the devouring nature of the fire to preserve the three children, and let it loose to consume their adversaries; and if he speaks the word, the stormy waves are hushed, as if they had no principle of rage within them (Psalms 89:9). Since the meanest creature attains its end, and no arrow that God hath by his power shot into the world but hits the mark he aimed at, we must conclude, that there is a sovereign hand that governs all: not a spot of earth, or air, or water in the world, but is his possession; not a creature in any element but is his subject.

2d. His dominion extends over men. It extends over the highest potentate, as well as the meanest peasant; the proudest monarch is no more exempt than the most languishing beggar. He lays not aside his authority to please the prince, nor strains it up to terrify the indigent. "He accepts not the persons of princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hand"

(Job 34:19). Both the powers and weaknesses, the gallantry and peasantry of the earth, stand and fall at his pleasure. Man, in innocence, was under his authority as his creature; and man, in his revolt, is further under his authority as a criminal: as a person is under the authority of a prince, as a governor, while he obeys his laws; and further under the authority of the prince, as a judge, when he violates his laws. Man is under God's dominion in everything, in his settlement, in his calling, in the ordering his very habitation (Acts 17:26): "He determines the bounds of their habitations." He never yet permitted any to be universal monarch in the world, nor over the fourth part of it, though several, in the pride of their heart, have designed and attempted it: the pope, who hath bid the fairest for it in spirituals, never attained it; and when his power was most flourishing, there were multitudes that would never acknowledge his authority.

3d. But especially this dominion, in the peculiarity of its extent, is seen in the exercise of it over the spirits and hearts of men. Earthly governors have, by his indulgence, a share with him in a dominion over men's bodies, upon which account he graceth princes and judges with the title of "gods" (Psalms 82:6); but the highest prince is but a prince "according to the flesh," as the apostle calls masters in relation to their servants (Colossians 3:22).

God is the sovereign; man rules over the beast in man, the body; and God rules over the man in man, the soul. It sticks not in the outward surface, but pierceth to the inward marrow. It is impossible God should be without this; if our wills were independent of him, we were in some sort equal with himself, in part gods, as well as creatures. It is impossible a creature, either in whole or in part, can be exempted from it; since he is the fashioner of hearts as well as of bodies. He is the Father of spirits, and therefore hath the right of a paternal dominion over them. When he established man lord of the other creatures, he did not strip himself of the propriety; and when he made man a free agent, and lord of the acts of his will, he did not divest himself of the sovereignty. His sovereignty is seen,

[1.] In gifting the spirits of men. Earthly magistrates have hands too short to inspire the hearts of their subjects with worthy sentiments: when they confer an employment, they are not able to convey an ability with it fit for the station: they may as soon frame a statue of liquid water, and gild, or paint it over with the costliest colors, as impart to any, a state-head for a state-ministry. But when God chooseth a Saul from so mean an employment as seeking of asses, he can treasure up in him a spirit fit for government; and fire David, in age a stripling, and by education a shepherd, with courage to encounter, and skill to defeat, a massy Goliath. And when he designs a person for glory, to stand before his throne, he can put a new and a royal spirit into him (Ezekiel 36:26). God only can infuse habits into the soul, to capacitate it to act nobly and generously.

[2.] His sovereignty is seen in regard of the inclinations of men's wills. No creature can immediately work upon the will, to guide it to what point he pleaseth, though mediately it may, by proposing reasons which may master the understanding, and thereby determine the will. But God bows the hearts of men, by the efficacy of his dominion, to what centre he pleaseth. When the more overweening sort of men, that thought their own heads as fit for a crown as Saul's, scornfully despised him; yet God touched the hearts of a band of men to follow and adhere to him (1 Samuel 10:26-27). When the anti-christian whore shall be ripe for destruction, God shall "put it into the heart" of the ten horns or kings, "to hate the whore, burn her with fire, and fulfil his will" (Revelation 17:16-17). He "fashions the hearts" alike, and tunes one string to answer another, and both to

answer his own design (Psalms 33:15). And while men seem to gratify their own ambition and malice, they execute the will of God, by his secret touch upon their spirits, guiding their inclinations to serve the glorious manifestation of truth. While the Jews would, in a reproachful disgrace to Christ, crucify two thieves with him, to render him more incapable to have any followers, they accomplished a prophecy, and brought to light a mark of the Messiah, whereby he had been characterized in one of their prophets, that he should be "numbered among transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). He can make a man of not willing, willing; the wills of all men are in his hand; i. e. under the power of his sceptre, to retain or let go upon this or that errand, to bend this or that way; as water is carried by pipes to what house or place the owner of it is pleased to order. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters; he turns it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1) without any limitation. He speaks of the heart of princes; because, in regard of their height, they seem to be more absolute, and impetuous as waters; yet God holds them in his hand, under his dominion; turns them to acts of clemency or severity, like waters, either to overflow and damage, or to refresh and fructify. He can convey a spirit to them, or "cut it off" from them (Psalms 76:12). It is with reference to his efficacious power, in graciously turning the heart of Paul, that the apostle breaks off his discourse of the story of his conversion, and breaks out into a magnifying and glorifying of God's dominion. "Now unto the King eternal," &c. "be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Timothy 1:17). Our hearts are more subject to the Divine sovereignty than our members in their motions are subject to our own wills. As we can move our hand east or west to any quarter of the world, so can God bend our wills to what mark he pleases. The second cause in every motion depends upon the first; and that will, being a second cause, may be furthered or hindered in its inclinations or executions by God; he can bend or unbend it, and change it from one actual inclination to another. It is as much under his authority and power to move, or hinder, as the vast engine of the heavens is in its motion or standing still, which he can affect by a word. The work depends upon the workman; the clock upon the artificer for the motions of it.

[3.] His dominion is seen in regard of terror or comfort. The heart or conscience is God's special throne on earth, which he hath reserved to himself, and never indulged human authority to sit upon it. He solely orders this in ways of conviction or comfort. He can flash terror into men's spirits in the midst of their earthly jollities, and put death into the pot of conscience, when they are boiling up themselves in a high pitch of worldly delights, and can raise men's spirits above the sense of torment under racks and flames. He can draw a hand-writing not only in the outward chamber, but the inward closet; bring the rack into the inwards of a man. None can infuse comfort when he writes bitter things, nor can any fill the heart with gall, when he drops in honey. Men may order outward duties, but they cannot unlock the conscience, and constrain men to think them duties which they are forced, by human laws, outwardly to act: and as the laws of earthly princes are bounded by the outward man, so do their executions and punishments reach no further than the case of the body: but God can run upon the inward man, as a giant, and inflict wounds and gashes there.

5. It is an eternal dominion. In regard of the exercise of it, it was not from eternity, because there was not from eternity any creature under the government of it; but in regard of the foundation of it, his essence, his excellency, it is eternal; as God was from eternity almighty, but there was no exercise or manifestation of it till he began to create. Men are kings only for a time; their lives expire like a lamp, and their dominion is extinguished with their lives; they hand their empire by

succession to others, but many times it is snapped off before they are cold in their graves. How are the famous empires of the Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, and Greeks, mouldered away, and their place knows them no more! and how are the wings of the Roman eagle cut, and that empire which overspread a great part of the world, hath lost most of its feathers, and is confined to a narrower compass! The dominion of God flourisheth from one generation to another: "He sits King forever" (Psalms 29:10). His "session" signifies the establishment, and "forever" the duration; and he "sits now," his sovereignty is as absolute, as powerful as ever. How many lords and princes hath this or that kingdom had! in how many families hath the sceptre lodged! when as God hath had an uninterrupted dominion; as he hath been always the same in his essence, he hath been always glorious in his sovereignty: among men, he that is lord to-day, may be stripped of it to-morrow; the dominions in the world vary; he that is a prince may see his royalty upon the wings, and feel himself laden with fetters; and a prisoner may be "lifted from his dungeon" to a throne. But there can be no diminution of God's government; "His throne is from generation to generation" (Lamentations 5:19); it cannot be shaken: his sceptre, like Aaron's rod, is always green; it cannot be wrested out of his hands; none raised him to it, none therefore can depose him from it; it bears the same splendor in all human affairs; he is an eternal, an "immortal King" (1 Timothy 1:17); as he is eternally mighty, so he is eternally sovereign; and, being an eternal King, he is a King that gives not a momentary and perishing, but a durable and everlasting life, to them that obey him: a durable and eternal punishment to them that resist him.

IV. Wherein this dominion and sovereign consists, and how it is manifested.

First. The first act of sovereignty is the making laws. This is essential to God; no creature's will can be the first rule to the creature, but only the will of God: he only can prescribe man his duty, and establish the rule of it; hence the law is called "the royal law" (James 2:8): it being the first and clearest manifestation of sovereignty, as the power of legislation is of the authority of a prince. Both are joined together in Isaiah 33:22 : "The Lord is our Lawgiver; the Lord is our King;" legislative power being the great mark of royalty. God, as King, enacts his laws by his own proper authority, and his law is a declaration of his own sovereignty, and of men's moral subjection to him, and dependence on him. His sovereignty doth not appear so much in his promises as in his precepts: a man's power over another is not discovered by promising, for a promise doth not suppose the promiser either superior or inferior to the person to whom the promise is made. [Note: Suarez. de Legib. p. 23.] It is not an exercising authority over another, but over a man's self; no man forceth another to the acceptance of his promise, but only proposeth and encourageth to an embracing of it. But commanding supposeth always an authority in the person giving the precept; it obhgeth the person to whom the command is directed; a promise obligeth the person by whom the promise is made. God, by his command, binds the creature; by his promise he binds himself; he stoops below his sovereignty, to lay obligations upon his own majesty; by a precept he binds the creature, by a promise he encourageth the creature to an observance of his precept: what laws God makes, man is bound, by virtue of his creation, to observe; that respects the sovereignty of God: what promises God makes, man is bound to believe; but that respects the faithfulness of God. God manifested his dominion more to the Jews than to any other people in the world; he was their Lawgiver, both as they were a church and a commonwealth: as a church, he gave them ceremonial laws for the regulating their worship; as a state, he gave them judicial laws for the ordering their civil affairs; and as both, he gave them moral laws, upon which both the laws of the

church and state were founded. This dominion of God, in this regard, will be manifest,

(1.) In the supremacy of it. The sole power of making laws doth originally reside in him (James 4:12); "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy." By his own law he judges of the eternal states of men, and no law of man is obligatory, but as it is agreeable to the laws of this supreme Lawgiver, and pursuant to his righteous rules for the government of the world. The power that the potentates of the world have to make laws is but derivative from God. If their dominion be from him, as it is, for "by him kings reign" (Proverbs 8:15), their legislative power, which is a prime flower of their sovereignty, is derived from him also: and the apostle resolves it into this original when he orders us to be "subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake" (Romans 13:5). Conscience, in its operations, solely respects God; and therefore, when it is exercised as the principle of obedience to the laws of men, it is not with respect to them, singly considered, but as the majesty of God appears in their station and in their decrees. This power of giving laws was acknowledged by the heathen to be solely in God by way of original; and therefore the greatest lawgivers among the heathen pretended their laws to be received from some deity or supernatural power, by special revelation: now, whether they did this seriously, acknowledging themselves this part of the dominion of God,—for it is certain that whatsoever just orders were issued out by princes in the world, was by the secret influence of God upon their spirits (Proverbs 8:15): "By me princes decree justice;" by the secret conduct of Divine wisdom,—or whether they pretended it only as a public engine, to enforce upon people the observance of their decrees, and gain a greater credit to their edicts, yet this will result from it, that the people in general entertained this common notion, that God was the great Lawgiver of the world. The first founders of their societies could never else have so absolutely gained upon them by such a pretence. There was always a revelation of a law from the mouth of God in every age: the exhortation of Eliphaz to Job (Job 22:22), of receiving a "law from the mouth" of God, at the time before the moral law was published, had been a vain exhortation had there been no revelation of the mind of God in all ages.

(2.) The dominion of God is manifest in the extent of his laws. As he is the Governor and Sovereign of the whole world, so he enacts laws for the whole world. One prince cannot make laws for another, unless he makes him his subject by right of conquest; Spain cannot make laws for England, or England for Spain; but God having the supreme government, as King over all, is a Lawgiver to all, to irrational, as well as rational creatures. The "heavens have their ordinances" (Job 38:33); all creatures have a law imprinted on their beings; rational creatures have Divine statutes copied in their heart: for men, it is clear (Romans 2:14), every son of Adam, at his coming into the world, brings with him a law in his nature, and when reason clears itself up from the clouds of sense, he can make some difference between good and evil; discern something of fit and just. Every man finds a law within him that checks him if he offends it: none are without a legal indictment and a legal executioner within them; God or none was the Author of this as a sovereign Lord, in establishing a law in man at the same time, wherein, as an Almighty Creator, he imparted a being. This law proceeds from God's general power of governing, as he is the Author of nature, and binds not barely as it is the reason of man, but by the authority of God, as it is a law engraven on his conscience: and no doubt but a law was given to the angels; God did not govern those intellectual creatures as he doth brutes, and in a way inferior to his rule of man. Some sinned; all might have sinned in regard to the changeableness of their nature. Sin cannot be but against

some rule; “where there is no law, there is no transgression;” what that law was is not revealed; but certainly it must be the same in part with the moral law, so far as it agreed with their spiritual natures; a love to God, a worship of him, and a love to one another in their societies and persons.

(3.) The dominion of God is manifest in the reason of some laws, which seem to be nothing else than purely his own will. Some laws there are for which a reason may be rendered from the nature of the thing enjoined, as to love, honor, and worship God: for others, none but this, God will have it so: such was that positive law to Adam of “not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17), which was merely an asserting his own dominion, and was different from that law of nature God had written in his heart. No other reason of this seems to us, but a resolve to try man’s obedience in a way of absolute sovereignty, and to manifest his right over all creatures, to reserve what he pleased to himself, and permit the use of what he pleased to man, and to signify to man that he was to depend on him, who was his Lord, and not on his own will. There was no more hurt in itself, for Adam to have eaten of that, than of any other in the garden; the fruit was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; but God would show the right he had over his own goods, and his authority over man, to reserve what he pleases of his own creation from his touch; and since man could not claim a propriety in anything, he was to meddle with nothing but by the leave of his Sovereign, either discovered by a special or general license. Thus God showed himself the Lord of man, and that man was but his steward, to act by his orders. If God had forbidden man the use of more trees in the garden, his command had been just; since, as a sovereign Lord, he might dispose of his own goods; and when he had granted him the whole compass of that pleasant garden, and the whole world round about for him and his posterity, it was a more tolerable exercise of his dominion to reserve this “one tree,” as a mark of his sovereignty, when he had left “all others” to the use of Adam. He reserved nothing to himself, as Lord of the manor, but this; and Adam was prohibited nothing else but this one, as a sign of his subjection. Now for this no reason can be rendered by any man but merely the will of God; this was merely a fruit of his dominion. For the moral laws a reason may be rendered; to love God hath reason to enforce it besides God’s will; viz., the excellency of his nature, and the greatness and multitudes of his benefits. To love our neighbor hath enforcing reasons; viz., the conjunction in blood, the preservation of human society, and the need we may stand in of their love ourselves: but no reason can be assigned of this positive command about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the pleasure of God. It was a branch of his pure dominion to but merely the pleasure of God. It was a branch of his pure dominion to try man’s obedience, and a mark of his goodness to try it by so and light a precept, when he might have extended his authority further. Had not God given this or the like order, his absolute dominion had not been so conspicuous. It is true, Adam had a law of nature in him, whereby he was obliged to perpetual obedience; and though it was a part of God’s dominion to implant it in him, yet his supreme dominion over the creatures had not been so visible to man but by this, or a precept of the same kind. What was commanded or prohibited by the law of nature, did bespeak a comeliness in itself, it appeared good or evil to the reason of man; but this was neither good nor evil in itself, it received its sole authority from the absolute will of God, and nothing could result from the fruit itself, as a reason why man should not taste it, but only the sole will of God. And as God’s dominion was most conspicuous in this precept, so man’s obedience had been most eminent in observing it: for in his obedience to it, nothing but the sole power and authority of God, which is the proper rule of obedience, could have been respected, not any reason from the thing itself. To this we may refer some other commands, as that of appointing the

time of solemn and public worship, the seventh day; though the worship of God be a part of the law of nature, yet the appointing a particular day, wherein he would be more formally and solemnly acknowledged than on other days, was grounded upon his absolute right of legislation: for there was nothing in the time itself that could render that day more holy than another, though God respected his “finishing the work of creation” in his institution of that day (Genesis 2:3). Such were the ceremonial commands of sacrifices and washings under the law, and the commands of sacraments under the gospel: the one to last till the first coming of Christ and his passion; the other to last till the second coming of Christ and his triumph. Thus he made natural and unavoidable uncleannesses to be sins, and the touching a dead body to be pollution, which in their own nature were not so.

(4.) The dominion of God appears in the moral law, and his majesty in publishing it. As the law of nature was writ by his own fingers in the nature of man, so it was engraven by his own finger in the “tables of stone” (Exodus 31:18), which is very emphatically expressed to be a mark of God’s dominion. “And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraven upon the tables” (Exodus 32:16); and when the first tables were broken, though he orders Moses to frame the tables, yet the writing of the law he reserves to himself (Exodus 34:1). It is not said of any part of the Scripture, that it was writ by the finger of God, but only of the Decalogue: herein he would have his sovereignty eminently appear; it was published by God in state, with a numerous attendance of his heavenly militia (Deuteronomy 32:2); and the artillery of heaven was shot off at the solemnity; and therefore it is called a fiery law, coming from his right hand, i. e. his sovereign power. It was published with all the marks of supreme majesty.

(5.) The dominion of God appears in the obligation of the law, which reacheth the conscience. The laws of every prince are framed for the outward conditions of men; they do not by their authority bind the conscience; and what obligations do result from them upon the conscience, is either from their being the same immediately with Divine laws, or as they are according to the just power of the magistrate, founded on the law of God. Conscience hath a protection from the King of kings, and cannot be arrested by any human power. God hath given man but an authority over half the man, and the worst half too, that which is of an earthly original; but reserved the authority over the better and more heavenly half to himself. The dominion of earthly princes extends only to the bodies of men; they have no authority over the soul, their punishment and rewards cannot reach it: and therefore their laws, by their single authority, cannot bind it, but as they are coincident with the law of God, or as the equity of them is subservient to the preservation of human society, a regular and righteous thing, which is the divine end in government; and so they bind, as they have relation to God as the supreme magistrate. The conscience is only intelligible to God in its secret motions, and therefore only guidable by God; God only pierceth into the conscience by his eye, and therefore only can conduct it by his rule. Man cannot tell whether we embrace this law in our heart and consciences, or only in appearance; “He only can judge it” (Luke 12:3-4), and therefore he only can impose laws upon it; it is out of the reach of human penal authority, if their laws be transgressed inwardly by it. Conscience is a book in some sort as sacred as the Scripture; no addition can be lawfully made to it, no subtraction from it. Men cannot diminish the duty of conscience, or raze out the law God hath stamped upon it. They cannot put a supersedeas to the writ of conscience, or stop its mouth with a noli prosequi. They can make no addition by their authority to bind it; it is a flower in the crown of Divine sovereignty only.

2. His sovereignty appears in a power of dispensing with his own laws. It is as much a part of his dominion to dispense with his laws, as to enjoin them; he only hath the power of relaxing his own right, no creature hath power to do it; that would be to usurp a superiority over him, and order above God himself. Repealing or dispensing with the law is a branch of royal authority. It is true, God will never dispense with those moral laws which have an eternal reason in themselves and their own nature; as for a creature to fear, love, and honor God; this would be to dispense with his own holiness, and the righteousness of his nature, to sully the purity of his own dominion; it would write folly upon the first creation of man after the image of God, by writing mutability upon himself, in framing himself after the corrupted image of man; it would null and frustrate the excellency of the creature, wherein the image of God mostly shines; nay, it would be to dispense with a creature's being a Creator, and make him independent upon the Sovereign of the world in moral obedience. But God hath a right to dispense with the ordinary laws of nature in the inferior creatures; he hath a power to alter their course by an arrest of miracles, and make them come short, or go beyond his ordinances established for them. He hath a right to make the sun stand still, or move backward; to bind up the womb of the earth, and bar the influences of the clouds; bridle in the rage of the fire, and the fury of lions; make the liquid waters stand like a wall, or pull up the dam, which he hath set to the sea, and command it to overflow the neighboring countries: he can dispense with the natural laws of the whole creation, and strain everything beyond its ordinary pitch. Positive laws he hath reversed; as the ceremonial law given to the Jews. The very nature, indeed, of that law required a repeal, and fell of course; when that which was intended by it was come, it was of no longer significancy; as before it was a useful shadow, it would afterwards have been an empty one: had not God took away this, Christianity had not, in all likelihood, been propagated among the Gentiles. This was the "partition wall between Jews and Gentiles" (Ephesians 2:14); which made them a distinct family from all the world, and was the occasion of the enmity of the Gentiles against the Jews. When God had, by bringing in what was signified by those rites, declared his decree for the ceasing of them; and when the Jews, fond of those Divine institutions, would not allow him the right of repealing what he had the authority of enacting; he resolved, for the asserting his dominion, to bury them in the ruins of the temple and city, and make them forever incapable of practising the main and essential arts of them; for the temple being the pillar of the legal service, by demolishing that, God hath taken away their rights of sacrificing, it being peculiarly annexed to that place; they have no altar dignified with a fire from heaven to consume their sacrifices, no legal high-priest to offer them. God hath by his providence changed his own law as well as by his receipt; yea, he hath gone higher, by virtue of his sovereignty, and changed the whole scene and methods of his government after the fall, from King Creator to King Redeemer. He hath revoked the law of works as a covenant; released the penalty of it from the believing sinner, by transferring it upon the Surety, who interposed himself by his own will and Divine designation. He hath established another covenant upon other promises in a higher root, with greater privileges, and easier terms. Had not God had this right of sovereignty, not a man of Adam's posterity could have been blessed; he and they must have lain groaning under the misery of the fall, which had rendered both himself and all in his loins unable to observe the terms of the first covenant. He hath, as some speak, dispensed with his own moral law in some cases; in commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, a righteous son, a son whereof he had the promise, that "in Isaac should his seed be called;"ⁱ yet he was commanded to sacrifice him by the right of his absolute sovereignty as the supreme Lord of the lives of his creatures, from the highest

angel to the lowest worm, whereby he bound his subjects to this law, not himself. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them, and they are a just forfeit to him, at the very moment we sin, at the very moment we come into the world, by reason of the venom of our nature against him, and the disturbance the first sin of man (whereof we are inheritors) gave to his glory. Had Abraham sacrificed his son of his own head, he had sinned, yea, in attempting it; but being authorized from heaven, his act was obedience to the Sovereign of the world, who had a power to dispense with his own law; and with this law he had before dispense in the case of Cain's murder of Abel, as to the immediate punishment of it with death, which, indeed, was settled afterwards by his authority, but then omitted because of the paucity of men, and for the peopling the world; but settled afterwards, when there was almost, though not altogether, the like occasion of omitting it for a time.

3. His sovereignty appears in punishing the transgression of his law.

(1.) This is a branch of God's dominion as lawgiver. So was the vengeance God would take upon the Amalekites (Exodus 17:16): "The Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war;" the Hebrew is, "The hand upon the throne of the Lord," as in the margin: as a "lawgiver" he "saves or destroys" (James 4:12). He acts according to his own law, in a congruity to the sanction of his own precepts; though he be an arbitrary lawgiver, appointing what laws he pleases, yet he is not an arbitrary judge. As he commands nothing but what he hath a right to command, so he punisheth none but whom he hath a right to punish, and with such punishment as the law hath denounced. All his acts of justice and inflictions of curses are the effects of this sovereign dominion (Psalms 29:10): "He sits King upon the floods;" upon the deluge of waters wherewith he drowned the world, say some. It is a right belonging to the authority of magistrates to pull up the infectious weeds that corrupt a commonwealth; it is no less the right of God, as the lawgiver and judge of all the earth, to subject criminals to his vengeance, after they have rendered themselves abominable in his eyes, and carried themselves unworthy subjects of so great and glorious a King. The first name whereby God is made known in Scripture, is Elohim (Genesis 1:1): "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth;" a name which signifies his power of judging, in the opinion of some critics; from him it is derived to earthly magistrates; their judgment is said, therefore, to be the "judgment of God" (Deuteronomy 1:17). When Christ came, he proposed this great motive of repentance from the "kingdom of heaven being at hand;" the kingdom of his grace, whereby to invite men; the kingdom of his justice in the punishment of the neglecters of it, whereby to terrify men. Punishments as well as rewards belong to royalty; it issued accordingly; those that believed and repented came under his gracious sceptre, those that neglected and rejected it fell under his iron rod; Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple demolished, the inhabitants lost their lives by the edge of the sword, or lingered them out in the chains of a miserable captivity. This term of "judge," which signifies a sovereign right to govern and punish delinquents, Abraham gives him, when he came to root out the people of Sodom, and make them the examples of his vengeance (Genesis 18:25).

(2.) Punishing the transgressions of his law. This is a necessary branch of dominion. His sovereignty in making laws would be a trifle, if there were not also an authority to vindicate those laws from contempt and injury; he would be a Lord only spurned at by rebels. Sovereignty is not preserved without justice. When the Psalmist speaks of the majesty of God's kingdom, he tells us, that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Psalms 97:1-2). These are the engines of Divine dignity which render him glorious and majestic. A legislative power would be

trampled on without executive; by this the reverential apprehensions of God are preserved in the world. He is known to be Lord of the world "by the judgments which he executes" (Psalms 9:16). When he seems to have lost his dominion, or given it up in the world, he recovers it by punishment. When he takes some away "with a whirlwind, and in his wrath," the natural consequence men make of it, is this: "Surely there is a God that judgeth the earth" (Psalms 58:9; Psalms 58:11). He reduceth the creature, by the lash of his judgments, that would not acknowledge his authority in his precepts. Those sins which disown his government in the heart and conscience, as pride, inward blasphemy, &c., he hath reserved a time hereafter to reckon for. He doth not presently shoot his arrows into the marrow of every delinquent, but those sins which traduce his government of the world, and tear up the foundations of human converse, and a public respect to him, he reckons with particularly here, as well as hereafter, that the life of his sovereignty might not always faint in the world.

(3.) This of punishing was the second discovery of his dominion in the world. His first act of sovereignty was the giving a law; the next, his appearance in the state of a judge. When his orders were violated, he rescues the honor of them by an execution of justice. He first judged the angels, punishing the evil ones for their crime: the first court he kept among them as a governor, was to give them a law; the second court he kept was as a judge trying the delinquents, and adjudging the offenders to be "reserved in chains of darkness" till the final execution (Jude 1:6); and, at the same time probably, he confirmed the good ones in their obedience by grace. So the first discovery of his dominion to man, was the giving him a precept, the next was the inflicting a punishment for the breach of it. He summons Adam to the bar, indicts him for his crime, finds him guilty by his own confession, and passeth sentence on him, according to the rule he had before acquainted him with.

(4.) The means whereby he punisheth shows his dominion. Sometimes he musters up hail and mildew; sometimes he sends regiments of wild beasts; so he threatens Israel (Leviticus 26:22). Sometimes he sends out a party of angels to beat up the quarters of men, and make a carnage among them (2 Kings 19:35). Sometimes he mounts his thundering battery, and shoots forth his ammunition from the clouds, as against the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:10). Sometimes he sends the slightest creatures to shame the pride and punish the sin of man, as "lice, frogs, locusts," as upon the Egyptians (Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29.).

Secondly. This dominion is manifested by God as a proprietor and Lord of his creatures and his own goods. And this is evident,

1. In the choice of some persons from eternity. He hath set apart some from eternity, wherein he will display the invincible efficacy of his grace, and thereby infallibly bring them to the fruition of glory (Ephesians 1:4-5): "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Why doth he write some names in the "book of life," and leave out others? Why doth he enrol some, whom he intends to make denizens of heaven, and refuse to put others in his register? The apostle tells us, it is the pleasure of his will. You may render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, the top and foundation of all; and under what head of reason can man reduce this act but to that of his royal prerogative? Why doth God save some, and condemn others at

last? because of the faith of the one, and unbelief of the other. Why do some men believe? because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied those means with the efficacy of his Spirit. Why did God accompany those means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? because he had decreed by grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree, or choose some, and not others? Into what will you resolve this but into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and condemnation at the last upshot, are acts of God as the Judge, conformable to his own law of giving life to believers, and inflicting death upon unbelievers; for those a reason may be rendered; but the choice of some, and preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. When a prince redeems a rebel, he acts as a judge according to law; but when he calls some out to pardon, he acts as a sovereign by a prerogative above law; into this the apostle resolves it (Romans 9:13; Romans 9:15). When he speaks of God's loving Jacob and hating Esau, and that before they had done either good or evil, it is, "because God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." Though the first scope of the apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, was to declare the reason of God's rejecting the Jews, and calling in the Gentiles; had he only intended to demolish the pride of the Jews, and flat their opinion of merit, and aimed no higher than that providential act of God; he might, convincingly enough to the reason of men, have argued from the justice of God, provoked by the obstinacy of the Jews, and not have had recourse to his absolute will; but, since he asserts this latter, the strength of his argument seems to be thus: if God by his absolute sovereignty may resolve, and fix his love upon Jacob and estrange it from Esau, or any other of his creatures, before they have done good or evil, and man have no ground to call his infinite majesty to account, may he not deal thus with the Jews, when their demerit would be a bar to any complaints of the creature against him? [Note: Amyrald, Dissert. pp. 101, 102.] If God were considered here in the quality of a judge, it had been fit to have considered the matter of fact in the criminal; but he is considered as a sovereign, rendering no other reason of his action but his own will; "whom he will he hardens" (Romans 9:18). And then the apostle concludes (Romans 9:20), "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" If the reason drawn from God's sovereignty doth not satisfy in this inquiry, no other reason can be found wherein to acquiesce: for the last condemnation there will be sufficient reason to clear the justice of his proceedings. But, in this case of election, no other reason but what is alleged, viz., the will of God, can be thought of, but what is liable to such knotty exceptions that cannot well be untied.

(1.) It could not be any merit in the creature that might determine God to choose him. If the decree of election falls not under the merit of Christ's passion, as the procuring cause, it cannot fall under the merit of any part of the corrupted mass. The decree of sending Christ did not precede, but followed, in order of nature, the determination of choosing some. When men were chosen as the subjects for glory, Christ was chosen as the means for the bringing them to glory (Ephesians 1:4): "Chosen us in him, and predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." The choice was not merely in Christ as the moving cause; that the apostle asserts to be "the good pleasure of his will;" but in Christ, as the means of conveying to the chosen ones the fruits of their election. What could there be in any man that could invite God to this act, or be a cause of distinction of one branch of Adam from another? Were they not all hewed out of the same rock, and tainted with the same corruption in blood? Had it been possible to invest them with a power of merit at the first, had not that venom, contracted in their nature, degraded all of power for the future? What merit

was there in any but of wrathful punishment, since they were all considered as criminals, and the cursed brood of an ungrateful rebel? What dignity can there be in the nature of the purest part of clay, to be made a vessel of honor, more than in another part of clay, as pure as that which was formed into a vessel for mean and sordid use? What had any one to move his mercy more than another, since they were all children of wrath, and equally daubed with original guilt and filth? Had not all an equal proportion of it to provoke his justice? What merit is there in one dry bone more than another, to be inspired with the breath of a spiritual life? Did not all he wallowing in their own filthy blood? and what could the steam and noisomeness of that deserve at the hands of a pure Majesty, but to be cast into a sink furthest from his sight? Were they not all considered in this deplorable posture, with an equal proportion of poison in their nature, when God first took his pen, and singled out some names to write in the book of life? It could not be merit in any one piece of this abominable mass, that should stir up that resolution in God to set apart this person for a vessel of glory, while he permitted another to putrefy in his own gore. He loved Jacob, and hated Esau, though they were both parts of the common mass, the seed of the same loins, and lodged in the same womb.

(2.) Nor could it be any foresight of works to be done in time by them, or of faith, that might determine God to choose them. What good could he foresee resulting from extreme corruption, and a nature alienated from him? What could he foresee of good to be done by them, but what he resolved in his own will, to bestow an ability upon them to bring forth? His choice of them was to holiness, not for a holiness preceding his determination (Ephesians 1:4). He hath chosen us, "that we might be holy" before him; he ordained us "to good works," not for them (Ephesians 2:10). What is a fruit cannot be a moving cause of that whereof it is a fruit: grace is a stream from the spring of electing love; the branch is not the cause of the root, but the root of the branch; nor the stream the cause of the spring, but the spring the cause of the stream. Good works suppose grace, and a good and right habit in the person, as rational acts suppose reason. Can any man say that the rational acts man performs after his creation were a cause why God created him? This would make creation, and everything else, not so much an act of his will, as an act of his understanding. God foresaw no rational act in man, before the act of his will to give him reason; nor foresees faith in any, before the act of his will determining to give him faith: "Faith is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In the salvation which grows up from this first purpose of God, he regards not the works we have done, as a principal motive to settle the top-stone of our happiness, but his own purpose, and the grace given in Christ; "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ, before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). The honor of our salvation cannot be challenged by our works, much less the honor of the foundation of it. It was a pure gift of grace, without any respect to any spiritual, much less natural, perfection. Why should the apostle mention that circumstance, when he speaks of God's loving Jacob, and hating Esau, "when neither of them had done good or evil" (Romans 9:11), if there were any foresight of men's works as the moving cause of his love or hatred? God regarded not the works of either as the first cause of his choice, but acted by his own liberty, without respect to any of their actions which were to be done by them in time. If faith be the fruit of election, the prescience of faith doth not influence the electing act of God. It is called "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1): "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect;" i. e. settled in this office to bring the elect of God to faith. If men be chosen by God upon the foresight of faith, or not chosen till they have faith, they are not so much God's

elect, as God their elect; they choose God by faith, before God chooseth them by love: it had not been the faith of God's elect, i. e. of those already chosen, but the faith of those that were to be chosen by God afterwards. Election is the cause of faith, and not faith the cause of election; fire is the cause of heat, and not the heat of fire; the sun is the cause of the day, and not the day the cause of the rising of the sun. Men are not chosen because they believe, but they believe because they are chosen: the apostle did ill, else, to appropriate that to the elect which they had no more interest in, by virtue of their election, than the veriest reprobate in the world. [Note: Daille, in loc.] If the foresight of what works might be done by his creatures was the motive of his choosing them, why did he not choose the devils to redemption, who could have done him better service, by the strength of their nature, than the whole mass of Adam's posterity? Well, then, there is no possible way to lay the original foundation of this act of election and preterition in anything but the absolute sovereignty of God. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration in this case. There is no debt which justice or injustice always respects in its acting: if he had pleased, he might have chosen all; if he had pleased, he might have chosen none. It was in his supreme power to have resolved to have left all Adam's posterity under the rack of his justice; if he determined to snatch out any, it was a part of his dominion, but without any injury to the creatures he leaves under their own guilt. Did he not pass by the angels, and take man? and, by the same right of dominion, may he pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. Are they not all his subjects? all are his criminals, and may be dealt with at the pleasure of their undoubted Lord and Sovereign. This is a work of arbitrary power; since he might have chosen none, or chosen all, as he saw good himself. It is at the liberty of the artificer to determine his wood or stone to such a figure, that of a prince, or that of a toad; and his materials have no right to complain of him, since it lies wholly upon his own liberty. They must have little sense of their own vileness, and God's infinite excellency above them by right of creation, that will contend that God hath a lesser right over his creatures than an artificer over his wood or stone. If it were at his liberty whether to redeem man, or send Christ upon such an undertaking, it is as much at his liberty, and the prerogative is to be allowed him, what person he will resolve to make capable of enjoying the fruits of that redemption. One man was as fit a subject for mercy as another, as they all lay in their original guilt: why would not Divine mercy cast its eye upon this man, as well as upon his neighbor? There was no cause in the creature, but all in God; it must be resolved into his own will: yet not into a will without wisdom. God did not choose hand over head, and act by mere will, without reason and understanding; an Infinite Wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure; but the reason of God is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself; the whole ground lies in God himself, no part of it in the creature; "not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shows mercy" (Romans 9:15-16). Since God hath revealed no other cause than his will, we can resolve it into no other than his sovereign empire over all creatures. It is not without a stop to our curiosity, that in the same place where God asserts the absolute sovereignty of his mercy to Moses, he tells him he could not see his face: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious;" and he said, "Thou canst not see my face" (Exodus 33:19-20): the rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weakness. The apostle acknowledged not only a wisdom in this proceeding, but a riches and treasure of wisdom; not only that, but a depth and vastness of those riches of wisdom; but was unable to give us an inventory and scheme of it (Romans 11:33). The secrets of his counsels are too deep for us to wade into; in attempting to know the reason of those acts, we should find ourselves swallowed up into a

bottomless gulf: though the understanding be above our capacity, yet the admiration of his authority and submission to it are not. "We should cast ourselves down at his feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure." [Note: This was Dr. Goodwin's speech when he was in trouble.] This is a more comely carriage in a Christian than all the contentious endeavors to measure God by our line.

2. In bestowing grace where he pleases. God in conversion and pardon works not as a natural agent, putting forth strength to the utmost, which God must do, if he did renew man naturally, as the sun shines, and the fire burns, which always act, *ad extremum virium*, unless a cloud interpose to eclipse the one, and water to extinguish the other. But God acts as a voluntary agent, which can freely exert his power when he please, and suspend it when he please. Though God be necessarily good, yet he is not necessitated to manifest all the treasures of his goodness to every subject; he hath power to distil his dews upon one part, and not upon another. If he were necessitated to express his goodness without a liberty, no thanks were due to him. Who thanks the sun for shining on him, or the fire for warming him? None; because they are necessary agents, and can do no other. What is the reason he did not reach out his hand to keep all the angels from sinking, as well as some, or recover them when they were sunk? What is the reason he engrafts one man into the true Vine, and lets the other remain a wild olive? Why is not the efficacy of the Spirit always linked with the motions of the Spirit? Why does he not mould the heart into a gospel frame when he fills the ear with a gospel sound? Why doth he strike off the chains from some, arid tear the veil from the heart, while he leaves others under their natural slavery and Egyptian darkness? Why do some lie under the bands of death, while another is raised to a spiritual life? What reason is there for all this but his absolute will? The apostle resolves the question, if the question be asked, why he begets one and not another? Not from the will of the creature, but "his own will," is the determination of one (James 2:18). Why doth he work in one "to will and to do," and not in another? Because of "his good pleasure," is the answer of another (Php 2:13). He could as well new create every one, as he at first created them, and make grace as universal as nature and reason, but it is not his pleasure so to do.

(1.) It is not from want of strength in himself. The power of God is unquestionably able to strike off the chains of unbelief from all; he could surmount the obstinacy of every child of wrath, and inspire every son of Adam with faith as well as Adam himself. He wants not a virtue superior to the greatest resistance of his creature; a victorious beam of light might be shot into their understandings, and a flood of grace might overspread their wills with one word of his mouth, without putting forth the utmost of his power. What hindrance could there be in any created spirit, which cannot be easily pierced into and new moulded by the Father of spirits? Yet he only breathes this efficacious virtue into some, and leaves others under that insensibility and hardness which they love, and suffer them to continue in their benighting ignorance, and consume themselves in the embraces of their dear, though deceitful Delilahs. He could have conquered the resistance of the Jews, as well as chased away the darkness and ignorance of the Gentiles. No doubt but he could overpower the heart of the most malicious devil, as well as that of the simplest and weakest man. But the breath of the Almighty Spirit is in his own power, to breathe "where he lists" (John 3:8). It is at his liberty whether he will give to any the feelings of the invincible efficacy of his grace; he did not want strength to have kept man as firm as a rock against the temptation of Satan, and poured in such fortifying grace, as to have made him impregnable against the powers

of hell, as well as he did secure the standing of the angels against the sedition of their fellows: but it was his will to permit it to be otherwise.

(2.) Nor is it from any prerogative in the creature. He converts not any for their natural perfection, because he seizeth upon the most ignorant; nor for their moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful; nor for their civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable.

[1.] Not for their natural perfection of knowledge. He opened the minds and hearts of the more ignorant. Were the nature of the Gentiles better manured than that of the Jews, or did the tapers of their understandings burn clearer? No; the one were skilled in the prophecies of the Messiah, and might have compared the predictions they owned with the actions and sufferings of Christ, which they were spectators of. He let alone those that had expectations of the Messiah, and expectations about the time of Christ's appearance, both grounded upon the oracles wherewith he had entrusted them. The Gentiles were unacquainted with the prophets, and therefore destitute of the expectations of the Messiah (Ephesians 2:12): they were "without Christ;" without any revelation of Christ, because "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," without any knowledge of God, or promises of Christ. The Jews might sooner, in a way of reason, have been wrought upon than the Gentiles, who were ignorant of the prophets, by whose writings they might have examined the truth of the apostles' declarations. Thus are they refused that were the kindred of Christ, according to the flesh, and the Gentiles, that were at a greater distance from him, brought in by God; thus he catcheth not at the subtle and mighty devils, who had an original in spiritual nature more like to him, but at weak and simple man.

[2.] Not for any moral perfection, because he converts the most sinful: the Gentiles, steeped in idolatry and superstition. He sowed more faith among the Romans than in Jerusalem; more faith in a city that was the common sewer of all the idolatry of the nations conquered by them, than in that city which had so signally been owned by him, and had not practised any idolatry since the Babylonish captivity. He planted saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; at Ephesus, that presented the whole world with a cup of fornication in their temple of Diana; among the Colossians, votaries to Cybele in a manner of worship attended with beastly and lascivious ceremonies. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable? (Titus 1:12): "liars," not to be credited; "evil beasts," not to be associated with; "slow bellies," fit for no service. What prerogative was there in the nature of such putrefaction? as much as in that of a toad to be elevated to the dignity of an angel. What steam from such dunghills could be welcome to him, and move him to cast his eye on them, and sweeten them from heaven? What treasures of worth were here to open the treasures of his grace! Were such filthy snuffs fit of themselves to be kindled by, and become a lodging for, a gospel beam? What invitations could he have from lying, beastliness, gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the fire, while he left straighter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

[3.] Not for any civil perfection, because he turns the most despicable. He elevates not nature to grace upon the account of wealth, honor, or any civil station in the world: he dispenseth not ordinarily those treasures to those that the mistaken world foolishly admire and dote upon (1

Corinthians 1:26); “Not many mighty, not many noble:” a purple robe is not usually decked with this jewel; he takes more of mouldy clay than refined dust to cast into his image; and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels than in the world’s golden ones; he gives out his richest doles to those that are the scorn and reproach of the world. Should he impart his grace most to those that abound in wealth or honor, it had been some foundation for a conception that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth when we behold the subjects of his grace as void originally of any allurements, as they are full of provocations. Hereby he declares himself free from all created engagements, and that he is not led by any external motives in the object.

[4.] It is not from any obligation which lies upon him. He is indebted to none: disobliged by all. No man deserves from him any act of grace, but every man deserves what the most deplorable are left to suffer. He is obliged by the children of wrath to nothing else but showers of wrath; owes no more a debt to fallen man, than to fallen devils, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. How was he more bound to restore them, than he was to preserve them; to catch them after they fell, than to put a bar in the way of their falling? God, as a sovereign, gave laws to men, and a strength sufficient to keep those laws. What obligation is there upon God to repair that strength man wilfully lost, and extract him out of that condition into which he voluntarily plunged himself? What if man sinned by temptation, which is a reason alleged by some, might not many of the devils do so too? Though there was a first of them that sinned without a temptation, yet many of them might be seduced into rebellion by the ringleader. Upon that account he is no more bound to give grace to all men, than to devils. If he promised life upon obedience, he threatened death upon transgression. By man’s disobedience God is quit of his promise, and owes nothing but punishment upon the violation of his law. Indeed man may pretend to a claim of sufficient strength from him by creation, as God is the author of nature, and he had it; but since he hath extinguished it by his sin, he cannot in the least pretend any obligation on God for a new strength. If it be a “peradventure” whether he will “give repentance,” as it is 2 Timothy 2:25, there is no tie in the case; a tie would put it beyond a peradventure with a God that never forfeited his obligation. No husbandman thinks himself obliged to bestow cost and pains, manure and tillage, upon one field more than another; though the nature of the ground may require more, yet he is at his liberty whether he will expend more upon one than another. [Note: Claude, sur la Parole des Noces, p. 29.] He may let it be fallow as long as he please. God is less obliged to till and prune his creatures, than man is obliged to his field or trees. If a king proclaim a pardon to a company of rebels, upon the condition of each of them paying such a sum of money; their estates before were capable of satisfying the condition, but their rebellion hath reduced them to an indigent condition; the proclamation itself is an act of grace, the condition required is not impossible in itself: the prince, out of a tenderness to some, sends them that sum of money, he hath by his proclamation obliged them to pay, and thereby enabled them to answer the condition he requires; the first he doth by a sovereign authority, the second he doth by a sovereign bounty. He was obliged to neither of them; punishment was a debt due to all of them; if he would remit it upon condition, he did relax his sovereign right; and if he would by his largess make any of them capable to fulfil the condition, by sending them presently a sufficient sum to pay the fine, he acted as proprietor of his own goods, to dispose of them in such a quantity to those to whom he was not obliged to bestow a mite.

[5.] It must therefore be an act of his mere sovereignty. This can only sit arbitrator in every gracious act. Why did he give grace to Abel and not to Cain, since they both lay in the same womb, and equally derived from their parents a taint in their nature; but that he would show a standing example of his sovereignty to the future ages of the world in the first posterity of man? Why did he give grace to Abraham, and separate him from his idolatrous kindred, to dignify him to be the root of the Messiah? Why did he confine his promise to Isaac, and not extend it to Ishmael, the seed of the same Abraham by Hagar, or to the children he had by Keturah after Sarah's death? What reason can be alleged for this but his sovereign will? Why did he not give the fallen angels a moment of repentance after their sin, but condemned them to irrevocable pains? Is it not as free for him to give grace to whom he please, as create what worlds he please; to form this corrupted clay into his own image, as to take such a parcel of dust from all the rest of the creation whereof to compact Adam's body? Hath he not as much jurisdiction over the sinful mass of his creatures in a new creation, as he had over the chaos in the old? And what reason can be rendered, of his advancing this part of matter to the nobler dignity of a star, and leaving that other part to make up the dark body of the earth; to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason a prince subjects one malefactor to punishment, and lifts up another to a place of trust and profit? that Pharaoh honored the butler with an attendance on his person, and remitted the baker to the hands of the executioner? It was his pleasure. And is not as great right due to God, as is allowed to the worms of the earth? What is the reason he hardens a Pharaoh, by a denying him that grace which should mollify him, and allows it to another? It is because he will. "Whom he will he hardens" (Romans 9:18). Hath not man the liberty to pull up the sluice, and let the water run into what part of the ground he pleases? What is the reason some have not a heart to understand the beauty of his ways? Because the Lord doth not give it them (Deuteronomy 29:4). Why doth he not give all his converts an equal measure of his sanctifying grace? some have mites and some have treasures. Why doth he give his grace to some sooner, to some later? some are inspired in their infancy, others not till a full age, and after; some not till they have fallen into some gross sin, as Paul; some betimes, that they may do him service: others later, as the thief upon the cross, and presently snatcheth them out of the world? Some are weaker, some stronger in nature, some more beautiful and lovely, others more uncomely and sluggish. It is so in supernaturals. What reason is there for this, but his own will? This is instead of all that can be assigned on the part of God. He is the free disposer of his own goods, and as a Father may give a greater portion to one child than to another. And what reason of complaint is there against God? may not a toad complain that God did not make it a man, and give it a portion of reason? or a fly complain that God did not make it an angel, and give it a garment of light; had they but any spark of understanding; as well as man complain that God did not give him grace as well as another? Unless he sincerely desired it, and then was denied it, he might complain of God, though not as a sovereign, yet as a promiser of grace to them that ask it. God doth not render his sovereignty formidable; he shuts not up his throne of grace from any that seek him; he invites man; his arms are open, and the sceptre stretched out; and no man continues under the arrest of his lusts, but he that is unwilling to be otherwise, and such a one hath no reason to complain of God.

3. His sovereignty is manifest in disposing the means of grace to some, not to all. He hath caused the sun to shine bright in one place, while he hath left others benighted and deluded by the devil's oracles. Why do the evangelical dews fall in this or that place, and not in another? Why was the

gospel published in Rome so soon, and not in Tartary? Why hath it been extinguished in some places, as soon almost as it had been kindled in them? Why hath one place been honored with the beams of it in one age, and been covered with darkness the next? One country hath been made a sphere for this star, that directs to Christ, to move in; and afterwards it hath been taken away, and placed in another; sometimes more clearly it hath shone, sometimes more darkly, in the same place; what is the reason of this? It is true something of it may be referred to the justice of God, but much more to the sovereignty of God. That the gospel is published later, and not sooner, the apostle tell us is "according to the commandment of the everlasting God" (Romans 16:26).

(1.) The means of grace, after the families from Adam became distinct, were never granted to all the world. After that fatal breach in Adam's family by the death of Abel, and Cain's separation, we read not of the means of grace continued among Cain's posterity; it seems to be continued in Adam's sole family, and not published in societies till the time of Seth. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). It was continued in that family till the deluge, which was 1523 years after the creation, according to some, or 1656 years, according to others. After that, when the world degenerated, it was communicated to Abraham, and settled in the posterity that descended from Jacob; though he left not the world without a witness of himself, and some sprinklings of revelations in other parts, as appears by the Book of Job, and the discourses of his friends.

(2.) The Jews had this privilege granted them above other nations, to have a clearer revelation of God. God separated them from all the world to honor them with the depositum of his oracles (Romans 3:2): "To them were committed the oracles of God." In which regard all other nations are said to be "without God" (Ephesians 2:12), as being destitute of so great a privilege. The Spirit blew in Canaan when the lands about it felt not the saving breath of it. "He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (Psalms 147:20). The rest had no warnings from the prophets, no dictates from heaven, but what they had by the light of nature, the view of the works of creation, and the administration of Providence, and what remained among them of some ancient traditions derived from Noah, which, in tract of time, were much defaced. We read but of one Jonah sent to Nineveh, but frequent alarms to the Israelites by a multitude of prophets commissioned by God. It is true, the door of the Jewish church was open to what proselytes would enter themselves, and embrace their religion and worship; but there was no public proclamation made in the world; only God, by his miracles in their deliverance from Egypt (which could not but be famous among all the neighbor nations), declared them to be a people favored by heaven: but the tradition from Adam and Noah was not publicly revived by God in other parts, and raised from that grave of forgetfulness wherein it had lain so long buried. Was there any reason in them for this indulgence? God might have been as liberal to any other nation, yea, to all the nations in the world, if it had been his sovereign pleasure: any other people were as fit to be entrusted with his oracles, and be subjects for his worship, as that people; yet all other nations, till the rejection of the Jews, because of their rejection of Christ, were strangers from the covenant of promise. These people were part of the common mass of the world: they had no prerogative in nature above Adam's posterity. Were they the extract of an innocent part of his loins, and all the other nations drained out of his putrefaction? Had the blood of Abraham, from whom they were more immediately descended, any more precious tincture than the rest of mankind? They, as well as other nations, were made of "one blood" (Acts 17:26); and that corrupted both in the spring and

in the rivulets. Were they better than other nations, when God first drew them out of their slavery? We have Joshua's authority for it, that they had complied with the Egyptian idolatry, "and served other gods," in that place of their servitude (Joshua 24:14). Had they had an abhorrence of the superstition of Egypt, while they remained there, they could not so soon have erected a golden calf for worship in imitation of the Egyptian idols. All the rest of mankind had as inviting reasons to present God with, as those people had. God might have granted the same privilege to all the world, as well as to them, or denied it them, and endowed all the rest of the world with his statutes: but the enriching such a small company of people with his Divine showers, and leaving the rest of the world as a barren wilderness in spirituals, can be placed upon no other account originally than that of his unaccountable sovereignty, of his love to them: there was nothing in them to merit such high titles from God as his first-born, his peculiar treasure, the apple of his eye. He disclaims any righteousness in them, and speaks a word sufficient to damp such thoughts in them, by charging them with their wickedness, while he "loaded them with his benefits" (Deuteronomy 9:4; Deuteronomy 9:6). The Lord "gives thee not" this land for "thy righteousness;" for thou art a stiff-necked people. It was an act of God's free pleasure to "choose them to be a people to himself" (Deuteronomy 7:6).

(3.) God afterwards rejected the Jews, gave them up to the hardness of their hearts, and spread the gospel among the Gentiles. He hath cast off the children of the kingdom, those that had been enrolled for his subjects for many ages, who seemed, by their descent from Abraham, to have a right to the privileges of Abraham; and called men from the east and from the west, from the darkest corners in the world, to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," i. e. to partake with them of the promises of the gospel (Matthew 8:11). The people that were accounted accursed by the Jews enjoy the means of grace, which have been hid from those that were once dignified this 1600 years; that they have neither ephod, nor teraphim, nor sacrifice, nor any true worship of God among them (Hosea 3:4). Why he should not give them grace to acknowledge and own the person of the Messiah, to whom he had made the promises of him for so many successive ages, but let their "heart be fat," and "their ears heavy" (Isaiah 6:10)?—why the gospel at length, after the resurrection of Christ, should be presented to the Gentiles, not by chance, but pursuant to the resolution and prediction of God, declared by the prophets that it should be so in time?—why he should let so many hundreds of years pass over, after the world was peopled, and let the nations all that while soak in their idolatrous customs?—why he should not call the Gentiles without rejecting the Jews, and bind them both up together in the bundle of life?—why he should acquaint some people with it a little after the publishing it in Jerusalem, by the descent of the Spirit, and others not a long time after?—some in the first ages of Christianity enjoyed it; others have it not, as those in America, till the last age of the world;—can be referred to nothing but his sovereign pleasure.

What merit can be discovered in the Gentiles? There is something of justice in the case of the Jews' rejection, nothing but sovereignty in the Gentiles' reception into the church. If the Jews were bad, the Gentiles were in some sort worse: the Jews owned the one true God, without mixture of idols, though they owned not the Messiah in his appearance, which they did in a promise; but the Gentiles owned neither the one nor the other. Some tell us, it was for the merit of some of their ancestors. How comes the means of grace, then, to be taken from the Jew, who had (if any people ever had) meritorious ancestors for a plea? If the merit of some of their former progenitors were

the cause, what was the reason the debt due to their merit was not paid to their immediate progeny, or to themselves, but to a posterity so distant from them, and so abominably depraved as the Gentile world was at the day of the gospel-sun striking into their horizon? What merit might be in their ancestors (if any could be supposed in the most refined rubbish), it was so little for themselves, that no oil could be spared out of their lamps for others. What merit their ancestors might have, might be forfeited by the succeeding generations. It is ordinarily seen, that what honor a father deserves in a state for public service, may be lost by the son, forfeited by treason, and himself attainted. Or was it out of a foresight that the Gentiles would embrace it, and the Jews reject it; that the Gentiles would embrace it in one place, and not in another? How did God foresee it, but in his own grace, which he was resolved to display in one, not in another? It must be then still resolved into his sovereign pleasure. Or did he foresee it in their wills and nature? What, were they not all one common dross? Was any part of Adam, by nature, better than another? How did God foresee that which was not, nor could be, without his pleasure to give ability, and grace to receive? Well, then, what reason but the sovereign pleasure of God can be alleged, why Christ forbade the apostles, at their first commission, to preach to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:15), but, at the second and standing commission, orders them to preach to “every creature?” Why did he put a demur to the resolutions of Paul and Timothy, to impart light to Bithynia, or order them to go into Macedonia? Was that country more worthy upon whom lay a great part of the blood of the world shed in Alexander’s time Acts 16:6-7; Acts 16:9-10)? Why should Corazin and Bethsaida enjoy those means that were not granted to the Tyrians and Sidonians, who might probably have sooner reached out their arms to welcome it (Matthew 11:21)? Why should God send the gospel into our island, and cause it to flourish so long here, and not send it, or continue it, in the furthest eastern parts of the world? Why should the very profession of Christianity possess so small a compass of ground in the world, but five parts in thirty, the Mahometans holding six parts, and the other nineteen overgrown with Paganism, where either the gospel was never planted, or else since rooted up? To whom will you refer this, but to the same cause our Saviour doth the revelation of the gospel to babes, and not to the wise—even to his Father? “For so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matthew 11:25-26); “For so was thy good pleasure before thee” (as in the original); it is at his pleasure whether he will give any a clear revelation of his gospel, or leave them only to the light of nature. He could have kept up the first beam of the gospel in the promise in all nations among the apostasies of Adam’s posterity, or renewed it in all nations when it began to be darkened, as well as he first published it to Adam after his fall; but it was his sovereign pleasure to permit it to be obscured in one place, and to keep it lighted in another.

4. His sovereignty is manifest in the various influences of the means of grace. He saith to these waters of the sanctuary, as to the floods of the sea, “Hitherto you shall go, and no further.” Sometimes they wash away the filth of the flesh and outward man, but not that of the spirit; the gospel spiritualizeth some, and only moralizeth others; some are by the power of it struck down to conviction, but not raised up to conversion; some have only the gleams of it in their consciences, and others more powerful flashes; some remain in their thick darkness under the beaming of the gospel every day in their face, and after a long insensibleness are roused by its light and warmth; sometimes there is such a powerful breath in it, that it levels the haughty imaginations of men, and lays them at its feet that before strutted against it in the pride of their heart. The foundation of this is not in the gospel itself, which is always the same, nor in the ordinances, which are channels as sound at one time as at another, but Divine sovereignty that spirits them as he pleaseth, and

“blows when and where it lists.” It has sometimes conquered its thousands (Acts 2:41); at another time scarce its tens; sometimes the harvest hath been great, when the laborers have been but few; at another time it hath been small, when the laborers have been many; sometimes whole sheaves; at another time scarce gleanings. The evangelical net hath been sometimes full at a cast, and at every cast; at another time many have labored all night, and day too, and caught nothing (Acts 2:47): “The Lord added to the church daily.” The gospel chariot doth not always return with captives chained to the sides of it, but sometimes blurred and reproached, wearing the marks of hell’s spite, instead of imprinting the marks of its own beauty. In Corinth it triumphed over many people (Acts 18:10); in Athens it is mocked, and gathers but a few clusters (Acts 17:32; Acts 17:34). God keeps the key of the heart, as well as of the womb. The apostles had a power of publishing the gospel, and working miracles, but under the Divine conduct; it was an instrumentality *durante bene placito*, and as God saw it convenient. Miracles were not upon every occasion allowed to them to be wrought, nor success upon every administration granted to them; God sometimes lent them the key, but to take out no more treasure than was allotted to them. There is a variety in the time of gospel operation; some rise out of their graves of sin, and beds of sluggishness, at the first appearance of this sun; others lie snorting longer. Why doth not God spirit it at one season as well as at another, but set his distinct periods of time, but because he will show his absolute freedom? And do we not sometimes experiment that after the most solemn preparations of the heart, we are frustrated of those incomes we expected? Perhaps it was because we thought Divine returns were due to our preparations, and God stops up the channel, and we return drier than we came, that God may confute our false opinion, and preserve the honor of his own sovereignty. Sometimes we leap with John Baptist in the womb at the appearance of Christ; sometimes we lie upon a lazy bed when he knocks from heaven; sometimes the fleece is dry, and sometimes wet, and God withholds to drop down his dew of the morning upon it. The dews of his word, as well as the droppings of the clouds, belong to his royalty; light will not shine into the heart, though it shine round about us, without the sovereign order of that God “who commanded light to shine out of the darkness” of the chaos (2 Corinthians 4:6). And is it not seen also in regard of the refreshing influences of the word? sometimes the strongest arguments, and clearest promises, prevail nothing towards the quelling black and despairing imaginations; when, afterwards, we have found them frightened away by an unexpected word, that seemed to have less virtue in it itself than any that passed in vain before it. The reasonings of wisdom have dropped down like arrows against a brazen wall, when the speech of a weaker person hath found an efficacy. It is God by his sovereignty spirits one word and not another; sometimes a secret word comes in, which was not thought of before, as dropped from heaven, and gives a refreshing, when emptiness was found in all the rest. One word from the lips of a sovereign prince is a greater cordial than all the harangues of subjects without it; what is the reason of this variety, but that God would increase the proofs of his own sovereignty? that as it was a part of his dominion to create the beauty of a world, so it is no less to create the peace as well as the grace of the heart (Isaiah 57:19): “I create the fruit of the lips, peace.” Let us learn from hence to have adoring thoughts of, not murmuring fancies against, the sovereignty of God; to acknowledge it with thankfulness in what we have; to implore it with a holy submission in what we want. To own God as a sovereign in a way of dependence, is the way to be owned by him as subjects in a way of favor.

5. His sovereignty is manifested in giving a greater measure of knowledge to some than to others. What parts, gifts, excellency of nature, any have above others, are God’s donative; “He gives

wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Daniel 2:21); wisdom, the habit, and knowledge, the right use of it, in discerning the right nature of objects, and the fitness of means conducing to the end; all is but a beam of Divine light; and the different degrees of knowledge in one man above another, are the effects of his sovereign pleasure. He enlightens not the minds of all men to know every part of his will; one "eats with a doubtful conscience," another in "faith," without any staggering (Romans 14:2). Peter had a desire to keep up circumcision, not fully understanding the mind of God in the abolition of the Jewish ceremonies; while Paul was clear in the truth of that doctrine. A thought comes into our mind that, like a sunbeam, makes a Scripture truth visible in a moment, which before we were poring upon without any success; this is from his pleasure. One in the primitive times had the gift of knowledge, another of wisdom, one the gift of prophecy, another of tongues, one the gift of healing, another that of discerning spirits; why this gift to one man, and not to another? Why such a distribution in several subjects? Because it is his sovereign pleasure. "The Spirit divides to every man severally as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Why doth he give Bezaleel and Aholiab the gift of engraving, and making curious works for the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3), and not others? Why doth he bestow the treasures of evangelical knowledge upon the meanest of earthen vessels, the poor Galileans, and neglect the Pharisees, stored with the knowledge both of naturals and morals? Why did he give to some, and not to others, "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 13:11.) The reason is implied in the words, "Because it was the mystery of his kingdom," and therefore was the act of his sovereignty. How would it be a kingdom and monarchy if the governor of it were bound to do what he did? It is to be resolved only into the sovereign right of propriety of his own goods, that he furnisheth babes with a stock of knowledge, and leaves the wise and prudent empty of it (Matthew 11:26): "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Why did he not reveal his mind to Eli, a grown man, and in the highest office in the Jewish church, but open it to Samuel, a stripling? why did the Lord go from the one to the other? Because his motion depends upon his own will. Some are of so dull a constitution, that they are incapable of any impression, like rocks too hard for a stamp; others like water; you may stamp what you please, but it vanisheth as soon as the seal is removed. It is God forms men as he pleaseth: some have parts to govern a kingdom, others scarce brains to conduct their own affairs; one is fit to rule men, and another scarce fit to keep swine; some have capacious souls in crazy and deformed bodies, others contracted spirits and heavier minds in a richer and more beautiful case. Why are not all stones alike? some have a more sparkling light, as gems, more orient than pebbles;—some are stars of first, and others of a less magnitude; others as mean as glow-worms, a slimy lustre:—it is because he is the sovereign Disposer of what belongs to him; and gives here, as well as at the resurrection, to one "a glory of the sun;" to another that of the "moon;" and to a third a less, resembling that of a "star" (1 Corinthians 15:40). And this God may do by the same right of dominion, as he exercised when he endowed some kinds of creatures with a greater perfection than others in their nature. Why may he not as well garnish one man with a greater proportion of gifts, as make a man differ in excellency from the nature of a beast? or frame angels to a more purely spiritual nature than a man? or make one angel a cherubim or seraphim, with a greater measure of light than another? Though the foundation of this is his dominion, yet his wisdom is not uninterested in his sovereign disposal; he garnisheth those with a greater ability whom he intends for greater service, than those that he intends for less, or none at all; as an artificer bestows more labor, and carves a more excellent figure upon those stones that he designs for a more honorable place in the building. But

though the intending this or that man for service be the motive of laying in a greater provision in him than in others, yet still it is to be referred to his sovereignty, since that first act of culling him out for such an end was the fruit solely of his sovereign pleasure: as when he resolved to make a creature actively to glorify him, in wisdom he must give him reason; yet the making such a creature was an act of his absolute dominion.

6. His sovereignty is manifest in the calling some to a more special service in their generation. God settles some in immediate offices of his service, and perpetuates them in those offices, with a neglect of others, who seem to have a greater pretence to them. Moses was a great sufferer for Israel, the solicitor for them in Egypt, and the conductor of them from Egypt to Canaan; yet he was not chosen to the high priesthood, but that was an office settled upon Aaron, and his posterity after him, in a lineal descent; Moses was only pitched upon for the present rescue of the captived Israelites, and to be the instrument of Divine miracles; but notwithstanding all the success he had in his conduct, his faithfulness in his employment, and the transcendent familiarity he had with the great Ruler of the world, his posterity were left in the common level of the tribe of Levi, without any special mark of dignity upon them above the rest for all the services of that great man. Why Moses for a temporary magistrate, Aaron for a perpetual priesthood, above all the rest of the Israelites? hath little reason but the absolute pleasure of God, who distributes his employments as he pleaseth; and as a master orders his servant to do the noblest work, and another to labor in baser offices, according to his pleasure. Why doth he call out David, a shepherd, to sway the Jewish sceptre, above the rest of the brothers, that had a fairer appearance, and had been bred in arms, and inured to the toils and watchings of a camp? Why should Mary be the mother of Christ, and not some other of the same family of David, of a more splendid birth, and a nobler education? Though some other reasons may be rendered, yet that which affords the greatest acquiescence, is the sovereign will of God. Why did Christ choose out of the meanest of the people the twelve apostles, to be heralds of his grace in Judea, and other parts of the world; and afterwards select Paul before Gamaliel, his instructor, and others of the Jews, as learned as himself, and advance him to be the most eminent apostle, above the heads of those who had ministered to Christ in the days of his flesh? Why should he preserve eleven of those he first called to propagate and enlarge his kingdom, and leave the other to the employment of shedding his blood? Why, in the times of our reformation, he should choose a Luther out of a monastery, and leave others in their superstitious nastiness, to perish in the traditions of their fathers? Why set up Calvin, as a bulwark of the gospel, and let others as learned as himself wallow in the sink of popery? It is his pleasure to do so. The potter hath power to separate this part of the clay to form a vessel for a more public use, and another part of the clay to form a vessel for a more private one. God takes the meanest clay to form the most excellent and honorable vessels in his house. As he formed man, that was to govern the creatures of the same clay and earth whereof the beasts were formed, and not of that nobler element of water, which gave birth to the fish and birds: so he forms some, that are to do him the greatest service, of the meanest materials, to manifest the absolute right of his dominion.

7. His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honor upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labors and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort in their whole lives; some sweat and toil, and what they labor for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same

clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather. One hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head. A sceptre is put into one man's hand, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in dunghill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the Divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the Maker of the "poor as well as the rich" (Proverbs 22:2), not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth, and the fulness thereof, is his propriety; and he hath as much a right as Joseph had to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins he please. There is an election to a greater degree of worldly felicity, as there is an election of some to a greater degree of supernatural grace and glory: as he makes it "rain upon one city, and not upon another" (Amos 4:7), so he causeth prosperity to distil upon the head of one and not upon another; crowning some with earthly blessings, while he crosseth others with continual afflictions: for he speaks of himself as a great proprietor of the corn that nourisheth us, and the wine that cheers us, and the wood that warm us (Hosea 2:8-9): "I will take away," not your corn and wine, but "my corn, my wine, my wool." His right to dispose of the goods of every particular person is unquestionable. He can take away from one, and pass over the propriety to another. Thus he devolved the right of the Egyptian jewels to the Israelites, and bestowed upon the captives what before he had vouchsafed to the oppressors; as every sovereign state demands the goods of their subjects for the public advantage in a case of exigency, though none of that wealth was gained by any public office, but by their private industry, and gained in a country not subject to the dominion of those that require a portion of them. By this right he changes strangely the scene of the world; sometimes those that are high are reduced to a mean and ignominious condition, those that are mean are advanced to a state of plenty and glory. The counter, which in accounting signifies now but a penny, is presently raised up to signify a pound. The proud ladies of Israel, instead of a girdle of curious needlework, are brought to make use of a cord; as the vulgar translates rent, a rag, or list of cloth (Isaiah 3:24), and sackcloth for a stomacher instead of silk. This is the sovereign act of God, as he is Lord of the world (Psalms 75:6-7): "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." He doth no wrong to any man, if he lets him languish out his days in poverty and disgrace: if he gives or takes away, he meddles with nothing but what is his own more than ours: if he did dispense his benefits equally to all, men would soon think it their due. The inequality and changes preserve the notion of God's sovereignty, and correct our natural unmindfulness of it. If there were no changes, God would not be feared as the "King of all the earth" (Psalms 55:19): to this might also be referred his investing some countries with greater riches in their bowels, and on the surface; the disposing some of the fruitful and pleasant regions of Canaan or Italy, while he settles others in the icy and barren parts of the northern climates.

8. His sovereignty is manifest in the times and seasons of dispensing his goods. He is Lord of the times when, as well as of the goods which, he doth dispose of to any person; these "the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). As it was his sovereign pleasure to restore the kingdom to Israel, so he would pitch upon the time when to do it, and would not have his right invaded, so much as by a question out of curiosity. This disposing of opportunities, in many things, can be referred to nothing else but his sovereign pleasure. Why should Christ come at the twilight and evening of the world? at the fulness, and not at the beginning, of time? Why should he be from the infancy of the world so long wrapt up in a promise, and not appear in the flesh till the last times and

gray hairs of the world, when so many persons, in all nations, had been hurried out of the world without any notice of such a Redeemer? What was this but his sovereign will? Why the Gentiles should be left so long in the devil's chains, wallowing in the sink of their abominable superstitions, since God had declared his intention by the prophets to call multitudes of them, and reject the Jews;—why he should defer it so long, can be referred to nothing but the same cause. What is the reason the veil continues so long upon the heart of the Jews, that is promised, one time or other, to be taken off? Why doth God delay the accomplishment of those glorious predictions of the happiness and interest of that people? Is it because of the sin of their ancestors,—a reason that cannot bear much weight? If we cast it upon that account, their conversion can never be expected, can never be effected; if for the sins of their ancestors, is it not also for their own sins? Do their sins grow less in number, or less venomous, or provoking in quality, by this delay? Is not their blasphemy of Christ as malicious, their hatred of him as strong and rooted, as ever? Do they not as much approve of the bloody act of their ancestors, since so many ages are past, as their ancestors did applaud it at the time of the execution? are they not the same disposition and will, discovered sufficiently by the scorn of Christ, and of those that profess his name, to act the same thing over again, were Christ now in the same state in the world, and they invested with the same power of government? If their conversion were deferred one age after the death of Christ for the sins of their preceding ancestors, is it to be expected now; since the present generation of the Jews in all countries have the sins of those remote, the succeeding, and their more immediate ancestors, lying upon them? This, therefore, cannot be the reason; but as it was the sovereign pleasure of God to foretell his intention to overcome the stoutness of their hearts, so it is his sovereign pleasure that it shall not be performed till the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25). As he is the Lord of his own grace, so he is the Lord of the time when to dispense it. Why did God create the world in six days, which he could have erected and beautified in a moment? Because it was his pleasure so to do. Why did he frame the world when he did, and not many ages before? Because he is Master of his own work. Why did he not resolve to bring Israel to the fruition of Canaan till after four hundred years? Why did he draw out their deliverance to so long time after he began to attempt it? Why such a multitude of plagues upon Pharaoh to work it, when he could have cut short the work by one mortal blow upon the tyrant and his accomplices? It was his sovereign pleasure to act so, though not without other reasons intelligible enough by looking into the story. Why doth he not bring man to a perfection of stature in a moment after his birth, but let him continue in a tedious infancy, in a semblance to beasts, for the want of an exercise of reason? Why doth he not bring this or that man, whom he intends for service, to a fitness in an instant, but by long tracts of study, and through many meanders and labyrinths? Why doth he transplant a hopeful person in his youth to the pleasures of another world, and let another, of an eminent holiness, continue in the misery of this, and wade through many floods of afflictions? What can we chiefly refer all these things to but his sovereign pleasure? The “times are determined by God” (Acts 17:26).

Thirdly. The dominion of God is manifested as a governor, as well as a lawgiver and proprietor.

1. In disposing of states and kingdoms. (Psalms 75:7): “God is Judge; he puts down one, and sets up another.” “Judge” is to be taken not in the same sense that we commonly use the word, for a judicial minister in a way of trial, but for a governor; as you know the extraordinary governors raised up among the Jews were called judges, whence one entire book in the Old Testament is so

denominated, the Book of Judges. God hath a prerogative to “change times and seasons” (Daniel 2:21), i. e. the revolutions of government, whereby times are altered. How many empires, that have spread their wings over a great part of the world, have had their carcasses torn in pieces; and unheard-of nations plucked off the wings of the Roman eagle, after it had preyed upon many nations of the world; and the Macedonian empire was as the dew that is dried up a short time after it falls. [Note: Mr. Mede, in one of his letters.] He erected the Chaldean monarchy, used Nebuchadnezzar to overthrow and punish the ungrateful Jews, and, by a sovereign act, gave a great parcel of land into his hands; and what he thought was his right by conquest, was God’s donative to him. You may read the charter to Nebuchadnezzar, whom he terms his servant (Jeremiah 27:6): “And now I have given all those lands” (the lands are mentioned Jeremiah 27:3), “into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant:” which decree he pronounceth after his asserting his right of sovereignty over the whole earth (Jeremiah 27:5). After that, he puts a period to the Chaldean empire, and by the same sovereign authority decrees Babylon to be a spoil to the nations of the north country, and delivers her up as a spoil to the Persian (Jeremiah 1:9-10): and this for the manifestation of his sovereign dominion, that he was the Lord, that made peace, and created evil (Isaiah 45:6-7). God afterwards overthrows that by the Grecian Alexander, prophesied of under the figure of a goat, with “one horn between his eyes” (Daniel 8:1-27.): the swift current of his victories, as swift as his motion, showed it to be from an extraordinary hand of heaven, and not either from the policy or strength of the Macedonian. His strength, in the prophet, is described to be less, being but one horn running against the Persian, described under the figure of a ram with two horns: [Note: Josephus.] and himself acknowledged a Divine motion exciting him to that great attempt, when he saw Joddus, the high-priest, coming out in his priestly robes, to meet him at his approach to Jerusalem, whom he was about to worship, acknowledging that the vision which put him upon the Persian war appeared to him in such a garb. What was the reason Israel was rent from Judah, and both split into two distinct kingdoms? Because Rehoboam would not hearken to sober and sound counsels, but follow the advice of upstarts. What was the reason he did not hearken to sound advice, since he had so advantageous an education under his father Solomon, the wisest prince of the world? “The cause was from the Lord” (1 Kings 12:15), that he might perform what he had before spoke. In this he acted according to his royal word; but, in the first resolve, he acted as a sovereign lord, that had the disposal of all nations in the world. And though Ahab had a numerous posterity, seventy sons to inherit the throne after him, yet God by his sovereign authority gives them up into the hands of Jehu, who strips them of their lives and hopes together: not a man of them succeeded in the throne, but the crown is transferred to Jehu by God’s disposal. In wars, whereby flourishing kingdoms are overthrown, God hath the chief hand; in reference to which it is observed that, in the two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, God is called “the Lord of Hosts” one hundred and thirty times. It is not the sword of the captain, but the sword of the Lord bears the first rank; “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon” (Judges 7:18). The sword of a conquerer is the sword of the Lord, and receives its charge and commission from the great Sovereign (Jeremiah 47:6-7). We are apt to confine our thoughts to second causes, lay the fault upon the miscarriages of persons, the ambition of the one, and the covetousness of another, and regard them not as the effects of God’s sovereign authority, linking second causes together to serve his own purpose. The skill of one man may lay open the folly of a counsellor; an earthly force may break in pieces the power of a mighty prince: but Job, in his consideration of those things, refers the matter higher: “He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth

their loins with a girdle" (Job 12:18). "He looseth the bonds of kings," i. e. takes off the yokes they lay upon their subjects, "and girds their loins with a girdle" (a cord, as the vulgar); he lays upon them those fetters they framed for others; such a girdle, or band, as is the mark of captivity, as the words, Job 12:19, confirm it: "He leads princes away spoiled, and overthrows the mighty." God lifts up some to a great height, and casts down others to a disgraceful ruin. All those changes in the face of the world, the revolutions of empires, the desolating and ravaging wars, which are often immediately the birth of the vice, ambition, and fury of princes, are the royal acts of God as Governor of the world. All government belongs to him; he is the Fountain of all the great and the petty dominions in the world; and, therefore, may place in them what substitutes and vicegerents he pleaseth, as a prince may remove his officers at pleasure, and take their commissions from them. The highest are settled by God *durante bene placito*, and not *quamdiu bene se gesserint*. Those princes that have been the glory of their country have swayed the sceptre but a short time, when the more wolfish ones have remained longer in commission, as God hath seen fit for the ends of his own sovereign government. Now, by the revolutions in the world, and changes in governors and government, God keeps up the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, when he doth arrest grand and public offenders that wear a crown by his providence, and employ it, by their pride, against him that placed it there. When he arraigns such by a signal hand from heaven, he makes them the public examples of the rights of his sovereignty, declaring thereby, that the cedars of Lebanon are as much at his foot, as the shrubs of the valley; that he hath as sovereign an authority over the throne in the palace, as over the stool in the cottage.

2. The dominion of God is manifested in raising up and ordering the spirits of men according to his pleasure. He doth, as the Father of spirits, communicate an influence to the spirits of men, as well as an existence; he puts what inclinations he pleaseth into the will, stores it with what habits he please, whether natural or supernatural, whereby it may be rendered more ready to act according to the Divine purpose. The will of man is a finite principle, and therefore subject to Him who hath an infinite sovereignty over all things; and God, having a sovereignty over the will, in the manner of its acting, causeth it to will what he wills, as to the outward act, and the outward manner of performing it. There are many examples of this part of his sovereignty. God, by his sovereign conduct, ordered Moses a protectress as soon as his parents had formed an "ark of bulrushes," wherein to set him floating on the river (Exodus 2:3-6): they expose him to the waves, and the waves expose him to the view of Pharaoh's daughter, whom God, by his secret ordering her motion, had posted in that place; and though she was the daughter of a prince that inveterately hated the whole nation, and had, by various arts, endeavored to extirpate them, yet God inspires the royal lady with sentiments of compassion to the forlorn infant, though she knew him to be one of the Hebrews' children (Exodus 2:6), i. e. one of that race whom her father had devoted to the hands of the executioner; yet God, that doth by his sovereignty rule over the spirits of all men, moves her to take that infant into her protection, and nourish him at her own charge, give him a liberal education, adopt him as her son, who, in time, was to be the ruin of her race, and the saviour of his nation. Thus he appointed Cyrus to be his shepherd, and gave him a pastoral spirit for the restoration of the city and temple of Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:28): and Isaiah (Isaiah 45:5) tells them, in the prophecy, that he had girded him, though Cyrus had not known him, i. e. God had given him a military spirit and strength for so great an attempt, though he did not know that he was acted by God for those divine purposes. And when the time came for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt, the spirits of the people were raised up, not by themselves, but by God (Ezra 1:5), "Whose

spirit God had raised to go up;" and not only the spirit of Zerubbabel, the magistrate, and of Joshua, the priest, but the spirit of all the people, from the highest to the meanest that attended him, were acted by God to strengthen their hands, and promote the work (Haggai 1:14). The spirits of men, even in those works which are naturally desirable to them, as the restoration of the city and rebuilding of the Temple was to those Jews, are acted by God, as the Sovereign over them, much more when the wheels of men's spirits are lifted up above their ordinary temper and motion. It was this empire of God good Nehemiah regarded, as that whence he was to hope for success; he did not assure himself so much of, it, from the favor he had with the king, nor the reasonableness of his intended petition, but the absolute power God had over the heart of that great monarch; and, therefore, he supplicates the heavenly, before he petitioned the earthly, throne (Nehemiah 2:4): "So I prayed to the God of heaven." The heathens had some glance of this; it is an expression that Cicero hath somewhere, "That the Roman commonwealth was rather governed by the assistance of the Supreme Divinity over the hearts of men, than by their own counsels and management." How often hath the feeble courage of men been heightened to such a pitch as to stare death in the face, which before were damped with the least thought or glance of it! This is a fruit of God's sovereign dominion.

3. The dominion of God is manifest in restraining the furious passions of men, and putting a block in their way. Sometimes God doth it by a remarkable hand, as the Babel builders were diverted from their proud design by a sudden confusion of their language, and rendering it unintelligible to one another; sometimes by ordinary, though unexpected, means; as when Saul, like a hawk, was ready to prey upon David, whom he had hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, he had another object presented for his arms and fury by the Philistines' sudden invasion of a part of his territory (1 Samuel 23:26-28). But it is chiefly seen by an inward curbing mutinous affections, when there is no visible cause. What reason but this can be rendered, why the nations bordering on Canaan, who bore no good will to the Jews, but rather wished the whole race of them rooted out from the face of the earth, should not invade their country, pillage their houses, and plunder their cattle, while they were left naked of any human defence, the males being annually employed at one time at Jerusalem in worship; what reason can be rendered, but an invisible curb God put into their spirits? What was the reason not a man, of all the buyers and sellers in the Temple, should rise against our Saviour, when, with a high hand, he began to whip them out, but a Divine bridle upon them? though it appears, by the questioning his authority, that there were Jews enough to have chased out him and his company (John 2:15; John 2:18). What was the reason that, at the publishing the gospel by the apostles at the first descent of the Spirit, those that had used the Master so barbarously a few days before, were not all in a foam against the servants, that, by preaching that doctrine, upbraided them with the late murder? Had they better sentiments of the Lord, whom they had put to death? Were their natures grown tamer, and their malignity expelled? No; but that Sovereign who had loosed the reins of their malicious corruption, to execute the Master for the purchase of redemption, curbed it from breaking out against the servants, to further the propagation of the doctrine of redemption. He that restrains the roaring lion of hell, restrains also his whelps on earth; he and they must have a commission before they can put forth a finger to hurt, how malicious soever their nature and will be. His empire reaches over the malignity of devils, as well as the nature of beasts. The lions out of the den, as well as those in the den, are bridled by him in favor of his Daniels. His dominion is above that of principalities and powers; their decrees are at his mercy, whether they shall stand or fall; he hath a vote above their stiffest

resolves: his single word, I will, or, I forbid, outweighs the most resolute purposes of all the mighty Nimrods of the earth in their rendezvouses and cabals, in their associations and counsels (Isaiah 8:9-10): "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood," with a violent and irresistible force, intending nothing but ravage and desolation, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against them" (Isaiah 59:19), shall give a sudden check, and damp their spirits, and put them to a stand. When Laban furiously pursued Jacob, with an intent to do him an ill turn, God gave him a command to do otherwise (Genesis 31:24). Would Laban have respected that command any more than he did the light of nature when he worshipped idols, had not God exercised his authority in inclining his will to observe it, or laying restraints upon his natural inclinations, or denying his concurrence to the acting those ill intentions he had entertained? The stilling the principles of commotion in men, and the noise of the sea, are arguments of the Divine dominion; neither the one nor the other is in the power of the most sovereign prince without Divine assistance: as no prince can command a calm to a raging sea, so no prince can order stillness to a tumultuous people; they are both put together as equally parts of the Divine prerogative (Psalms 65:7), which "stills the noise of the sea, and tumult of the people:" and David owns God's sovereignty more than his own, "in subduing the people under him" (Psalms 18:47). In this his empire is illustrious (Psalms 29:10): "The Lord sitteth upon the floods, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever;" a King impossible to be deposed, not only on the natural floods of the sea, that would naturally overflow the world, but the metaphorical floods or tumults of the people, the sea in every wicked man's heart, more apt to rage morally than the sea to foam naturally. If you will take the interpretation of an angel, waters and floods, in the prophetic style, signify the inconstant and mutable people (Revelation 17:1; Revelation 17:5): "The waters where the whore sits are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues:" so the angel expounds to John the vision which he saw (Revelation 17:1). The heathens acknowledged this part of God's sovereignty in the inward restraints of men: those apparitions of the gods and goddesses in Homer, to several of the great men when they were in a fury, were nothing else, in the judgment of the wisest philosophers, than an exercise of God's sovereignty in quelling their passions, checking their uncomely intentions, and controlling them in that which their rage prompted them to. And, indeed, did not God set bounds to the storms in men's hearts, we should soon see the funeral, not only of religion, but civility; the one would be blown out, and the other torn up by the roots.

4. The dominion of God is manifest in defeating the purposes and devices of men. God often makes a mock of human projects, and doth as well accomplish that which they never dreamt of, as disappoint that which they confidently designed. He is present at all cabals, laughs at men's formal and studied counsels, bears a hand over every egg they hatch, thwarts their best compacted designs, supplants their contrivances, breaks the engines they have been many years rearing, diverts the intentions of men, as a mighty wind blows an arrow from the mark which the archer intended. (Job 5:12): "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise; he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." Enemies often draw an exact scheme of their intended proceedings, marshal their companies, appoint their rendezvous, think to make but one morsel of those they hate; God, by his sovereign dominion, turns the scale, changeth the gloominess of the oppressed into a sunshine, and the enemies' sunshine into darkness. When the nations were gathered together against Sion, and said, "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Sion" (Micah 4:11), what doth

God do in this case? (Micah 4:12), "He shall gather them," i. e. those conspiring nations, as "sheaves into the floor." Then he sounds a trumpet to Sion: "Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Sion, for I will make thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." I will make them and their counsels, them and their strength, the monuments and signal marks of my empire over the whole earth. When you see the cunningest designs baffled by some small thing intervening; when you see men of profound wisdom infatuated, mistake their way, and "grope in the noon-day as in the night" (Job 5:14), bewildered in a plain way; when you see the hopes of mighty attempters dashed into despair, their triumphs turned into funerals, and their joyful expectations into sorrowful disappointments; when you see the weak, devoted to destruction, victorious, and the most presumptuous defeated in their purposes, then read the Divine dominion in the desolation of such devices. How often doth God take away the heart and spirit of grand designs, and burst a mighty wheel, by snatching but one man out of the world! How often doth he "cut off the spirits of princes" (Psalms 76:12), either from the world by death, or from the execution of their projects by some unforeseen interruption, or from favoring those contrivances, which before they cherished by a change of their minds! How often hath confidence in God, and religious prayer, edged the weakest and smallest number of weapons to make a carnage of the carnally confident! How often hath presumption been disappointed, and the contemned enemy rejoice in the spoils of the proud expectant of victory! Phidias made the image of Nemesis, or Revenge, at Marathon, of that marble which the haughty Persians, despising the weakness of the Athenian forces, brought with them, to erect a trophy for an expected, but an ungained, victory. [Note: Causin. Symb. lib. ii. cap. 65.] Haman's neck, by a sudden turn, was in the halter, when the Jews' necks were designed to the block; Julian designed the overthrow of all the Christians, just before his breast was pierced by an unexpected arrow; the Powder-traitors were all ready to give fire to the mine, when the sovereign hand of Heaven snatched away the match. Thus the great Lord of the world cuts off men on the pinnacle of their designs, when they seem to threaten heaven and earth; puts out the candle of the wicked, which they thought to use to light them to the execution of their purposes; turns their own counsels into a curse to themselves, and a blessing to their adversaries, and makes his greatest enemies contribute to the effecting his purposes. How may we take notice of God's absolute disposal of things in private affairs, when we see one man, with a small measure of prudence and little industry, have great success, and others, with a greater measure of wisdom, and a greater toil and labor, find their enterprises melt between their fingers! It was Solomon's observation, "That the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill" (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Many things might interpose to stop the swift in his race, and damp the courage of the most valiant: things do not happen according to men's abilities, but according to the overruling authority of God: God never yet granted man the dominion of his own way, no more than to be lord of his own time: "The way of man is not in himself, it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). He hath given man a power of acting, but not the sovereignty to command success. He makes even those things which men intended for their security to turn to their ruin; Pilate delivered up Christ to be accounted a friend to Caesar, and Cxsar soon after proves an enemy to him, removes him from his government, and sends him into banishment. The Jews imagined by the crucifying Christ to keep the Roman ensigns at a distance from them, and this hastened their march, by God's sovereign disposal, which ended in a total desolation. "He makes the

judges fools" (Job 22:17), by taking away his light from their understanding, and suffering them to go on in the vanity of their own spirits, that his sovereignty in the management of things may be more apparent; for then he is known to be Lord, when he "snares the wicked in the work of his own hands" (Psalms 9:16). You have seen much of this doctrine in your experience, and, if my judgment fail me not, you will yet see much more.

5. The dominion of God is manifest in sending his judgments upon whom he please. "He kills and makes alive; he wounds and heals" whom he pleaseth: his thunders are his own, and he may cast them upon what subjects he thinks good: he hath a right, in a way of justice, to punish all men; he hath his choice, in a way of sovereignty, to pick out whom he please, to make the examples of it. Might not some nations be as wicked as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet have not been scorched with the like dreadful flames? Zoar was untouched, while the other cities, her neighbors, were burnt to ashes. Were there never any places and persons successors in Sodom's guilt? Yet those only by his sovereign authority are separated by him to be the examples of his "eternal vengeance" (Jude 1:7). Why are not sinners as Sodom, like as those ancient ones, scalded to death by the like fiery drops? It is because it is his pleasure; and the same reason is to be rendered, why he would in a way of justice cut off the Jews for their sins, and leave the Gentiles untouched in the midst of their idolatries. When the church was consumed because of her iniquities, they acknowledged God's sovereignty in this. "We are the clay, and thou art our Potter, and we all the work of thy hands" (Isaiah 64:7-8); thou hast a liberty to break or preserve us. Judgments move according to God's order. When the sword hath a charge against Ashkelon and the sea-shore, thither it must march, and touch not any other place or person as it goes, though there may be demerit enough for it to punish. When the prophet had spake to the sword, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still;" the prophet answers for the sword, "How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon? there hath he appointed it" (Jeremiah 47:6-7). If he hath appointed a judgment against London or Westminster, or any other place, there it shall drop, there it shall pierce, and in no other place without a like charge. God, as a sovereign, gives instructions to every judgment, when, and against whom, it shall march, and what cities, what persons, it shall arrest; and he is punctually obeyed by them, as a sovereign Lord. All creatures stand ready for his call, and are prepared to be executioners of his vengeance, when he speaks the word; they are his hosts by creation, and in array for his service at the sound of his trumpet, or beat of his drum, they troop together with arms in their hands, to put his orders exactly in execution.

6. The dominion of God is manifest in appointing to every man his calling and station in the world. If the hairs of every man's head fall under his sovereign care, the calling of every man, wherein he is to glorify God and serve his generation, which is of a greater concern than the hairs of the head, falls under his dominion. He is the master of the great family, and divides to every one his work as he pleaseth. The whole work of the Messiah, the time of every action, as well as the hour of his passion, was ordered and appointed by God. The separation of Paul to the preaching of the gospel, was by the sovereign disposal of God (Romans 1:1). By the same exercise of his authority, that he "sets every man the bounds of his habitation" (Acts 17:26), he prescribes also to him the nature of his work. He that ordered Adam, the father of mankind, his work, and the place of it, the "dressing the garden" (Genesis 2:15), doth not let any of his posterity be their own choosers, without an influence of his sovereign direction on them. Though our callings are our work, yet they

are by God's order, wherein we are to be faithful to our great Master and Ruler.

7. The dominion of God is manifest in the means and occasions of men's conversion. Sometimes one occasion, sometimes another; one word lets a man go, another arrests him, and brings him before God and his own conscience; it is as God gives out the order. He lets Paul be a prisoner at Jerusalem, that his cause should not be determined there; moves him to appeal to Cwsar, not only to make him a prisoner, but a preacher, in Caesar's court, and render his chains an occasion to bring in a harvest of converts in Nero's palace. His bonds in or for Christ are "manifest in all the palace" (Php 1:12-13); not the bare knowledge of his bonds, but the sovereign design of God in those bonds, and the success of them; the bare knowledge of them would not make others more confident for the gospel, as it follows, Php 1:14, without a providential design of them. Onesimus, running from his master, is guided by God's sovereign order into Paul's company, and thereby into Christ's arms; and he who came a fugitive, returns a Christian (Philemon 1:10, Philemon 1:15). Some, by a strong affliction, have had by the Divine sovereignty their understandings awakened to consider, and their wills spirited to conversion. Monica being called Meribibula, or toss-pot, was brought to consider her way, and reform her life. A word hath done that at one time, which hath often before fallen without any fruit. Many have come to suck in the eloquence of the minister, and have found in the honey for their ears a sting for their consciences. Austin had no other intent in going to hear Ambrose but to have a taste of his famous oratory. But while Ambrose spake a language to his ear, God spake a heavenly dialect to his heart. No reason can be rendered of the order, and timing, and influence of those things, but the sovereign pleasure of God, who will attend one occasion and season with his blessing, and not another.

8. The dominion of God is manifest in disposing of the lives of men. He keeps the key of death, as well as that of the womb, in his own hand; he hath given man a life, but not power to dispose of it, or lay it down at his pleasure; and therefore he hath ordered man not to murder, not another, not himself; man must expect his call and grant, to dispose of the life of his body. Why doth he cut the thread of this man's life, and spin another's out to a longer term? Why doth one die an inglorious death, and another more honorable? One silently drops away in the multitude, while another is made a sacrifice for the honor of God, or the safety of his country. This is a mark of honor he gives to one and not to another. "To you it is given" (Php 1:29). The manner of Peter's death was appointed (John 21:19). Why doth a small and slight disease against the rules of physic, and the judgment of the best practitioners, dislodge one man's soul out of his body, while a greater disease is mastered in another, and discharges the patient, to enjoy himself a longer time in the land of the living? Is it the effect of means so much as of the Sovereign Disposer of all things? If means only did it, the same means would always work the same effect, and sooner master a dwarfish than a giant-like distemper. "Our times are only in God's hands" (Psalms 31:15); either to cut short or continue long. As his sovereignty made the first marriage knot, so he reserves the sole authority to himself to make the divorce.

Fourthly. The dominion of God is manifest in his being a Redeemer, as well as Lawgiver, Proprietor, and Governor. His sovereignty was manifest in the creation, in bestowing upon this or that part of matter a form more excellent than upon another. He was a Lawgiver to men and angels, and prescribed them rules according to the counsel of his own will. These were his creatures, and perfectly at his disposal. But in redemption a sovereignty is exercised over the Son, the Second person in the Trinity, one equal with the Father in essence and works, by whom the

worlds were created, and by whom they do consist. The whole gospel is nothing else but a declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning Christ, and concerning us in him; it is therefore called “the mystery of his will” (Ephesians 1:9); the will of God is distinct from the will of Christ, a purpose in himself, not moved thereunto by any; the whole design was framed in the Deity, and as much the purpose of his sovereign will as the contrivance of his immense wisdom. He decreed, in his own leasure, to have the Second Person assume our nature for to deliver mankind from that misery whereinto it was fallen. The whole of the gospel, and the privileges of it, are in that chapter resolved into the will and pleasure of God. God is therefore called “the head of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3). As Christ is superior to all men, and the man superior to the woman, so is God superior to Christ, and of a more eminent dignity; in regard of the constituting him mediator, Christ is subject to God, as the body to the head. “Head” is a title of government and sovereignty, and magistrates were called the “heads” of the people. As Christ is the head of man, so is God the head of Christ; and as man is subject to Christ, so is Christ subject to God; not in regard of the Divine nature, wherein there is an equality, and consequently no dominion of jurisdiction; nor only in his human nature, but in the economy of a Redeemer, considered as one designed, and consenting to be incarnate, and take our flesh; so that after this agreement, God had a sovereign right to dispose of him according to the articles consented to. In regard of his undertaking, and the advantage he was to bring to the elect of God upon the earth, he calls God by the solemn title of “his Lord” in that prophetic psalm of him (Psalms 16:2): “O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extends not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth.” It seems to be the speech of Christ in heaven, mentioning the saints on earth as at a distance from him. I can add nothing to the glory of thy majesty, but the whole fruit of my meditation and sufferings will redound to the saints on earth. And it may be observed, that God is called the Lord of Hosts in the evangelical prophets, Isaiah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi, more in reference to this affair of redemption, and the deliverance of the church, than for any other works of his providence in the world.

1. This sovereignty of God appears, in requiring satisfaction for the sin of man. Had he indulged man after his fall, and remitted his offence without a just compensation for the injury he had received by his rebellion, his authority had been vilified, man would always have been attempting against his jurisdiction, there would have been a continual succession of rebellions on man's part; and if a continual succession of indulgences on God's part, he had quite disowned his authority over man, and stripped himself of the flower of his crown; satisfaction must have been required some time or other from the person thus rebelling, or some other in his stead; and to require it after the first act of sin, was more preservative to the right of the Divine sovereignty, than to do it after a multitude of repeated revolts. God must have laid aside his authority if he had laid aside wholly the exacting punishment for the offence of man.

2. This sovereignty of God appears, in appointing Christ to this work of redemption. His sovereignty was before manifest over angels and men by the right of creation; there was nothing wanting to declare the highest charge of it, but his ordering his own Son to become a mortal creature; the Lord of all things to become lower than those angels that had, as well as all other things, received their being and beauty from him, and to be reckoned in his death among the dust and refuse of the world: he by whom God created all things, not only became a man, but a crucified man, by the will of his Father (Galatians 1:4), “who gave himself for our sins according to

the will of God;" to which may refer that expression (Proverbs 8:22), of his being "possessed by God in the beginning of his way." Possession is the dominion of a thing invested in the possessor; he was possessed, indeed, as a Son by eternal generation; he was possessed also in the beginning of his way or works of creation, as a Mediator by special constitution: to this the expression seems to refer, if you read on to the end of Proverbs 8:31, wherein Christ speaks of his "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth," the earth of the great God, who hath designed him to this special work of redemption. He was a Son by nature, but a Mediator by Divine will; in regard of which Christ is often called God's servant, which is a relation to God as a Lord. God being the Lord of all things, the dominion of all things inferior to him is inseparable from him; and in this regard, the whole of what Christ was to do, and did actually do, was acted by him as the will of God, and is expressed so by himself in the prophecy (Psalms 40:7), "Lo, I come;" (Psalms 40:8), "I delight to do thy will;" which are put together (Hebrews 10:7), "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The designing Christ to this work was an act of mercy, but founded on his sovereignty. His compassionate bowels might have pitied us without his being sovereign, but without it could not have relieved us. It was the council of his own will, as well as of his bowels: none was his counsellor or persuader to that mercy he showed: (Romans 11:34), "Who hath been his counsellor?" for it refers to that mercy in "sending the Deliverer out of Sion" (Romans 11:26), as well as to other things the apostle had been discoursing of. As God was at liberty to create, or not to create, so he was at liberty to redeem or not to redeem, and at his liberty whether to appoint Christ to this work, or not to call him out to it. In giving this order to his Son, his sovereignty was exercised in a higher manner than in all the orders and instructions he hath given out to men or angels, and all the employments he ever sent them upon. Christ hath names which signify an authority over him: he is called "an Angel," and a "Messenger" (Malachi 3:1); an "Apostle" (Hebrews 3:1): declaring thereby, that God hath as much authority over him as over the angels sent upon his messages, or over the apostles commissioned by his authority, as he was considered in the quality of Mediator.

3. This sovereignty of God appears in transferring our sins upon Christ. The supreme power in a nation can only appoint or allow of a commutation of punishment; it is a part of sovereignty to transfer the penalty due to the crime of one upon another, and substitute a sufferer, with the sufferer's own consent, in the place of a criminal, whom he had a mind to deliver from a deserved punishment. God transferred the sins of men upon Christ, and inflicted on him a punishment for them. He summed up the debts of man, charged them upon the score of Christ, imputing to him the guilt, and inflicting upon him the penalty. (Isaiah 53:6): "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" he made them all to meet upon his back: "He hath made him to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21); he was made so by the sovereign pleasure of God: a punishment for sin, as most understand it, which could not be righteously inflicted, had not sin been first righteously imputed, by the consent of Christ, and the order of the Judge of the world. This imputation could be the immediate act of none but God, because he was the sole creditor. A creditor is not bound to accept of another's suretyship, but it is at his liberty whether he will or no; and when he doth accept of him, he may challenge the debt of him, as if he were the principal debtor himself. Christ made himself sin for us by a voluntary submission; and God made him sin for us by a full imputation, and treated him penally, as he would have done those sinners in whose stead he suffered. Without this act of sovereignty in God, we had forever perished: for if we could suppose Christ laying down his life for us without the pleasure and order of God, he could not have been

said to have borne our punishment. What could he have undergone in his humanity but a temporal death? But more than this was due to us, even the wrath of God, which far exceeds the calamity of a mere bodily death. The soul being principal in the crime, was to be principal in the punishment. The wrath of God could not have dropped upon his soul, and rendered it so full of agonies, without the hand of God: a creature is not capable to reach the soul, neither as to comfort nor terror; and the justice of God could not have made him a sufferer, if it had not first considered him a sinner by imputation, or by inherency, and actual commission of a crime in his own person. The latter was far from Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He must be considered then in the other state of imputation, which could not be without a sovereign appointment, or at least concession of God: for without it, he could have no more authority to lay down his life for us, than Abraham could have had to have sacrificed his son, or any man to expose himself to death without a call; nor could any plea have been entered in the court of heaven, either by Christ for us, or by us for ourselves. And though the death of so great a person had been meritorious in itself, it had not been meritorious for us, or accepted for us; Christ is "delivered up by him" (Romans 8:32), in every part of that condition wherein he was, and suffered; and to that end, that "we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21): that we might have the righteousness of him that was God imputed to us, or that we might have a righteousness as great and proportioned to the righteousness of God, as God required. It was an act of Divine sovereignty to account him that was righteous a sinner in our stead, and to account us, who were sinners, righteous upon the merit of his death.

4. This was done by the command of God; by God as a Lawgiver, having the supreme legislative and preceptive authority: in which respect, the whole work of Christ is said to be an answer to a law, not one given him, but put into his heart, as the law of nature was in the heart of man at first. (Psalms 40:7-8): "Thy law is within my heart." This law was not the law of nature or moral law, though that was also in the heart of Christ, but the command of doing those things which were necessary for our salvation, and not a command so much of doing, as of dying. The moral law in the heart of Christ would have done us no good without the mediatory law; we had been where we were by the sole observance of the precepts of the moral law, without his suffering the penalty of it: the law in the heart of Christ was the law of suffering, or dying, the doing that for us by his death which the blood of sacrifices was unable to effect. Legal "sacrifices thou wouldest not; thy law is within my heart;" i. e. thy law ordered me to be a sacrifice; it was that law, his obedience to which was principally accepted and esteemed, and that was principally his passive, his obedience to death (Php 2:8); this was the special command received from God, that he should die (John 10:18). It is not so clearly manifested when this command was given, whether after the incarnation of Christ, or at the point of his constitution as Mediator, upon the transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the affair of redemption: the promise was given "before the world began" (Titus 1:2). Might not the precept be given, before the world began, to Christ, as considered in the quality of Mediator and Redeemer? Precepts and promises usually attend one another; every covenant is made up of both. Christ, considered here as the Son of God in the Divine nature, was not capable of a command or promise; but considered in the relation of Mediator between God and man, he was capable of both. Promises of assistance were made before his actual incarnation, of which the Prophets are full: why not precepts for his obedience, since long before his incarnation this was his speech in the Prophet, "Thy law is within my heart!" however, a command, a law it was, which is a fruit of the Divine sovereignty; that as the sovereignty of God was impeached and

violated by the disobedience of Adam, it might be owned and vindicated by the obedience of Christ; that as we fell by disloyalty to it, we might rise by the highest submission to it in another head, infinitely superior in his person to Adam, by whom we fell.

5. This sovereignty of God appears in exalting Christ to such a sovereign dignity as our Redeemer. Some, indeed, say, that this sovereignty of Christ's human nature was natural, and the right of it resulted from its union with the Divine; as a lady of mean condition, when espoused and married to a prince, hath, by virtue of that, a natural right to some kind of jurisdiction over the whole kingdom, because she is one with the king. [Note: Lessius, de Perfect. Divin. lib. 10. p. 65.] But to waive this; the Scripture placeth wholly the conferring such an authority upon the pleasure and will of God. As Christ was a gift of God's sovereign will to us, so this was a gift of God's sovereign will to Christ (Matthew 28:18): "All power is given me." And he "gave him to be head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22); "God gave him a name above every name" (Php 2:9); and, therefore, his throne he sits upon is called "The throne of his Father" (Revelation 3:21). And be "committed all judgment to the Son," i. e. all government and dominion; an empire in heaven and earth (John 5:22); and that because he is "the Son of Man" (John 5:27); which may understood, that the Father hath given him authority to exercise that judgment and government as the Son of Man, which he originally had as the Son of God; or rather, because he became a servant, and humbled himself to death, he gives him this authority as the reward of his obedience and humility, conformable to Php 2:9. This is an act of the high sovereignty of God, to obscure his own authority in a sense, and take into association with him, or vicarious subordination to him, the human nature of Christ as united to the Divine; not only lifting it above the heads of all the angels, but giving that person in our nature an empire over them, whose nature was more excellent than ours: yea, the sovereignty of God appears in the whole management. of this kingly office of Christ; for it is managed in every part of it according to God's order (Ezekiel 37:24-25): "David, my servant, shall be king over them," and "my servant David shall be their prince forever:" he shall be a prince over them, but my servant in that principality, in the exercise and duration of it. The sovereignty of God is paramount in all that Christ hath done as a priest, or shall do as a king.

Use 1. For instruction.

1. How great is the contempt of this sovereignty of God! Man naturally would be free from God's empire, to be a slave under the dominion of his own lust; the sovereignty of God, as a Lawgiver, is most abhorred by man (Leviticus 26:43). The Israelites, the best people in the world, were apt, by nature, not only to despise, but abhor, his statutes; there is not a law of God but the corrupt heart of man hath an abhorrency of: how often do men wish that God had not enacted this or that law that goes against the grain! and, in wishing so, wish that he were no sovereign, or not such a sovereign as he is in his own nature, but one according to their corrupt model. This is the great quarrel between God and man, whether he or they shall be the Sovereign Ruler. He should not, by the will of man, rule in any one village in the world; God's vote should not be predominant in any one thing. There is not a law of his but is exposed to contempt by the perverseness of man (Proverbs 1:21): "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof:" Septuag. "Ye have made all my counsels without authority." The nature of man cannot endure one precept of God, nor one rebuke from him; and for this cause God is at the expense of judgments in the world, to assert his own empire to the teeth and consciences of men (Psalms 59:13): "Lord, consume them in wrath, and let them know that God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth." The

dominion of God is not slighted by any creature of this world but man; all others observe it by observing his order, whether in their natural motions or preternatural irruptions; they punctually act according to their commission. Man only speaks a dialect against the strain of the whole creation, and hath none to imitate him among all the creatures in heaven and earth, but only among those in hell: man is more impatient of the yoke of God than of the yoke of man. There are not so many rebellions committed by inferiors against their superiors and fellow-creatures, as are committed against God. A willing and easy sinning is an equalling the authority of God to that of man (Hosea 6:7): "They, like men, have transgressed my covenant;" they have made no more account of breaking my covenant than if they had broken some league or compact made with a mere man; so slightly do they esteem the authority of God; such a disesteem of the Divine authority is a virtual undefying of him. [Note: Munster.] To slight his sovereignty is to stab his Deity; since the one cannot be preserved without the support of the other, his life would expire with his authority. How base and brutish is it for vile dust and mouldering clay to lift up itself against the majesty of God, whose throne is in the heavens, who sways his sceptre over all parts of the world—a Majesty before whom the devils shake, and the highest cherubims tremble! It is as if the thistle, that can presently be trod down by the foot of a wild beast, should think itself a match for the cedar of Lebanon, as the phrase is, 2 Kings 14:9.

Let us consider this in general; and, also, in the ordinary practice of men. First, In general.

(1.) All sin in its nature is a contempt of the Divine dominion. As every act of obedience is a confirmation of the law, and consequently a subscription of the authority of the Lawgiver (Deuteronomy 27:26), so every breach to it is a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the Lawgiver; setting up our will against the will of God is an articing against his authority, as setting up our reason against the methods of God is an articing against his wisdom; the intendment of every act of sin is to wrest the sceptre out of God's hand. The authority of God is the first attribute in the Deity which it directs its edge against; it is called, therefore, a "transgression of his law" (1 John 3:4), and, therefore, a slight, or neglect, of the majesty of God; and the not keeping his commands is called a "forgetting God" (Deuteronomy 8:11), i. e. a forgetting him to be our absolute Lord. As the first notion we have of God as a Creator is that of his sovereignty, so the first perfection that sin struck at, in the violation of the law, was his sovereignty as a Lawgiver. "Breaking the law is a dishonoring God" (Romans 2:23), a snatching off his crown; to obey our own wills before the will of God, is to prefer ourselves as our own sovereigns before him. Sin is a wrong, and injury to God, not in his essence, that is above the reach of a creature, nor in anything profitable to him, or pertaining to his own intrinsic advantage; not an injury to God in himself, but in his authority, in those things which pertain to his glory; a disowning his due right, and not using his goods according to his will. Thus the whole world may be called, as God calls Chaldea, "a land of rebels" (Jeremiah 50:21): "Go up against the land of Merathaim," or rebels: rebels, not against the Jews, but against God. The mighty opposition in the heart of man to the supremacy of God is discovered emphatically by the apostle (Romans 8:7) in that expression, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," i. e. against the authority of God, because "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It refuseth not subjection to this or that part, but to the whole; to every mark of Divine authority in it; it will not lay down its arms against it, nay, it cannot but stand upon its terms against it; the law can no more be fulfilled by a carnal mind, than it can be disowned by a sovereign God. God is so holy, that he cannot alter a righteous law, and man is so averse, that he

cares not for, nay, cannot fulfil, one title; so much doth the nature of man swell against the majesty of God. Now an enmity to the law, which is in every sin, implies a perversity against the authority of God that enacted it.

(2.) All sin, in its nature, is the despoiling God of his sole sovereignty, which was probably the first thing the devil aimed at. That pride was the sin of the devil, the Scripture gives us some account of, when the apostle adviseth not a novice, or one that hath but lately embraced the faith, to be chosen a bishop (1 Timothy 3:6), "Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" lest he fall into the same sin for which the devil was condemned. But in what particular thing this pride was manifest, is not so easily discernible; the ancients generally conceived it to be an affecting the throne of God, grounding it on Isaiah 14:12 : "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! for thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." It is certain the prophet speaks there of the king of Babylon, and taxeth him for his pride, and gives to him the title of "Lucifer," perhaps likening him in his pride to the devil, and then it notes plainly the particular sin of the devil, attempting a share in the sovereignty of God; and some strengthen their conjecture from the name of the archangel who contended against Satan (Jude 1:9), which is Michael, which signifies, "Who as God?" or, "Who like God?" the name of the angel giving the superiority to God, intimating the contrary disposition in the devil, against whom he contended. It is likely his sin was an affecting equality with God in empire, or a freedom from the sovereign authority of God; because he imprinted such a kind of persuasion on man at his first temptation: "Ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5); and though it be restrained to the matter of knowledge, yet that being a fitness for government, it may be extended to that also. But it is plainly a persuading them, that they might be, in some sort, equal with God, and independent on him as their superior. What he had found so fatal to himself, he imagined would have the same success in the ruin of man. And since the devil hath, in all ages of the world, usurped worship to himself which is only due to God, and would be served by man, as if he were the God of the world; since all his endeavor was to be worshipped as the Supreme God on earth, it is not unreasonable to think, that he invaded the supremacy of God in heaven, and endeavored to be like the Most High before his banishment, as he hath attempted to be like the Most High since. And since the devil and antichrist are reputed by John, in the Revelation, to be so near of kin, and so like in disposition, why might not that, which is the sin of antichrist, the image of him, be also the sin of Satan, "to exalt himself above all that is called God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and "sit as God in his temple," affecting a partnership in his throne and worship? Whether it was this, or attempting an unaccountable dominion over created things, or because he was the prime angel, and the most illustrious of that magnificent corporation, he might think himself fit to reign with God over all things else? Or if his sin were envy, as some think, at the felicity of man in paradise, it was still a quarrelling with God's dominion, and right of disposing his own goods and favors; he is, therefore, called "Belial" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15): "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" i. e. with the devil, one "without yoke," as the word "Belial" signifies.

(3.) It is more plain, that this was the sin of Adam. The first act of Adam was to exercise a lordship over the lower creatures, in giving names to them,—a token of dorninion (Genesis 2:19). The next was to affect a lordship over God, in rebelling against him. After he had writ the first mark of his own delegated dominion, in the names he gave the creatures, and owned their dependence on him as their governor, he would not acknowledge his own dependence on God. As soon as the

Lord of the world had put him into possession of the power he had allotted him, he attempted to strip his Lord of that which he had reserved to himself; he was not content to lay a yoke upon the other creatures, but desirous to shake off the Divine yoke from himself, and be subject to none but his own will; hence Adam's sin is more particularly called "disobedience" (Romans 5:19): for, in the eating the apple, there was no moral evil in itself, but a contradiction to the positive command and order of God, whereby he did disown God's right of commanding him, or reserving anything from him to his own use. The language all his posterity speaks, "Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us" (Psalms 2:3), was learned from Adam in that act of his. The next act we read of; was that of Cain's murdering Abel, which was an invading God's right, in assuming an authority to dispose of the life of his brother,—a life which God had given him, and reserved the period of it in his own hands. And he persists in the same usurpation when God came to examine him, and ask him where his brother was; how scornful was his answer! (Genesis 4:9): "Am I my brother's keeper?" as much as if he had said, What have you to do to examine me? or, What obligation is there upon me to render an account of him? or, as one saith, it is as much as if he had said, "Go, look for him yourself." [Note: Trap. in loc.] The sovereignty of God did not remain undisturbed as soon as ever it appeared in creation; the devils rebelled against it in heaven, and man would have banished it from the earth.

(4.) The sovereignty of God hath not been less invaded by the usurpations of men. One single order of the Roman episcopacy hath endeavored to usurp the prerogatives of God; the Pope will prohibit what God hath allowed; the marriage of priests; the receiving of the cup, as well as of the bread, in the sacrament; the eating of this or that sort of meat at special times, meats which God hath sanctified; and forbid them, too, upon pain of damnation. It is an invasion of God's right to forbid the use of what God hath granted, as though the earth, and the fulness thereof, were no longer the Lord's, but the Pope's; much more to forbid what God hath commanded, as if Christ overreached his own authority, when he enjoined all to drink of the sacramental wine, as well as eat of the sacramental bread. No lord but will think his right usurped by that steward who shall permit to others what his lord forbids, and forbid that which his master allows, and act the lord instead of the servant. Add to this the pardons of many sins, as if he had the sole key to the treasures of Divine mercy; the disposing of crowns and dominions at his pleasure, as if God had divested himself of the title of King of kings, and transferred it upon the see of Rome. The allowing public stews, dispensing with incestuous marriages, as if God had acted more the part of a tyrant than of a righteous Sovereign in forbidding them, depriving the Jews of the propriety in their estates upon their conversion to Christianity, as if the pilfering men's goods were the way to teach them self-denial, the first doctrine of Christian religion; and God shall have no honor from the Jew without a breach of his law by theft from the Christian. Granting many years' indulgences upon slight performances, the repeating so many Ave-Marias and Pater-Nosters in a day, canonizing saints, claiming the keys of heaven, and disposing of the honors and glory of it, and proposing creatures as objects of religious worship, wherein he answers the character of the apostle (2 Thessalonians 2:4), "showing himself that he is God," in challenging that power which is only the right of Divine sovereignty; exalting himself above God, in indulging those things which the law of God never allowed, but hath severely prohibited. This controlling the sovereignty of God, not allowing him the rights of his crown, is the soul and spirit of many errors. Why are the decrees of election and preterition denied? Because men will not acknowledge God the Sovereign Disposer of his creature. Why is effectual calling and efficacious grace denied? Because they will not allow

God the proprietor and distributor of his own goods. Why is the satisfaction of Christ denied? Because they will not allow God a power to vindicate his own law in what way he pleaseth. Most of the errors of men may be resolved into a denial of God's sovereignty; all have a tincture of the first evil sentiment of Adam.

Secondly. The sovereignty of God is contemned in the practices of men—(1.) As he is a Lawgiver.

[1.] When laws are made, and urged in any state contrary to the law of God. It is part of God's sovereignty to be a Lawgiver; not to obey his law is a breach made upon his right of government; but it is treason in any against the crown of God, to mint laws with a stamp contrary to that of heaven, whereby they renounce their due subjection, and vie with God for dominion, snatch the supremacy from him, and account themselves more lords than the Sovereign Monarch of the world. When men will not let God be the judge of good and evil, but put in their own vote, controlling his to establish their own; such are not content to be as gods, subordinate to the supreme God, to sit at his feet; nor co-ordinate with him, to sit equal upon his throne; but paramount to him, to over-top and shadow his crown;—a boldness that leaves the serpent, in the first temptation, under the character of a more commendable modesty; who advised our first parents to attempt to be as gods, but not above him, and would enervate a law of God, but not enact a contrary one to be observed by them. Such was the usurpation of Nebuchadnezzar, to set up a golden image to be adored (Daniel 3:1-30.), as if he had power to mint gods, as well as to conquer men; to set the stamp of a Deity upon a piece of gold, as well as his own effigies upon his current coin. Much of the same nature was that of Darius, by the motion of his flatterers, to prohibit any petition to be made to God for the space of thirty days, as though God was not to have a worship without a license from a dotting piece of clay (Daniel 6:7). So Henry the Third of France, by his edict, silenced masters of families from praying with their households. [Note: Trap. in. loc.] And it is a farther contempt of God's authority, when good men are oppressed by the sole weight of power, for not observing such laws, as if they had a real sovereignty over the consciences of men, more than God himself. [Note: Faucheur, Vol. II. pp. 663, 664.] When the apostles were commanded by an angel from God, to preach in the Temple the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:19-20), they were fetched from thence with a guard before the council (Acts 5:26). And what is the language of those statesmen to them? as absolute as God himself could speak to any transgressors of his law. [Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name?] (Acts 5:28). It is sufficient that we gave you a command to be silent, and publish no more this doctrine of Jesus; it is not for you to examine our decrees, but rest in our order as loyal subjects, and comply with your rulers; they might have added,—though it be with the damnation of your souls. How would those overrule the apostles by no other reason but their absolute pleasure! And though God had espoused their cause, by delivering them out of the prison, wherein they had locked them the day before, yet not one of all this council had the wit or honesty to entitle it a fighting against God, but Gamaliel (Acts 5:34). So foolishly fond are men to put themselves in the place of God, and usurp a jurisdiction over men's consciences: and to presume that laws made against the interest and command of God, must be of more force than the laws of God's enacting.

[2.] The sovereignty of God is contemned in making additions to the laws of God. The authority of a sovereign Lawgiver is invaded and vilified when an inferior presumes to make orders equivalent to his edicts. It is a præmunire against heaven to setup an authority distinct from that of God, or to enjoin anything as necessary in matter of worship for which a Divine commission cannot be

shown. God was always so tender of this part of his prerogative, that he would not have anything wrought in the tabernacle, not a vessel, not an instrument, but what himself had prescribed. "According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus 25:9); which is strictly urged again, Exodus 25:40 : "Look that thou make them after their pattern;" look to it, beware of doing anything of thine own head, and justling with my authority. It was so afterwards in the matter of the temple, which succeeded the tabernacle; God gave the model of it to David, and made him "understand in writing by his hand upon him, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chronicles 28:19). Neither the royal authority in Moses, who was king in Jesurun; nor in David, who was a man after God's own heart, and called to the crown by a special and extraordinary providence; nor Aaron, and the high priests his successors, invested in the sacerdotal office, had any authority from God, to do anything in the framing the tabernacle or temple of their own heads. God barred them from anything of that nature, by giving them an exact pattern, so dear to him was always this, flower of his crown. And afterwards, the power of appointing officers and ordinances in the church was delegated to Christ, and was among the rest of those royalties given to him, which he fully completed "for the edifying of the body" (Ephesians 4:11-12); and he hath the eulogy by the Spirit of God, to be "faithful as Moses was in all his house, to Him that appointed him" (Hebrews 3:2). Faithfulness in a trust implies a punctual observing directions; God was still so tender of this, that even Christ, the Son, should no more do anything in this concern without appointment and pattern, than "Moses, a servant" (Hebrews 3:5-6). It seems to be a vote of nature to refer the original of the modes of all worship to God; and therefore in all those varieties of ceremonies among the heathens, there was scarce any but were imagined by them to be the dictates and orders of some of their pretended deities, and not the resolves of mere human authority. What intrusion upon God's right hath the papacy made in regard of officers, cardinals, patriarchs, &c., not known in any Divine order? In regard of ceremonies in worship, pressed as necessary to obtain the favor of God, holy water, crucifixes, altars, images, cringings, reviving many of the Jewish and Pagan ceremonies, and adopting them into the family of Christian ordinances; as if God had been too absolute and arbitrary in repealing the one, and dashing in pieces the other. When God had by his sovereign order framed a religion for the heart, men are ready to usurp an authority to frame one for the sense, to dress the ordinances of God in new and gaudy habit, to take the eye by a vain pomp; thus affecting a Divine royalty, and acting a silly childishness; and after this, to impose the observation of those upon the consciences of men, is a bold ascent into the throne of God; to impose laws upon the conscience, which Christ hath not imposed, hath deservedly been thought the very spirit of antichrist; it may be called also the spirit of anti-god. God hath reserved to himself the sole sovereignty over the conscience, and never indulged men any part of it; he hath not given man a power over his own conscience, much less one man a power over another's conscience. Men have a power over outward things to do this or that, where it is determined by the law of God, but not the least authority to control any dictate or determination of conscience: the sole empire of that is appropriate to God, as one of the great marks of his royalty. What an usurpation is it of God's right to make conscience a slave to man, which God hath solely, as the Father of spirits, subjected to himself!—an usurpation which, though the apostles, those extraordinary officers, might better have claimed, yet they utterly disowned any imperious dominion over the faith of others (2 Corinthians 1:24). Though in this they do not seem to climb up above God, yet they set themselves in the throne of God, envy him an absolute monarchy, would be sharers with him in his

legislative power, and grasp one end of his sceptre in their own hands. They do not pretend to take the crown from God's head, but discover a bold ambition to shuffle their hairy scalps under it, and wear part of it upon their own, that they may rule with him, not under him; and would be joint lords of his manor with him, who hath, by the apostle, forbidden any to be "lords of his heritage" (1 Peter 5:3.): and therefore they cannot assume such an authority to themselves till they can show where God hath resigned this part of his authority to them. If their exposition of that place (Matthew 16:18), "Upon this rock I will build my church," be granted to be true, and that the person and successors of Peter are meant by that rock, it could be no apology for their usurpations; it is not Peter and his successors shall build, but "I will build;" others are instruments in building, but they are to observe the directions of the grand Architect.

[3.] The sovereignty of God is contemned when men prefer obedience to men's laws before obedience to God. As God hath an undoubted right, as the Lawgiver and Ruler of the world, to enact laws without consulting the pleasure of men, or requiring their consent to the verifying and establishing his edicts, so are men obliged, by their allegiance as subjects, to observe the laws of their Creator, without consulting whether they be agreeable to the laws of his revolted creatures. To consult with flesh and blood whether we should obey, is to authorize flesh and blood above the purest and most sovereign Spirit. When men will obey their superiors, without taking in the condition the apostle prescribes to servants (Colossians 3:22), "In singleness of heart fearing God," and postpone the fear of God to the fear of man, it is to render God of less power with them than the drop of a bucket, or dust of the balance. When we, out of fear of punishment, will observe the laws of men against the laws of God, it is like the Egyptians, to worship a ravenous crocodile instead of a Deity; when we submit to human laws, and stagger at Divine, it is to set man upon the throne of God, and God at the footstool of man; to set man above, and God beneath; to make him the tail, and not the head, as God speaks in another case of Israel (Deuteronomy 28:13). When we pay an outward observation to Divine laws, because they are backed by the laws of man, and human authority is the motive of our observance, we subject God's sovereignty to man's authority; what he hath from us, is more owing to the pleasure of men than any value we have for the empire of God: when men shall commit murders, and imbrue their hands in blood by the order of a grandee; when the worst sins shall be committed by the order of papal dispensations; when the use of his creatures, which God hath granted and sanctified, shall be abstained from for so many days in the week, and so many weeks in the year, because of a Roman edict, the authority of man is acknowledged, not only equal, but superior, to that of God; the dominion of dust and clay is preferred before the undoubted right of the Sovereign of the world; the commands of God are made less than human, and the orders of men more authoritative than Divine, and a grand rebel's usurpation of God's right is countenanced. When men are more devout in observance of uncertain traditions, or mere human inventions, than at the hearing of the unquestionable oracles of God; when men shall squeeze their countenances into a more serious figure, and demean themselves in a more religious posture, at the appearance of some mock ceremony, clothed in a Jewish or Pagan garb, which hath unhappily made a rent in the coat of Christ, and pay a more exact reverence to that which hath no Divine, but only a human stamp upon it, than to the clear and plain word of God, which is perhaps neglected with sleepy nods, or which is worse, entertained with profane scoffs;—this is to prefer the authority of man employed in trifles, before the authority of the wise Lawgiver of the world: besides, the ridiculousness of it is as great as to adore a glow-worm, and laugh at the sun; or for a courtier to be more exact in his cringes and starched postures before

a puppet than before his sovereign prince. In all this we make not the will and authority of God our rule, but the will of man; disclaim our dependence on God, to hang upon the uncertain breath of a creature. In all this God is made less than man, and man more than God; God is deposed, and man enthroned; God made a slave, and man a sovereign above him. To this we may refer the solemn addresses of some for the maintenance of the Protestant religion according to law, the law of man; not so much minding the law of God, resolving to make the law, the church, the state, the rule of their religion, and change that if the laws be changed, steering their opinions by the compass of the magistrate's judgment and interest.

(2.) The dominion of God, as a Proprietor, is practically contemned.

[1.] By envy. When we are not flush and gay, as well spread and sparkling as others, this passion gnaws our souls, and we become the executioners to rack ourselves, because God is the executor of his own pleasure. The foundation of this passion is a quarrel with God; to envy others the enjoyment of their propriety is to envy God his right of disposal, and, consequently, the propriety of his own goods; it is a mental theft committed against God; we rob him of his right in our will and wish; it is a robbery to make ourselves equal with God when it is not our due, which is implied (Php 2:6), when Christ is said "to think it no robbery to be equal with God." We would wrest the sceptre out of his hand, wish he were not the conductor of the world, and that he would resign his sovereignty, and the right of the distribution of his own goods, to the capricious of our humor, and ask our leave to what subjects he should dispense his favors. All envy is either a tacit accusation of God as an usurper, and assuming a right to dispose of that which doth not belong to him, and so it is a denial of his propriety, or else charges him with a blind or unjust distribution, and so it is a bespattering his wisdom and righteousness. When God doth punish envy, he vindicates his own sovereignty, as though this passion chiefly endeavored to blast this perfection (Ezekiel 25:11-12): "As I live, saith the Lord, I will do according to thy anger, and according to thy envy, and thou shall know that I am the Lord." The sin of envy in the devils was immediately against the crown of God, and so was the sin of envy in the first man, envying God the sole prerogative in knowledge above himself. This base humor in Cain, at the preference of Abel's sacrifice before his, was the cause that he deprived him of his life: denying God, first his right of choice and what he should accept, and then invading God's right of propriety, in usurping a power over the life and being of his brother, which solely belonged to God.

[2.] The dominion of God, as a proprietor, is practically contemned by a violent or surreptitious taking away from any what God hath given him the possession of. Since God is the Lord of all, and may give the possession and dominion of things to whom he pleaseth, all theft and purloining, all cheating and cozening another of his right, is not only a crime against the true possessor, depriving him of what he is entrusted with, but against God, as the absolute and universal proprietor, having a right thereby to confer his own goods upon whom he pleaseth, as well as against God as a Lawgiver, forbidding such a violence: the snatching away what is another's, denies man the right of possession, and God the right of donation: the Israelites taking the Egyptians' jewels had been theft had it not been by a Divine license and order, but cannot be slandered with such a term, after the Proprietor of the whole world had altered the title, and alienated them by his positive grant from the Egyptians, to confer them upon the Israelites.

[3.] The dominion of God, as a proprietor, is practically contemned by not using what God hath given us for those ends for which he gave them to us. God passeth things over to us with a condition to use that for his glory which he hath bestowed upon us by his bounty: he is Lord of the end for which he gives, as well as Lord of what he gives; the donor's right of propriety is infringed when the lands and legacies he leaves to a particular use are not employed to those ends to which he bequeathed them: the right of the lord of a manor is violated when the copyhold is not used according to the condition of the conveyance. So it is an invasion of God's sovereignty not to use the creatures for those ends for which we are entrusted with them: when we deny ourselves a due and lawful support from them; hence covetousness is an invasion of his right: or when we unnecessarily waste them; hence prodigality disowns his propriety: or when we bestow not anything upon the relief of others; hence uncharitableness comes under the same title, appropriating that to ourselves, as if we were the lords, when we were but the usufructuaries for ourselves, and stewards for others; this is to be [rich to ourselves, not to God] (Luke 12:21), for so are they who employ not their wealth for the service, and according to the intent, of the donor. Thus the Israelites did not own God the true proprietor of their corn, wine, and oil, which God had given them for his worship, when they prepared offerings for Baal out of his stock: [For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her gold and silver, which they prepared for Baal] (Hosea 2:8); as if they had been sole proprietors, and not factors by commission, to improve the goods for the true owner. It is the same invasion of God's right to use the parts and gifts that God hath given us, either as fuel for our pride, or advancing self, or a witty scoffing at God and religion; when we use not religion for the honor of our Sovereign, but a stool to rise by, and observe his precepts outwardly, not out of regard to his authority, but as a stale to our interest, and furnishing self with a little concern and trifle; when men will wrest his word for the favor of their lusts, which God intended for the checking of them, and make interpretations of it according to their humors, and not according to his will discovered in the Scripture, this is to pervert the use of the best goods and depositum he hath put into our hands, even Divine revelations. Thus hypocrisy makes the sovereignty of God a nullity.

(3.) The dominion of God, as a Governor, is practically contemned.

[1.] In idolatry. Since worship is an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, to adore any creature instead of God, or to pay to anything that homage of trust and confidence which is due to God, though it be the highest creature in heaven or earth, is to acknowledge that sovereignty to pertain to a creature, which is challenged by God; as to set up the greatest lord in a kingdom in the government, instead of the lawful prince, is rebellion and usurpation; and that woman incurs the crime of adultery, who commits it with a person of great port and honor, as well as with one of a mean condition. While men create anything a god, they own themselves supreme above the true God, yea, and above that which they account a god; for, by the right of creation, they have a superiority, as it is a deity blown up by the breath of their own imagination. The authority of God is in this sin acknowledged to belong to an idol; it is called loathing of God as a husband (Ezekiel 16:45), all the authority of God as a husband and Lord over them: so when we make anything or any person in the world the chief object and prop of our trust and confidence, we act the same part. Trust in an idol is the formal part of idolatry; "so is every one that trusts in them" (Psalms 115:8), i. e. in idols: whatsoever thing we make the object of our trust, we rear as an idol. It is not unlawful to have the image of a creature, but to bestow divine adoration upon it; it was not unlawful

for the Egyptians to possess and use oxen, but to dub them gods to be adored, it was: it is not unlawful to have wealth and honor, nor to have gifts and parts, they are the presents of God; but to love them above God, to fix our reliance upon them more than upon God, is to rob God of his due, who, being our Creator, ought to be our confidence. What we want we are to desire of him, and expect from him. When we confide in anything else we deny God the glory of his creation; we disown him to be Lord of the world; imply that our welfare is in the hands of, and depends upon, that thing wherein we confide; it is not only to "equal it to God" in sovereign power, which is his own phrase (Isaiah 40:25), but to prefer it before him in a reproach of him. When the hosts of heaven shall be served instead of the Lord of those hosts; when we shall lackey after the stars, depend barely upon their influences, without looking up to the great Director of the sun, it is to pay an adoration unto a captain in a regiment which is due to the general. When we shall "make gold our hope, and say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence," it is to deny the supremacy of that God that is above; as well as if we kiss our hands, in a way of adoration, to the sun in its splendor, or "the moon walking in its brightness," for Job couples them together (Job 31:25-28); it is to prefer the authority of earth before that of heaven, and honor clay above the Sovereign of the world: as if a soldier should confide more in the rag of an ensign, or the fragment of a drum, for his safety, than in the orders and conduct of his general; it were as much as is in his power to uncommission him, and snatch from him his commander's staff. When we advance the creature in our love above God, and the altar of our soul smokes with more thoughts and affections to a petty interest than to God, we lift up that which was given us as a servant in the place of the Sovereign, and bestow that throne upon it which is to be kept undefiled for the rightful Lord, and subject the interest of God to the demands of the creature. So much respect is due to God, that none should be placed in the throne of our affections equal with him, much less anything to perk above him.

[2.] Impatience is a contempt of God as a governor. When we meet with rubs in the way of any design, when our expectations are crossed, we will break through all obstacles to accomplish our projects, whether God will or no. When we are too much dejected at some unexpected providence, and murmur at the instruments of it, as if God divested himself of his prerogative of conducting human affairs; when a little cross blows us into a mutiny, and swells us into a sauciness to implead God, or make us fret against him (as the expression is, Isaiah 8:21), wishing him out of his throne; no sin is so devilish as this; there is not any strikes more at all the attributes of God than this, against his goodness, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and doth as little spare his sovereignty as any of the rest: what can it be else, but an impious invasion of his dominion, to quarrel with him for what he doth, and to say, What reason hast thou to deal thus with me? This language is in the nature of all impatience, whereby we question his sovereignty, and parallel our dominion with his. When men have not that confluence of wealth or honor they greedily desired, they bark at God, and revile his government: they are angry God doth not more respectfully observe them, as though he had nothing to do in their matters, and were wanting in that becoming reverence which they think him bound to pay to such great ones as they are; they would have God obedient to their minds, and act nothing but what he receives a commission for from their wills. When we murmur, it is as if we would command his will, and wear his crown; a wresting the sceptre out of his hands to sway it ourselves; we deny him the right of government, disown his power over us, and would be our own sovereigns: you may find the character of it in the language of Jehoram (as many understand it), "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (2 Kings 6:33). This is an evil of such a nature, that it could come from none but the hand of God;

why should I attend upon him, as my Sovereign, that delights to do me so much mischief, that throws curses upon me when I expected blessings? I will no more observe his directions, but follow my own sentiments, and regard not his authority in the lips of his doting prophet. The same you find in the Jews, when they were under Gods lash; "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jeremiah 18:12): we can expect no good from him, and therefore we will be our own sovereigns, and prefer the authority of our own imaginations before that of his precepts. Men would be their own carvers, and not suffer God to use his right; as if a stone should order the mason in what manner to hew it, and in what part of the building to place it. We are not ordinarily concerned so much at the calamities of our neighbors, but swell against heaven at a light drop upon ourselves. We are content God should be the sovereign of others, so that he will be a servant to us: let him deal as he will himself with others, so he will treat us, and what relates to us, as we will ourselves. We would have God resign his authority to our humors, and our humors should be in the place of a God to him, to direct him what was fit to do in our cause. When things go not according to our vote, our impatience is a wish that God was deposed from his throne, that he would surrender his seat to some that would deal more favorably, and be more punctual observers of our directions. Let us look to ourselves in regard of this sin, which is too common, and the root of much mischief. This seems to be the first bubbling of Adam's will; he was not content with the condition wherein God had placed him, but affected another, which ended in the ruin of himself, and of mankind.

[3.] Limiting God in his way of working to our methods, is another part of the contempt of his dominion. When we will prescribe him methods of acting, that he should deliver us in this or that way, we would not suffer him to be the Lord of his own favors, and have the privilege to be his own director. When we will limit him to such a time, wherein to work our deliverance, we would rob him of the power of times and seasons, which are solely in his hand. We would regulate his conduct according to our imaginations, and assume a power to give laws to our Sovereign. Thus the Israelites "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41): they would control his absolute dominion, and, of a sovereign, make him their slave. Man, that is God's vassal, would set bounds to his Lord, and cease to be a servant, and commence master, when he would give, not take, directions from him. When God had given them manna, and their fancies were weary of that delicious food, they would prescribe heaven to rain down some other sort of food for them. When they wanted no sufficient provision in the wilderness, they quarrelled with God for bringing them out of Egypt, and not presently giving them a place of seed, of figs, vines, and pomegranates (Numbers 20:5), which is called a "striving with the Lord" (Numbers 20:13), a contending with him for his Lordship. When we tempt God, and require a sign of him as a mark of his favor, we circumscribe his dominion; when we will not use the means he hath appointed, but father our laziness upon a trust in his providence, as if we expected he should work a miracle for our relief; when we censure him for what he hath done in the course of his providence; when we capitulate with him, and promise such a service, if he will do us such a good turn according to our platform, we would bring down his sovereign pleasure to our will, we invade his throne, and expect a submissive obedience from him. Man that hath not wit enough to govern himself, would be governing God, and those that cannot be their own sovereigns, affect a sovereignty over heaven.

[4.] Pride and presumption is another invasion of his dominion. When men will resolve to go to-morrow to such a city, to such a fair and market, to traffic, and get gain, without thinking of the

necessity of a Divine license, as if ourselves were the lords of our time and of our lives, and God were to lackey after us (James 4:13; James 4:15): “Ye that say, To-day we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, whereas ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live;” as if they had a freehold, and were not tenants at will to the Lord of the manor. When we presume upon our own strength or wit to get the better of our adversaries; as the Germans (as Tacitus relates) assured themselves, by the numerousness of their army, of a victory against the Romans, and prepared chains to fetter the captives before the conquest, which were found in their camp after their defeat;—when we are peremptory in expectations of success according to our will; as Pharaoh (Exodus 15:9), “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them:” he speaks more like a god than a man, as if he were the sovereign power, and God only his vicar and lieutenant; how he struts, without thinking of a superior power to curb him!—when men ascribe to themselves what is the sole fruit of God’s sovereign pleasure; as the king of Assyria speaks a language fit only to be spoken by God (Isaiah 10:13-14, &c.), “I have removed the bounds of the people; my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; I have gathered all the earth;” which God declares to be a wrong to his sovereignty by the title wherewith he prefaceth his threatening against him (Isaiah 10:16): “Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness,” &c. It is indeed a rifling, if not of his crown, yet of the most glittering jewel of it, his glory. “He that mocks the poor reproacheth his Maker” (Proverbs 17:5). He never thinks that God made them poor, and himself rich; he owns not his riches to be dropped upon him by the Divine hand. Self is the great invader of God’s sovereignty; doth not only spurn at it, but usurp it, and assume divine honors, payable only to the universal Sovereign. The Assyrian was not so modest as the Chaldean, who would impute his power and victories to his idol (Habakkuk 1:11), whom he thought to be God, though yet robbing the true God of his authority; and so much was signified by their names, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, Nebo, Merodach, Bel, being the Chaldean idols, and the names signifying, Lord of wealth, Giver of riches, and the like.—When we behave ourselves proudly towards others, and imagine ourselves greater than our Maker ever meant us;—when we would give laws to others, and expect the most submissive observances from them, as if God had resigned his authority to us, and made us, in his stead, the rightful monarchs of the world. To disdain that any creature should be above us, is to disdain God’s sovereign disposition of men, and consequently, his own superiority over us. A proud man would govern all, and would not have God his Sovereign, but his subject; to overvalue ourselves, is to undervalue God.

[5.] Slight and careless worship of God is another contempt of his sovereignty. A prince is contemned, not only by a neglect of those reverential postures which are due to him, but in a reproachful and scornful way of paying them. To behave ourselves uncomely or immodestly before a prince, is a disesteem of majesty. Sovereignty requires awe in every address, where this is wanting there is a disrespect of authority. We contemn God’s dominion when we give him the service of the lip, the hand, the knee, and deny him that of the heart; as they in Ezekiel 33:31, as though he were the Sovereign only of the body, and not of the soul. To have devout figures of the face, and uncomely postures of the soul, is to exclude his dominion from our spirits, while we own it only over our outward man; we render him an insignificant Lord, not worthy of any higher adorations from us than a senseless statue; we demean not ourselves according to his majestical authority over us, when we present him not with the cream and quintessence of our souls. The greatness of God required a great house, and a costly palace (1 Chronicles 29:11; 1 Chronicles

29:16); David speaks it in order to the building God a house and a temple; God being a great King expects a male the best of our flock (Malachi 1:14), a masculine and vigorous service. When we present him with a sleepy, sickly rheumatic service, we betray our conceptions of him to be as mean as if he were some petty lord, whose dominion were of no larger extent than a mole-hill, or some inconsiderable village.

[6.] Omission of the service he hath appointed is another contempt of his sovereignty. This is a contempt of his dominion, whereby he hath a right to appoint what means and conditions he pleaseth, for the enjoyment of his proffered and promised benefits. It is an enmity to his sceptre not to accept of his terms after a long series of precepts and invitations made for the restoring us to that happiness we had lost, and providing all means necessary thereunto, nothing being wanting but our own concurrence with it, and acceptance of it, by rendering that easy homage he requires. By withholding from him the service he enjoins, we deny, that we hold anything of him; as he that pays not the quit rent, though it be never so small, disowns the sovereignty of the lord of the manor; it implies, that he is a miserable poor lord, having no right, or destitute of any power, to dispose of anything in the world to our advantage (Job 22:17): "They say unto God, Depart from us, what can the Almighty do for them?" They will have no commerce with him in a way of duty, because they imagine him to have no sovereign power to do anything for them in way of benefit, as if his dominion were an empty title, and as much destitute of any authority to command a favor for them as any idol. They think themselves to have as absolute a disposal of things, as God himself. What can he do for us? what can he confer upon us, that we cannot invest ourselves in? as though they were sovereigns in an equality with God. Thus men live "without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12), as if there were no Supreme Being to pay a respect to, or none fit to receive any homage at their hands; withholding from God the right of his time and the right of his service, which is the just claim of his sovereignty.

[7.] Censuring others is a contempt of his sovereignty. When we censure men's persons or actions by a rash judgment; when we will be judges of the good and evil of men's actions, where the law of God is utterly silent, we usurp God's place, and invade his right; we claim a superiority over the law, and judge God defective, as the Rector of the world, in his prescriptions of good and evil. (James 4:11-12), "He that speaks evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judgeth the law; there is one Lawgiver who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" Do you know what you do in judging another? You take upon you the garb of a sovereign, as if he were more your servant than God's, and more under your authority than the authority of God; it is a setting thyself in God's tribunal, and assuming his rightful power of judging; thy brother is not to be governed by thy fancy, but by God's law, and his own conscience.

2. Information. Hence it follows, that God doth actually govern the world. He hath not only a right to rule, but "he rules over all," so saith the text. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"—what, to let them do what they please, and all that their lusts prompt them to? hath God an absolute dominion? Is it good, and is it wise? Is it then a useless prerogative of the Divine nature? Shall so excellent a power lie idle, as if God were a lifeless image? Shall we fancy God like some lazy monarch, that solaceth himself in the gardens of his palace, or steeps himself in some charming pleasures, and leaves his lieutenants to govern the several provinces, which are all members of his empire, according to their own humor? Not to exercise this dominion is all one as not to have it; to what purpose is he invested with this sovereignty, if he were careless of what were done in the

world, and regarded not the oppressions of men? God keeps no useless excellency by him; he actually reigns over the heathen (Psalms 47:8), and those as bad, or worse than heathens. It had been a vanity in David to call upon the heavens to be glad, and the earth to rejoice, under the rule of a “sleepy Deity” (1 Chronicles 16:31). No; his sceptre is full of eyes, as it was painted by the Egyptians; he is always waking, and always more than Ahasuerus, reading over the records of human actions. Not to exercise his authority, is all one as not to regard whether he keep the crown upon his head, or continue the sceptre in his hand. If his sovereignty were exempt from care, it would be destitute of justice; God is more righteous than to resign the ensigns of his authority to blind and oppressive man; to think that God hath a power, and doth not use it for just and righteous ends, is to imagine him an unrighteous as well as a careless Sovereign; such a thing in a man renders him a base man, and a worse governor; it is a vice that disturbs the world, and overthrows the ends of authority, as to have a power, and use it well, is the greatest virtue of an earthly sovereign. What an unworthy conception is it of God, to acknowledge him to be possessed of a greater authority than the greatest monarch, and yet to think that he useth it less than a petty lord; that his crown is of no more value with him than a feather? This represents God impotent, that he cannot, or unrighteous and base, that he will not administer the authority he hath for the noblest and justest end. But can we say, that he neglects the government of the world? How come things then to remain in their due order? How comes the law of nature yet to be preserved in every man’s soul? How comes conscience to check, and cite, and judge if God did not exercise his authority, what authority could conscience have to disturb man in unlawful practices, and to make his sports and sweetness so unpleasant and sour to him? Hath he not given frequent notices and memorials, that he holds a curb over corrupt inclinations, puts rubs in the way of malicious attempters, and often oversets the disturbers of the peace of the world?

3. Information. God can do no wrong, since he is absolute Sovereign. Man may do wrong, princes may oppress and rifle, but it is a crime in them so to do: because their power is a power of government, and not of propriety, in the goods or lives of their subjects; but God cannot do any wrong, whatsoever the clamors of creatures are, because he can do nothing but what he hath a sovereign right to do. If he takes away your goods, he takes not away anything that is yours more than his own, since though he entrusted you with them, he divested not himself of the propriety. When he takes away our lives, he takes what he gave us by a temporary donation, to be surrendered at his call: we can claim no right in anything but by his will. He is no debtor to us: and since he owes us nothing, he can wrong us in nothing that he takes away. His own sovereignty excuseth him in all those acts which are most distasteful to the creature. If we crop a medicinal plant for our use, or a flower for our pleasure, or kill a lamb for our food, we do neither of them any wrong: because the original of them was for our use, and they had their life, and nourishment, and pleasing qualities for our delight and support. And are not we much more made for the pleasure and use of God, than any of those can be for us? “Of him and to him are all things” (Romans 11:36): hath not God as much right over any one of us, as over the meanest worm? Though there be a vast difference in nature between the angels in heaven and the worms on earth, yet they are all one in regard of subjection to God; he is as much the Lord of the one as the other; as much the Proprietor of the one as the other; as much the Governor of one as the other;—not a cranny in the world is exempt from his jurisdiction;—not a mite or grain of a creature exempt from his propriety. He is not our Lord by election; he was a Lord before we were in being; he had no terms put upon him who capitulated with him, and set him in his throne by covenant. What oath did he take to any

subject at his first investiture in his authority? His right is as natural, as eternal as himself: as natural as his existence, and as necessary as his Deity. Hath he any law but his own will? What wrong can he do that breaks no law, that fulfils his law in everything he doth, by fulfilling his own will, which as it is absolutely sovereign, so it is infinitely righteous? In whatsoever he takes from us, then, he cannot injure us; it is no crime in any man to seize upon his own goods to vindicate his own honor;—and shall it be thought a wrong in God to do such things, besides the occasion he hath from every man, and that every day provoking him to do it? He seems rather to wrong himself by forbearing such a seizure, than wrong us by executing it.

4. Information. If God have a sovereignty over the whole world., then merit is totally excluded. His right is so absolute over all creatures, that he neither is, nor can be, a debtor to any; not to the undefiled holiness of the blessed angels, much less to poor earthly worms; those blessed spirits enjoy their glory by the title of his sovereign pleasure, not by virtue of any obligation devolving from them upon God. Are not the faculties, whereby they and we perform any act of obedience, his grant to us? Is not the strength, whereby they and we are enabled to do anything pleasing to him, a gift from him? Can a vassal merit of his lord, or a slave of his master, by using his tools, and employing his strength in his service, though it was a strength he had naturally, not by donation from the man in whose service it is employed? God is Lord of all—all is due to him; how can we oblige him by giving him what is his own, more his to whom it is presented, than ours by whom it is offered? He becomes not a debtor by receiving anything from us, but by promising something to us. [Note: Austin.]

5. Information. If God hath a sovereign dominion over the whole world, then hence it follows, that all magistrates are but sovereigns under God. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; all the potentates of the world are no other than his lieutenants, movable at his pleasure, and more at his disposal than their subjects are at theirs. Though they are dignified with the title of “gods,” yet still they are at an infinite distance from the supreme Lord; gods under God, not to be above him, not to be against him. The want of the due sense of their subordination to God hath made many in the world act as sovereigns above him more than sovereigns under him. Had they all bore a deep conviction of this upon their spirits, such audacious language had never dropped from the mouth of Pharaoh: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go?” (Exodus 5:2), presuming that there was no superior to control him, nor any in heaven able to be a match for him; Darius had never published such a doting edict, as to prohibit any petition to God; Nero had never fired Rome, and sung at the sight of the devouring flames; nor ever had he ripped up his mother’s belly, to see the womb where he first lodge and received a life so hateful to his country. Nor would Abner and Joab, the two generals, have accounted the death of men but a sport and interlude. “Let the young men arise and play before us” (2 Samuel 2:14); what play it was, the next verse acquaints you with; thrusting their swords into one another’s sides. They were no more troubled at the death of thousands, than a man is to kill a fly, or a flea. Had a sense of this but hovered over their souls, people in many countries had not been made their foot-balls, and used worse than their dogs! Nor had the lives of millions, worth more than a world, been exposed to fire and sword, to support some sordid lust, or breach of faith upon an idle quarrel, and for the depredation of their neighbors’ estates; the flames of cities had not been so bright, nor the streams of blood so deep, nor the cries of innocents so loud. In particular,

(1.) If God be Sovereign, all under-sovereigns are not to rule against him, but to be obedient to his orders. If they “rule by his authority” (Proverbs 8:15), they are not to rule against his interest; they are not to imagine themselves as absolute as God, and that their laws must be of as sovereign authority against his honor, as the Divine are for it. If they are his lieutenants on earth, they ought to act according to his orders. No man but will account a governor of a province a rebel, if he disobeys the orders sent to him by the sovereign prince that commissioned him. Rebellion against God is a crime of princes, as well as rebellion against princes a crime of subjects. Saul is charged with it by Samuel in a high manner for an act of simple disobedience, though intended for the service of God, and the enriching his country with the spoils of the Amalekites. “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Samuel 15:23); like witchcraft or covenanting with the devil, acting as if he had received his commission not from God, but from Satan. Magistrates, as commissioned by God, ought to act for him. Doth human authority ever give a commission to any to rebel against itself? did God ever depute any earthly sovereignty against his glory, and give them leave to outlaw his laws, to introduce their own? No; when he gave the vicarious dominion to Christ, he calls upon the kings of the earth to be instructed, and be wise, and “kiss the Son” (Psalms 2:10; Psalms 2:12), i. e. to observe his orders, and pay him homage as their Governor. What a silly doltish thing is it to resist that Supreme Authority, to which the archangels submit themselves, and regulate their employments punctually by their instructions! Those excellent creatures exactly obey him in all the acts of their subordinate government in the world; those in whose hand the greatest monarch is no more than a silly fly between the fingers of a giant. A contradiction to the interest of God hath been fatal to kings. The four monarchies have had their wings clipped, and most of them have been buried in their own ashes; they have all, like the imitators of Lucifer’s pride, fallen from the heaven of their glory to the depth of their shame and misery. All governors are bound to be as much obedient to God, as their subjects are bound to be submissive to them. Their authority over men is limited; God’s authority over them is absolute and unbounded. Though every soul ought to be subject to the higher powers, yet there is a higher Power of all, to which those higher powers are to subject themselves; they are to be keepers of both the tables of the law of God, and are then most sovereigns when they set in their own practice an example of obedience to God, for their subjects to write after.

(2.) They ought to imitate God in the exercise of their sovereignty in ways of justice and righteousness. Though God be an absolute sovereign, yet his government is not tyrannical, but managed according to the rules of righteousness, wisdom, and goodness. If God, that created them as well as their subjects, doth so exercise his government, it is a duty incumbent upon them to do the same; since they are not the creators of their people, but the conductors. As God’s government tends to the good of the world, so ought theirs to the good of their countries. God committed not the government of the world to the Mediator in an unlimited way, but for the good of the church, in order to the eternal salvation of his people. “He gave him to be head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1:22). He had power over the devils to restrain them in their temptation and malice; power over the angels to order their ministry for the heirs of salvation. So power is given to magistrates for the civil preservation of the world and of human society; they ought therefore to consider for what ends they were placed over the rest of mankind, and not exercise their authority in a licentious way, but conformable to that justice and righteousness wherein God doth administer his government, and for the preservation of those who are committed to them.

(3.) Magistrates must then be obeyed when they act according to God's order, and within the bounds of the Divine commission. They are no friends to the sovereignty of God, that are enemies to magis tracy, his ordinance. Saul was a good governor, though none of the best men, and the despisers of his government after God's choice, were the sons of Belial (1 Samuel 10:27). Christ was no enemy to Caesar. To pull down a faithful magistrate, such an one as Zerubbabel, is to pluck a signet from the hand of God; for in that capacity he accounts him (Haggai 2:23). God's servants stand or fall to their own Master; how doth he check Aaron and Miriam for speaking against Moses, his servant? "Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:8); against Moses as related to you in the capacity of a governor; against Moses as related to you in the capacity of my servant? To speak anything against them, as they act by God's order, is an invasion of God's sovereign right, who gave them their commission. To act against just power, or the justice of an earthly power, is to act against God's ordinance, who ordained them in the world, but not any abuse, or ill use of their power.

Use II. How dreadful is the consideration of this doctrine to all rebels against God! Can any man that hath brains in his head, imagine it an inconsiderable thing to despise the Sovereign of the world? It was the sole crime of disobedience to that positive law, whereby God would have a visible memorial of his sovereignty preserved in the eye of man, that showered down that deluge of misery, under which the world groans to this day. God had given Adam a soul, whereby he might live as a rational creature; and then gives him a law, whereby he might live as a dutiful subject: for God forbidding him to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, declared his own supremacy over Adam, and his propriety in the pleasant world he had given him by his bounty; he let him know hereby, that man was not his own lord, nor was to live after his own sentiments, but the directions of a superior. As when a great lord builds a magnificent palace, and brings in another to inhabit it, he reserves a small duty to himself, not of an equal value with the house, but for an acknowledgment of his own right, that the tenant may know he is not the lord of it, but hath this grant by the liberality of another. [Note: Chrysost. in gen. Hom. 16.] God hereby gave Adam matter for a pure obedience, that had no foundation in his own nature by any implanted law; he was only in it to respect the will of his Sovereign, and to understand that he was to live under the power of a higher than himself. There was no more moral evil in the eating of this fruit, as considered distinct from the command, than in eating of any other fruit in the garden: had there been no prohibition, he might with as much safety have fed upon it as upon any other. No law of nature was transgressed in the act of eating of it, but the sovereignty of God over him was denied by him; and for this the death threatened was inflicted on his posterity: for though divines take notice of other sins in the fall of Adam, yet God, in his trial, chargeth him with none but this, and doth put upon his question an emphasis of his own authority: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded ye that thou shouldst not eat?" (Genesis 3:11). This I am pleased with, that thou shouldst disown my dominion over thyself, and this garden. This was the inlet to all the other sins: as the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty is the first step to the practice of all the duties of a creature, so the disowning his. sovereignty is the first spring of all the extravagances of a creature. Every sin against the sovereign Lawgiver is worthy of death: the transgression of this command deserved death, and procured it to spread itself over the face of the world. God's dominion cannot be despised without meriting the greatest punishment.

1. Punishment necessarily follows upon the doctrine of sovereignty. It is a faint and a feeble sovereignty that cannot preserve itself, and vindicate its own wrongs against rebellious subjects; the height of God's dominion infers a vengeance on the contemners of it: if God be an eternal King, he is an eternal Judge. Since sin unlinks the dependence between God the Sovereign, and man the subject, if God did not vindicate the rights of his sovereignty, and the authority of his law, he would seem to despise his own dominion, be weary of it, and not act the part of a good governor. But God is tender of his prerogative, and doth most bestir himself when men exalt themselves proudly against him: "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he will be above them" (Exodus 18:11). When haraoh thought himself a mate for God, and proudly rejected his commands, as if they had been the messages of some petty Arabian lord, God rights his own authority upon the life of his enemy by the ministry of the Red Sea. He turned a great king into a beast, to make him know that the Most High ruled in the kingdoms of men: "The demand is by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men" (Daniel 4:16-17); and that by the petitions of the angels, who cannot endure that the empire of God should be obscured and diminished by the pride of man. Besides the tender respect he hath to his own glory, he is constantly presented with the solicitations of the angels to punish the proud ones of the earth, that darken the glory of his majesty: it is necessary for the rescue of his honor, and necessary for the satisfaction of his illustrious attendants, who would think it a shame to them to serve a Lord that were always unconcerned in the rebellions of his creatures, and tamely, suffer their spurns at his throne; and therefore there is a day wherein the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, the cedars of Lebanon overthrown, and high mountains levelled, that "God may be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:11-12), &c. Pride is a sin that immediately swells against God's authority; this shall be brought down that God may be exalted; not that he should have a real exaltation, as if he were actually deposed from his government, but that he shall be manifested to be the Sovereign of the whole world. It is necessary there should be a day to chase away those clouds that are upon his throne, that the lustre of his majesty may break forth to the confusion of all the children of pride that vaunt against him. God hath a dominion over us as a Lawgiver, as we are his creatures; and a dominion over us in a way of justice, as we are his criminals.

2. This punishment is unavoidable.

(L) None can escape him. He hath the sole authority over hell and eath, the keys of both are in his hand: the greatest Caesar can no more escape him than the meanest peasant: "Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel?" (Zechariah 4:7). The height of angels is no match for him, much less that of the mortal grandees of the world; they can no more resist him than the meanest person; but are rather, as the highest steeples, the fittest marks for his crushing thunder. If he speaks the word, the principalities of men come down, and "the crown of their glory" (Jeremiah 13:18). He can "take the mighty away in a moment," and that "without hands," i. e. without instruments (Job 34:20). The strongest are like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, iron and clay; iron to man, but clay to God, to be crumbled to nothing.

(2.) What comfort can be reaped from a creature, when the Sovereign of the world arms himself with terrors, and begins his visitation? "What will you do in the day of visitation, to whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your glory?" (Isaiah 10:3). The torments from a subject may be relieved by the prince, but where can there be an appeal from the Sovereign of the world?

Where is there any above him to control him, if he will overthrow us? Who is there to call him to account, and say to him, What dost thou? He works by an uncontrollable authority; he needs not ask leave of any; "he works, and none can let it" (Isaiah 43:13): as when he will relieve, none can afflict; so when he will wound, none can relieve. If a king appoint the punishment of a rebel, the greatest favorite in the court cannot speak a comfortable word to him: the most beloved angel in heaven cannot sweeten and ease the spirit of a man that the Sovereign Power is set against to make the butt of his wrath. The devils he under his sentence, and wear their chains as marks of their condemnation, without hope of ever having them filed off, since they are laid upon them by the authority of an unaccountable Sovereign.

(3.) By his sovereign authority God can make any creature the instrument of his vengeance. He hath all the creatures at his beck, and can commission any of them to be a dreadful scourge. Strong winds and tempests fulfil his word (Psalms 148:8); the lightnings answer him at his call, and cry aloud, "Here are we" (Job 38:35). By his sovereign authority he can render locusts as mischievous as lions, forge the meanest creatures into swords and arrows, and commission the most despicable to be his executioners. He can cut off joy from our spirits, and make our own hearts be our tormentors, our most confident friends our persecutors, our nearest relations to be his avengers; they are more his, who is their Sovereign, than ours, who place a vain confidence in them. Rather than Abraham shall want children, he can raise up stones, and adopt them into his family; and rather than not execute his vengeance, he can array the stones in the streets, and make them his armed subjects against us. If he speak the word, a hair shall drop from our heads to choke us, or a vapor, congealed into rheum in our heads, shall drop down and putrefy our vitals. He can never want weapons, who is Sovereign over the thunders of heaven and stones of the earth, over every creature; and can, by a sovereign word, turn our greatest comforts into curses.

3. This punishment must be terrible. How loth David, a great king, sound in his body, prosperous in his crown, and successful in his conquests, settled in all his royal conveniences, groan under the wrathful touch of a greater King than himself (Psalms 6:1-10; Psalms 38:1-22, and his other penitential Psalms), not being able to give himself a writ of ease by all the delights of his palace and kingdom "If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion" (Proverbs 19:10) to a poor subject, how great is the wrath of the King of kings, that cannot be set forth by the terror of all the amazing volleys of thunder that have been since the creation, if the noise of all were gathered into one single crack! As there is an inconceivable ground of joy in the special favor of so might a King, so is there of terror in his severe displeasure: he is "terrible to the kings of the earth; with God is terrible majesty" (Psalms 86:12). What a folly is it, then, to rebel against so mighty a Sovereign!

Use III. Of comfort. The throne of God drops honey and sweetness, as well as dread and terror; all his other attributes afford little relief without this of his dominion and universal command. When, therefore, he speaks of his being the God of his people, he doth often preface it with "the Lord thy God;" his sovereignty, as a Lord, being the ground of all the comfort we can take in his federal relation as our God; thy God, but superior to thee; thy God, not as thy cattle and goods are thine, in a way of sole propriety, but a Lord too, in a way of sovereignty, not only over thee, but over all things else for thee. As the end of God's settling earthly governments was for the good of the communities over which the governors preside, so God exerciseth his government for the good of the world, and more particularly for the good of the church, over which he is a peculiar Governor.

1. His love to his people is as great as his sovereignty over them. He stands not upon his dominion with his people so much as upon his affection to them; he would not be called "Baali, my Lord," i. e. he would not be known only by the name of sovereignty, but "Ishi, my husband," a name of authority and sweetness together (Hosea 2:16; Hosea 2:19, &c.): he signifies that he is not only the Lord of our spirits and bodies, but a husband by a marriage knot, admitting us to a nearness to him, and communion of goods with him. Though he majestically sits upon a high throne, yet it is a throne "encircled with a rainbow" (Ezekiel 1:28), to show that his government of his people is not only in a way of absolute dominion, but also in a way of federal relation; he seems to own himself their subject rather than their Sovereign, when he gives them a charter to command him in the affairs of his church (Isaiah 45:11); "Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me." Some read it by way of question, as a corrective of a sauciness: Do you ask me of things to come, and seem to command me concerning the works of my hands, as if you were more careful of my interest among my people than I am, who have formed them? But if this were the sense, it would seem to discourage an importunity of prayer for public deliverance; and therefore, to take it according to our translation, it is an exhortation to prayer, and a mighty encouragement in the management and exercise of it. Urge me with my promise, in a way of humble importunity, and you shall find me as willing to perform my word, and gratify your desires, as if I were rather under your authority, than you under mine: as much as to say, If I be not as good as my word, to satisfy those desires that are according to my promise, implead me at my own throne, and, if I be failing in it, will give judgment against myself: almost iike princes' charters, and gracious grants, "We grant such a thing against us and our heirs," giving the subject power to implead them if they be not punctually observed by them. How is the love of God seen in his condescension below the majesty of earthly governors! He that might command, by the absoluteness of his authority, doth not only do that, but entreats, in the quality of a subject, as if he had not a fulness to supply us, but needed something from us for a supply of himself (2 Corinthians 5:20): "As though God did beseech you by us." And when he may challenge, as a due by the right of his propriety, what we bestow upon his poor, which are his subjects as well as ours, he reckons it as a loan to him, as if what we had were more our own than his (Proverbs 19:17). He stands not upon his dominion so much with us, when he finds us conscientious in paying the duty we owe to him; he rules as a Father, by love as well as by authority; he enters into a peculiar communion with poor earthly worms, plants his gracious tabernacle among the troops of sinners, instructs us by his word, invites us by his benefits, admits us into his presence, is more desirous to bestow his smiles than we to receive them, and acts in such a manner as if he were willing to resign his sceptre into the hands of any that were possessed with more love and kindness to us than himself: this is the comfort of believers.

2. In his being Sovereign, his pardons carry in them a full security. He that hath the keys of hell and death, pardons the crime, and wipes off the guilt. Who can repeal the act of the chief Governor? what tribunal can null the decrees of an absolute throne? (Isaiah 43:25), "I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions, for my name's sake." His sovereign dominion renders his mercy comfortable. The clemency of a subject, though never so great, cannot pardon; people may pity a criminal, while the executioner tortures him, and strips him of his life; but the clemency of the Supreme Prince establisheth a pardon. Since we are under the dominion of God, if he pardons, who can reverse it? if he doth not, what will the pardons of men profit us in regard of an eternal state? If God be a King forever, then he whom God forgives, he in whom God reigns, shall live

forever; else he would want subjects on earth, and have none of his lower creatures, which he formed upon the earth, to reign over after the dissolution of the world; if his pardons did not stand secure, he would, after this life, have no voluntary subjects that had formerly a being upon the earth; he would be a King only over the damned creatures.

3. Corruptions will certainly be subdued in his voluntary subjects. The covenant, “I will be your God,” implies protection, government, and relief, which are all grounded upon sovereignty; that, therefore, which is our greatest burden, will be removed by his sovereign power (Micah 7:19): “He will subdue our iniquities.” If the outward enemies of the church shall not bear up against his dominion, and perpetuate their rebellions unpunished, those within, his people, shall as little bear up against his throne, without being destroyed by him; the billows of our own hearts, and the raging waves within us, are as much at his beck as those without us; and his sovereignty is more eminent in quelling the corruptions of the heart, than the commotions of the world in reigning over men’s spirit, by changing them, or curbing them, more than over men’s bodies, by pinching and punishing them. The remainders of Satan’s empire will moulder away before him, since He that is in us is a greater Sovereign “than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). His enemies will be laid at his feet, and so never shall prevail against him, when his kingdom shall come. He could not be Lord of any man, as a happy creature, if he did not, by his power, make them happy; and he could not make them happy, unless, by his grace, he made them holy: he could not be praised, as a Lord of glory, if he did not make some creatures glorious to praise him; and an earthly creature could not praise him perfectly, unless he had every grain of enmity to his glory taken out of his heart. Since God is the only Sovereign, he only can still the commotions in our spirits, and pull down all the ensigns of the devil’s royalty; he can waste him by the powerful word of his lips.

4. Hence is a strong encouragement for prayer. “My King,” was the strong compellation David used in prayer, as an argument of comfort and confidence, as well as that of “my God” (Psalms 5:2): “Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God.” To be a king is to have an office of government and protection: he gives us liberty to approach to him as the “Judge of all” (Hebrews 12:23), i. e. as the Governor of the world; we pray to one that hath the whole globe of heaven and earth in his hand, and can do whatsoever he will: though he be higher than the cherubims, and transcendentally above all in majesty, yet we may soar up to him with the wings of our soul, faith and love, and lay open our cause, and find him as gracious as if he were the meanest subject on earth, rather than the most sovereign God in heaven. He hath as much of tenderness as he hath of authority, and is pleased with prayer, which is an acknowledgment of his dominion, an honoring of that which he delights to honor; for prayer, in the notion of it, imports thus much—that God is the Rector of the world, that he takes notice of human affairs, that he is a careful, just, wise Governor, a storehouse of blessing, a fountain of goodness to the indigent, and a relief to the oppressed. What have we reason to fear when the Sovereign of the world gives us liberty to approach to him and lay open our case? that God, who is King of the whole earth, not only of a few villages or cities in the earth, but the whole earth; and not only King of this dreggy place of our dross, but of heaven, having prepared, or established, his throne in the most glorious place of the creation.

5. Here is comfort in affliction. As a sovereign, he is the author of afflictions; as a sovereign, he can be the remover of them; he can command the waters of affliction to go so far and no farther. If he speaks the word, a disease shall depart as soon as a servant shall from your presence with a nod; if we are banished from one place, he can command a shelter for us in another; if he orders Moab,

a nation that had no great kindness for his people, to let “his outcasts dwell with them,” they shall entertain them, and afford them sanctuary (Isaiah 16:4). Again, God chasteneth as a “Sovereign,” but teacheth as a “Father” (Psalm 99:12); the exercise of his authority is not without an exercise of his goodness; he doth not correct for his own pleasure, or the creature’s torment, but for the creature’s instruction; though the rod be in the hand of a sovereign, yet it is tinctured with the kindness of Divine bowels: he can order them as a sovereign to mortify our flesh, and try our faith. In the severest tempest, the Lord that raised the wind against us, which shattered the ship, and tore its rigging, can change that contrary wind for a more happy one, to drive us into the port.

6. It is a comfort against the projects of the church’s adversaries in times of public commotions. The consideration of the Divine sovereignty may arm us against the threatenings of mighty ones, and the menaces of persecutors. God hath authority above the crowns of men, and a wisdom superior to the cabals of men; none can have a step without him; he hath a negative voice upon their counsels, a negative hand upon their motions; their politic resolves must stop at the point he hath prescribed them; their formidable strength cannot exceed the limits he hath set them; their overreaching wisdom expires at the breath of God: “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord” (Proverbs 21:30); not a bullet can be discharged, nor a sword drawn, a wall battered, nor a person despatched out of the world, without the leave of God, by the mightiest in the world. The instruments of Satan are no more free from his sovereign restraint than their inspirer; they cannot pull the hook out of their nostrils, nor cast the bridle out of their mouths; this Sovereign can shake the earth, rend the heavens, overthrow mountains, the most mountainous opposers of his interest. Though the nations rush in against his people like the rushing of many waters, “God shall rebuke them, they shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind” (Isaiah 17:13); so doth he often burst in pieces the most mischievous designs, and conducts the oppressed to a happy port: he often turns the severest tempests into a calm, as well as the most peaceful calm into a horrible storm. How often hath a well-rigged ship, that seemed to spurn the sea under her feet, and beat the waves before her to a foam, been swallowed up into the bowels of that element, over whose back she rode a little before! God never comes to deliver his church as a governor, but in a wrathful posture (Ezekiel 20:33): “Surely, saith the Lord, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you;” not with fury poured out upon the church, but fury poured out upon her enemies, as the words following evidence: the church he would bring out from the countries where she was scattered, and bring the people into the bond of the covenant. He sometimes “cuts off the spirits of princes” (Psalms 76:12), i. e. cuts off their designs as men do in the pipes of a water-course. The hearts of all are as open to him as the riches of heaven, where he resides; he can slip an inclination into the heart of the mighty, which they dreamed not of before; and if he doth not change their projects, he can make them abortive, and waylay them in their attempts. Laban marched with fury, but God put a padlock on his passion against Jacob (Genesis 31:24; Genesis 31:29); the devils, which ravage men’s minds, must be still when he gives out his sovereign orders. This Sovereign can make his people find favor in the eyes of the cruel Egyptians, which had so long oppressed them (Exodus 11:3); and speak a good word in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar for the prophet Jeremiah, that he should order his captain to take him into his special protection, when he took Zedekiah away prisoner in chains, and “put out his eyes” (Jeremiah 39:11). His people cannot want deliverance from Him who hath all the world at his command, when he is pleased to bestow it; he hath as many instruments of deliverance as he

hath creatures at his beck in heaven or earth, from the meanest to the highest. As he is the Lord of hosts, the church hath not only an interest in the strength he himself is possessed with, but in the strength of all the creatures that are under his command, in the elements below, and angels above. In those armies of heaven, and in the inhabitants of the earth, he doth "what he will" (Daniel 4:35); they are all in order and array at his command. There are angels to employ in a fatal stroke, lice and frogs to quell the stubborn hearts of his enemies; he can range his thunders and lightnings, the cannon and granadoes of heaven, and the worms of the earth in his service; he can muzzle lions, calm the fury of the fire, turn his enemies' swords into their own bowels, and their artillery on their own breasts; set the wind in their teeth, and make their chariot-wheels languish; make the sea enter a quarrel with them, and wrap them in its waves till it hath stifled them in its lap. The angels have storms, and tempests, and wars in their hands, but at the disposal of God; when they shall cast them out against the empire of antichrist (Revelation 7:1-2), then shall Satan be discharged from his throne, and no more seduce the nations; the everlasting gospel shall be preached, and God shall reign gloriously in Sion. Let us, therefore, shelter ourselves in the Divine sovereignty, regard God as the most high in our dangers and in our petitions. This was David's resolution (Psalms 57:1-2): "I will cry unto God most high;" this dominion of God is the true "tower of David, wherein there are a thousand shields" for defence and encouragement (Song of Solomon 4:4).

Use IV. If God hath an extensive dominion over the whole world, this ought to be often meditated on, and acknowledged by us. This is the universal duty of mankind. If he be the Sovereign of all, we should frequently think of our great Prince, and acknowledge ourselves his subjects, and him our Lord. God will be acknowledged the Lord of the whole earth; the neglect of this is the cause of the judgments which are sent upon the world. All the prodigies were to this end, that they might know, or acknowledge, that "God was the Lord" (Exodus 10:2); as God was proprietor, he demanded the first-born of every Jew, and the first-born of every beast; the one was to be redeemed, and the other sacrificed; this was the quit rent they were to pay to him for their fruitful land. The first-fruits of the earth were ordered to be paid to him, as a homage due to the landlord, and an acknowledgment they held all in chief of him. The practice of offering first-fruits for an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, was among many of the heathens, and very ancient; hence they dedicated some of the chief of their spoils, owning thereby the dominion and goodness of God, whereby they had gained the victory; Cain owned this in offering the fruits of the earth, and it was his sin he owned no more, viz., his being a sinner, and meriting the justice of God, as his brother Abel did in his bloody sacrifice. God was a sovereign Proprietor and Governor while man was in a state of innocence; but when man proved a rebel, the sovereignty of God bore another relation towards him, that of a Judge, added to the other. The first-fruits might have been offered to God in a state of innocence, as a homage to him as Lord of the manor of the world; the design of them was to own God's propriety in all things, and men's dependence on him for the influences of heaven in producing the fruits of the earth, which he had ordered for their use. The design of sacrifices, and placing beasts instead of the criminal, was to acknowledge their own guilt, and God as a sovereign Judge; Cain owned the first, but not the second; he acknowledged his dependence on God as a Proprietor, but not his obnoxiousness to God as a Judge; which may be probably gathered from his own speech, when God came to examine him, and ask him for his brother (Genesis 4:9): "Am I my brother's keeper?" Why do you ask me? though I own thee as the Lord of my land and goods, yet I do not think myself accountable to thee for all my actions. This

sovereignty of God ought to be acknowledged in all the parts of it, in all the manifestattons of it to the creature; we should bear a sense of this always upon our spirits, and be often in the thoughts of it in our retirements; we should fancy that we saw God upon his throne in his royal garb, and great attendants about him, and take a view of it, to imprint an awe upon our spirits. The meditation of this would,

1. Fix us on him as an object of trust. It is upon his sovereign dominion as much as upon anything, that safe and secure confidence is built; for if he had any superior above him to control him in his designs and promises, his veracity and power would be of little efficacy to form our souls to a close adherency to him. It were not fit to make him the object of our trust that can be gainsayed by a higher than himself, and had not a full authority to answer our expectations; if we were possessed with this notion fully and believingly, that God were high above all, that "his kingdom rules over all," we should not catch at every broken reed, and stand gaping for comforts from a pebble stone. He that understands the authority of a king, would not waive a reliance on his promise to depend upon the breath of a changeling favorite. None but an ignorant man would change the security he may have upon the height of a rock, to expect it from the dwarfishness of a molehill. To put confidence in any inferior lord more than in the prince, is a folly in civil converse, but a rebellion in divine; God only being above all, can only rule all; can command things to help us, and check other things which we depend on, and make them fall short of our expectations. The due consideration of this doctrine would make us pierce through second causes to the first, and look further than to the smaller sort of sailors, that climb the ropes, and dress the sails, to the pilot that sits at the helm, the master, that, by an indisputable authority, orders all their notions. We should not depend upon second causes for our support, but look beyond them to the authority of the Deity, and the dominion he hath over all the works of his hands (Zechariah 10:1): "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;" when the seasons of the year conspire for the producing such an effect, when the usual time of rain is wheeled about in the year, stop not your thoughts at the point of the heavens whence you expect it, but pierce the heavens, and solicit God, who must give order for it before it comes. The due meditation of all things depending on the Divine dominion would strike off our hands from all other holds, so that no creature would engross the dependence and trust which is due to the First Cause; as we do not thank the heavens when they pour out rain, so we are not to depend upon them when we want it; God is to be sought to when the womb of second causes is opened to relieve us, as well as when the womb of second causes is barren, and brings not forth its wonted progeny.

2. It would make us diligent in worship. The consideration of God, as the Supreme Lord, is the foundation of all religion: "Our Father, which art in heaven," prefaceth the Lord's prayer; "Father" is a name of authority; "in heaven," the place where he hath fixed his throne, notes his government; not "my Father," but "our Father," notes the extent of this authority. In all worship we acknowledge the object of our worship our Lord, and ourselves his vassals; if we bear a sense that he is our Sovereign King, it would draw us to him in every exigence, and keep us with him in a reverential posture, in every address; when we come, we should be careful not to violate his right, but render him the homage due to his royalty. We should not appear before him with empty souls, but filled with holy thoughts: we should bring him the best of our flock, and present him with the prime of our strength; were we sensible we hold all of him, we should not withhold anything from him which is more worthy than another. Our hearts would be framed into an awful regard of him, when we

consider that glorious and “fearful name, the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 28:58). We should look to our feet when we enter into his house; if we considered him in heaven upon his throne, and ourselves on earth at his footstool (Ecclesiastes 5:2), lower before him than a worm before an angel, it would hinder garnishness and lightness. The Jews, saith Capel, on 1 Timothy 1:17, repeat this expression, ■■■■ ■■■■■■, King of worlds, or Eternal King; probably the first original of it might be to stake them down from wandering. When we consider the majesty of God, clothed with a robe of light, sitting upon his high throne, adorned with his royal ensigns, we should not enter into the presence of so great a Majesty with the sacrifice of fools, with light motions and foolish thoughts, as if he were one of our companions to be drolled with. We should not hear his word as if it were the voice of some ordinary peasant. The consideration of majesty would engender reverence in our service; it would also make us speak of God with honor and respect, as of a great and glorious king, and not use defaming expressions of him, as if he were an infamous being. And were he considered as a terrible majesty, he would not be frequently solicited by some to pronounce a damnation upon them upon every occasion.

3. It would make us charitable to others. Since he is our Lord, the great Proprietor of the world, it is fit he should have a part of our goods, as well as our time: he being the Lord both of our goods and time. The Lord is to be honored with our substance (Proverbs 3:9); kings were not to be approached to without a present; tribute is due to kings: but because he hath no need of any from us to bear up his state, maintain the charge of his wars, or pay his military officers and hosts, it is a debt due to him to acknowledge him in his poor, to sustain those that are a part of his substance; though he stands in no need of it himself, yet the poor, that we have always with us, do; as a seventh part of our weekly time, so some part of our weekly gains, are due to him. There was to be a weekly laying by in store somewhat of what God had prospered them, for the relief of others (1 Corinthians 16:1-2); the quantity is not determined, that is left to every man’s conscience, “according as God hath prospered him” that week. If we did consider God as the Donor and Proprietor, we should dispose of his gifts according to the design of the true owner, and act in our places as stewards entrusted by him, and not purse up his part, as well as our own, in our coffers. We should not deny him a small quit rent, as an acknowledgement that we have a greater income from him; we should be ready to give the inconsiderable pittance he doth require of us, as an acknowledgment of his propriety, as well as liberality.

4. It would make us watchful, and arm us against all temptations. Had Eve stuck to her first argument against the serpent, she had not been instrumental to that destruction which mankind yet feel the smart of (Genesis 3:3): “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it;” the great Governor of the world hath laid his sovereign command upon us in this point. The temptation gained no ground till her heart let go the sense of this for the pleasure of her eye and palate. The repetition of this, the great Lord of the world hath said or ordered, had both unargued and disarmed the tempter. A sense of God’s dominion over us would discourage a temptation, and put it out of countenance; it would bring us with a vigorous strength to beat it back to a retreat. If this were as strongly urged as the temptation, it would make the heart of the tempted strong, and the motion of the tempter feeble.

5. It would make us entertain afflictions as they ought to be entertained, viz., with a respect to God. When men make light of any affliction from God, it is a contempt of his sovereignty, as to contemn the frown, displeasure, and check of a prince, is an affront to majesty: it is as if they did not care a

straw what God did with them, but dare him to do his worst. There is a “despising the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). To be unhumbled under his hand, is as much, or more, affront to him, than to be impatient under it. Afflictions must be entertained as a check from heaven, as a frown from the great Monarch of the world; under the feeling of every stroke, we are to acknowledge his sovereignty and bounty; to despise it, is to make light of his authority over us; as to despise his favors is to make light of his kindness to us. A sense of God’s dominion would make us observe every check from him, and not diminish his authority by casting off a due sense of his correction.

6. This dominion of God would make us resign up ourselves to God in everything. He that considers himself a thing made by God, a vassal under his authority, would not expostulate with him, and call him to an account why he hath dealt so or so with him. It would stab the vitals of all pleas against him. We should not then contest with him, but humbly lay our cause at his feet, and say with Eli, (1 Samuel 3:18), “It is the Lord, let him do what seems good.” We should not commence a suit against God, when he doth not answer our prayers presently, and send the mercy we want upon the wings of the wind; he is the Lord, the Sovereign. The consideration of this would put an end to our quarrels with God; should I expect that the Monarch of the world should wait upon me; or I, a poor worm, wait upon him? Must I take state upon me before the throne of heaven, and expect the King of kings should lay by his sceptre, to gratify my humor? Surely Jonah thought God no more than his fellow, or his vassal, at that time when he told him to his face he did well to be angry, as though God might not do what he pleased with so small a thing as a gourd; he speaks as if he would have sealed a lease of ejectment, to exclude him from any propriety in anything in the world.

7. This dominion of God would stop our vain curiosity. When Peter was desirous to know the fate of John, the beloved disciple, Christ answereth no more than this: (John 21:22), “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” Consider your duty, and lay aside your curiosity, since it is my pleasure not to reveal it. The sense of God’s absolute dominion would silence many vain disputes in the world. What if God will not reveal this or that? the manner and method of his resolves should humble the creature under intruding inquiries.

Use V. Of exhortation.

1. The doctrine of the dominion of God may teach us humility. We are never truly abased, but by the consideration of the eminence and excellency of the Deity. Job never thought himself so pitiful a thing, so despicable a creature, as after God’s magnificent declamation upon the theme of his own sovereignty (Job 42:5-6). When God’s name is regarded as the most excellent and sovereign name in all the earth, then is the soul in the fittest temper to lie low; and cry out, What is man, that so great a Majesty should be mindful of him? When Abraham considers God as the supreme Judge of all the earth, he then owns “himself but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:25; Genesis 18:27). Indeed, how can vile and dusty man vaunt before God, when angels, far more excellent creatures, cannot stand before him, but with a veil on their faces? How little a thing is man in regard of all the earth! How mean a thing is the earth in regard of the vaster heavens!

How poor a thing is the whole world in comparison of God! How pitiful a thing is man, if compared with so excellent a Majesty! There is as great a distance between God and man, as between being and not being; and the more man considers the Divine royalty, the more disesteem he will have of himself; it would make him stoop and disrobe himself, and fall low before the throne of the King of

kings, throwing down before his throne any crown he gloried in (Revelation 4:10).

(1). In regard of authority. How unreasonable is pride in the presence of majesty! How foolish is it for a country justice of peace to think himself as great as his prince that commissioned him! How unreasonable is pride in the presence of the greatest sovereignty! What, is human greatness before Divine? The stars discover no light when the sun appears, but in a humble posture withdraw in their lesser beams, to give the sole glory of enlightening the world to the sun, who is, as it were, the sovereign of those stars, and imparts a light unto them. The greatest prince is infinitely less, if compared with God, than the meanest scullion in his kitchen can be before him. As the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of a man is a mere mote compared to the goodness and holiness of God, so is the authority of a man a mere trifle in regard of the sovereignty of God: and who but a simple child would be proud of a mote or trifle? Let man be as great as he can, and command others, he is still a subject to One greater than himself. Pride would then vanish like smoke at the serious consideration of this sovereignty. One of the kings of this country did very handsomely shame the flattery of his courtiers, that cried him up as lord of sea and land, by ordering his chair to be set on the sand of the sea shore, when the tide was coming in, and commanding the waters not to touch his feet, which when they did without any regard to his authority, he took occasion thereby to put his flatterers out of countenance, and instruct himself in a lesson of humility. [See,] saith he, [how I rule all things, when so mean a thing as the water will not obey me!] It is a ridiculous pride that the Turk and Persian discover in their swelling titles. What poor sovereigns are they, that cannot command a cloud, give out an effectual order for a drop of rain, in a time of drought, or cause the bottles of heaven to turn their mouth another way in a time of too much moisture! Yet their own prerogatives are so much in their minds, that they jostle out all thoughts of the supreme prerogative of God, and give thereby occasion to frequent rebellions against him.

(2). In regard of propriety. And this doctrine is no less an abatement of pride in the highest, as well as in the meanest; it lowers pride in point of propriety, as well as in point of authority. Is any proud of his possessions? how many lords of those possessions have gone before you! how many are to follow you! [Note: Raynard, de Deo, p. 766.] Your dominion lasts but a short time, too short to be a cause of any pride and glory in it. God by a sovereign power can take you from them, or them from you, when he pleaseth. The traveller refresheth himself in the heat of summer under a shady tree; how many have done so before him the same day he knows not, and how many will have the benefit after before night comes, he is as much ignorant of; he, and the others that went before him and follow after him, use it for their refreshment, but none of them can say, that they are the lords of it; the property is invested in some other person, whom perhaps they know not. The propriety of all you have is in God, not truly in yourselves. Doth not that man deserve scorn from you, who will play the proud fool in gay clothes and attire, which are known to be none of his own, but borrowed? Is it not the same case with every proud man, though he hath a property in his goods by the law of the land? Is anything you have your own truly? Is it not lent you by the great Lord? Is it not the same vanity in any of you, to be proud of what you have as God's loan to you, as for such a one to be proud of what he hath borrowed of man? And do you not make yourselves as ridiculous to angels and good men, who know that though it is yours in opposition to man, yet it is not yours in opposition to God? they are granted you only for your use, as the collar of esses and sword, and other ensigns of the chief magistrate in the city, pass through many hands in regard of

the use of them, but the propriety remains in the community and body of the city: or as the silver plate of a person that invites you to a feast is for your use during the time of the invitation. What ground is there to be proud of those things you are not the absolute lords and proprietors of, but only have the use of them granted to you during the pleasure of the Sovereign of the world!

2. Praise and thankfulness result from this doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

(1). He is to be praised for his royalty. (Psalms 145:1), "I will extoll thee, my God, O King." The Psalmist calls upon men five times to sing praise to him as King of all the earth. (Psalms 47:6-7), "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises to our king, sing praises: for God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding." All creatures, even the inanimate ones, are called upon to praise him because of the excellency of his name and the supremacy of his glory, in Psalms 148:1-14 throughout, and Psalms 148:13. That Sovereign Power that gave us hearts and tongues, deserves to have them employed in his praises, especially since he hath by the same hand given us so great matter for it. As he is a Sovereign we owe him thankfulness; he doth not deal with us in a way of absolute dominion; he might then have annihilated us, since he hath as full a dominion to reduce us to nothing. Consider the absoluteness of his sovereignty in itself, and you must needs acknowledge that he might have multiplied precepts, enjoined us the observance of more than he hath done; he might have made our tether much shorter; he might exact obedience, and promise no reward for it; he might dash us against the walls, as a potter doth his vessel, and no man have any just reason to say, What dost thou? or, Why dost thou use me so? A greater right is in him to use us in such a manner as we do sensible as well as insensible things. And if you consider his dominion as it is capable to be exercised in a way of unquestionable justice, and submitted to the reason and judgments of creatures, he might have dealt with us in a smarter way than he hath hitherto done; instead of one affliction, we might have had a thousand: he might have shut his own hands from pouring out any good upon us, and ordered innumerable scourges to be prepared for us; but he deals not with us according to the rights of his dominion. He doth not oppress us by the greatness of his majesty; he enters into covenant with us, and allures us by the chords of a man, and shows himself as much a merciful as an absolute Sovereign.

(2.) As he is a Proprietor, we owe him thankfulness. He is at his own choice whether he will bestow upon us any blessings or no; the more value, therefore, his benefits deserve from us, and the Donor the more sincere returns. If we have anything from the creature to serve our turn, it is by the order of the chief Proprietor. He is the spring of honor, and the fountain of supplies: all creatures are but as the conduit pipes in a great city, which serve several houses with water, but from the great spring. All things are conveyed originally from his own hand, and are dispensed from his exchequer. If this great Sovereign did not order them, you would have no more supplies from a creature than you could have nourishment from a chip: it is the Divine will in everything that doth us good; every favor from creatures is but a smile from God, an evidence of his royalty to move us to pay a respect to him as the great Lord. Some heathens had so much respect for God, as to conclude that his will, and not their prudence, was the chief conductor of their affairs. His goodness to us calls for our thankfulness, but his sovereignty calls for a higher elevation of it: a smile from a prince is more valued, and thought worthy of more gratitude, than a present from a peasant; a small gift from a great person is more gratefully to be received than a larger from an inferior person: the condescension of royalty magnifies the gift. What is man, that thou, so great a Majesty, art mindful of him, to bestow this or that favor upon him?—is but a due reflection upon

every blessing we receive. Upon every fresh blessing we should acknowledge the Donor and true Proprietor, and give him the honor of his dominion: his property ought to be thankfully owned in everything we are capable of consecrating to him; as David, after the liberal collection he had made for the building of the temple, owns in his dedication of it to that use the propriety of God: "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14): it was but a return of God's own to him, as the waters of the river are no other than the return to the sea of what was taken from it. Praise and thankfulness is a rent due from all mankind, and from every creature, to the great Landlord, since all are tenants, and hold by him at his will. "Every creature in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and in the sea," were heard, by John, to ascribe "blessing, honor, glory, and power, to Him that sits on the throne" (Revelation 5:13). We are as much bound to the sovereignty of God for his preservation of us, as for his creation of us; we are no less obliged to him that preserves our beings when exposed to dangers, than we are for bestowing a being upon us when we were not capable of danger. Thankfulness is due to this Sovereign for public concerns. Rath he not preserved the ship of his church in the midst of whistling winds and roaring waves; in the midst of the combats of men and devils; and rescued it often when it hath been near shipwrecked?

3. How should we be induced from hence to promote the honor of this Sovereign! We should advance him as supreme, and all our actions should concur in his honor: we should return to his glory what we have received from his sovereignty, and enjoy by his merey he that is the superior of all, ought to be the end of all. This is the harmony of the creation; that which is of an inferior nature is ordered to the service of that which is of a more excellent nature; thus water and earth, that have a lower being, are employed for the honor and beauty of the plants of the earth, who are more excellent in having a principle of a growing life: these plants are again subservient to the beasts and birds, which exceed them in a principle of sense, which the others want: those beasts and birds are ordered for the good of man, who is superior to them in a principle of reason, and is invested with a dominion over them. Man having God for his superior, ought as much to serve the glory of God, as other things are designed to be useful to man. Other governments are intended for the good of the community, the chief end is not the good of the governors themselves: but God being every way sovereign, the sovereign Being, giving being to all things, the sovereign Ruler, giving order and preservation to all things, is also the end of all things, to whose glory and honor all things, all creatures, are to be subservient; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36): of him, as the efficient cause; through him, as the preserving cause; to him, as the final cause. All our actions and thoughts ought to be addressed to his glory; our whole beings ought to be consecrated to his honor, though we should have no reward but the honor of having been subservient to the end of our creation: so much doth the excellency and majesty of God, infinitely elevated above us, challenge of us. Subjects use to value the safety, honor, and satisfaction of a good prince above their own: David is accounted worth ten thousand of the people; and some of his courtiers thought themselves obliged to venture their lives for his satisfaction in so mean a thing as a little water from the well of Bethlehem. Doth not so great, so good a Sovereign as God, deserve the same affection from us? "Do we swear," saith a heathen, "to prefer none before Caesar, and have we not greater reason to prefer none before God?" [Note: Arrian in Epictet.] It is a justice due from us to God to maintain his glory, as it is a justice to preserve the right and property of another. As God would lay aside his Deity if he did

deny himself, so a creature acts irregularly, and out of the rank of a creature, if it doth not deny itself for God. He that makes himself his own end, makes himself his own sovereign. To napkin up a gift he hath bestowed upon us, or to employ what we possess solely to our own glory, to use anything barely for ourselves, without respect to God, is to apply it to a wrong use, and to injure God in his propriety, and the end of his donation. What we have ought to be used for the honor of God: he retains the dominion and lordship, though he grants us the use: we are but stewards, not proprietors, in regard to God, who expects an account from us, how we have employed his goods to his honor. The kingdom of God is to be advanced by us: we are to pray that his kingdom may come: we are to endeavor that his kingdom may come, that is, that God may be known to be the chief Sovereign; that his dominion, which was obscured by Adam's fall, may be more manifested; that his subjects, which are suppressed in the world, may be supported; his laws, which are violated by the rebellions of men, may be more obeyed; and his enemies be fully subdued by his final judgment, the last evidence of his dominion in this state of the world; that the empire of sin and the devil may be abolished, and the kingdom of God perfected, that none may rule but the great and rightful Sovereign. Thus while we endeavor to advance the honor of his throne, we shall not want an honor to ourselves. He is too gracious a Sovereign to neglect them that are mindful of his glory; "those that honor him, he will honor" (1 Samuel 2:30).

4. Fear and reverence of God in himself, and in his actions, is a duty incumbent on us from this doctrine (Jeremiah 10:7): "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" The ingratitude of the world is taxed in not reverencing God as a great king, who had given so many marks of his royal government among them. The prophet wonders there was no fear of so great a King in the world, since, "among all the wise men of the nations, and among all their kings, there is none like unto this;" no more reverence of him, since none ruled so wisely, nor any ruled so graciously. The dominion of God is one of the first sparks that gives fire to religion and worship, considered with the goodness of this Sovereign (Psalms 22:27-28): "All the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is Governor among the nations." Epicurus, who thought God careless of human affairs, leaving them at hap-hazard, to the conduct of men's wisdom and mutability of fortune, yet acknowledged that God ought to be worshipped by man for the excellency of his nature, and the greatness of his majesty. How should we reverence that God, that hath a throne encompassed with such glorious creatures as angels, whose faces we are not able to behold, though shadowed in assumed bodies! how should we fear the Lord of Hosts, that hath so many armies at his command in the heavens above, and in the earth below, whom he can dispose to the exact obedience of his will! how should men be afraid to censure any of his actions, to sit judge of their Judge, and call him to an account at their bar! how should such an earth-worm, a mean animal as man, be afraid to speak irreverently of so great a King among his pots and strumpets! Not to fear him, not to reverence him, is to pull his throne from under him, and make him of a lower authority than ourselves, or any creature that we reverence more.

5. Prayer to God, and trust in him, is inferred from his sovereignty. If he be the supreme Sovereign, holding heaven and earth in his hand, disposing all things here below, not committing everything to the influence of the stars or the humors of men, we ought, then, to apply ourselves to him in every case, implore the exercise of his authority; we hereby own his peculiar right over all things and persons. He only is the supreme Head in all causes, and over all-persons: "Thine is the kingdom" (Matthew 6:13), concludes the Lord's prayer, both as a motive to pray, and a ground to

expect what we want. He that believes not God's government will think it needless to call upon him, will expect no refuge under him in a strait, but make some creature need his support. If we do not seek to him, but rely upon the dominion we have over our own possessions, or upon the authority of anything else, we disown his supremacy and dominion over all things; we have as good an opinion of ourselves, or of some creatures, as we ought to have of God; we think ourselves, or some natural cause we seek to or depend upon, as much sovereigns as he, and that all things which concern us are as much at the dispose of an inferior, as of the great Lord. It is, indeed, to make a god of ourselves, or of the creature; when we seek to him, upon all occasions, we own this Divine eminency, we acknowledge that it is by him men's hearts are ordered, the world governed, all things disposed; and God, that is jealous of his glory, is best pleased with any duty in the creature that doth acknowledge and desire the glorification of it, which prayer and dependence on him doth in a special manner, desiring the exercise of his authority, and the preservation of it in ordering the affairs of the world.

6. Obedience naturally results from this doctrine. As his justice requires fear, his goodness thankfulness, his faithfulness trust, his truth belief, so his sovereignty, in the nature of it, demands obedience: as it is most fit he should rule, in regard of his excellency, so it is most fit we should obey him in regard of his authority: he is our Lord, and we his subjects; he is our Master, and we his servants; it is righteous we should observe him, and conform to his will: he is everything that speaks an authority to command us, and that can challenge an humility in us to obey. As that is the truest doctrine that subjects us most to God, so he is the truest Christian that doth, in his practice, most acknowledge this subjection; and as sovereignty is the first notion a creature can have of God, so obedience is the first and chief thing conscience reflects upon the creature. Man holds all of God; and therefore owes all the operations capable to be produced by those faculties to that Sovereign Power that endowed him with them. Man had no being but from him; he hath no motion without him; he should, therefore, have no being but for him; and no motion but according to him: to call him Lord, and not to act in subjection to him, is to mock and put a scorn upon him (Luke 6:46): "Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" It is like the crucifying Christ under the title of a King. It is not by professions, but by observance of the laws of a prince, that we manifest a due respect to him: by that we reverence that authority that enacted them, and the prudence that framed them. This doctrine affords us motives to obey, and directs us to the manner of obedience.

1st. Motives to obey,

(1.) It is comely and orderly. Is it not a more becoming thing to be ruled by the will of our Sovereign than by that of our lusts?—to observe a wise and gracious Authority, than to set up inordinate appetites in the room of his law? Would not all men account it a disorder to be abominated, to see a slave or vassal control the just orders of his lord, and endeavor to subject his master's will to his own? much more to expect God should serve our humor rather than we be regulated by his will. It is more orderly that subjects should obey their governors, than governors their subjects; that passion should obey reason, than reason obey passion. When good governors are to conform to subjects, and reason veil to passion, it is monstrous! the one disturbs the order of a community, and the other defaceth the beauty of the soul. Is it a comely thing for God to stoop to our meanness, or for us to stoop to his greatness?

(2.) In regard of the Divine sovereignty, it is both honorable and advantageous to obey God. It is, indeed, the glory of a superior to be obeyed by his inferior; but where the sovereign is of transcendent excellency and dignity, it is an honor to a mean person to be under his immediate commands, and enrolled in his service. It is more honor to be God's subject than to be the greatest worldly monarch; his very service is an empire, and disobedience to him is a slavery. It is a part of his sovereignty to reward any service done him. [Note: *Servire, Deo regnare est.*] Other lords may be willing to recompense the service of their subjects, but are often rendered unable; but nothing can stand in the way of God to hinder your reward, if nothing stand in your way to hinder your obedience (Leviticus 18:5): "If you keep my statutes, you shall live in them; I am the Lord." Is there anything in the world can recompense you for rebellion against God, and obedience to a lust? Saul cools the hearts of his servants from running after David, by David's inability to give them fields and vineyards (1 Samuel 22:7): "Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, that you have conspired against me?" But God hath a dominion to requite, as well as an authority to command your obedience; he is a great Sovereign, to bear you out in your observance of his precepts against all reproaches and violence of men, and at last to crown you with eternal honor. If he should neglect vindicating, one time or other, your loyalty to him, he will neglect the maintaining and vindicating his own sovereignty and greatness.

(3.) God, in all his dispensations to man, was careful to preserve the rights of his sovereignty in exacting obedience of his creature. The second thing he manifested his sovereignty in was that of a Lawgiver to Adam, after that of a Proprietor in giving him the possession of the garden; one followed immediately the other (Genesis 2:15-16): "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it; and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it," &c. Nothing was to be enjoyed by man but upon the condition of obedience to his Lord; and it is observed that in the description of the creation, God is not called "Lord" till the finishing of the creation, and particularly in the forming of man. "And the Lord God formed man" (Genesis 2:7). Though he was Lord of all creatures, yet it was in man he would have his sovereignty particularly manifested, and by man have his authority specially acknowledged. The law is prefaced with this title: "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2): authority in Lord, sweetness in God, the one to enjoin, the other to allure obedience; and God enforceth several of the commands with the same title. And as he begins many precepts with it, so he concludes them with the same title, "I am the Lord," Leviticus 19:37, and in other places. In all his communications of his goodness to man in ways of blessing them, he stands upon the preservation of the rights of his sovereignty, and manifests his graciousness in favor of his authority. "I am the Lord your God," your God in all my perfections for your advantage, but yet your Sovereign for your obedience. In all his condescension he will have the rights of this untouched and unviolated by us. When Christ would give the most pregnant instance of his condescending and humble kindness, he urgeth his authority to ballast their spirits from any presumptuous eruptions because of his humility. "You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well: for so I am" (John 13:13). He asserts his authority, and presseth them to their duty, when he had seemed to lay it by for the demeanor of a servant, and had, below the dignity of a master, put on the humility of a mean underling, to wash the disciples feet; all which was to oblige them to perform the command he then gave them (John 13:14), and in obedience to his authority, and imitation of his example.

(4.) All creatures obey him. All creatures punctually observe the law he hath imprinted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their Sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps out of its sphere; the stars march in their order, “they continue this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants” (Psalms 119:91). If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature, they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not a hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature, when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent it in Joshua's time, and stands still. Shall insensible and sensible creatures be punctual to his orders, passively acknowledge his authority? shall lions and serpents obey God in their places?—and shall not man, who can, by reason, argue out the sovereignty of God, and understand the sense and goodness of his laws, and actively obey God with that will he hath enriched him with above other creatures? Yet the truth is, every sensitive, yea, every senseless creature, obeys God more than his rational, more than his gracious creatures in this world. The rational creatures since the fall have a prevailing principle of corruption. Let the obedience of other creatures incite us more to imitate them, and shame our remissness in not acknowledging the dominion of God, in the just way he prescribes us to walk in. Well then, let us not pretend to own God as our Lord, and yet act the part of rebels; let us give him the reverence, and pay him that obedience, which of right belongs to so great a King. Whatsoever he speaks as a true God, ought to be believed; whatsoever he orders as a sovereign God, ought to be obeyed; let not God have less than man, nor man have more than God. It is a common principle writ upon the reason of all men, that respect and observance is due to the majesty of a man, much more to the Majesty of God as a Lawgiver.

2d. As this doctrine presents us motives, so it directs us to the manner and kind of our obedience to God.

(1.) It must be with a respect to his authority. As the veracity of God is the formal object of faith, and the reason why we believe the things he hath revealed; so the authority of God is the formal object of our obedience, or the reason why we observe the things he hath commanded. There must be a respect to his will as the rule, as well as to his glory as the end. It is not formally obedience that is not done with regard to the order of God, though it may be materially obedience, as it answers the matter of the precept. As when men will abstain from excess and rioting, because it is ruinous to their health, not because it is forbidden by the great Lawgiver; this is to pay a respect to our own conveniency and interest, not a conscientious observance to God; a regard to our health, not to our Sovereign; a kindness to ourselves, not a justice due to the rights of God. There must not only be a consideration of the matter of the precept as convenient, but a consideration of the authority of the Lawgiver as obligatory. “Thus saith the Lord,” ushers in every order of his, directing our eye to the authority enacting it; Jeroboam did God's will of prophecy in taking the kingdom of Israel; and the devils may be subservient in God's will or providence; but neither of them are put upon the account of obedience, because not done intentionally with any conscience of the sovereignty of God. God will have this owned by a regular respect to it; so much he insists upon the honor of it, that the sacrifice of Christ, God-man, was most agreeable to him, not only as it was great and admirable in itself, but also for that ravishing obedience to his will, which was the life and glory of his sacrifice, whereby the justice of God was not only owned in the

offering, but the sovereignty of God owned in the obedience. "He became obedient unto death; wherefore God highly exalted him" (Php 2:8).

(2.) It must be the best and most exact obedience. The most sovereign authority calls for the exactest and lowest observance; the highest Lord for the deepest homage; being, he is, a "great King; he must have the best in our flock" (Malachi 1:14). Obedience is due to God, as King, and the choicest obedience is due to him, as he is the most excellent King. The more majestic and noble any man is, the more careful we are in our manner of service to him. We are bound to obey God, not only under the title of a "Lord" in regard of jurisdiction and political subjection, but under the title of a true "Lord and Master," in regard of propriety; since we are not only his subjects but his servants, the exactest obedience is due to God, *jure servitutis*; "When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10), because we can do nothing which we owe not to God.

(3.) Sincere and inward obedience. As it is a part of his sovereignty to prescribe laws not only to man in his outward state, but to his conscience, so it is a part of our subjection to receive his laws into our will and heart. The authority of his laws exceeds human laws in the extent and riches of them, and our acknowledgment of his sovereignty cannot be right, but by subjecting the faculties of our soul to the Lawgiver of our souls; we else acknowledge his authority to be as limited as the empire of man; when his will not only sways the outward action, but the inward motion, it is a giving him the honor of his high throne above the throne of mortals. The right of God ought to be preserved undamaged in affection, as well as action.

(4.) It must be sole obedience. We are ordered to serve him only; "Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10): as the only Supreme Lord, as being the highest Sovereign, it is fit he should have the highest obedience before all earthly sovereigns, and as being unparalleled by any among all the nations, so none must have an obedience equal to him. When God commands, if the highest power on earth countermands it, the precept of God must be preferred before the countermand of the creature. "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:18-19). We must never give place to the authority of all the monarchs in the world, to the prejudice of that obedience we owe to the Supreme Monarch of heaven and earth; this would be to place the throne of God at the footstool of man, and debase him below the rank of a creature. Loyalty to man can never recompense for the mischief accruing from disloyalty to God. All the obedience we are to give to man, is to be paid in obedience to God, and with an eye to his precept: therefore, what servants do for their masters, they must do "as to the Lord" (Colossians 3:23); and children are to obey their parents "in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1). The authority of God is to be eyed in all the services payable to man; proper and true obedience hath God solely for its principal and primary object; all obedience to man that interferes with that, and would jumble out obedience to God, is to be refused. What obedience is due to man, is but rendered as a part of obedience to God, and a stooping of his authority.

(5.) It must be universal obedience. The laws of man are not to be universally obeyed; some may be oppressing and unjust: no man hath authority to make an unjust law, and no subject is bound to obey an unrighteous law; but God being a righteous Sovereign, there is not one of his laws but doth necessarily oblige us to obedience. Whatsoever this Supreme Power declares to be his will, it must be our care to observe; man, being his creature, is bound to be subject to whatsoever laws he doth impose to the meanest as well as to the greatest: they having equally a stamp of Divine

authority upon them. We are not to pick and choose among his precepts this is to pare away part of his authority, and render him a half sovereign. It must be universal in all places. An Englishman in Spain is bound to obey the laws of that country wherein he resides and so not responsible there for the breach of the laws of his native country. In the same condition is a Spaniard in England. But the laws of God are to be obeyed in every part of the world; wheresoever Divine Providence doth cast us, it casts us not out of the places where he commands, nor out of the compass of his own empire. He is Lord of the world, and his laws oblige in every part of the world; they were ordered for a world, and not for a particular climate and territory.

(6.) must be indisputable obedience. All authority requires readiness in the subject; the centurion had it from his soldiers; they went when he ordered them, and came when he beckoned to them (Matthew 8:9). It is more fit God should have the same promptness from his subjects. We are to obey his orders, though our purblind understanding may not apprehend the reason of every one of them. It is without dispute that he is sovereign, and therefore it is without dispute that we are bound to obey him, without controlling his conduct. A master will not bear it from his slave, why should God from his creature? Though God admits his creatures sometimes to treat with him about the equality of his justice, and also about the reason of some commands, yet sometimes he gives no other reason but his own sovereignty, "Thus saith the Lord;" to correct the malapertness of men, and exact from them an entire obedience to his unlimited and absolute authority. When Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac, God acquaints him not with the reason of his demand till after (Genesis 22:2; Genesis 22:12), nor did Abraham enter any demur to the order, or expostulate with God, either from his own natural affection to Isaac, the hardness of the command, it being, as it were, a ripping up of his own bowels, nor the quickness of it after he had been a child of the promise, and a Divine donation above the course of nature. Nor did Paul confer with flesh and blood, and study arguments from nature and interest to oppose the Divine command, when he was sent upon his apostolical employment (Galatians 1:16). The more indisputable his right is to command, the stronger is our obligation to obey, without questioning the reason of his orders.

(7.) It must be joyful obedience. Men are commonly more cheerful if their obedience to a great prince than to a mean peasant; because the quality of the master renders the service more honorable. It is a discredit to a prince's government, when his subjects obey him with discontent and dejectedness, as though he were a hard master, and his laws tyrannical and unrighteous. When we pay obedience but with a dull and feeble pace, and a sour and sad temper, we blemish our great Sovereign, imply his commands to be grievous, void of that peace and pleasure he proclaims to be in them; that he deserves no respect from us, if we obey him because we must, and not because we will. Involuntary obedience deserves not the title: it is rather submission than obedience, an act of the body, not of the mind: a mite of obedience with cheerfulness, is better than a talent without it. In the little Paul did, he comforts himself in this, that with the "mind he served the law of God" (Romans 7:25); the testimonies of God were David's delight (Psalms 119:24). Our understandings must take pleasure in knowing him, our wills delightfully embrace him, and our actions be cheerfully squared to him. This credits the sovereignty of God in the world, makes others believe him to be a gracious Lord, and move them to have some veneration for his authority.

(8.) It must be a perpetual obedience. As man is a subject as soon as he is a creature, so he is a subject as long as he is a creature. God's sovereignty is of perpetual duration, as long as he is

God; man's obedience must be perpetual, while he is a man. God cannot part with his sovereignty, and a creature cannot be exempted from subjection; we must not only serve him, but cleave to him (Deuteronomy 13:4). Obedience is continued in heaven, his throne is established in heaven, it must be bowed to in heaven, as well as in earth. The angels continually fulfil his pleasure.

7. Exhortation. Patience is a duty flowing from this doctrine. In all strokes upon ourselves, or thick showers upon the church, "the Lord reigns," is a consideration to prevent muttering against him, and make us quietly wait to see what the issue of his Divine pleasure will be. It is too great an insolence against the Divine Majesty to censure what he acts, or quarrel with him for what he inflicts. Proud clay doth very unbecomingly swell against an infinite superior. If God be our Sovereign, we ought to subscribe to his afflicting will without debates, as well as to his liberal will with affectionate applauses. We should be as full of patience under his sharper, as of praise under his more grateful, dispensations, and be without reluctancy against his penal, as well as his preceptive, pleasure. It is God's part to inflict, and the creature's part to submit. This doctrine affords us motives, and shows us the nature of patience. 1. Motives to it.

(1.) God, being Sovereign, hath an absolute right to dispose of all things. His title to our persons and possessions is, upon this account, stronger than our own can be; we have as much reason to be angry with ourselves, when we assert our worldly right against others, as to be angry with God for asserting the right of his dominion over us. Why should we enter a charge against him, because he hath not tempered us so strong in our bodies, drawn us with as fair colors, embellished our spirits with as rich gifts as others? Is he not the Sovereign of his own goods, to impart what, and in what measure, he pleaseth? Would you be content your servants should cheek your pleasure in dispensing your own favors? It is an unreasonable thing not to leave God to the exercise of his own dominion. Though Job were a pattern of patience, yet he had deep tinctures of impatience; he often complains of God's usage of him as too hard, and stands much upon his own integrity; but when God comes, in the latter chapters of that book, to justify his carriage towards him, he chargeth him not as a criminal, but considers him only as his vassal. He might have found flaws enough in Job's carriage, and corruption enough in Job's nature, to clear the equity of his proceeding as a judge; but he useth no other medium to convince him, but the greatness of his Majesty, the unlimitedness of his sovereignty, which so appals the good man, that he puts his finger on his mouth and stands mute with a self-abhorrency before him, as a Sovereign, rather than as a Judge. When he doth pinch us, and deprive us of what we most affect, his right to do it should silence our lips and calm our hearts from any boisterous uproars against him.

(2.) The property of all still remains in God, since he is sovereign. He did not divest himself of the property when he granted us the use; the earth is his, not ours; the fulness any of us have, as well as the fulness others have. After he had given the Israelites corn, wine, and oil, he calls them all his, and emphatically adds my, to every one of them (Hosea 2:9). His right is universal over every mite we have, and perpetual too; he may, therefore, take from us what he please. He did but deposit in our hands for awhile the benefits we enjoy, either children, friends, estate, or lives; he did not make a total conveyance of them, and alienate his own property, when he put them into our hands; we can show no patent for them, wherein the full right is passed over to us, to hold them against his will and pleasure, and implead him if he offer to re-assume them: he reserved a power to dispossess us upon a forfeiture, as he is the Lord and Governor. Did any of us yet

answer the condition of his grant? it was his indulgence to allow them so long; there is reason to submit to him, when he re-assumes what he lent us, and rather to thank him that he lent it so long, and did not seize upon it sooner.

(3.) Other things have more reason to complain of our sovereignty over them, than we of God's exercise of his sovereignty over us. Do we not exercise an authority over our beasts, as to strike them when we please, and merely for our pleasure; and think we merit no reproof for it, because they are our own, and of a nature inferior to ours? And shall not God, who is absolute, do as much with us, who are more below him than the meanest creatures are below us? They are creatures as well as we, and we no more creatures than they; they were framed by Omnipotence as well as we; there is no more difference between them and us in the notion of creatures. As there is no difference between the greatest monarch on earth, and the meanest beggar on the dunghill, in the notion of a man; the beggar is a man, as well as the monarch, and as much a man; the difference consists in the special endowments we have above them by the bounty of their and our common Creator. We are less, if compared with God, than the worst, meanest, and most sordid creature can be, if compared with us. Hath not a bird or a hare (if they had a capacity) more reason to complain of men's persecuting them by their hawks and their dogs? but would their complaints appear reasonable, since both were made for the use of man, and man doth but use the nature of the one to attain a benefit by the other? Have we any reason to complain of God if he lets loose other creatures, the devouring hounds of the world, to bite and afflict us? We must not open our lips against him, nor let our heart swell against his scourge, since both they and we were made for his use, as well as other creatures for our; this is a reason to stifle all complaints against God, but not to make us careless of preventing afflictions, or emerging out of them by all just ways. The hare hath a nature to shift for itself by its winding and turning, and the bird by its flight; and neither of them could be blamed, if they were able, should the one scratch out the eyes of the hounds, and the other sacrifice the hawk to its own fury.

(4.) It is a folly not to submit to him. Why should we strive against him, since he is an unaccountable Sovereign, and "gives no account of any of his matters?" (Job 33:13.) Who can disannul the judgment God gives? There is no appeal from the supreme court; a higher court can repeal or null the sentence of an inferior court, but the sentence of the highest stands irreversible, but by itself and its own authority. It is better to lower our sails, than to grapple with one that can shoot us under water; to submit to that Sovereign whom we cannot subdue.

2. It shows us the true nature of patience in regard of God: it is a submission to God's sovereignty. As the formal object of obedience is the authority of God enacting the law, so the formal object of patience is the authority of God inflicting the punishment: as his right of commanding is to be eyed in the one, so his right of punishing is to be considered in the other. This was Eli's condition, when he had received a message that might put flesh and blood into a mutiny, the rending the priesthood from his family, and the ruin of his house: yet this consideration, "It is the Lord," calms him into submission, and a willing compliance with the Divine pleasure (1 Samuel 3:18): "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight." Job was of the same strain (Job 1:21): "The Lord gives, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord;" he considers God as a sovereign, who was not to be reproached, or have anything uncomely uttered of him, for what he had done. To be patient because we cannot avoid it, or resist it, is a violent, not a loyal patience; but to submit because it is the will of God to inflict; to be silent, because the sovereignty of God

doth order it, is a patience of a true complexion. The other kind of patience is no other than that of an enemy that will free himself as soon as he can, and by any way, though never so violent, that offers itself. This sort of patience is that of a subject acknowledging the supreme authority over him, and that he ought to be ordered by the will, and to the glory of God, more than by his own will, and for his own ease; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth" (Psalms 39:10); not because I could not help it, but "because thou didst it," thou who art my sovereign Lord. The greatness of God claims an awful and inviolable respect from his creatures in what way soever he doth dispose of them; this is due to him; since his kingdom ruleth over all, his kingdom should be acknowledged by all, and his royal authority submitted to in all that he doth.

On God's Knowledge

ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE Psalms 147:5.—Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite.

It is uncertain who was the author of this psalm, and when it was penned; some think after the return from the Babylonish captivity. It is a psalm of praise, and is made up of matter of praise from the beginning to the end: God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures, and the essential excellency of his nature. The psalmist doubles his exhortation to praise God (Psalms 147:1), "Praise ye the Lord, sing praise to our God;" to praise him from his dominion as "Lord," from his grace and mere as "our God;" from the excellency of the duty itself, "it is good, it is comely:" some read it comely, some lovely, or desirable, from the various derivations of the word. Nothing doth so much delight a gracious soul, as an opportunity of celebrating the perfections and goodness of the Creator. The highest duties a creature can render to the Creator are pleasant and delightful in themselves; "it is comely." Praise is a duty that affects the whole soul. The praise of God is a decent thing; the excellency of God's nature deserves it, and the benefits of God's grace requires it. It is comely when done as it ought to be, with the heart as well as with the voice; a sinner sings ill, though his voice be good; the soul in it is to be elevated above earthly things. The first matter of praise is God's erecting and preserving his church (Psalms 147:2): "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the outcasts of Israel." The walls of demolished Jerusalem are now re-edified; God hath brought back the captivity of Jacob, and reduced his people from their Babylonish exile, and those that were dispersed into strange regions, he hath restored to their habitations. Or, it may be prophetic of the calling of the Gentiles, and the gathering the outcasts of the spiritual Israel, that were before as without God in the world, and strangers to the covenant of promise. Let God be praised, but especially for building up his church, and gathering the Gentiles, before counted as outcasts (Isaiah 11:12); he gathers them in this world to the faith, and hereafter to glory.

Obs. 1. From the two first verses, observe: 1. All people are under God's care; but he has a particular regard to his church. This is the signet on his hand, as a bracelet upon his arm; this is his garden which he delights to dress; if he prunes it, it is to purge it; if he digs about his vine, and wounds the branches, it is to make it beautiful with new clusters, and restore it to a fruitful vigor. 2. All great deliverances are to be ascribed to God, as the principal Author, whosoever are the instruments. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the outcasts of Israel. This great deliverance from Babylon is not to be ascribed to Cyrus or Darius, or the rest of our favorers; it is the Lord that doth it; we had his promise for it, we have now his performance. Let us not ascribe that which is the effect of his truth, only to the good will of men; it is God's act, not by might, nor by power, nor by weapons of war, or strength of horses, but by the Spirit of the Lord. He sent prophets to comfort us while we were exiles; and now he hath stretched out his own arm to work our deliverance according to his word; blind man looks so much upon instruments, that he hardly takes notice of God, either in afflictions or mercies, and this is the cause that robs God of so much prayer and praise in the world. (Psalms 147:3) "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up

their wounds." He hath now restored those who had no hope but in his word; he hath dealt with them as a tender and skilful surgeon; he hath applied his curing plasters, and dropped in his sovereign balsams; he hath now furnished our fainting hearts with refreshing cordials, and comforted our wounds with strengthening ligatures. How gracious is God, that restores liberty to the captives, and righteousness to the penitent! Man's misery is the fittest opportunity for God to make his in mercy illustrious in itself, and most welcome to the patient. He proceeds (Psalms 147:4), wonder not that God calls together the outcasts, and singles them out from every corner for a return; why can he not do this, as well as tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names? There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God; though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth? No, wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them; however they are afflicted, he will not despise them; the stars are so numerous, that they are innumerable by man; some are visible and known by men; others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky way; man cannot see one of them distinctly. God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover; shall man measure God by his scantiness? Proud man must not equal himself to God, nor cut God as short as his own line. He tells the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He hath them all in his list, as generals the names of their soldiers in their muster-roll, for they are his host, which he marshals in the heavens, as in Isaiah 40:26, where you have the like expression; he knows them more distinctly than man can know anything, and so distinctly, as to call "them all by their names." He knows their names, that is, their natural offices, influences the different degrees of heat and light, their order and motion; and all of them, the least glimmering star, as well as the most glaring planet: this, man cannot do; "Tell the stars if thou be able to number them" (Genesis 15:5), saith God to Abraham, whom Josephus represents as a great astronomer: "Yea, they cannot be numbered" (Jeremiah 33:22); and the uncertainty of the opinions of men, evidenceth their ignorance of their number; some reckoning 1022; others 1025; others 1098; others 7000, beside those that by reason of their mixture of light with one another, cannot be distinctly discerned, and others perhaps so high, as not to be reached by the eye of man. To impose names on things, and names according to their natures, is both an argument of power and dominion, and of wisdom and understanding: from the imposition of names upon the creatures by Adam, the knowledge of Adam is generally concluded; and it was also a fruit of that dominion God allowed him over the creatures. Now he that numbers and names the stars that seem to lie confused among one another, as well as those that appear to us in an unclouded night, may well be supposed accurately to know his people, though lurking in secret caverns, and know those that are fit to be instruments of their deliverance; the one is as easy to him as the other; and the number of the one as distinctly known by him as the multitude of the other. "For great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite" (Psalms 147:5). He wants not knowledge to know the objects, nor power to affect his will concerning them. Of great power, ■■■■■. Much power, plenteous in power; so the word ■■, is rendered (Psalms 147:5), ■■■■■, a multitude of power, as well as a multitude of mercy; a power that exceeds all created power and understanding. His understanding is infinite. You may not imagine, how he can call all the stars by name, the multitude of the visible being so great, and the multitude of the invisible being greater; but you must know, that as God is Almighty, so he is omniscient; and as there is no end of his

power, so no account can exactly be given of his understanding; his understanding is infinite, ■■■■■■■■. No number or account of it; and so the same words are rendered, “a nation strong, and without number” (Joel 1:6): no end of his understanding: (Syriac) no measure, no bounds. His essence is infinite, and so is his power and understanding; and so vast is his knowledge, that we can no more comprehend it, than we can measure spaces that are without limits, or tell the minutes or hours of eternity. Who, then, can fathom that whereof there is no number, but which exceeds all, so that there is no searching of it out? He knows universals, he knows particulars: we must not take understanding here, as noting a faculty, but the use of the understanding in the knowledge of things, and the judgment, ■■■■■■, in the consideration of them, and so it is often used. In the verse there is a description of God. 1. In his essence, “great is our Lord.” 2. In his power of “great power.” 3. In his knowledge, “his understanding is infinite.” his understanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his infinite understanding I am to discourse.

Doctrine. God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. All knowledge. Omnipresence, which before we spake of, respects his essence; omniscience respects his understanding, according to our manner of conception. This is clear in Scripture; hence God is called a God of knowledge (1 Samuel 2:3), “the Lord is a God of knowledge,” (Heb.) knowledges, in the plural number, of all kind of knowledge; it is spoken there to quell man’s pride in his own reason and parts; what is the knowledge of man but a spark to the whole element of fire, a grain of dust, and worse than nothing, in comparison of the knowledge of God, as his essence is in comparison of the essence of God? All kind of knowledge. He knows what angels know, what man knows, and infinitely more; he knows himself, his own operations, all his creatures, the notions and thoughts of them; he is understanding above understanding, mind above mind, the mind of minds, the light of lights; this the Greek word, Θεός, signifies in the etymology of it, of Θεσθαί, to see, to contemplate; and δαμων of δαω, scio. The names of God signify a nature, viewing and piercing all things; and the attribution of our senses to God in Scripture, as hearing and seeing, which are the senses whereby knowledge enters into us, signifies God’s knowledge.

1. The notion of God’s knowledge of all things lies above the ruins of nature; it was not obliterated by the fall of man. It was necessary offending man was to know that he had a Creator whom he had injured, that he had a Judge to try and punish him; since God thought fit to keep up the world, it had been kept up to no purpose, had not this notion been continued alive in the minds of men; there would not have been any practice of his laws, no bar to the worst of crimes. If men had thought they had to deal with an ignorant Deity, there could be no practice of religion. Who would lift up his eyes, or spread his hands towards heaven, if he imagined his devotion were directed to a God as blind as the heathens imagined fortune? To what boot would it be for them to make heaven and earth resound with their cries, if they had not thought God had an eye to see them, and an ear to hear them? And indeed the very notion of a God at the first blush, speaks him a Being endued with understanding; no man can imagine a Creator void of one of the noblest perfections belonging to those creatures, that are the flower and cream of his works.

2. Therefore all nations acknowledge this, as well as the existence and being of God. No nation but had their temples, particular ceremonies of worship, and presented their sacrifices, which they could not have been so vain as to do, without an acknowledgment of this attribute. This notion of God’s knowledge owed not its rise to tradition, but to natural implantation; it was born and grew up with every rational creature. Though the several nations and men of the world agreed not in one

kind of deity, or in their sentiments of his nature or other perfections, some judging him clothed with a fine and pure body, others judging him an uncompounded spirit, some fixing him to a seat in the heavens, others owning his universal presence in all parts of the world; yet they all agreed in the universality of his knowledge, and their own consciences reflecting their crimes, unknown to any but themselves, would keep this notion in some vigor, whether they would or no. Now this being implanted in the minds of all men by nature, cannot be false, for nature imprints not in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity. Nature would not pervert the reason and minds of men. Universal notions of God are from original, not lapsed nature, and preserved in mankind in order to a restoration from a lapsed state. The heathens did acknowledge this: in all the solemn covenants, solemnized with oaths and the invocation of the name of God, this attribute was supposed. [Note: Agamemnon, (Homer Il. 3. v. 8.) making a Covenant with Priam, invokes the Sun, ἥλιος, πῦρ, φῶς καὶ πᾶντ' ἀκακοῦς.] They confessed knowledge to be peculiar to the Deity; scientia deorum vita, saith Cicero. Some called him Νοῦς, mens, mind, pure understanding, without any note, Ἐπιπλητής, the inspector of all. As they called him life, because he was the author of life, so they called him intellectus, because he was the author of all knowledge and understanding in his creatures; and one being asked, whether any man could be hid from God? Do, saith he, not so much as thinking. [Note: Gamach in 1 Pa. Aqui. Q. 14. cap. 1 p. 119. Clem. Alexander Strom. lib. 6.] Some call him the eye of the world; and the Egyptians represented God by an eye on the top of a sceptre, because God is all eye, and can be ignorant of nothing. And the same nation made eyes and ears of the most excellent metals, consecrating them to God, and hanging them up in the midst of their temples, in signification of God's seeing and hearing all things; hence they called God light, as well as the Scripture, because all things are visible to him. For the better understanding of this, we will enquire, I. What kind of knowledge or understanding there is in God. II. What God knows. III. How God knows things. IV. The proof that God knows all things. V. The use of all to ourselves.

I. What kind of understanding or knowledge there is in God. The knowledge of God in Scripture hath various names, according to the various relations or objects of it: in respect of present things, it is called knowledge or sight; in respect of things past, remembrance; in respect of things future, or to come, it is called foreknowledge, or prescience (1 Peter 1:2); in regard of the universality of the objects, it is called omniscience; in regard to the simple understanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wisdom and prudence (Ephesians 1:8). He must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom. As to what this knowledge is, if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and ascribing to him the most eminent way of understanding; because we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleased to condescend to us in his own ways of discovery, that is, under some way of similitude to his perfectest creatures, therefore we have a notion of God by his understanding and will; understanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himself in acting according to his wisdom, and whereby he doth approve or disapprove; yet we must not measure his understanding by our own, or think it to be of so gross a temper as a created mind; that he hath eyes of flesh, or sees or knows as man sees (Job 10:4). We can no more measure his knowledge by ours than we can measure his essence by our essence. As he hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket, so he hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust, or mere darkness: his

thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth. The knowledge of God is variously divided by the schools, and acknowledged by all divines.

1. A knowledge *visionis et simplicis intelligentiæ*; the one we may call a sight, the other an understanding; the one refers to sense, the other to the mind. (1.) A knowledge of vision or sight. Thus God knows himself and all things that really were, are, or shall be in time; all those things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually sprung up in the world, but lie couchant in their causes. (2.) A knowledge of intelligence or simple understanding. The object of this is not things that are in being, or that shall by any decree of God ever be existent in the world, but such things as are possible to be wrought by the power of God, though they shall never in the least peep up into being, but lie forever wrapt up in darkness and nothing. [Note: Suarez de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 130.] This also is a necessary knowledge to be allowed to God, because the object of this knowledge is necessary. The possibility of more creatures than ever were or shall be, is a conclusion that hath a necessary truth in it; as it is necessary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not necessary that it should produce more creatures, so it is necessary that whatsoever the power of God can work, is possible to be. And as God knows this possibility, so he knows all the objects that are thus possible; and herein doth much consist the infiniteness of his knowledge, as shall be shown presently. These two kinds of knowledge differ; that of vision, is of things which God hath decreed to be, though they are not yet; that of intelligence is of things which never shall be; yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God please to will and order their being; one respects things that shall be, the other, things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be. The knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say God knew them as possible before he decreed them; he knew them as future, because he decreed them.) For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass. But the knowledge of intelligence stands without any act of his will, in order to the being of those things he knows; he knows possible things only in his power; he knows other things both in his power as able to effect them, and in his will, as determining the being of them; such knowledge we must grant to be in God, for there is such a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not oft know and see what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have a conception of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are possible to the power of God.

2. There is a speculative and practical knowledge in God. (1.) A speculative knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a respect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things possible is in God only speculative, [Note: Suarez de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 138.] and some say God's knowledge of himself is only speculative, because there is nothing for God to work in himself: and though he knows himself, yet this knowledge of himself doth not terminate there, but flowers into a love of himself, and delight in himself; yet this love of himself, and delight in himself, is not enough to make it a practical knowledge, because it is natural, and naturally and necessarily flows from the knowledge of himself and his own goodness: he cannot but love himself, and delight in himself, upon the knowledge of himself. But that which is properly practice, is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought not naturally and necessarily, but in a way of freedom and counsel. As when we see a beautiful flower or other thing, there ariseth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, because it is a natural

affection of the will, arising from the virtue of the object, without any consideration of the understanding in a practical manner by counselling, commanding, &c. (2.) A practical knowledge: which tends to operation and practice, and is the principle of working about things that are known; as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or mystery. This knowledge is in God: the knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is such a kind of knowledge; for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and necessary act, as the loving himself, and delighting in himself is, but wholly free: for it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no; this is called discretion (Jeremiah 10:12): "He hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Such also is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge "the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew" (Proverbs 3:20). This is a knowledge whereby he knows the essence, qualities, and properties of what he creates and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he resides; so that speculative knowledge is God's knowledge of himself and things possible; practical knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable; yet in some sort this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are possible, which God might make, though he will not: for as he knows that they can be created, so he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge for it is not requisite to constitute a knowledge practical, actually to act, but that the knowledge in itself be referable to action. [Note: Ibid. p. 140.]

3. There is a knowledge of approbation, as well as apprehension. This the Scripture often mentions. Words of understanding are used to signify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the simple act of the understanding, the complacency and pleasure of the will, and is improperly knowledge, because it belongs to the will, and not to the understanding; only it is radically in the understanding, because affection implies knowledge: men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken (Amos 3:2), "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"; and (2 Timothy 2:19), "The Lord knows who are his," that is, he loves them; he doth not only know them, but acknowledges them for his own. It notes, not only an exact understanding, but a special care of them; and so is that to be understood (Genesis 1:1-31.), "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good:" that is, he saw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehension. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of vision, his sight of his creatures; for God doth not love or delight in anything but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being. On the contrary, also, when God doth not approve, he is said not to know (Matthew 25:12), "I know you not," and (Matthew 7:23), "I never knew you;" he doth not approve of their works. It is not an ignorance of understanding, but an ignorance of will; for while he saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works: so he knows them, and doth not know them in a different manner: he knows them so as to understand them, but he doth not know them so as to love them. We must, then, ascribe an universal knowledge to God. If we deny him a speculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we destroy his Deity, we make him ignorant of his own power: if we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourselves to be his creatures; for, as his creatures, we are the fruits of this, his discretion, discovered in creation: if we deny his knowledge of vision, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exercise a sovereign and uncontrollable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the things he is to govern? If he had not knowledge he could

make no revelation; he that knows not cannot dictate; we could then have no Scripture. To deny God knowledge, is to dash out the Scripture, and demolish the Deity. God is described in Zechariah 3:9, "with seven eyes," to show his perfect knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world; and the cherubims, or whatsoever is meant by the wings, are described to be full of eyes, both "before and behind" (Ezekiel 1:18), round about them; much more is God all eye, all ear, all understanding. The sun is a natural image of God; if the sun had an eye, it would see; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth, in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature, the sun, in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding? certainly more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust. We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in particular, and so exactly, as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the same cast of it: shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all knowledge, be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold everything in the world, which is infinitely less to him than a wide room to a picture?

II. The second thing, What God knows; how far his understanding reaches.

1. God knows himself, and only knows himself. This is the first and original knowledge, wherein he excels all creatures. No man doth exactly know himself; much less doth he understand the full nature of a spirit; much less still the nature and perfections of God; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty and an infinite object? Herein consists the infiniteness of Gods knowledge, that he knows his own essence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any else. It doth not so much consist in knowing the creatures, which he hath made, as in knowing himself, who was never made. It is not so much infinite, because he knows all things which are in the world, or that shall be; or things that he can make, because the number of them is finite; but because he hath a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of his own infinite perfections. [Note: Moulin.] Though it be said that angels "see his face" (Matthew 18:10), that sight notes rather their immediate attendance, than their exact knowledge; they see some signs of his presence and majesty, more illustrious and express than ever appeared to man in this life; but the essence of God is invisible to them, hid from them in the secret place of eternity; none knows God but himself (1 Corinthians 2:11): "What man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man? so the things of God knows no man but the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God searches the deep things of God;" searcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly understands, as those who have their eyes in every chink and crevice, to see what lies hid there; the word search notes not an inquiry, but an exact knowledge, such as men have of things upon a diligent scrutiny as when God is said to search the heart and the reins, it doth not signify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the most intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themselves, so the depths of the divine essence, perfections, and decrees, are unknown to any but to God himself; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do. For first, if God did not know himself, he would not be perfect. It is the perfection of a creature to know itself, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himself, he would want an infinite perfection, and so would cease to be God, in being

defective in that which intellectual creatures in some measure possess. As God is the most perfect being, so he must have the most perfect understanding: if he did not understand himself, he would be under the greatest ignorance, because he would be ignorant of the most excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the understanding; and ignorance of one's self is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God should know all things without himself, and not know himself, he would not have the most perfect knowledge, because he would not have the knowledge of the best of objects. Secondly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could not be blessed. Nothing can have any complacency in itself, without knowledge of itself. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itself, without understanding itself. The blessedness of God consists not in the knowledge of anything without him, but in the knowledge of himself and his own excellency, as the principle of all things; if, therefore, he did not perfectly know himself and his own happiness, he could not enjoy a happiness; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. "He is God, blessed forever" (Romans 9:5.), and therefore forever had a knowledge of himself. Thirdly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could create nothing. For he would be ignorant of his own power, and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends, could not act: if he did not know himself, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing, can do nothing; he could not know an effect to be possible to him, unless he knew his own power as a cause. Fourthly, Without the knowledge of himself, he could govern nothing. He could not, without the knowledge of his own holiness and righteousness, prescribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature order himself a manner of worship suitable to it. All worship must be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worshipped: he must therefore know his own authority, whereby worship was to be enacted; his own excellency, to which worship was to be suited; his own glory, to which worship was to be directed. If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he would not know what was contrary to himself: not knowing himself, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy of him. In fine, he could not know other things, unless he knew himself; unless he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things; unless he knew his own wisdom, he could not know the beauty of his works; unless he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unless he knew his own holiness, he could not know what was evil; and unless he knew his own justice, he could not know how to punish the crimes of his offending creatures. And, therefore,

(1.) God knows himself, because his knowledge, with his will, is the cause of all other things that can fall under his cognizance he knows himself first, before he can know any other thing; that is, first according to our conceptions; for, indeed God knows himself and all other things at once; he is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his own understanding. There is nothing more excellent than himself, and therefore nothing more known to him than himself. As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge. To understand, is properly to know one's self. No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself, nor so intimately and immediately joined with his understanding as himself; for his understanding is his essence, himself.

(2.) He knows himself by his own essence. He knows not himself and his own power by the effect, because he knows himself from eternity, before there was a world, or any, effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cause, for God hath no cause; nor a knowledge of himself by any species, or anything from without: if it were anything from without himself, that must be

created or untreated; if uncreated it would be God; and so we must either own many Gods, or own, it to be his essence, and so not distinct from himself: if created, then his knowledge of himself would depend upon a creature: he could not, then, know himself from eternity, but in time, because nothing can be created from eternity, but in time. God knows not himself by any faculty, for there is no composition in God; he is not made up of parts, but is a simple being; some, therefore, have called God, not intellectus, understanding, because that savors of a faculty, but intellectio, intellection: God is all act in the knowledge of himself and his knowledge of other things.

(3.) God, therefore, knows himself perfectly, comprehensively. Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him; he reflects upon everything that he is. [Note: Magalaneus.] There is a positive comprehension, so God doth not comprehend himself; for what is comprehended hath bounds, and what is comprehended by itself is finite to itself; and there is a negative comprehension—God so comprehends himself; nothing in his own nature is obscure to him, unknown by him; for there is as great a perfection in the understanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The understanding of God, and the nature of God, are both infinite, and so equal to one another: his understanding is equal to himself; he knows himself so well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly than himself is known to himself. He knows himself in the highest manner, because nothing is so proportioned to the understanding of God as himself. He knows his own essence, goodness, power; all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own understanding, so that nothing of himself is in the dark to himself: and, in this respect, some use this expression, that the infiniteness of God is in a manner finite to himself, because it is comprehended by himself. Thus God transcends all creatures; thus his understanding is truly infinite, because nothing but himself is an infinite object for it: what angels may understand of themselves perfectly I know not, but no creature in the world understands himself. Man understands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature; upon God's knowledge of himself depends the comfort of his people, and the terror of the wicked: this is also a clear argument for, his knowledge of all other things without himself; he that knows himself, must needs know all other things less than himself, and which were made by himself; when the knowledge of his own immensity and infiniteness is not an object too difficult for him, the knowledge of a finite and limited creature, in all his actions, thoughts, circumstances, cannot be too hard for him: since he knows himself, who is infinite, he cannot but know whatsoever is finite. This is the foundation of all his other knowledge; the knowledge of everything present, past, and to come, is far less than the knowledge of himself. He is more incomprehensible in his own nature, than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be. If he, then, have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of his own nature, any knowledge of all other things is less than the knowledge of himself; this ought to be well considered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

2. Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present, or future; whether they be things that he can do, but will never do, or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes. [Note: Petar. Theol. Dogm lib. p. 257.] If his understanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatsoever that can be known, else his understanding would have bounds, and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite. If he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, a but, God knows all things but this; a bar is then set to his knowledge. If there were anything, any particular

circumstance in the whole creation or non-creation, and possible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be said to be omniscient; as he would not be Almighty if any one thing, that implied not a repugnancy to his nature, did transcend his power.

First, All things possible. No question but God knows what he could create, as well as what he hath created; what he would not create, as well as what he resolved to create; he knew what he would not do before he willed to do it; this is the next thing which declares the infiniteness of his understanding; for, as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures, so is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things possible to his power. Possibles are infinite; that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what God doth know; otherwise his power would be more infinite than his knowledge: if he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his understanding, because all creatures may be numbered, but possible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the same reason of this in eternity; when never so many numbers of years are run out, there is still more to come, there still wants an end; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his understanding; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by anything. This the Scripture gives us some account of: God knows things that are not, "for he calls things that are not as if they were" (Romans 4:17); he calls things that are not, as if they were in being; what he calls is not unknown to him: if he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be; as he knows things that shall be, because he wills them, so he knows things that might be, because he is able to effect them: he knew that the inhabitants of Keilah would betray David to Saul if he remained in that place (1 Samuel 23:11); he knew what they would do upon that occasion, though it was never done; as he knew what was in their power and in their wills, so he must needs know what is within the compass of his own power; as he can permit more than he doth permit so he knows what he can permit, and what, upon that permission, would be done by his creatures; so God knew the possibility of the Tyrians' repentance, if they had had the same means, heard the same truths, and beheld the same miracles which were offered to the ears, and presented to the eyes of the Jews (Matthew 11:21). This must needs be so, because,

1. Man knows things that are possible to him, though he will never effect them. A carpenter knows a house in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never build a house according to that model. A watch-maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his instruments; man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it. [Note: Ficini de Immort. lib. 2. cap. 10.] As the understanding of man hath a virtue, that where it sees one man it may imagine thousands of men of the same shape, stature, form, parts; yea, taller, more vigorous, sprightly, intelligent, than the man he sees; because it is possible such a number may be. Shall not the understanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, since the understanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I see, can produce a thousand exactly like him? If the Divine understanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number, it may be demanded whether God can understand anything farther than that number, or whether he cannot? If he can, then he doth actually understand all those things which he hath a power to understand; otherwise there would be an increase of God's knowledge, if it were actually now, and not before, and so he would be more perfect than he was before; if he cannot understand them, then he cannot understand what a human mind can understand; for our understandings can multiply

numbers in in infinitum; and there is no number so great, but a man can still add to it: we must suppose the divine understanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never were, nor never shall be; he must needs know whatsoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, because God concurs to the support of the faculty in that imagination; and though it may be replied, an atheist may imagine that there is no God, a man may imagine that God can lie, or that he can be destroyed; doth God know therefore that he is not? or that he can lie, or cease to be? No, he knows he cannot; his knowledge extends to things possible, not to things impossible to himself; he knows it as imaginable by man, not as possible in itself; because it is utterly impossible, and repugnant to the nature of God, [Note: Gamach.] since he eminently contains in himself all things possible, past, present, and to come; he cannot know himself without knowing them.

2. God knowing his own power, knows whatsoever is in his power to effect. If he knows not all things possible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself, as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created. How can he comprehend himself, who comprehends not all effluxes of things possible that may come from him, and be wrought by him? How can he know himself as a cause, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce? [Note: Ficin de Immort. lib. 2. cap. 10.] Since the power of God extends to numberless things, his knowledge also extends to numberless objects; as if a unit is, could see the numbers it could produce, it would see infinite numbers: for a unit, as it were, all number. God knowing the fruitfulness of his own virtue, knows a numberless multitude of things which he can do, more than have been done, or shall be done by him; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections, than any of them which he hath created have: so that if the world should last many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this; and having created an inconceivable number, he knows he could still create more: so that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men, and other creatures in himself, infinite kinds of things, infinite species, and individuals under those kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may display and discover itself. A comprehensive knowledge of his own power doth necessarily include the objects of that power; so he knows whatsoever he could effect, and whatsoever he could permit, if he pleased to do it. If God could not understand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created: for it cannot be conceived how he can create anything that he is ignorant of; what he doth not know, he cannot do: he must know also the extent of his own goodness, and how far anything is capable to partake of it: so much therefore, as any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his, power.

3. It is further evident that God knows all possible things, because he knew those things which he has created, before they were created, when they were yet in a possibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a possibility, and not in actual reality. It is absurd to imagine that his understanding did lackey after the creatures, and draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is absurd to think that God did create, before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew those things he did create when they were possible, he must know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are possible. To conclude this, we must consider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or shall be. He sees possible things as possible, not as things that ever are or shall be. If he saw

them as existing or future, and they shall never be, this knowledge would be false, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows those things not in themselves, because they are not, nor in their causes, because they shall never be: he knows them in his own power, not in his will: he understands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things possible he knows only in his power; things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleasure to give being to them. Those that shall never come to pass, he knows only in himself as a sufficient cause; those things that shall come into being, he knows in himself as the efficient cause, and also in their immediate second causes. This should teach us to spend our thoughts in the admiration of the excellency of God, and the divine knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

Secondly, God knows all things past. This is an argument used by God himself to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols (Isaiah 41:22): "Let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them." He knows them as if they were now present, and not past for indeed in his eternity there is nothing past or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance, in Scripture, as when God remembered Rachel's prayer for a child (Genesis 30:22), and he is said to put tears into his bottle, and write them in his book of accompts, which signifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumstances past in the world; and this knowledge is called a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16), signifying the perpetual presence of things past, before him. There are two elegant expressions, signifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of sins past (Job 14:17), "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity;" a metaphor, taken from men that put up in a bag the money they would charily keep, tie the bag, sew up the holes, and bind it hard, that nothing may fall out; or a vessel, wherein they reserve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous stuff, that nothing may leak out, but be safely kept till the time of use; or else, as some think, from the bags attornies carry with them, full of writings, when they are to manage a cause against a person. Thus we find God often in Scripture calling to men's minds their past actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude, wherein he testifies his remembrance of his own past benefits and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard hath something of infinity in it, since though the sins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the sins of one man in thoughts, words, and deeds, are numberless in his own account, and perhaps in the count of any creature, the sins of all the vast numbers of men that have been, or shall be, are much more numberless, it cannot be less than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a survey of them all at once. If past things had not been known by God, how could Moses have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former transactions, wherein all histories are silent but the Scripture? How could he know the cause of man's present misery so many ages after, wherewith all philosophy was unacquainted? How could he have writ the order of the creation, the particulars of the sin of Adam, the circumstances of Cain's murder, the private speech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things past were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men, as well as by ourselves, and reserve the forms of divers things in our minds, which rise as occasions are presented to draw them forth? And shall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkness upon his understanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not destroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no less perfect than his understanding. If he did not know

things past, he could not be a righteous Governor, or exercise any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not dispense rewards and punishments, according to his promises and threatenings, if things that were past could be forgotten by him; he could not require that which is past (Ecclesiastes 3:15), if he did not remember that which is past. And though God be said to forget in Scripture, and not to know his people, and his people pray to him to remember them, as if he had forgotten them (Psalms 119:49), this is improperly ascribed to God. [Note: Bradward.] As God is said to repent, when he changes things according to his counsel beyond the expectation of men, so he is said to forget, when he defers the making good his promise to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked; this is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will. When he is said to remember his covenant, it is to will grace according to his covenant; when he is said to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the influences of it, whereby to punish the sin of his people; and when he is said not to know his people, it is not an absolute forgetfulness of them, but withdrawing from them the testimonies of his kindness, and clouding the signs of his favor; so God in pardon is said to forget sin, not that he ceaseth to know it, but ceaseth to punish it. It is not to be meant of a simple forgetfulness, or a lapse of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulness; so when his people in Scripture pray, Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant, no more is to be understood but, Lord, fulfil thy word and promise to thy servant.

Thirdly, He knows things present (Hebrews 4:13): "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" this is grounded upon the knowledge of himself; it is not so difficult to know all creatures exactly, as to know himself, because they are finite, but himself is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore everything through which his omnipotence is diffused, all the acts and objects of it; not the least thing that is the birth of his power, can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodness, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodness strike; he therefore knows distinctly the properties of every creature, because every property in them is a ray of his goodness; he is not only the efficient, but the exemplary cause; therefore as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, so he knows them in himself as the pattern; as a carpenter can give an account of every part and passage in a house he hath built, by consulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. "He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good" (Genesis 1:3), full of a natural goodness he had endowed them with: he did not ignorantly pronounce them so, and call them good, whether he knew them or not; and therefore he knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their first presence. Is there any, reason he should be ignorant of everything now present in the world, or that anything that derives an existence from him as a free cause, should be concealed from him? If he did not know things present in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea, by beasts, which the infinite God were ignorant of; and if he did not know all things present, but only some, it is possible for the most blessed God to be deceived and be miserable: ignorance is a calamity to the understanding: he could not prescribe laws to his creatures, unless he knew their natures to which those laws were to be suited: no, not natural ordinances to the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unless he knew the vigor and virtue in them, to execute those ordinances; for to prescribe laws above the nature of things, is inconsistent with the wisdom of government; he must know how far they were able to obey; whether the laws were suited to their ability: and for his rational creatures, whether the punishments annexed to the law were proper, and suited to the transgression of the creature.

1. He knows all creatures from the highest to the lowest, the least as well as the greatest. He knows the ravens and their young ones (Job 38:41); the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten (Job 38:29); every bird in the air, as well as any man doth what he hath in a cage at home (Psalms 50:11): "I know all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beasts in the field;" which some read creeping things. The clouds are numbered in his wisdom (Job 38:37); every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of snow, and the knots of hail, the sands upon the sea-shore, the hairs upon the head; it is no more absurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the stars which he calls by their names, as well as the most glorious angel and blessed spirit; he knows them as well as if there were none but them in particular for him to know; the least things were framed by his art as well as the greatest; the least things partake of his goodness as well as the greatest; he knows his own arts, and his own goodness, and therefore all the stamps and impressions of them upon all his creatures; he knows the immediate causes of the least, and therefore the effects of those causes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it must extend to those things which are at the greatest distance from him, to those which approach nearest to not being; since he did not want power to create, he cannot want understanding to know everything he hath created, the dispositions, qualities, and virtues of the minutest creature. Nor is the understanding of God embased, and suffers a diminution by the knowledge of the vilest and most inconsiderable things. Is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of anything? and can God have such a defect in his most perfect understanding? Is the understanding of man of an impurer alloy by knowing the nature of the rankest poisons? by understanding a fly, or a small insect? or by considering the deformity of a toad? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind to be able to discourse of the nature of them? Was Solomon, who knew all from the cedar to the hyssop, debased by so rich a present of wisdom from his Creator? Is any glass defiled by presenting a deformed image? Is there anything more vile than the "imaginations, which are only evil, and continually?" Doth not the mind of man descend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, suck in the most unclean things? yet God knows these in all their circumstances, in every appearance, inside and outside. Is there anything viler than some thoughts of men? than some actions of men? their unclean beds and gluttonous vomiting, and Luciferian pride? yet do not these fall under the eye of God, in all their nakedness? The Second Person's taking human nature, though it obscured, yet it did not disparage the Deity, or bring any disgrace to it. Is gold the worse for being formed into the image of a fly? doth it not still retain the nobleness of the metal? When men are despised for descending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is because they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and sin in their inquiries after lesser things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honor of God and the happiness of themselves; to be ambitious of such a knowledge, and careless of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greatest as well as the least; mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater; nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himself, but within himself, wherein all things in their ideas are beautiful and comely: our knowledge of a deformed thing is not a deforming of our understanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the understanding of God should become material by knowing material things, any more than our understandings lose their spirituality by knowing the nature of bodies; it is to be observed,

therefore, that only those senses of men, as seeing, hearing, smelling, which have those qualities for their objects that come nearest the nature of spiritual things, as light, sounds, fragrant odors, are ascribed to God in Scripture; not touching or tasting, which are senses that are not exercised without a more immediate commerce with gross matter; and the reason may be, because we should have no gross thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter, like the things he knows.

2. As he knows all creatures, so God knows all the actions of creatures. He counts in particular all the ways of men. "Doth he not see all my ways, and count all my steps" (Job 31:4)? He "tells" their "wanderings," as if one by one (Psalms 56:8). "His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he sees all his goings" (Job 34:21); a metaphor taken from men, when they look wistly, with fixed eyes upon a thing, to view it in every circumstance, whence it comes, whether it goes, to observe every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering, but a fixed eye; and the ways of man are not only "before his eyes," but he doth exactly "ponder them" (Proverbs 5:21); as one that will not be ignorant of the least mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the standard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members, as the hairs of our heads; the smallest actions before they be, whether civil, natural, or religious, fall under his cognizance; what meaner than a man carrying a pitcher, yet our Saviour foretels it (Luke 22:10); God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done, had he not restrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah, had not God put a bar in his way (Genesis 20:6); what a man that is taken away in his youth would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea, he knows the most secret words as well as actions; the words spoken by the king of Israel in his bed-chamber, were revealed to Elisha (2 Kings 6:12); and indeed, how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants, or a hive of bees in a glass, without turning our eyes; and shall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are less than bees or ants in his sight, and more visible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acutest eye of man?

3. As God knows all the actions of creatures, so he knows all the thoughts of creatures. The thoughts are the most closeted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unless disclosed by some outward expressions; but God descends into the depths and abysses of the soul, discerns the most inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the sun doth not so much enlighten the earth, as God understands the heart; all things are as visible to him, as flies and motes enclosed in a body of transparent crystal; this man naturally allows to God. Men often speak to God by the motions of their minds and secret ejaculations, which they would not do, if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions; the Scripture is plain and positive in this, "He tries the heart and the reins" (Psalms 7:9), as men, by the use of fire, discern the drossy and purer parts of metals. The secret intentions and aims, the most lurking affections seated in the reins; he knows that which no man, no angel, is able to know, which a man himself knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea, "he weighs the Spirit" (Proverbs 16:2); he exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap. "He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12); all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every stirring and purpose; so that not one thought can be withheld from him Job 42:2); yea, "Hell and destruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men" (Proverbs 15:11); he works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treasure, say some; but more naturally, God knows the whole state of the

dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men consumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures; things that seem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures, whom he hath cast out of his care forever into the arms of his justice, never more to cast a delightful glance towards them; not a secret in any soul in hell (which he hath no need to know, because he shall not judge them by any of the thoughts they now have, since they were condemned to punishment) is hid from him; much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counsels of whose hearts are yet to be manifested, in order to their trial and censure; yea, he knows them before they spring up into actual being (Psalms 139:2): "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off;" my thoughts, that is, every thought; though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day, and that in the source and fountain, when it is yet in the womb, before it is our thought; if he knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us: he knows the tendency of them; where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a "discerner" or criticiser "of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12), as a critic discerns every letter, point, and stop; he is more intimate with us than our souls with our bodies, and hath more the possession of us than we have of ourselves; he knows them by an inspection into the heart, not by the mediation of second causes, by the looks or gestures of men, as men may discern the thoughts of one another. (1.) God discerns all good motions of the mind and will. These he puts into men, and needs must God know his own act; he knew the son of "Jeroboam to have some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel" (1 Kings 14:13); and the integrity of David and Hezekiah; the freest motions of the will and affections to him: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," saith Peter (John 21:17). Love can be no more restrained, than the will itself can; a man may make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love. (2.) God discerns all the evil motions of the mind and will; "Every imagination of the heart" (Genesis 6:5); the vanity of "men's thoughts" (Psalms 94:11); their inward darkness, and deceitful disguises. No wonder that God, who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it (Psalms 33:13; Psalms 33:15): "He looks from heaven and beholds all the children of men; he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works." Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that anything in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it. He could not be a Judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart did lie covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart; those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles, would merit a punishment, would meet with a reward; and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he could not be a wise Lawgiver, so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous Judge: acts that are rotten in the spring, might be judged good by the fair color and appearance. This is the glory of God at the last day, "to manifest the secrets of all hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5); and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging and the prerogative of trying the hearts together (Jeremiah 11:20): "But thou, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart;" and (Jeremiah 17:10): "I, the Lord, search, the heart, I try the reins;" to what end? even to "give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his

doings.” And, indeed, his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidenceth that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God sustains the mind of man in every act of thinking; in him we have not only the principle of life, but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members: “In him we live and move,” &c. (Acts 17:28). Since he supports the vigor of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of those acts which spring from the faculty, to which he doth at that instant communicate power and ability? Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is,

1st. An incommunicable property, belonging only to the Divine understanding. Creatures, indeed, may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themselves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and see all that lodgeth there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge. [Note: Daille, Serm. Part 1. p. 230.] Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may guess at them, by the acquaintance they have with the disposition and constitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by some marks which an inward imagination may stamp upon the brain, blood, animal spirits, face, &c. But the knowing the thoughts merely as thought, without any impression by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himself, as the main secret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his Deity, as much as any else (Jeremiah 17:9-10): “The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?” yes, there is one, and but one, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins.” “Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7); where God is distinguished by this perfection from all men whatsoever, others may know by revelation, as Elisha did what was in Gehazi’s heart (2 Kings 5:26). But God knows a man more than any man knows himself; what person upon earth understands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reserves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations? all which God knows exactly.

2d. God acquires no new knowledge of the thoughts and hearts by the discovery of them in the actions. He would then be but equal in this part of knowledge to his creature; no man or angel but may thus arrive to the knowledge of them; God were then excluded from an absolute dominion over the prime work of his lower creation; he would have made a creature superior in this respect to himself, upon whose will to discover, his knowledge of their inward intentions should depend; and therefore when God is said to search the heart, we must not understand it as if God were ignorant before, and was fain to make an exact scrutiny and inquiry, before he attained what he desired to know; but God condescends to our capacity in the expression of his own knowledge, signifying that his knowledge is as complete as any man’s knowledge can be of the designs of others, after he hath sifted them by a strict and thorough examination, and wrung out a discovery of their intentions, that he knows them as perfectly as if he had put them upon the rack, and forced them to make a discovery of their secret plottings. Nor must we understand that in Genesis 22:12, where God saith, after Abraham had stretched out his hand to sacrifice his son, “Now I know that thou fearest God,” as though God was ignorant of Abraham’s gracious disposition to him; did Abraham’s drawing his knife furnish God with a new knowledge? no, God knew Abraham’s pious inclinations before (Genesis 18:19): “I know him, that he will command his children after him,” &c. Knowledge is sometimes taken for approbation; then the sense will be, Now I approve this fact as a testimony of thy fear of me, since thy affection to thy Isaac is extinguished by the more powerful flame of affection to my will and command; I now accept thee, and count thee a meet subject of my choicest benefits: or, Now I know, that is, I have made known

and manifested the faith of Abraham to himself and to the world: thus Paul uses the word know (1 Corinthians 2:2): "I have determined to know nothing;" that is, to declare and teach nothing, to make known nothing but Christ crucified: or else, Now I know, that is, I have an evidence and experiment in this noble fact, that thou fearest me. God often condescends to our capacity in speaking of himself after the manner of men, as if he had (as men do) known the inward affections of others by their outward actions.

4. God knows all the evils and sins of creatures. (1.) God knows all sin. This follows upon the other. If he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows also all the sinfulness in those acts and thoughts. This Zophar infers from God's punishing men (Job 11:11); for he knows vain man, he sees his wickedness also; he knows every man, and sees the wickedness of every man; he looks down from heaven, and beholds not only the filthy persons, but what is filthy in them (Psalms 14:2-3), all nations in the world, and every man of every nation; none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes; he searches Jerusalem with candles (Jeremiah 16:17). God follows sinners step by step, with his eye, and will not leave searching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that searches all chinks with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it distinctly in all the parts of it, how an adulterer rises out of his bed to commit uncleanness, what contrivances he had, what steps he took, every circumstance in the whole progress; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker spots upon it, which may most aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, punish it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? order to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? punish or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? "Cleanse me," saith David, "from my secret faults" (Psalms 19:12), secret in regard of others, secret in regard of himself; how could God cleanse him from that whereof he was ignorant? He knows sins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apostacy of the Jews; what gods they would serve, in what measure they would provoke him. and violate his covenant (Deuteronomy 31:20-21); he knew Judas' sin long before Judas' actual existence, foretelling it in the Psalms; and Christ predicts it before he acted it. He sees sins future in his own permitting will; he sees sins present in his own supporting act. As he knows things possible to himself, because he knows his own power so he knows things practicable by the creature, because he knows the power and principles of the creature. [Note: Fotherby Atheoma, p. 132.] This sentiment of God is naturally written in the fears of sinners, upon lightning, thunder, or some prodigious operation of God in the world; what is the language of them, but that he sees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward sinfulness of their hearts; that he doth not only behold them as a mere spectator, but considers them as a just judge. And the poets say, that the sins of men leaped into heaven, and were writ in parchments of Jupiter, [Note: Ev Διος ■λτ Cross. Anthol. Dec. 1. cap. 395. p. 101.] scelus in terram geritur, in cœlo scribitur: sin is acted on earth, and recorded in heaven. God indeed doth not behold evil with the approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a speculative knowledge, so as to understand the sinfulness of it; or a knowledge simplicis intelligentiæ, of simple intelligence, as he permits them, not positively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of assent to them, but dissent from them. Evil pertains to a dissenting act of the mind, and an aversive act of the will; and what though evil formerly taken, hath no distinct conception, because it is a privation; a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehension of some being; would not this lie as strongly against our own knowledge of sin? Sin is a privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of sin? by his

knowing the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the subject of evil hath a being, and so hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itself, or in itself; but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? as we know darkness to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wisdom. God knows good all by himself, because he is the sovereign good; is it strange then, that he should know all evil, since all evil is in some natural good. (2.) The manner of God's knowing evil is not so easily known. And indeed, as we cannot comprehend the essence of God, though it is easily intelligible that there is such a Being, so we can as little comprehend the manner of God's knowledge, though we cannot but conclude him to be an intelligent Being, a pure understanding, knowing all things. As God hath a higher manner of being than his creatures, so he hath another and higher manner of knowing; and we can as little comprehend the manner of his knowing, as we can the manner of his being. But as to the manner, doth not God know his own law? and shall he not know how much any action comes short of his rule? he cannot know his own rule without knowing all the deviations from it. He knows his own holiness, and shall he not see how any action is contrary to the holiness of his own nature? Doth not God know everything that is true? and is it not true that this or that is evil? and shall God be ignorant of any truth? How doth God know that he cannot lie, but by knowing his own veracity? How doth God know that he cannot die, but by knowing his own immutability? and by knowing those, he knows what a lie is, he knows what death is; so if sin never had been, if no creature had ever been, God would have known what sin was, because he knows his own holiness; because he knew what law was fit to be appointed to his creatures if he should create them, and that that law might be transgressed by them. God knows all good, all goodness in himself; he therefore hath a foundation in himself to know all that comes short of that goodness, that is opposite to that holiness: as if light were capable of understanding, it would know darkness only by knowing itself; by knowing itself, it would know what is contrary to itself knows all created goodness which he hath planted in the creature; he knows then all defects from this goodness, what perfection an act is deprived of; what is opposite to that goodness, and that is evil. As we know sickness by health, discord by harmony, blindness by sight, because it is a privation of sight, whosoever knows one contrary knows the other; God knows unrighteousness by the idea which he hath of righteousness, and sees an act deprived of that rectitude and goodness which ought to be in it; he knows evil because he knows the causes whence evil proceeds. [Note: Cusan, p. 246.] A painter knows a picture of his own framing, and if any one dashes any base color upon it, shall not he also know that? God by his hand painted all creatures, impressed upon man the fair stamp and color of his own image; the devil defiles it; man daubs it. Doth not God, that knows his own work, know how this piece is become different from his work? Doth not God, that knows his creatures' goodness, which himself was the fountain of, know the change of this goodness? Yea, he knew before, that the devil would sow tares where he had sown wheat; and therefore that controversy of some in the schools, whether God knew evil by its opposition to created or uncreated goodness, is needless. We may say God knows sin as it is opposite to created goodness, yet he knows it radically by his own goodness, because he knows the goodness he hath communicated to the creature by his own essential goodness in himself. To conclude this head: The knowledge of sin doth not bespot the holiness of God's nature; for the bare knowledge of a crime doth not infect the mind of man with the filth and pollution of that crime, for then every man that knows an act of murder committed by another, would, by that bare knowledge, be tainted with his sin; yea, and a judge that condemns a malefactor, may as well condemn himself if this were so: the knowledge of

sins infects not the understandings that knows them, but only the will that approves them. It is no discredit to us to know evil, in order to pass a right judgment upon it; so neither can it be to God.

Fourthly, God knows all future things, all things to come. The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him, who is before time, above time, that is not measured by hours, or days, or years; if God did not know them, the hindrance must be in himself, or in the things themselves, because they are things to come: not in himself; if it did, it must arise from some impotency in his own nature, and so we render him weak; or from an unwillingness to know, and so we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for, simply considered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the knowledge of a thing includes something of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes something of imperfection. The knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wisdom, which they call foresight; it is then surely a greater perfection in God to know future things, than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have something of imperfection than be possessor of all perfection? Nor doth the hindrance lie in the things themselves, because their futurity depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will, giving it existence, so nothing can be future without his will, designing the futurity of it. Certainly if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things future, which he is not only able, but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do. Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of most things in the world; for before the deluge he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and so the more perfection; then the understanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay, is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of those things which are still to come to pass; he must tarry for a perfection he wants, till those futurities come to be in act, till those things which are to come, cease to be future, and begin to be present. Either God knows them, or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and doth not, there is something wanting to him; all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring: if he doth not desire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it destroys all providence, all his government of affairs; for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a prospect of something that is future: as in Joseph's case, who was put into the pit, and sold to the Egyptians in order to his future advancement, and the preservation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, something might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free-will of Pharaoh, whereby Joseph might have been cut short of his advancement, and so God have been interrupted in the track and method of his designed providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath designed him, knows all the means before, whereby he will govern him, and therefore hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things; for a confused knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infiniteness of his understanding is more seen than in knowing things past or present; his eyes are a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14), in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any else. To make it further appear that God knows all things future, consider,

1. Everything which is the object of God's knowledge without himself was once only future. There was a moment when nothing was in being but himself: he knew nothing actually past, because

nothing was past; nothing actually present, because nothing had any existence but himself; therefore only what was future. And why not everything that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to pass just at the beginning of the creation? God indeed knows everything as present, but the things themselves known by him were not present, but future; the whole creation was once future, or else it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itself, else it could never have begun to be. Did not God know what would be created by him, before it was created by him? [Note: Petavius changed.] Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before, what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them and saw them in being? Creatures, then, did not arise from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures should be, for he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they, therefore, must be known before they were made, and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them; By the same reason that he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knows still what creatures shall be before they are; [Note: Bradward, lib. 3 cap. 14.] for all things that are, were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cause; so the earth and heavens were in him, as a model is in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and soul, before it be brought forth into outward act.

2. The predictions of future things evidence this. There is not a prophecy of any thing to come, but is a spark of his foreknowledge, and bears witness to the truth of this assertion, in the punctual accomplishment of it; this is a thing challenged by God as his own peculiar, wherein he surmounts all the idols that man's inventions have godded in the world (Isaiah 41:21-22): Let them bring them forth (speaking of the idols) and show us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. Such a fore-knowledge of things to come, is here ascribed to God by God himself, as a distinction of him from all false gods; such a knowledge, that if any could prove that they were possessors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himself: "that we may know that you are gods." He puts his Deity to stand or fall upon this account, and this should be the point which should decide the controversy, whether he or the heathen idols were the true God; the dispute is managed by this medium,—He that knows things to come, is God; I know things to come, ergo, I am God; the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods; God submits the being of his Deity to this trial. If God know things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be, in his own account, no more a God than devils or men, no more a God than the pagan idols he doth scoff at for this defect. If the heathen idols were to be stripped of their deity for want of this foreknowledge of things to come, would not the true God also fall from the same excellency if he were defective in knowledge? He would, in his own judgment, no more deserve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himself? It cannot be understood of future things in their causes, when the effects necessarily arise from such causes, as light from the sun, and heat from the fire many of these men know; more of them angels and devils know if God, therefore, had not a higher and farther knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God any more than angels and devils, who know necessary effects in their causes. The devils, indeed, did predict some things in the heathen oracles; but God is differenced from them here by the infiniteness of his knowledge, in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their particularities, things that depended

on the liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of. Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer, they can conjecture, and so their deity was as good as God's; for, though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much, then, is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his Deity? God asserts his knowledge of things to come, as a manifest evidence of his Godhead; those that deny, therefore, the argument that proves it, deny the conclusion too; for this will necessarily follow, that if he be God, because he knows future things then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God, because a certain knowledge, so as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inseparable perfection of the Deity: it was, therefore, well said of Austin, that it was as high a madness to deny God to be, as to deny him the foreknowledge of things to come. The whole prophetic part of Scripture declares this perfection of God; every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch; they could not have this foreknowledge of themselves; why might not many other men have the same insight, if it were nature? It must be from some superior Agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of Divine illumination. [Note: Pacuvius said, *Siqui quæ eventura sunt provident, æqui parent*, Gell. lib. 14. c. 1.] Prophecy must be totally expunged if this be denied; for the subjects of prophecy are things future, and no man is properly a prophet but in prediction. Now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come, and the foretelling of them supposeth them not to be yet, but that they shall be in time; several such predictions we have in Scripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold that he would order second causes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews. Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; that prince refers to God as the revealer of secrets (Daniel 2:47). By the same reason that he knows one thing future by himself, and by the infiniteness of his knowledge before any causes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

3. Some future things are known by men; and we must allow God a greater knowledge than any creature. Future things in their causes may be known by angels and men, (as I said before); whosoever knows necessary causes, and the efficacy of them, may foretell the effects; and when he sees the meeting and concurrence of several causes together, he may presage what the consequent effect will be of such a concurrence: so physicians foretel the progress of a disease, the increase or diminution of it by natural signs; and astronomers foretel eclipses by their observation of the motion of heavenly bodies, many years before they happen; [Note: Cusanus.] can they be hid from God, with whom are the reasons of all things? [Note: Fuller's Pisgah, 1. 2. p. 281.] An expert gardener, by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the month when they will peep out their heads; and shall not God much more, that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations shall be from those principles? Now, if God did know things only in their causes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to pass, from every cause singly, and from the concurrence of many. Now, as God is more excellent in being than his creature, so he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge, and the manner of his knowledge; well, then, shall a certain knowledge of something future, and a

conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men? and shall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come be found nowhere, in no being? If the conjecture of future things savours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is, then, no such thing in being as a perfect intelligent Being, and so no God.

4. God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must needs know all future things. If anything be future, or to come to pass, it must be from itself or from God: not from itself, then it would be independent and absolute: if it hath its futurity from God, then God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass; those things that are future, in necessary causes, God must know, because he willed them to be causes of such effects; he, therefore, knows them, because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him; and knowledge, which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will; in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to suffer them and dispose of them; nothing can pass out of the rank of things merely possible into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futurity. [Note: Chequell.] It is not from the infiniteness of his own nature, simply considered, that God knows things to be future; [Note: Coccei sum. Theol. p. 50.] for as things are not future because God is infinite (for then all possible things should be future), so neither is any thing known to be future only because God is infinite, but because God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come, is founded upon his appointment of things to come. [Note: Ibid.] In Isaiah 44:7, it is said, "And who, as I, shall call and declare it, since I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?" [Note: Gamauil in Aquin, Part I. Q. 14. cap. 3. p. 124.] Nothing is created or ordered in the world but what God decreed to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exist in time; not the minutest part of the world could have existed without his will, not an action can be done without his will; as life, the principle, so motion, the fruit of that life, is by and from God; as he decreed life to this or that thing, so he decreed motion as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from such causes; for without such a concurrence they could not have acted anything, or produced anything; and therefore as for natural things, which we call necessary causes, God foreseeing them all particularly in his own decree, foresaw also all effects which must necessarily flow from them, because such causes cannot but act when they are furnished with all things necessary for action: he knows his own decrees, and therefore necessarily knows what he hath decreed, or else we must say things come to pass whether God will or no, or that he wills he knows not what; but this cannot be, for "known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Now this necessarily, flows from that principle first laid down, that God knows himself, since nothing is future without God's will; if God did not know future things, he would not know his own will; for as things possible could not be known by him, unless he knew the fulness of his own power, so things future could not be known by his understanding, unless he knew the resolves of his own will. Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men; [Note: Maimonid. More Nevoeh. Part 3. cap. 21. pp. 393, 394.] God's knowledge of his works precedes his works; man's knowledge of God's works follows his works, just as an artificer's knowledge of a watch, instrument, or engine, which he would make, is before his making of it; he knows the motion of it, and the reason of those motions before it is made, because he knows what he hath determined to

work; he knows not those motions from the consideration of them after they were made, as the spectator doth, who, by viewing the instrument after it is made, gains a knowledge from the sight and the consideration of it, till he understands the reason of the whole; so we know things from the consideration of them after we see them in being, and therefore we know not future things: but God's knowledge doth not arise from things because they are, but because he wills them to be; and therefore he knows everything that shall be, because it cannot be without his will, as the Creator and maintainer of all things; knowing his own substance,. he knows all his works.

5. If God did not know all future things, he would be mutable in his knowledge. If he did not know all things that ever were or are to be, there would be upon the appearance of every new object, an addition of light to his understanding, and therefore such a change in him as every new knowledge causes in the mind of a man, or as the sun works in the world upon its rising every morning, scattering the darkness that was upon the face of the earth; if he did not know them before they came, he would gain a knowledge by them when they came to pass, which he had not before they were effected; his knowledge would be new according to the newness of the objects, and multiplied according to the multitude of the objects. If God did know things to come as perfectly as he knew things present and past, but knew those certainly, and the others doubtfully and conjecturally, he would suffer some change, and acquire some perfection in his knowledge, when those future things should cease to be future, and become present; for he would know it more perfectly when it were present, than he did when it was future, and so there would be a change from imperfection to a perfection; but God is every way immutable. Besides, that perfection would not arise from the nature of God, but from the existence and presence of the thing; but who will affirm that God acquires any perfection of knowledge from his creatures, any more than he doth of being? he would not then have that knowledge, and consequently that perfection from eternity, as he had when he created the world, and will not have a full perfection of the knowledge of his creature till the end of the world, nor of immortal souls, which will certainly act as well as live to eternity; and so God never was, nor ever will be, perfect in knowledge; for when you have conceived millions of years, wherein angels and souls live and act, there is still more coming than you can conceive, wherein they will act. And if God be always changing to eternity, from ignorance to knowledge, as those acts come to be exerted by his creatures, he will not be perfect in knowledge, no, not to eternity, but will always be changing from one degree of knowledge to another; a very unworthy conceit to entertain of the most blessed, perfect, and infinite God! Hence, then, it follows, that:

(1.) God foreknows all his creatures. All kinds which he determined to make; all particulars that should spring out of every species; the time when they should come forth of the womb; the manner how; "In thy Book all my members were written" (Psalms 139:16). Members is not in the Heb. whence some refer all, to all living creatures whatsoever, and all the parts of them which God did foresee; he knew the number of creatures with all their parts; they were written in the book of his foreknowledge; the duration of them, how long they shall remain in being, and act upon the stage; he knows their strength, the links of one cause with another, and what will follow in all their circumstances, and the series and combinations of effects with their causes. The duration of everything is foreknown, because determined (Job 14:5); "seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds, that he cannot pass;" bounds are fixed, beyond which none shall reach; he speaks of days and months, not of years, to give us

notice of God's particular foreknowledge of everything, of every day, month, year, hour of a man's life.

(2.) All the acts of his creatures are foreknown by him. All natural acts, because he knows their causes; voluntary acts I shall speak of afterwards.

(3.) This foreknowledge was certain. For it is an unworthy notion of God to ascribe to him a conjectural knowledge; if there were only a conjectural knowledge, he could but conjecturally foretell anything; and then it is possible the events of things might be contrary to his predictions. It would appear then that God were deceived and mistaken, and then there could be no rule of trying things, whether there were from God or no; for the rule God sets down to discern his words from the words of false prophets, is the event and certain accomplishment of what is predicted (Deuteronomy 18:21) to that question, "How shall we know whether God hath spoken or no?" he answers, that "if the thing doth not come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken." If his knowledge of future things were not certain, there were no stability in this rule, it would fall to the ground: we never yet find God deceived in any prediction, but the event did answer his forerevelation; his foreknowledge, therefore, is certain and infallible. We cannot make God uncertain in his knowledge, but we must conceive him fluctuating and wavering in his will; but if his will be not yea and nay, but yea, his knowledge is certain, because he doth certainly will and resolve.

(4.) This foreknowledge was from eternity. Seeing he knows things possible in his power, and things future in his will; if his power and resolves were from eternity, his knowledge must be so too, or else we must make him ignorant of his own power, and ignorant of his own will from eternity; and consequently not from eternity blessed and perfect. His knowledge of possible things must run parallel with his power, and his knowledge of future things run parallel with his will. If he willed from eternity, he knew from eternity what he willed; but that he did will from eternity, we must grant, unless we would render him changeable, and conceive him to be made in time of not willing, willing. The knowledge God hath in time, was always one and the same, because his understanding is his proper essence, and of an immutable nature. [Note: Gamach. in Aquin. Part 1. Q. 14. cap. 3. p. 124.] And indeed the actual existence of a thing is not simply necessary to its being perfectly known; we may see a thing that is past out of being, when it doth actually exist; and a carpenter may know the house he is to build, before it be built, by the model of it in his own mind; much more we may conceive the same of God whose decrees were before the foundation of the world; [Note: Ephesians 1:5. and in other places.] and to be before time was, and to be from eternity, hath no difference. As God in his being exceeds all beginning of time, so doth his knowledge all motions of time.

(5.) God foreknows all things as present with him from eternity. As he knows mutable things with an immutable and firm knowledge, so he knows future things with a present knowledge; [Note: Gerhard Exeges, ch. 8. de Deo sect. 13. p. 303.] not that the things which are produced in time, were actually and really present with him in their own beings from eternity; for then they could not be produced in time; had they a real existence, then they would not be creatures, but God; and had they actual being, then they could not be future, for future speaks a thing to come that is not yet. If things had been actually present with him, and yet future, they had been made before they were made, and had a being before they had a being; but they were all present to his knowledge as if they were in actual being, because the reason of all things that were to be made, was present

with him. The reason of the will of God that they shall be, was aequally eternal with him, wherein he saw what, and when, and how he would create things, how he would govern them, to what ends he would direct them. [Note: Bradward, lib. 3. cap 14.] Thus all things are present to God's knowledge, though in their own nature they may be past or future, not in esse reali, but in esse intelligibili, objectively, not actually present [Note: Hornbeck.] for as the unchangeableness and infiniteness of God's knowledge of changeable and finite things, doth not make the things he knows immutable and infinite, so neither doth the eternity of his knowledge make them actually present with him from eternity; but all things are present to his understanding, because he hath at once a view of all successions of times; and his knowledge of future things is as perfect as of present things, or what is past; it is not a certain knowledge of present things, and an uncertain knowledge of future, but his knowledge of one is as certain and unerring as his knowledge of the other; [Note: Pugio Fidei, Part I. ch 19.] as a man that beholds a circle with several lines from the centre, beholds the lines as they are joined in the centre, beholds them also as they are distant and severed from one another, beholds them in their extent and in their point all at once, though they may have a great distance from one another. He saw from the beginning of time to the last minute of it, all things coming out of their causes, marching in their order according to his own appointment; as a man may see a multitude of ants, some creeping one way, some another, employed in several businesses for their winter provision. The eye of God at once runs through the whole circle of time; as the eye of man upon a tower sees all the passengers at once, though some be past, some under the tower, some coming at a farther distance. "God," saith Job, "looks to the end of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven" (Job 28:24); the knowledge of God is expressed by sight in Scripture, and futurity to God is the same thing as distance to us; we can with a perspective-glass make things that are afar off appear as if they were near; and the sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, to appear as if it were at the end of the glass: why, then, should future things be at so great a distance from God's knowledge, when things so far from us may be made to approach so near to us? God considers all things in his own simple knowledge, as if they were now acted; and therefore some have chosen to call the knowledge of things to come, not prescience, or foreknowledge, but knowledge; because God sees all things in one instant, scientiā nunquam deficientis instantiæ. [Note: Boet. consolat lib. 5. pros. 6] Upon this account, things that are to come, are set down in Scripture as present, and sometimes as past (Isaiah 9:6): "Unto us a child is born," though not yet born; so of the sufferings of Christ (Isaiah 53:4, &c.): "He hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was taken from prison," &c., not shall be; and (Psalms 22:18): "they part my garments among them," as if it were present; all to express the certainty of God's foreknowledge, as if things were actually present before him.

(6.) This is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Nothing but what is eternal can know all things that are to come. Suppose a creature might know things that are to come, after he is in being, he cannot know things simply as future, because there were things future before he was in being. The devils know not men's heart, therefore cannot foretel their actions with any certainty; they may indeed have a knowledge of some things to come, but it is only conjectural, and often mistaken; as the devil was in his predictions among the heathen, and in his presage of "Job's cursing God to his face" upon his pressing calamities (Job 1:11). Sometimes, indeed, they have a certain knowledge of something future by the revelation of God, when he uses them as instruments of his vengeance, or for the trial of his people, as in the case of Job, when he gave

him a commission to strip him of his goods; or, as the angels have, when he uses them as instruments of the deliverance of his people.

(7.) Though this be certain, that God foreknows all things and actions, yet the manner of his knowing all things before they come, is not so easily resolved. We must not, therefore, deny this perfection in God, because we understand not the manner how he hath the knowledge of all things. It were unworthy for us to own no more of God than we can perfectly conceive of him; we should then own no more of him than that he doth exist. "Canst thou," saith Job, "by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). Do we not see things unknown to inferior creatures, to be known to ourselves? Irrational creatures do not apprehend the nature of a man, nor what we conceived of them when we look upon them; nor do we know what they fancy of us when they look wistly upon us; for ought as I know, we understand as little the manner of their imaginations, as they do of ours; and shall we ascribe a darkness in God as to future things, because we are ignorant of them, and of the manner how he should know them? [Note: Ficinus in Procl. cap. 91.] shall we doubt whether God doth certainly know those things which we only conjecture? As our power is not the measure of the power of God, so neither is our knowledge the judge of the knowledge of God, no better nor so well as an irrational nature can be the judge of our reason. Do we perfectly know the manner how we know? shall we therefore deny that we know anything? We know we have such a faculty which we call understanding, but doth any man certainly know what it is? and became he doth not, shall he deny that which is plain and evident to him? Because we cannot ascertain ourselves of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of the manner how minerals are engendered in the earth, shall we therefore deny that which our eyes convince us of? And this will be a preparation to the last thing.

Fifthly, God knows all future contingencies, that is, God knows all things that shall accidentally happen, or, as we say, by chance; and he knows all the free motions of men's wills that shall be to the end of the world. If all things be open to him (Hebrews 4:13), then all contingencies are, for they are in the number of things; and as, according to Christ's speech, those things that are impossible to man, are possible to God, so those things which are unknown to man, are known to God; because of the infinite fulness and perfection of the divine understanding. Let us see what a contingent is. That is contingent which we commonly call accidental, as when a tile falls suddenly upon a man's head as he is walking in the street; or when one letting off a musket at random shoots another he did not intend to hit; such was that arrow whereby Ahab was killed, shot by a soldier at a venture (1 Kings 22:39); this some call a mixed contingent, made up partly of necessity, and partly of accident; it is necessary the bullet, when sent out of the gun, or arrow out of the bow, should fly and light somewhere; but it is an accident that it hits this or that man, that was never intended by the archer. Other things, as voluntary actions, are purely contingents, and have nothing of necessity in them; all free actions that depend upon the will of man, whether to do, or not to do, are of this nature, because they depend not upon a necessary cause, as burning doth upon the fire, moistening upon water, or as descent or falling down is necessary to a heavy body; for those cannot in their own nature do otherwise; but the other actions depend upon a free agent, able to turn to this or that point, and determine himself as he pleases. Now we must know, that what is accidental in regard of the creature, is not so in regard of God; the manner of Ahab's death was accidental, in regard of the hand by which he was slain, but not in regard of God who foretold his death, and foreknew the shot, and directed the arrow; God was not uncertain before of the

manner of his fall, nor hovered over the battle to watch for an opportunity to accomplish his own prediction; what may be or not be, in regard of us, is certain in regard of God; to imagine that what is accidental to us, is so to God, is to measure God by our short line. How many events following upon the results of princes in their counsels, seem to persons, ignorant of those counsels, to be a haphazard, yet were not contingencies to the prince and his assistants, but foreseen by him as certainly to issue so as they do, which they knew before would be the fruit of such causes and instruments they would knit together! That may be necessary in regard of God's foreknowledge, which is merely accidental in regard of the natural disposition of the immediate causes which do actually produce it; contingent in its own nature, and in regard of us, but fixed in the knowledge of God. One illustrates it by this similitude; [Note: Zanch.] a master sends two servants to one and the same place, two several ways, unknown to one another; they meet at the place which their master had appointed them; their meeting is accidental to them, one knows not of the other, but it was foreseen by the master that they should so meet; and that in regard of them it would seem a mere accident, till they came to explain the business to one another; both the necessity of their meeting, in regard of their master's order, and the accidentalness of it in regard of themselves, were in both their circumstances foreknown by the master that employed them. For the clearing of this, take it in this method.

1. It is an unworthy conceit of God in any to exclude him from the knowledge of these things.

(1.) It will be a strange contracting of him to allow him no greater a knowledge than we have ourselves. Contingencies are known to us when they come into act, and pass from futurity to reality; and when they are present to us, we can order our affairs accordingly; shall we allow God no greater a measure of knowledge than we have, and make him as blind as ourselves, not to see things of that nature before they come to pass? Shall God know them no more? Shall we imagine God knows no otherwise than we know? and that he doth, like us, stand gazing with admiration at events? man can conjecture many things; is it fit to ascribe the same uncertainty to God, as though he, as well as we, could have no assurance till the issue appear in the view of all? If God doth not certainly foreknow them, he doth but conjecture them; but a conjectural knowledge is by no means to be fastened on God; for that is not knowledge, but guess, and destroys a Deity by making him subject to mistake; for he that only guesseth, may guess wrong; so that this is to make God like ourselves, and strip him of an universally acknowledged perfection of omniscience. A conjectural knowledge, saith one, [Note: Scrivener.] is as unworthy of God as the creature is unworthy of omniscience. It is certain man hath a liberty to act many things this or that way as he pleases; to walk to this or that quarter, to speak or not to speak; to do this or that thing, or not to do it; which way a man will certainly determine himself, is unknown before to any creature, yea, often at the present to himself, for he may be in suspense; but shall we imagine this future determination of himself is concealed from God? Those that deny God's foreknowledge in such cases, must either say, that God hath an opinion that a man will resolve rather this way than that; but then if a man by his liberty determine himself contrary to the opinion of God, is not God then deceived? and what rational creature can own him for a God that can be deceived in anything? or else they must say that God is at uncertainty, and sustends his opinion without determining it any way; then he cannot now free acts till they are done; he would then depend upon the creature for his information; his knowledge would be every instant increased, as things, he knew not before, came into act; and since there are every minute an innumerable multitude of various imaginations in the

minds of men, there would be every minute an accession of new knowledge to God which he had not before; besides, this knowledge would be mutable according to the wavering and weathercock resolutions of men, one while standing to this point, another while to that, if he depended upon the creature's determination for his knowledge.

(2.) If the free acts of men were unknown before to God, no man can see how there can be any government of the world by him. Such contingencies may happen, and such resolves of men's free-wills unknown to God, as may perplex his affairs, and put him upon new counsels and methods for attaining those ends which he settled at the first creation of things; if things happen which God knows not of before, this must be the consequence; where there is no foresight, there is no providence; things may happen so sudden, if God be ignorant of them, that they may give a check to his intentions and scheme of government, and put him upon changing the whole model of it. How often doth a small intervening circumstance, unforeseen by man, dash in pieces a long meditated and well-formed design! To govern necessary causes, as sun and stars, whose effects are natural and constant in themselves, is easy to be imagined; but how to govern the world that consists of so many men of free-will, able to determine themselves to this or that, and which have no constancy in themselves, as the sun and stars have, cannot be imagined; unless we will allow in God as great a certainty of foreknowledge of the designs and actions of men, as there is inconstancy in their resolves. God must be altering the methods of his government every day, every hour, every minute, according to the determinations of men, which are so various and changeable in the whole compass of the world in the space of one minute; he must wait to see what the counsels of men will be, before he could settle his own methods of government; and so must govern the world according to their mutability, and not according to any certainty in himself. But his counsel is stable in the midst of multitudes of free devices in the heart of man (Proverbs 19:21), and knowing them all before, orders them to be subservient to his own stable counsel. If he cannot know what to-morrow will bring forth in the mind of a man, how can he certainly settle his own determination of governing him? His decrees and resolves must be temporal, and arise *pro re nata*, and he must always be in counsel what he should do upon every change of men's minds. This is an unworthy conceit of the infinite majesty of heaven, to make his government depend upon the resolves of men, rather than their resolves upon the design of God.

2. It is therefore certain, that God doth foreknow the free and voluntary acts of man. How could he else order his people to ask of him things to come, in order to their deliverance, such things as depended upon the will of man, if he foreknew not the motions of their will (Isaiah 45:11)?

(1.) Actions good or indifferent depending upon the liberty of man's will as much as any whatsoever. Several of these he hath foretold; not only a person to build up Jerusalem was predicted by him, but the name of that person, Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28). What is more contingent, or is more the effect of the liberty of man's will, than the names of their children? Was not the destruction of the Babylonish empire foretold, which Cyrus undertook, not by any compulsion, but by a free inclination and resolve of his own will? And was not the dismissal of the Jews into their own country a voluntary act in that conqueror? If you consider the liberty of man's will, might not Cyrus as well have continued their yoke, as have struck off their chains, and kept them captive, as well as dismissed them? Had it not been for his own interest, rather to have strengthened the fetters of so turbulent a people, who being tenacious of their religion and laws different from that professed by the whole world, were like to make disturbances more when they were linked in a

body in their own country, than when they were transplanted and scattered into the several parts of his empire? It was in the power of Cyrus (take him as a man) to choose one or the other; his interest invited him to continue their captivity, rather than grant their deliverance; yet God knew that he would willingly do this rather than the other; he knew this which depended upon the will of Cyrus; and why may not an infinite God foreknow the free acts of all men, as well as of one? If the liberty of Cyrus' will was no hindrance to God's certain and infallible foreknowledge of it, how can the contingency of any other thing be a hindrance to him? for there is the same reason of one and all; and his government extends to every village, every family, every person, as well as to kingdoms and nations. So God foretold, by his prophet, not only the destruction of Jeroboam's altar, but the name of the person that should be the instrument of it (1 Kings 13:2), and this about 300 years before Josiah's birth. It is a wonder that none of the pious kings of Judah, in detestation of idolatry, and hopes to recover again the kingdom of Israel, had in all that space named one of their sons by that name of Josiah, in hopes that that prophecy should be accomplished by him; that Manasseh only should do this, who was the greatest imitator of Jeroboam's idolatry among all the Jewish kings, and indeed went beyond them; and had no mind to destroy in another kingdom what he propagated in his own. What is freer than the imposition of a name? yet this he foreknew, and this Josiah was Manasseh's son (2 Kings 21:26). Was there anything more voluntary than for Pharaoh to honor the butler by restoring him to his place, and punish the baker by hanging him on a gibbet? yet this was foretold (Genesis 40:8). And were not all the voluntary acts of men, which were the means of Joseph's advancement, foreknown by God, as well as his exaltation, which was the end he aimed at by those means? Many of these may be reckoned up. Can all the free acts of man surmount the infinite capacity of the Divine understanding? If God singles out one voluntary action in man as contingent as any, and lying among a vast number of other designs and resolutions, both antecedent and subsequent, why should he not know the whole mass of men's thoughts and actions, and pierce into all that the liberty of man's will can effect? why should he not know every grain, as well as one that lies in the midst of many of the same kind? And since the Scripture gives so large an account of contingents, predicted by God, no man can certainly prove that anything is unforeknown to him. It is as reasonable to think he knows every contingent, as that he knows some that he as much hid from the eye of any creature, since there is no more difficulty to an infinite understanding to know all, than to know some. [Note: The Stoics, that thought their souls to be some particle of God $\text{Αποσπ}\blacksquare\text{σμα}\tau\alpha$, pieces pulled off from him, did conclude from thence that he knew all the motions of their souls as his own mover, as things coherent with him. Arrian Epictet. lib. 1. cap. 14. p. 60.] Indeed, if we deny God's foreknowledge of the voluntary actions of men, we must strike ourselves off from the belief of scripture predictions that yet remain unaccomplished, and will be brought about by the voluntary engagements of men, as the ruin of antichrist, &c. If God foreknows not the secret motions of man's will, how can he foretel them? if we strip him of this perfection of prescience, why should we believe a word of scripture predictions? all the credit of the word of God is torn up by the roots. If God were uncertain of such events, how can we reconcile God's declaration of them to his truth; and his demanding our belief of them to his goodness? Were it good and righteous in God to urge us to the belief of that he were uncertain of himself, how could he be true in predicting things he were not sure of? or good, in requiring credit to be given to that which might be false? This would necessarily follow, if God did not foreknow the motions of men's wills, whereby many of his predictions were fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished.

(2.) God foreknows the voluntary sinful motions of men's wills. First, God had foretold several of them. Were not all the minute sinful circumstances about the death of our blessed Redeemer, as the piercing him, giving him gall to drink, foretold, as well as the not breaking his bones, and parting his garments? What were those but the free actions of men, which they did willingly without any constraint? and those foretold by David, Isaiah, and other prophets; some above a thousand, some eight hundred, and some more, some fewer years before they came to pass; and the events punctually answered the prophesies. Many sinful acts of men, which depended upon their free will, have been foretold. The Egyptians' voluntary oppressing Israel (Genesis 15:13); Pharaoh's hardening his heart against the voice of Moses (Exodus 3:19); that Isaiah's message would be in vain to the people (Isaiah 6:9); that the Israelites would be rebellious after Moses' death, and turn idolaters (Deuteronomy 31:16); Judas' betraying of our Saviour, a voluntary action (John 6:1-71. ult.); he was not forced to do what he did, for he had some kind of repentance for it; and not violence, but voluntariness falls under repentance. Second, His truth had depended upon this foresight. Let us consider that in Genesis 15:16, "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again;" that is, the posterity of Abraham shall come into Canaan, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. [Note: Vid Rivet. in loc. exerci. 86. p. 329.] God makes a promise to Abraham, of giving his posterity the land of Canaan, not presently, but in the fourth generation; if the truth of God be infallible in the performance of his promise, his understanding is as infallible in the foresight of the Amorites' sin; the fullness of their iniquity was to precede the Israelites' possession. Did the truth of God depend upon an uncertainty? did he make the promise hand over head (as we say)? How could he, with any wisdom and truth, assure Israel of the possession of the land in the fourth generation, if he had not been sure that the Amorites would fill up the measure of their iniquities by that time? If Abraham had been a Socinian, to deny God's knowledge of the free acts of men, had he not a fine excuse for unbelief? What would his reply have been to God? Alas, Lord, this is not a promise to be relied upon, the Amorites' iniquity depends upon the acts of their free will, and such thou canst have no knowledge of; thou canst see no more than a likelihood of their iniquity being full, and therefore there is but a likelihood of thy performing thy promise, and not a certainty! Would not this be judged not only, a saucy, but a blasphemous answer? And upon these principles the truth of the most faithful God had been dashed to uncertainty and a peradventure. Third, God provided a remedy for man's sin, and therefore foresaw the entrance of it into the world by the fall of Adam. He had a decree before the foundation of the world, to manifest his wisdom in the gospel by Jesus Christ, an "eternal purpose in Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:11), and a decree of election past before the foundation of the world;—a separation of some to redemption, and forgiveness of sin in the blood of Christ, in whom they were from eternity chosen, as well as in time accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 1:6-7), which is called a "purpose in himself" (ver. 9); had not sin entered, there had been no occasion for the death of the Son of God, it being everywhere in Scripture laid upon that score;—a decree for the shedding of blood, supposed a decree for the permission of sin, and a certain foreknowledge of God, that it would be committed by man. An uncertainty of foreknowledge, and a fixedness of purpose, are not consistent in a wise man, much less in the only wise God. God's purpose to manifest his wisdom to men and angels in this way might have been defeated, had God had only a conjectural foreknowledge of the fall of man; and all those solemn purposes of displaying his perfections in those methods had been to no purpose; [Note: Mare. cont. Volkel. lib. 1. cap. 24. p. 343.] the provision of a remedy supposed a certainty of the disease. If a sparrow fall

not to the ground without the will of God, how much less could such a deplorable ruin fall upon mankind, without God's will permitting it, and his knowledge foreseeing it? It is not hard to conceive how God might foreknow it? [Note: Amyrald. de Prædestin. cap. 6.] he indeed decreed to create man in an excellent state; the goodness of God could not but furnish him with a power to stand; yet in his wisdom he might foresee that the devil would be envious to man's happiness, and would, out of envy, attempt his subversion. As God knew of what temper the faculties were he had endued man with, and how far they were able to endure the assaults of a temptation, so he also foreknew the grand subtelties of Satan, how he would lay his mine, and to what point he would drive his temptation; how he would propose and manage it, and direct his battery against the sensitive appetite, and assault the weakest part of the fort; might he not foresee that the efficacy of the temptation would exceed the measure of the resistance; cannot God know how far the malice of Satan would extend, what shots he would, according to his nature, use, how high he would charge his temptation without his powerful restraint, as well as an engineer judge how many shots of a cannon will make a breach in a town, and how many casks of powder will blow up a fortress, who never yet built the one, nor founded the other? We may easily conclude God could not be deceived in the judgment of the issue and event, since he knew how far he would let Satan loose, how far he would permit man to act; and since he dives to the bottom of the nature of all things, he foresaw that Adam was endued with an ability to stand; as he foresaw that Benhadad might naturally recover of his disease; but he foresaw also that Adam would sink under the allurements of the temptation, as he foresaw that Hamel would let Benhadad live (2 Kings 8:10). Now since the whole race of mankind lies in corruption, and is subject to the power of the devil (1 John 3:18), may not God, that knows that corruption in every man's nature, and the force of every man's spirit, and what every particular nature will incline him to upon such objects proposed to him, and what the reasons of the temptation will be, know also the issues? is there any difficulty in God's foreknowing this, since man knowing the nature of one he is well acquainted with, can conclude what sentiments he will have, and how he will behave himself upon presenting this or that object to him? If a man that understands the disposition of his child or servant, knows before what he will do upon such an occasion, may not God much more, who knows the inclinations of all his creatures, and from eternity run with his eyes over all the works he intended? Our wills are in the number of causes; and since God knows our wills, as causes, better than we do ourselves, why should he be ignorant of the effects? God determines to give grace to such a man, not to give it to another, but leave him to himself, and suffer such temptations to assault him; now God knowing the corruption of man in the whole mass, and in every part of it, is it not easy for him to foreknow what the future actions of the will will be, when the tinder and fire meet together, and how such a man will determine himself, both as to the substance and manner of the action? Is it not easy for him to know how a corrupted temper and a temptation will suit? God is exactly privy to all the gall in the hearts of men, and what principles they will have, before they have a being. He "knows their thoughts afar off" (Psalms 139:2), as far off as eternity, as some explain the words, and thoughts are as voluntary as anything; he knows the power and inclinations of men in the order of second causes; he understands the corruption of men, as well as "the poison of dragons, and the venom of asps;" this is "laid up in store with him, and sealed among his treasures" (Deuteronomy 32:33-34): among the treasures of his foreknowledge, say some. What was the cruelty of Hazael, but a free act? yet God knew the frame of his heart, and what acts of murder and oppression would spring from that bitter fountain, before Hazael had conceived them in himself (2 Kings 8:12),

as a man that knows the minerals through which the waters pass, may know what relish they will have before they appear above the earth, so our Saviour knew how Peter would deny him; he knew what quantity of powder would serve for such a battery, in what measure he would let loose Satan, how far he would leave the reins in Peter's hands, and then the issue might easily be known; and so in every act of man, God knows in his own will what measure of grace he will give, to determine the will to good, and what measure of grace he will withdraw from such a person, or not give to him; and, consequently, how far such a person will fall or not. God knows the inclinations of the creature; he knows his own permissions, what degrees of grace he will either allow him, or keep from him, according to which will be the degree of his sin. This may in some measure help our conceptions in this, though, as was said before, the manner of God's foreknowledge is not so easily explicable.

(3.) God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions doth not necessitate the will of man. The foreknowledge of God is not deceived, nor the liberty of man's will diminished. I shall not trouble you with any school distinctions, but be as plain as I can, laying down several propositions in this case.

Prop. I. It is certain all necessity doth not take away liberty, indeed a compulsive necessity takes away liberty, but a necessity of immutability removes not liberty from God; why should, then, a necessity of infallibility in God remove liberty from the creature? God did necessarily create the world, because he decreed it; yet freely, because his will from eternity stood to it, he freely decree it and freely created it, as the apostle saith in regard of God's decrees, "Who hath been his counsellor" (Romans 11:34)? so in regard of his actions I may say, Who hath been his compeller? he freely decreed, and he freely created. Jesus Christ necessarily took our flesh, because he had covenanted with God so to do, yet he acted freely and voluntarily according to that covenant, otherwise his death had not been efficacious for us. A good man doth naturally, necessarily, love his children, yet voluntarily: it is part of the happiness of the blessed to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if it were done by compulsion. What is done by force cannot be called felicity, because there is no delight or complacency in it; and, though the blessed love God freely, yet, if there were a possibility of change, it would not be their happiness, their blessedness would be damped by their fear of falling from this love, and consequently from their nearness to God, in whom their happiness consists: God foreknows that they will love him forever, but are they therefore compelled forever to love him? If there were such a kind of constraint, heaven would be rendered burdensome to them, and so no heaven. Again, God's foreknowledge of what he will do, doth not necessitate him to do: he foreknew that he would create a world, yet he freely created a world. God's foreknowledge doth not necessitate himself; why should it necessitate us more than himself? We may instance in ourselves: when we will a thing, we necessarily use our faculty of will; and when we freely will any thing, it is necessary that we freely will; but this necessity doth not exclude, but include, liberty; or, more plainly, when a man writes or speaks, whilst he writes or speaks, those actions are necessary, because to speak and be silent, to write and not to write, at the same time, are impossible; yet our writing or speaking doth not take away the power not to write or to be silent at that time if a man would be so; for he might have chose whether he would have spoke or writ. So there is a necessity of such actions of man, which God foresees; that is, a necessity of infallibility, because God cannot be deceived, but not a coactive necessity, as if they were compelled by God to act thus or thus.

Prop. II. No man can say in any of his voluntary actions that he ever found any force upon him. When any of us have done anything according to our wills, can we say we could not have done the contrary to it? were we determined to it in our own intrinsic nature, or did we not determine ourselves? did we not act either according to our reason, or according to outward allurements? did we find anything without us, or within us, that did force our wills to the embracing this or that? Whatever action you do, you do it because you judge it fit to be done, or because you will do it. What, though God foresaw that you would do so, and that you would do this or that, did you feel any force upon you? did you not act according to your nature? God foresees that you will eat or walk at such a time; do you find anything that moves you to eat, but your own appetite? or to walk, but your own reason and will? If prescience had imposed any necessity upon man, should we not probably have found some kind of plea from it in the mouth of Adam? he knew as much as any man ever since knew of the nature of God, as discoverable in creation; he could not in innocence fancy an ignorant God, a God that know nothing of future things; he could not be so ignorant of his own action, but he must have perceived a force upon his will, had there been any; had he thought that God's prescience imposed any necessity upon him, he would not have omitted the plea, especially when he was so daring as to charge the providence of God in the gift of the woman to him, to be the cause of his crime. (Genesis 3:12) How come his posterity to invent new charges against God, which their father Adam never thought of, who had more knowledge than all of them? He could find no cause of his sin but the liberty of his own will; he charges it, not upon any necessity from the devil, or any necessity from God; nor doth he allege the gift of the woman as a necessary cause of his sin, but an occasion of it, by giving the fruit to him. Judas knew that our Saviour did foreknow his treachery, for he had told him of it in the hearing of his disciples (John 13:21-26), yet he never charged the necessity of his crime upon the foreknowledge of his Master; if Judas had not done it freely, he had had no reason to repent of it; his repentance justifies Christ from imposing any necessity upon him by that foreknowledge. No man acts anything, but he can give an account of the motives of his action; he cannot father it upon a blind necessity; the will cannot be compelled, for then it would cease to be the will: God doth not root up the foundations of nature, or change the order of it, and make men unable to act like men, that is, as free agents. God foreknows the actions of irrational creatures; this concludes no violence upon their nature, for we find their actions to be according to their nature, and spontaneous.

Prop. III. God's foreknowledge is not, simply considered, the cause of anything. It puts nothing into things, but only beholds them as present, and arising from their proper causes. The knowledge of God is not the principle of things, or the cause of their existence, but directive of the action; nothing is because God knows it, but because God wills it, either positively or permissively; God knows all things possible; yet, because God knows them they are not brought into actual existence, but remain still only as things possible; knowledge only apprehends a thing, but acts nothing; it is the rule of acting, but not the cause of acting; the will is the immediate principle, and the power the immediate cause; to know a thing is not to do a thing, for then we may be said to do everything that we know: but every man knows those things which he never did, nor never will do; knowledge in itself is an apprehension of a thing, and is not the cause of it. A spectator of a thing is not the cause of that thing which he sees, that is, he is not the cause of it, as he beholds it. We see a man write, we know before that he will write at such a time; but this foreknowledge is not the cause of his writing. We see a man walk, but our vision of him brings no necessity of walking upon him; he was free to walk or not to walk. [Note: Rawley of the World, lib. i. cap. 1, see. 12.] We

foreknow that death will seize upon all men, we foreknow that the seasons of the year will succeed one another, yet is not our foreknowledge the cause of this succession of spring after winter, or of the death of all men, or any man? We see one man fighting with another; our sight is not the cause of that contest, but some quarrel among themselves, exciting their own passions. As the knowledge of present things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are acting, and present, so the knowledge of future things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are coming. We are certain there will be men in the world to-morrow, and that the sea will ebb and flow; but is this knowledge of ours the cause that those things will be so? I know that the sun will rise to-morrow, it is true that it shall rise; but it is not true that my foreknowledge makes it to rise. If a physician prognosticates, upon seeing the intemperances and debaucheries of men, that they will fall into such a distemper, is his prognostication any cause of their disease, or of the sharpness of any symptoms attending it? The prophet foretold the cruelty of Hazael before he committed it; but who will say that the prophet was the cause of his commission of that evil? And thus the foreknowledge of God takes not away the liberty of man's will, no more than a foreknowledge that we have of any man's actions takes away his liberty. We may upon our knowledge of the temper of a man, certainly foreknow, that if he falls into such company, and get among his cups; he will be drunk; but is this foreknowledge the cause that he is drunk? No; the cause is the liberty of his own will, and not resisting the temptation. God purposes to leave such a man to himself and his own ways; and man being so left, God foreknows what will be done by him according to that corrupt nature which is in him; though the decree of God of leaving a man to the liberty of his own will be certain, yet the liberty of man's will as thus left, is the cause of all the extravagances he doth commit. Suppose Adam had stood, would not God certainly have foreseen that he would have stood? yet it would have been concluded that Adam had stood, not by any necessity of God's foreknowledge, but by the liberty of his own will. Why should then the foreknowledge of God add more necessity to his falling than to his standing? And though it be said sometimes in Scripture, that such a thing was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," as John 12:38, "that the saving of Esaias might be fulfilled, Lord, who hath believed our report?" the word that doth not infer that the prediction of the prophet was the cause of the Jews' belief, but infers this, that the prediction was manifested to be true by their unbelief, and the event answered the prediction; this prediction was not the cause of their sin, but their foreseen sin was the cause of this prediction; and so the particle that is taken (Psalms 51:6), "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified," &c.; the justifying God was not the end and intent of the sin, but the event of it upon his acknowledgment. [Note: Rivet, in Isaiah 53:1. p. 16.]

Prop. IV. God foreknows things, because they will come to pass; but things are not future, because God knows them. Foreknowledge presupposeth the object which is foreknown; a thing that is to come to pass is the object of the Divine knowledge, but not the cause of the act of divine knowledge; and though the foreknowledge of God doth in eternity precede the actual presence of a thing which is foreseen as future, yet the future thing, in regard of its futurity, is as eternal as the foreknowledge of God: as the voice is uttered before it be heard, and a thing is visible before it be seen, and a thing knowable before it be known. But how comes it to be knowable to God? it must be answered, either in the power of God as a thing possible, or in the will of God as a thing future; he first willed, and then knew what he willed; he knew what he willed to effect, and he knew what he willed to permit; as he willed the death of Christ by a determinate counsel, and willed the permission of the Jew's sin, and the ordering of the malice of their nature to that end (Acts 2:22).

God decrees to make a rational creature, and to govern him by a law; God decrees not to hinder this rational creature from transgressing his law; and God foresees that what he would not hinder, would come to pass. Man did not sin because God foresaw him; but God foresaw him to sin, because man would sin. If Adam and other men would have acted otherwise, God would have foreknown that they would have acted well; God foresaw our actions because they would so come to pass by the motion of our freewill, which he would permit, which he would concur with, which he would order to his own holy and glorious ends, for the manifestation of the perfection of his nature. If I see a man lie in a sink, no necessity is inferred upon him from my sight to lie in that filthy place, but there is a necessity inferred by him that lies there, that I should see him in that condition if I pass by, and cast my eye that way.

Prop. V. God did not only foreknow our actions, but the manner of our actions. That is, he did not only know that we would do such actions, but that we would do them freely; he foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that; the knowledge of God takes not away the nature of things; though God knows possible things, yet they remain in the nature of possibility; and though God knows contingent things, yet they remain in the nature of contingencies; and though God knows free agents, yet they remain in the nature of liberty. God did not foreknow the actions of man, as necessary, but as free; so that liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge, than removed. God did not foreknow that Adam had not a power to stand, or that any man hath not a power to omit such a sinful action, but that he would not omit it. Man hath a power to do otherwise than that which God foreknows he will do. Adam was not determined by any inward necessity to fall, nor any man by any inward necessity to commit this or that particular sin; but God foresaw that he would fall, and fall freely; for he saw the whole circle of means and causes whereby such and such actions should be produced, and can be no more ignorant of the motions of our wills, and the manner of them, than an artificer can be ignorant of the motions of his watch, and how far the spring will let down the string in the space of an hour; he sees all causes leading to such events in their whole order, and how the free-will of man will comply with this, or refuse that; he changes not the manner of the creature's operation, whatsoever it be.

Prop. VI. But what if the foreknowledge of God, and the liberty of the will, cannot be fully reconciled by man? shall we therefore deny a perfection in God to support a liberty in ourselves? Shall we rather fasten ignorance upon God, and accuse him of blindness, to maintain our liberty? That God doth foreknow everything, and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain; but how fully to reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man. Some truths the disciples were not capable of bearing in the days of Christ; and several truths our understandings cannot reach as long as the world doth last; yet, in the mean time, we must, on the one hand, take heed of conceiving God ignorant, and on the other hand, of imagining the creature necessitated; the one will render God imperfect, and the other will seem to render him unjust, in punishing man for that sin which he could not avoid, but was brought into by a fatal necessity. God is sufficient to render a reason of his own proceedings, and clear up all at the day of judgment; it is a part of man's curiosity, since the fall, to be prying into God's secrets, things too high for him; whereby he singes his own wings, and confounds his own understanding. It is a cursed affectation that runs in the blood of Adam's posterity, to know as God, though our first father smarted and ruined his posterity in that attempt; the ways and knowledge of God are as much above our thoughts and conceptions as the heavens are above the earth (Isaiah 55:9), [Note: Daille, Melang. Part II. pp.

712, 725.] and so sublime, that we cannot comprehend them in their true and just greatness; his designs are so mysterious, and the ways of his conduct so profound, that it is not possible to dive into them. The force of our understandings is below his infinite wisdom, and therefore we should adore him with an humble astonishment, and cry out with the apostle (Romans 11:33): "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Whenever we meet with depths that we cannot fathom, let us remember that he is God, and we his creatures; and not be guilty of so great extravagance, as to think that a subject can pierce into all the secrets of a prince, or a work understand all the operations of the artificer. Let us only resolve not to fasten anything on God that is unworthy of the perfection of his nature, and dishonorable to the glory of his majesty; nor imagine that we can ever step out of the rank of creatures to the glory of the Deity, to understand fully everything in his nature. So much for the second general, what God knows.

III. The third is, how God knows all things. As it is necessary we should conceive God to be an understanding being, else he could not be God, so we must conceive his understanding to be infinitely more pure and perfect than ours in the act of it, else we liken him to ourselves, and debase him as low as his footstool. [Note: Maxim. Tyrius. Dissert. 1. pp. 9, 10.] As among creatures there are degrees of being and perfection, plants above earth and sand, because they have a power of growth, beasts above plants, because to their power of growth there is an addition of excellency of sense, rational creatures above beasts, because to sense there is added the dignity of reason. The understanding of man is more noble than all the vegetative power of plants, or the sensitive power of beasts: God therefore must be infinitely more excellent in his understanding, and therefore in the manner of it. As man differs from a beast in regard of his knowledge, so doth God also from man, in regard of his knowledge. As God therefore is in being and perfection, infinitely more above a man than a man is above a beast, the manner of his knowledge must be infinitely more above a man's knowledge, than the knowledge of a man is above that of a beast; our understanding can clasp an object in a moment that is at a great distance from our sense; our eye, by one elevated motion, can view the heavens; the manner of God's understanding must be unconceivably above our glimmerings; as the manner of his being is infinitely more perfect than all beings, so must the manner of his understanding be infinitely more perfect than all created understandings, [Note: Maimonides More Nevochim. Part III. c. 20. pp. 291–293.] Indeed, the manner of God's knowledge can no more be known by us than his essence can be known by us; and the same incapacity in man, which renders him unable to comprehend the being of God, renders him as unable to comprehend the manner of God's understanding. As there is a vast distance between the essence of God and our beings, so there is between the thoughts of God and our thoughts; the heavens are not so much higher than the earth, as the thoughts of God are above the thoughts of men, yea, and of the highest angel (Isaiah 55:8-9), yet though we know not the manner of God's knowledge, we know that he knows; as though we know not the infiniteness of God, yet we know that he is infinite. It is God's sole prerogative to know himself, what he is; and it is equally his prerogative to know how he knows; the manner of God's knowledge therefore must be considered by us as free from those imperfections our knowledge is encumbered with. In general, God doth necessarily know all things; he is necessarily omnipresent, because of the immensity of his essence; so he is necessarily omniscient, because of the infiniteness of his understanding. It is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will know all things, than whether he will be able to create all things; it is no more at the liberty of his will,

whether he will be omniscient, than whether he will be holy; he can as little be ignorant, as he can be impure; he knows not all things, because he will know them, but because it is essential to his nature to know them. In particular,

Prop. I. God knows by his own essence; that is, he sees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will; he knows them not by viewing the things, but by viewing himself; his own essence is the mirror and book, wherein he beholds all things that he doth ordain, dispose and execute; and so he knows all things in their first and original cause; which is no other than his own essence willing, and his own essence executing what he wills; he knows them in his power, as the physical principle; in his will, as the moral principle of things, as some speak. He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of understanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to assist us with images of things, and to our senses to convey them into our minds; God would then acquire a perfection from those things which are below himself, and an excellency from those things which are vile; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he understood by images drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be something in God which is not God, viz. the images of things drawn from outward objects: God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being; for to be understanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Besides, if God's knowledge of his creatures were derived from the creatures by the impression of anything upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, because from eternity there was no actual existence of anything but himself; and therefore there could not be any images shot out from anything, because there was not anything in being but God; as there is no principle of being to anything. but by his essence; so there is no principle of the knowledge of anything by himself but his essence; if the knowledge of God were distinct from his essence, his knowledge were not eternal, because there is nothing eternal but his essence. His understanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the same with his essence, because of the simplicity of his nature; God is not made up of various parts, one distinct from another, as we are, and therefore doth not understand by a part of himself, but by himself; so that to be, and to understand, is the same with God; his essence is not one thing, and the power whereby he understands another; he would then be compounded, and not be the most simple being. This is also necessary for the perfection of God; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reason, is a more noble way of knowing than knowledge by sense; so it is more excellent for God to know by his essence, than by anything without him, anything mixed with him; the first would render him dependent, and the other would demolish his simplicity. Again, the natures of all things are contained in God, not formally; for then the nature of the creatures would be God; but eminently, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Psalms 94:9.) He hath in himself eminently the beauty, perfection, life and vigor of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himself, but everything with some footsteps of himself in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been anything in them contrary to his own goodness; and therefore as his essence primarily represents itself, so it represents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the essence of God is eminently all things, so by understanding his essence, he eminently understands all things. [Note: Dionys.] And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himself, and

another knowledge of the creatures; but by knowing himself as the original and exemplary cause of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cause of; so that he knows all things, not by an understanding of them, but by an understanding of himself; by understanding his own power as the efficient of them, his own will as the orderer of them, his own goodness as the adorning and beautifier of them, his own wisdom as the disposer of them, and his own holiness, to which many of their actions are contrary. As he sees all things possible in his own power, because he is able to produce them; so he sees all things future in his own will, decreeing to effect them, if they be good, or decreeing to permit them if they be evil. [Note: Kendall against Goodwin of Foreknowledge.] In this class he sees what he will give being to, and what he will suffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himself, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures; he knows all things in himself. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be; he knows all things by one comprehension of the causes in himself.

Prop. II. God knows all things by one act of intuition. This the schools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other; for if he know by his own essence, he knows all things by one act, there would be otherwise a division in his essence, a first and a last, a nearness and a distance. As what he made, he made by one word; so what he sees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity: as he wills all things by one act of his will, so he knows all things by one act of his understanding: he knows not some things discursively from other things, nor knows one thing successively after another. As by one act he imparts essence to things; so by one act he knows the nature of things.

1. He doth not know by discourse, as we do;—that is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational conclusions and arguing one thing from another, and springing up various consequences from some principle assented to. But God stands in no need of reasonings; the making inferences and abstracting things, would be stains in the infinite perfection of God; here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the consequence and conclusion, till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and so he would have an ignorance, and then a knowledge; and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects; as it is in human understandings. But God knows all things before they did exist, and never was ignorant of them (Acts 15:18)

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as it doth in the way of human reasoning. [Note: Suarez. Vol. I. de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 2. pp. 133, 134.] Though, indeed, some make a virtual discourse in God; that is, though God hath a simple knowledge, yet it doth virtually contain a discourse by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power, he knows what things are possible to be made by him; and from the knowledge of himself, he passes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and because of our weakness they are apprehended as two distinct acts in God, one of which is the reason of another; as we say that one attribute is the reason of another; as his mercy may be said to be the reason of his patience; and his omnipresence to be the reason of the knowledge of present things done in the world. God, indeed, by one simple act, knows himself and the creatures; but when that act whereby he knows himself, is conceived by us

to pass to the knowledge of the creatures, we must not understand it to be a new act, distinct from the other; but the same act upon different terms or objects; such an order is in our understandings and conceptions, not in God's.

2. Nor doth he know successively as we do: that is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former; a knowledge of all things without discourse, is a knowledge without succession. [Note: Gamach in Aquin Q. 14. cap. 1. p. 113.] The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge doth not beget another; in regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another, one is the cause, the other is the effect; in the creatures there is such a succession, and God knows there will be such a succession; but there is no such order in God's knowledge, for he knows all those successions by one glance, without any succession of knowledge in himself. Man, in his view of things, must turn sometimes his body, sometimes only his eyes, he cannot see all the contents of a letter at once; and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he must turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and so spin out one thing after another by several acts and motions. We behold a great part of the sea at once, [Note: Epiphanius.] but not all the dimensions of it; for to know the length of the sea, we move our eyes one way; to see the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the depth of it, we have another motion of them. And when we cast our eyes up to heaven, we seem to receive in an instant, the whole extent of the hemisphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot distinctly view what we see in a lump, without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without succession of time. [Note: Amyrant, *Morale Chr ti*. Tom. III. p. 137.] And certainly the understanding of angels is bounded, according to the measure of their beings; so that it cannot extend itself at one time, to a quantity of objects, to make a distinct application of them, but the objects must present themselves one by one; but God is all eye, all understanding; as there is no succession in his essence, so there is none in his knowledge; his understanding in the nature and in the act, is infinite, as it is in the text. He therefore sees, eternally and universally, all things by one act, without any motion, much less various motions; the various changes of things, in their substance, qualities, places, and relations, withdraw not anything from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge; he doth not upon consideration of present things turn his mind from past; or when he beholds future things turn his mind from present; but he sees them not one after another, but all at once and all together; the whole circle of his own counsels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the centre of his will, to the circumference of his creatures; just as if a man were able in one moment to read a whole library; or, as if you should imagine a transparent crystal globe, hung up in the midst of a room, and so framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fretwork in the ceiling, the inlaid parts of the floor and the particular parts of the tapestry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once in it. As the sun by one light and heat frames sensible things, so God by one simple act knows all things; as he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a spiritual knowledge, so he knows many things by one knowledge (Hebrews 4:13): "All things are open and naked to him," more than any one thing can be to us; and therefore he views all things at once, as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the Father of lights, a God of infinite understanding, there is no variableness in his mind, nor any shadow of turning of his eye, as there is of ours, to behold various things (James 1:17); his knowledge being eternal, includes all times; there is nothing past or future with him, and therefore

he beholds all things by one and the same manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment. This must needs be so,

(1.) Because of the eminency of God. God is above all, and therefore cannot but see the motions of all. He that sits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, sees all things, all persons; by one aspect he comprehends the whole circle of the place; whereas, he that sits below, when he looks before, he cannot see things behind; God being above all, about all, in all, sees at once the motions of all. The whole world, in the eye of God, is less than a point that divides one sentence from another in a book; as a cypher, a "grain of dust" (Isaiah 40:15); so little a thing can be seen by man at once; and all things being as little in the eye of God, are seen at once by him. As all time is but a moment to his eternity, so all things are but as a point to the immensity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more ease than we can move or turn our eye.

(2.) Because all the perfections of knowing are united in God. [Note: Cusan. p. 646.] As particular senses are divided in man,—by one he sees, by another he smells, yet all those are united in one common sense, and this common sense comprehends all,—so the various and distinct ways of knowledge in the creatures are all eminently united in God. A man when he sees a grain of wheat, understands at once all things that can in time proceed from that seed; so God, by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which shall in time be unfolded by him. We have a shadow of this way of knowledge in our own understanding; the sense only perceives a thing present, and one object only proper and suitable to it; as the eye sees color, the ear hears sounds; we see this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the understanding abstracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree; and so in a manner beholds and understands all men at once, by understanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the sense and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaster perfection in the understanding of God. As to know, is simply better than not to know at all; so to know by one act comprehensive, is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by succession to receive information, and to have an increase or decrease of knowledge; to be like a bucket, always descending into the well, and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakness that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon one no more than upon another.

Prop. III. God knows all things independently. This is essential to an infinite understanding. He receives not his knowledge from anything without him; he hath no tutor to instruct him, or book to inform him: "Who hath been his counsellor?" saith the prophet (Isaiah 40:13); he hath no need of the counsels of others, nor of the instructions of others. This follows upon the first and second propositions; if he knows things by his essence, then, as his essence is independent from the creatures, so is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature; hath no species or pictures of things in his understanding, as we have; no beams from the creature strike upon him to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world; the earth sends not light to the sun, but the sun to the earth. Our knowledge, indeed, depends upon the object, but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will; we could not know creatures unless they were; but creatures could not be unless God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cause of his will, so nothing that he knows is the cause of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them: who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the dust is the cause that the foot stands in this or that particular place? If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the

existence of things did precede God's knowledge of them: to say that they are the cause of God's knowledge, is to say that God was not the cause of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power; he created he knew not what, till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependent upon them, it could not be eternal, but must have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer a date than since the nature of things was in actual existence; for whatsoever is a cause of knowledge, doth precede the knowledge it causes, either in order of time, or order of nature: temporal things, therefore, cannot be the cause of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, if his knowledge commenced with the existence of his works (Acts 15:18): if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive a knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things in wisdom (Psalms 104:24). How can this be imagined, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so before his knowledge, and therefore before his action. [Note: Bradward, lib. 1. cap. 15.] God would not then be the first in the order of knowing agents, because he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted; and so the creature which he made would be before the act of his understanding, whereby he knew what he made. Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the Divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himself; if his perfection in knowledge were gained from anything without himself and below himself; he would not be sufficient of himself, but be under an indigence, which wanted a supply from the things he had made, and could not be eternally perfect till he had created and seen the effects of his own power, goodness, and wisdom, to render him more wise and knowing in time than he was from eternity. Who can fancy such a God as this without destroying the Deity he pretends to adore? for if his understanding be perfected by something without him, why may not his essence be perfected by something without him; that, as he was made knowing by something without him, he might be made God by something without him? How could his understanding be infinite if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cause? Is the majesty of God to be debased to a mendicant condition, to seek for a supply from things inferior to himself? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly, should be assistant to the knowledge of God? that the most noble being should be perfected by things so vile; that the Supreme Cause of all things should receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his understanding, by the notion of things so mean? To conclude this particular, all things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himself and his own essence.

Prop. IV. God knows all things distinctly. His understanding is infinite in regard of clearness; "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (John 1:5); he sees not through a mist or cloud; there is no blemish in his understanding, no mote or beam in his eye, to render any thing obscure to him. Man discerns the surface and outside of things; little or nothing of the essence of things; we see the noblest thing but "as in a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12); the too great nearness, as well as the too great distance of a thing, hinders our sight; the smallness of a mote escapes our eye, and so our knowledge; also the weakness of our understanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confusedly: but God knows the forms and essence of things, every circumstance; nothing is so deep, but he sees to the bottom; he sees the mass, and sees the motes of beings; his understanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or

distracted with the variety of them; he discerns every thing infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge; what knowledge they had, was from him; he hath, therefore, infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. All things are open to him (Hebrews 4:13); the least fibre, in its nakedness and distinct frame, is transparent to him, as, by the help of glasses, the mouth, feet, hands, of a small insect, are visible to a man, which seem to the eye, without that assistance, one entire piece, not diversified into parts. All the causes, qualities, natures, properties of things, are open to him; "he brings out the host of heaven by number, and calleth them by names" (Isaiah 40:26); he numbers the hairs of our heads: what more distinct than number? Thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap; he knows, and none else can, every thing in its true and intimate causes, in its original and intermediate causes; in himself, as the cause of every particular of their being, every property in their being. Knowledge by the causes is the most noble and perfect knowledge, and most suited to the infinite excellency of the Divine Being; he created all things, and ordered them to a universal and particular end; he, therefore, knows the essential properties of every thing, every activity of their nature, all their fitness for those distinct ends, to which he orders them, and for which he governs and disposeth them, and understands their darkest and most hidden qualities infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the sun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them distinctly, and therefore knows them distinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is said (Genesis 1:31) to see every thing that he had made; he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good. To pronounce that good, which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not consisted with his veracity; for every one that speaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he speaks truth, is a liar in speaking that which is true. God knows every act of his own will, whether it be positive or permissive, and therefore every effect of his will. We must needs ascribe to God a perfect knowledge; but a confused knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a heap is unworthy of the Divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows distinctly the means whereby he will bring them to those ends for which he hath appointed them: no wise man intends an end, without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance, then, of any thing in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a Divine end (and there is nothing in the world but doth), would be inconsistent with the perfection of God; it would ascribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and essence, so there can be nothing imperfect in his understanding and knowledge, and therefore not a confused knowledge, which is an imperfection. "Darkness and light are both alike to him" (Psalms 139:12); he sees distinctly into the one, as well as the other; what is darkness to us, is not so to him.

Prop. V. God knows all things infallibly. His understanding is infinite in regard of certainty; every tittle of what he knows is as far from failing as what he speaks; our Saviour affirms the one (Matthew 5:18), and there is the same reason of the certainty of one as well as the other; his essence is the measure of his knowledge; whence it is as impossible that God should be mistaken in the knowledge of the least thing in the world, as it is that he should be mistaken in his own essence; for, knowing himself comprehensively, he must know all others things infallibly; since he is essentially omniscient, he is no more capable of error in his understanding than of imperfection in his essence; his counsels are as unerring as his essence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his essence is free from defect. Again, since God knows all things with a knowledge of

vision, because he wills them, his knowledge must be as infallible as his purpose; now his purpose will certainly be effected "what he hath thought shall come to pass, and what he hath purposed shall stand" (Isaiah 14:24); "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). There may be interruptions of nature, the foundation of it may be out of course, but there can be no bar upon the Author of nature; he hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the resolves of his own will; he can effect what he pleases by a word. Speech is one of the least motions; yet when God said, "Let there be light, there was light" arising from darkness. No reason can be given why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be. Again, [Note: Saurez. Vol. II. p. 228.] the schools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived; for that is repugnant to their blessed state; for deceit is an evil and an imperfection inconsistent with that perfect blessedness the good angels are possessed of; and would it not much more be a stain upon the blessedness of that God, that is blessed forever, to be subject to deceit? His knowledge therefore is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the question proposed, rather than to the other. If things did not come to pass therefore as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and since he knows by his essence, his essence also would be imperfect, if God were exposed to any deceit in his knowledge; he knows by himself, who is the highest truth; and therefore it is impossible he should err in his understanding.

Prop. VI. God knows immutably. His understanding else could not be infinite; everything and every act that is mutable, is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. [Note: Tileni Syntagma, Part 1. Disp. 13. Thes. 14.] There is a change in the understanding, when we gain the knowledge of a thing, which was unknown to us before; or when we actually consider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it; or, when we know that distinctly, which we before knew confusedly. None of these can be ascribed to God without a manifest disparagement of his infiniteness. Our knowledge indeed is alway arriving to us or flowing from us; we pass from one degree to another; from worse to better, or from better to worse; but God loses nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain anything by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he would grow wiser than he was, he was not then perfectly wise before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the understanding exercised about them; the wheel moves round, the spokes that are lowest are presently highest, and presently return to be low again; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motions of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increase or decrease, than his essence doth; since God knows by his essence, and the essence of God is God himself, his knowledge must be void of any change. The knowledge of possible things, arising from the knowledge of his own power, cannot be changed unless his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent; the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge ariseth from his will, which is irreversible, "the counsel of the Lord that shall stand" (Proverbs 19:21); so that if God can never decay into weakness, and never turn to inconstancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do; and both these being immutable, his knowledge must, consequently, be so too: It was not necessary that this or that creature should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature with a knowledge of vision; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue

unchangeable. God, therefore, knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world, he shall know no more than he doth now; and from eternity, he knows no less than he doth now, and shall do to eternity. Though things pass into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them,. for he knows them as well before they were, as when they are, and knows them as well when they are past, as when they are present.

Prop. VII. God knows all things perpetually, i. e, in act. Since he knows by his essence, he always knows, because his essence never ceaseth, but is a pure act; so that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men that have the knowledge of some art or science, have it always in habit, though when they are asleep they have it not in act: a musician hath the habit of music, but doth not so much as think of it when his senses are bound up. But God is an unsleepy eye; [Note: Plato, κοιμητος φθαλμις.] he never slumbers nor sleeps; he never slumbers, in regard of his providence, and therefore never slumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himself, nor any other creature more perfectly at one time than at another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the sun is in the act of shining; the sun never ceased to shine in one or other part of the world, since it was first fixed in the heavens; nor God to be in the act of knowledge, since he was God; and therefore since he always was, and always will be God, he always was and always will be in the act of knowledge; always knowing his own essence, he must always actually know what hath been gone and ceased from being, and what shall come and arise into being; as a watchmaker knows what watch he intends to make, and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces, or consumed by the fire, he still knows it, because he knows the copy of it in his own mind. Some, therefore, in regard of this perpetual act of the Divine knowledge, have called God not intellectus, but the intellection of intellections; we have no proper English word to express the act of the understanding; as his power is co-eternal with him, so is his knowledge; all times past, present, and to come, are embraced in the bosom of his understanding; he fixed all things in their seasons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old passes from him. [Note: Damianus.] What is done in a thousand years, is actually present with his knowledge, as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours; since a “thousand years are no more to God than a day,” or a “watch in the night” is to us (Psalms 90:4). God is in the highest degree of being, and therefore in the highest degree of understanding. Knowledge is one of the most perfect acts in any creature. God therefore hath all actual, as well as essential and habitual knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

IV. The fourth general is, Reasons to prove this.

Reason 1. God must know what any creature knows, and more than any creature knows. There is nothing done in the world but is known by some creature or other; every action is at least known by the person that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together; and every creature is known by him, since every creature is made by him. [Note: Gerhard.] And as God works all things by an infinite power, so he knows all things by an infinite understanding. First, the perfection of God requires this. [Note: Gamach in Aquin. Part 1. Q. 14, cap. 1. pp. 118, 119.] All perfections that include no essential defect, are formally in God; but knowledge includes no essential defeet in itself, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itself is desirable, and an excellency; ignorance is a defect; it is impossible that the least grain of defect can be found in the most perfect Being. Since God is wise, he must be knowing; for wisdom must have knowledge for the basis of it. A creature can no more be wise

without knowledge, than he can be active without strength. Now God is “only wise” (Romans 16:27); and, therefore, only knowing in the highest degree of knowledge, incomprehensibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, because infinite. Again, the more spiritual anything is, the more understanding it is. The dull body understands nothing; sense perceives, but the understanding faculty is seated in the soul, which is of a spiritual nature, which knows things that are present, remembers things that are past, foresees many things to come. What is the property of a spiritual nature, must be, in a most eminent manner, in the supreme spirit of the world; that is, in the highest degree of spirituality, and most remote from any matter. Again, nothing can enjoy other things, but by some kind of understanding them; God hath the highest enjoyment of himself, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them; nothing of perfection and blessedness can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not consist with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance: God, therefore, doth perfectly know himself, and all things from whence he designs any glory to himself. The most noble manner of acting must be ascribed to God, as being the most noble and excellent Being; to act by knowledge is the most excellent manner of acting; God hath, therefore, not only knowledge, but the most excellent manner of knowledge; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, so it is better to know in the most excellent manner, than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge; his knowledge, therefore, must be every way as perfect as his essence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature must have an infinite knowledge: a God ignorant of anything cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

Reason 2. All the knowledge in any creature is from God. And you must allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of any creature hath, come from God; and all the knowledge in every creature, that ever was, is, or shall be, in the whole mass, was derived from him. If all those several drops in particular creatures, were collected into one spirit, into one creature, it would be an unconceivable knowledge, yet still lower than what the Author of all that knowledge hath; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himself; nor is the creature capable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving so much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty, so it is incapable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God. Nothing can be made by God equal to him in anything; if anything could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cause of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have, is an argument God uses for the asserting the greatness of his own knowledge (Psalms 94:10): “He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know?” Man hath here knowledge ascribed to him; the author of this knowledge is God; he furnished him with it, and therefore doth in a higher manner possess it, and much more than can fall under the comprehension of any creature; as the sun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itself than it darts upon the earth or the heavens: and shall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehensive?

Reason 3. The accusations of conscience evidence God’s knowledge of all actions of his creatures. Doth not conscience check for the most secret sins, to which none are privy but a man’s self, the whole world beside being ignorant of his crime? Do not the fears of another Judge gall the heart? If a judgment above him be feared, an understanding above him. discerning their secrets is confessed by those fears; whence can those horrors arise, if there be not a superior that

understands and records the crime? What perfection of the Divine Being can this relate unto, but omniscience? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this? The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible, that there is One “greater than our hearts” in respect of knowledge, who “knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20). Conscience would be a vain principle, and stingless without this; it would be an easy matter to silence all its accusations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its severest frowns. What need any trouble themselves, if none knows their crimes but themselves? Concealed sins, gnawing the conscience, are arguments of God’s omniscience of all present and past actions.

Reason 4. God is the first cause of everything, every creature is his production. Since all creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, exist by the power of God, if God understands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him, that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him, that that power is able to produce. “If God knows nothing besides himself; he may then believe there is nothing besides himself; we shall then fancy a God miserably mistaken: if he knows nothing besides himself, then things were not created by him, or not understandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware.” [Note: Bradwardin, p. 6.] To think that the First Cause of all should be ignorant of those things he is the cause of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore necessary; and then that the creature came from him as light from the sun, and moisture from the water; this would be an absurd opinion of the world’s creation; if God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he must be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature, without that of understanding also. If God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge must extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unless we imagine God hath lost his memory, in that long tract of time since the first creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work: if God knows himself, he knows himself to be a cause; how can he know himself to be a cause, unless he know the effects he is the cause of? One relation implies another; a man cannot know himself to be a father, unless he hath a child, because it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cause is a name of relation, and implies an effect; if God therefore know himself in all his perfections, as the cause of things, he must know all his acts, what his wisdom contrived, what his counsel determined, and what his power effected. The knowledge of God is to be supposed in a free determination of himself; and that knowledge must be perfect, both of the object, act, and all the circumstances of it. How can his will freely produce anything that was not first known in his understanding? From this the prophet argues the understanding of God, and the unsearchableness of it, because he is the “Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28), and the same reason David gives of God’s knowledge of him, and of everything he did, and that afar off, because he was formed by him (Psalms 139:2; Psalms 139:15-16). As the perfect making of things only belongs to God: so doth the perfect knowledge of things; it is as absurd to think, that God should be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he should not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues; as that a man should not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Everything bears in itself the mark of God’s perfection; and shall not God know the representation of his own virtue?

Reason 5. Without this knowledge, God could no more be the Governor, than he could be the Creator of the world. Knowledge is the basis of providence; to know things, is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing

could be directed to its proper end, without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its suitableness to answer that end for which it is intended. As everything, even the minutest, falls under the conduct of God, so everything falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horses, and direct them in right paths: since the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge must be about particulars; he could not else govern them in particular; nor could all things be said to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exercise of it upon the goodness of God; it cannot be without understanding and will; understanding, to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore speaks of providence, he intimates these two in a special manner, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things" (Matthew 6:32), and goodness, in Luke 11:13. The reason of providence is so joined with omniscience, that they cannot be separated. What a kind of God would he be that were ignorant of those things that were governed by him! The ascribing this perfection to him, asserts his providence; for it is as easy for one that knows all things, to look over the whole world, if writ with monosyllables, in every little particular of it; as it is with a man to take a view of one letter in an alphabet. Again, if God were not omniscient, how could he reward the good, and punish the evil? the works of men are either rewardable or punishable; not only according to their outward circumstances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. [Note: Sabund. Tit. 84. much changed.] The exact discerning of these, without a possibility to be deceived, is necessary to pass a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the censure and punishment to the crime: without such a knowledge and discerning, men would not have their due; nay, a judgment just for the matter, would be unjust in the manner, because unjustly past, without an understanding of the merit of the cause. It is necessary, therefore that the Supreme Judge of the world should not be thought to be blindfold, when he distributes his rewards and punishments, and muffle his face when he passes his sentence. It is necessary to ascribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions; the secret wills and aims; the hidden works of darkness in every man's conscience, because every man's work is to be measured by the will and inward frame. It is necessary that he should perpetually retain all those things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a just proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God, to discover the secrets of all hearts at last, as 1 Corinthians 4:5, "The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God." This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reason why the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, is because God knows their ways, which is implied in his knowing the way of the righteous (Psalms 1:5-6). I now proceed to the use.

Use I. is of information or instruction. If God hath all knowledge; then,

Instruct 1. Jesus Christ is not a mere creature. The two titles of wonderful Counsellor, and mighty God, are given him in conjunction (Isaiah 9:6), not only the Angel of the covenant, as he is called (Malachi 3:1), or the executor of his counsels, but a counsellor, in conjunction with him in counsel as well as power: this title is superior to any title given to any of the prophets in regard of their predictions; and therefore I should take it rather as the note of his perfect understanding, than of his perfect teaching and discovering; as Calvin doth. He is not only the revealer of what he knows, so were the prophets according to their measures; but the counsellor of what he revealed, having a perfect understanding of all the counsels of God, as being interested in them, as the mighty God.

He calls himself by the peculiar title of God, and declares that he will manifest himself by this prerogative to all the churches (Revelation 2:23): "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts," the most hidden operations of the minds of men, that lie locked up from the view of all the world besides. And this was no new thing to Him, after his ascension; for the same perfection he had in the time of his earthly flesh (Luke 6:8), he knew their thoughts; his eyes are therefore compared (Song of Solomon 5:12) to doves' eyes, which are clear and quick; and to a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14), not only heat to consume his enemies, but light to discern their contrivances against the church; he pierceth by his knowledge, into all parts, as fire pierceth into the closest particle of iron, and separates between the most united parts of metals; and some tell us, he is called a Roe, from the perspicacity of his sight, as well as from the swiftness of his motion.

1. He hath a perfect knowledge of the Father; he knows the Father, and none else knows the Father; angels know God, men know God, but Christ in a peculiar manner knows the Father; no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son (Matthew 11:27); he knows so, as that he learns not from any other; he doth perfectly comprehend him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue; not because of any incapacity in God to reveal, but the incapacity of the creature to receive; finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinite; so that Christ cannot be Deus factus, made of a creature a God, to comprehend God; for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, because he searches the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10), that is comprehends them, [Note: Petav. Theo. Dogmat. I. p. 467, &c.] as the spirit of a man doth the things of a man (now the spirit of man understands what it thinks, and what it wills), so the Spirit of God understands what is in the understanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an absolute knowledge ascribed to him, and such as could not be ascribed to anything but a divinity: now if the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and takes from Christ what he shows to us of him (John 16:15), he cannot be ignorant of those things himself; he must know the depths of God, that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counsels of the Father's will; since he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himself infinite; for God whose essence is infinite, is infinitely knowable; but no created understanding can infinitely know God. The infiniteness of the object hinders it from being understood by anything that is not infinite. Though a creature should understand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore said to understand God himself: as though I may understand all the volitions and motions of my soul, yet it doth not follow that therefore I understand the whole nature and substance of my soul; or if a man understood all the effects of the sun, that therefore he understands fully the nature of the sun. But Christ knows the Father, he lay in the bosom of the Father, was in the greatest intimacy with him (John 1:18), and from this intimacy with him, he saw him and knew him; so he knows God as much as he is knowable; and therefore knows him perfectly as the Father knows himself by a comprehensive vision; this is the knowledge of God wherein properly the infiniteness of his understanding appears: and our Saviour uses such expressions which manifest his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and such a manner of knowledge of the Father, as the Father hath of him.

2. Christ knows all creatures. That knowledge which comprehends God, comprehends all created things as they are in God; it is a knowledge that sinks to the depths of his will, and therefore

extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence; by knowing the Father he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power, and will of God; “whatsoever the Father doth, that the Son doth” (John 5:19.) As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cause of, so doth the Son know all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, so doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the same, the knowledge is the same. Now the Father did not create one thing and Christ another; “but all things were created by him, and for him, all things both in heaven and earth” (Colossians 1:16): as he knows himself as the cause of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him; he knows all creatures in God, as he knows the essence of God, and knows all creatures in themselves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power; those things must be in his knowledge that were in his power; all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God are hid in him (Colossians 2:3). Now it is not the wisdom of God to know in part, and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of anything, since there is nothing but what was made by him (John 1:3), and since it is less to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. I. p. 467.] If he be the Creator, he cannot but be the discernor of what he made; this is a part of wisdom belonging to an artificer, to know the nature and quality of what he makes. Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furnished with being, and with various endowments, he must know them not only universally, but particularly.

3. Christ knows the heart and affections of men. Peter scruples not to ascribe to him this knowledge, among the knowledge of all other things (John 21:17). “Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” From Christ’s knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and dispositions of men. To search the heart is the sole prerogative of God (1 Kings 8:39), for thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men: shall we take only here with a limitation, as some that are no friends to the Deity of Christ would, and say, God only knows the hearts of men from himself, and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take only in other places with a limitation, and make nonsense of it, as Psalms 86:10, “Thou art God alone.” Is it to be understood that God is God alone from himself, but other gods may be made by him, and so there may be numberless infinities? As God is God alone, so that none can be God but himself; so he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his nature. The reason why God knows the hearts of men, is rendered in the Scripture double, because he created them, and because he is present everywhere (Psalms 33:13; Psalms 33:15), [Note: Placæus de Deitate Christi.] these two are by the confession of Christians and Pagans universally received as the proper characters of divinity, whereby the Deity is distinguished from all creatures. Now when Christ ascribes this to himself, and that with such an emphasis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth (Revelation 2:23), we must conclude that he is of the same essence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men; there is the unity of God: Christ searches the hearts and reins; there is a distinction of persons in a oneness of essence; he knows the hearts of all men, not only of those that were with him in the time of the flesh, that have been, and shall be, since his ascension; but of those that lived and died before his coming; because he is to be the Judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth, as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him, as a Judge, to know distinctly the merits of the cause of which he is to judge; and this excellency of searching the hearts is mentioned by

himself with relation to his judicial proceeding, “I will give to every one of you according to your works.” And though a creature may know what is in a man’s heart, if it be revealed to him, yet such a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inspection; yet this latter is ascribed to Christ (John 2:24-25): “he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man:” he looked into their hearts. The Evangelist, to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour’s knowledge of the inward falsity of those that made a splendid profession of him, doth not say the Father revealed it to him, but intimates it to be an unseparable property of his nature. No covering was so thick as to bound his eye; no pretence so glittering as to impose upon his understanding. Those that made a profession of him, and could not be discerned by the eye of man from his faithfulest attendants, were in their inside known to him plainer than their outside was to others; and, therefore, he committed not himself to them, though they seemed to be persuaded to a real belief in his name, because of the power of his miracles, and were touched with an admiration of him, as some great prophet, and, perhaps, declared him to be the Messiah (John 2:23)

4. He had a foreknowledge of the particular inclinations of men, before those distinct inclinations were in actual being in them. This is plainly asserted, John 6:64 : “But there are some of you that believe not; for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.” When Christ assured them, from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that some of them were void of that faith they professed, the Evangelist, to stop their amazement that Christ should have such a power and virtue, adds, that he “knew from the beginning;” that he had not only a present knowledge, but a foreknowledge, of every one’s inclination; he knew, not only now and then what was in the hearts of his disciples, but from the beginning, of any one’s giving up their names to him; he knew whether it were a pretence or sincere; he knew who should betray him; and there was no man’s inward affection but was foreseen by him. [Note: Εξ ἀρχῆς] “From the beginning,” whether we understand it from the beginning of the world, as when Christ saith, concerning divorces, “From the beginning it was not so,” that is, from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature; or, from the beginning of their attending him, as it is taken, Luke 1:2; he had a certain prescience of the inward dispositions of men’s hearts, and their succeeding sentiments; he foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midst of his splendid profession, and discerned his resolution in the root, and his thought in the confused chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would spring up before it did spring up, before Judas had any distinct and formal conception of it himself, or before there was any actual preparation to a resolve. Peter’s denial was not unknown to him, when Peter had a present resolution, and no question spake it in the present sincerity of his soul, “never to forsake him;” he foreknew what would be the result of that poison which lurked in Peter’s nature, before Peter himself imagined anything of it; he discerned Peter’s apostatizing heart, when Peter resolved the contrary: our Saviour’s prediction was accomplished, and Peter’s valiant resolution languished into cowardice. Shall we then conclude our blessed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures; who had all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge who knew the inward motions of men’s hearts by his own virtue, and had, not only a present knowledge, but a prescience of them?

Instruct. 2. The second instruction from this position, That God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. Then there is a providence exercised by God in the world, and that about everything. As providence infers omniscience as the guide of it, so omniscience infers providence

as the end of it. What exercise would there be of this attribute, but in the government of the world? To this, this infinite perfection refers (Jeremiah 17:10), "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." He searches the heart to reward, he rewards every man according to the rewardableness of his actions; his government, therefore, extends to every man in the world; there is no heart but he searches, therefore no heart but he governs; to what purpose, else, would be this knowledge of all his creatures? for a mere contemplation of them? No. What pleasure can that be to God, who knows himself, who is infinitely more excellent than all his creatures? Doth he know them to neglect all care of them? this must be either out of sloth; but how incompatible is laziness to a pure and infinite activity! or out of majesty; but it is no less for the glory of his majesty to conduct them, than it was for the glory of his power to erect them into being. He that counts nothing unworthy of his arms to make, nothing unworthy of his understanding to know, why should he count anything unworthy of his wisdom to govern? If he knows them to neglect them, it must be because he hath no will to it, or no goodness for it; either of these would be a stain upon God; to want goodness is to be evil, and to want will is to be negligent and scornful, which are inconsistent with an infinite, active goodness. Doth a father neglect providing for the wants of the family which he knows? or a physician, the cure of that disease he understands? God is omniscient, he therefore sees all things; he is good, he doth not therefore neglect anything, but conducts it to the end he appointed it. There is nothing so little that can escape his knowledge, and therefore nothing so little but falls under his providence; nothing so sublime as to be above his understanding, and therefore nothing can be without the compass of his conduct; nothing can escape his eye, and therefore nothing can escape his care; nothing is known to him in vain, as nothing was made by him in vain; there must be acknowledged, therefore, some end of this knowledge of all his creatures.

Instruct. 3. Hence, then, will follow the certainty of a day of judgment. To what purpose can we imagine this attribute of omniscience, so often declared and urged in Scripture to our consideration, but in order to a government of our practice, and a future trial? Every perfection of the Divine nature hath sent out brighter rays in the world than this of his infinite knowledge. His power hath been seen in the being of the world, and his wisdom in the order and harmony of the creatures; his grace and mercy hath been plentifully poured out in his mission of a Redeemer, and his justice hath been elevated by the dying groans of the Son of God upon the cross. But hath his omniscience yet met with a glory proportionable to that of his other perfections? All the attributes of God that have appeared in some beautiful glimmerings in the world, wait for a more full manifestation in glory, as the creatures do for the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19); but especially this, since it hath been less evidenced than others, and as much, or more, abused than any; it expects, therefore, a public righting in the eye of the world. There have been, indeed, some few sparks of this perfection sensibly struck out now and then in the world in some horrors of conscience, which have made men become their own accusers of unknown crimes, in bringing out hidden wickedness to a public view by various providences. This hath also been the design of sprinklings of judgments upon several generations, as (Psalms 90:8), "We are consumed by thy anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled; thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." The word ■■■■■ signifies youth, as well as secret, i. e., sins committed long ago, and that with secrecy. By this he hath manifested that secret sins are not hid from his eye. Though inward terrors and outward judgments have been let loose to worry men into a belief of this, yet the corruptions of men would still keep a contrary notion in their

minds, that "God hath forgotten, that he hides his face from transgression, and will not regard their impiety" (Psalms 10:11). There must, therefore, be a time of trial for the public demonstration of this excellency, that it may receive its due honor, by a full testimony that no secrecy can be a shelter from it. As his justice, which consists in giving every one his due, could not be glorified, unless men were called to an account for their actions, so neither would his omniscience appear in its illustrious colors, without such a manifestation of the secret motions of men's hearts, and of villanies done under lock and key, when none were conscious to them, but the committers of them. Now the last judgment is the time appointed for the "opening of the books" (Daniel 7:10). The book of God's records, and conscience the counterpart, were never fully opened and read before, only now and then some pages turned to, in particular judgments; and out of those "books shall men be judged according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). Then shall the defaced sins be brought, with all their circumstances, to every man's memory; the counsels of men's hearts fled far from their present remembrance, all the habitual knowledge they had of their own actions, shall, by God's knowledge of them, be excited to an actual review; and their works not only made manifest to themselves, but notorious to the world: all the words, thoughts, deeds of men, shall be brought forth into the light of their own minds by the infinite light of God's understanding reflecting on them. His knowledge renders him an unerring witness, as well as his justice "a swift witness" (Malachi 3:5); a swift witness, because he shall, without any circuit, or length of speech, convince their consciences, by an inward illumination of them, to take notice of the blackness and deformity of their hearts and works. In all judgments God is somewhat known to be the searcher of hearts; the time of judgment is the time of his remembrance (Hosea 8:13): "Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;" but the great instant, or now, of the full glorifying it, is the grand day of account. This attribute must have a time for its full discovery; and no time can be fit for it but a time of a general reckoning. Justice cannot be exercised without omniscience; for as justice is a giving to every one his due, so there must be knowledge to discern what is due to every man; the searching the heart is in order to the rewarding the works.

Instruct 4. This perfection in God gives us ground to believe a resurrection. Who can think this too hard for his power, since not the least atom of the dust of our bodies can escape his knowledge? An infinite understanding comprehends every mite of a departed carcase; this will not appear impossible, nor irrational, to any, upon a serious consideration, of this excellency in God. The body is perished, the matter of it hath been since clothed with different forms and figures; part of it hath been made the body of a worm, part of it returned to the dust that hath been blown away by the wind; part of it hath been concocted in the bodies of canibals, fish, ravenous beasts; the spirits have evaporated into air, part of the blood melted into water; what, then, is the matter of the body annihilated? is that wholly perished? no; the foundation remains, though it hath put on a variety of forms; the body of Abel, the first man that died, nor the body of Adam, are not, to this day, reduced to nothing; indeed, the quantity and the quality of those bodies have been lost by various changes they have past through since their dissolution; but the matter, or substance of them, remains entire, and is not capable to be destroyed by all those transforming alterations, in so long a revolution of time. The body of a man in his infancy and his old age, if it were Methuselah's, is the same in the foundation in those multitude of years; though the quantity of it be altered, the quality different; though the color and other things be changed in it, the matter of this body remains the same among all the alterations after death. And can it be so mixed with other natures and creatures, as that it is past finding out by an infinite understanding? Can any particle of this matter

escape the eye of Him that makes and beholds all those various alterations, and where every mite of the substance of those bodies is particularly lodged, so as that he cannot compact it together again for a habitation of that soul, that many a year before fled from it? [Note: Daille, Sermon. 15. pp. 21–24.] Since the knowledge of God is infinite, and his providence extensive over the least as well as the greatest parts of the world, he must needs know the least as well as the greatest of his creatures in their beginning, progress, and dissolution; all the forms through which the bodies of all creatures roll, the particular instants of time, and the particular place when and where those changes are made, they are all present with him; and, therefore, when the revolution of time allotted by him for the reunion of souls and deceased bodies is come, it cannot be doubted but, out of the treasures of his knowledge, he can call forth every part of the matter of the bodies of men, from the first to the last man that expired, and strip it of all those forms and figures which it shall then have, to compact it to be a lodging for that soul which before it entertained; and though the bodies of men have been devoured by wild beasts in the earth, and fish in the sea, and been lodged in the stomachs of barbarous men-eaters, the matter is not lost. There is but little of the food we take that is turned into the substance of our own bodies; that which is not proper for nourishment, which is the greatest part, is separated, and concocted, and rejected; whatsoever objections are made, are answered by this attribute. Nothing hinders a God of infinite knowledge from discerning every particle of the matter, wheresoever it is disposed; and since he hath an eye to discern, and a hand to recollect and unite, what difficulty is there in believing this article of the christian faith? he that questions this revealed truth of the resurrection of the body, must question God's omniscience as well as his omnipotence and power.

Instruct. 5. What semblance of reason is there to expect a justification in the sight of God by anything in ourselves? Is there any action done by any of us, but upon a scrutiny we may find flaws and deficiency in it? What then? shall not this perfection of God discern them? the notes that escape our eyes cannot escape his (1 John 3:20): "God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things;" so that it is in vain for any man to flatter himself with the rectitude of any work, or enter into any debate with him who can bring a thousand articles against us, out of his own infinite records, unknown to us, and unanswerable by us. If conscience, a representative or counterpart of God's omniscience in our own bosoms, find nothing done by us, but in a copy short of the original, and beholds, if not blurs, yet imperfections in the best actions, God must much more discern them; we never knew a copy equally exact with the original. If our own conscience be as a thousand witnesses, the knowledge of God is as millions of witnesses against us; if our corruption be so great, and our holiness so low, in our own eyes, how much greater must the one, and how much meaner must the other, appear in the eyes of God? God hath an unerring eye to see, as well as an unspotted holiness to hate, and an unbribable justice to punish; he wants no more understanding to know the shortness of our actions, than he doth holiness to enact, and power to execute, his laws; nay, suppose we could recollect many actions, wherein there were no spot visible to us, the consideration of this attribute should scare us from resting upon any or all of them, since it is the Lord that, by a piercing eye, sees and judges according to the heart, and not according to appearance. The least crookedness of a stick, not sensible to an acute eye, yet will appear when laid to the line; and the impurity of a counterfeit metal be manifest when applied to the touchstone; so will the best action of any mere man in the world, when it comes to be measured in God's knowledge by the straight line of his law. Let every, man, therefore, as Paul, though he should know nothing by himself, think not himself therefore justified; since it is the Lord, who is of an

infinite understanding, that judgeth (1 Corinthians 4:4). A man may be justified in his own sight, “but not any living man can be justified in the sight of God” (Psalms 143:2); in his sight, whose eye pierceth into our unknown secrets and frames: it was, therefore, well answered of a good man upon his death bed, being asked “What he was afraid of?” “I have labored,” saith he, “with all my strength to observe the commands of God; but since I am a man, I am ignorant whether my works are acceptable to God, since God judges in one manner, and I in another manner.” Let the consideration therefore of this attribute, make us join with Job in his resolution (Job 9:21): “Though we were perfect, yet would we not know our own souls.” I would not stand up to plead any of my virtues before God. Let us, therefore, look after another righteousness, wherein the exact eye of the Divine omniscience, we are sure, can discern no stain or crookedness.

Instruct. 6. What honorable and adoring thoughts ought we to have of God for this perfection! Do we not honor a man that is able to predict? do we not think it a great part of wisdom? Have not all nations regarded such a faculty as a character and a mark of divinity? There is something more ravishing in the knowledge of future things, both to the person that knows them, and the person that hears them, than there is in any other kind of knowledge; whence the greatest prophets have been accounted in the greatest veneration, and men have thought it a way to glory, to divine and predict. Hence it was that the devils and pagan oracles gained so much credit; upon this foundation were they established, and the enemies of mankind owned for a true God;—I say, from the prediction of future things, though their oracles were often ambiguous, many times false; yet those poor heathens framed many ingenious excuses to free their adored gods from the charge of falsity and imposture: and shall we not adore the true God, the God of Israel, the God blessed for ever, for this incommunicable property, whereby he flies above the wings of the wind, the understandings of men and cherubims? [Note: Sabuud. Theol. Natural. Tit. 84. somewhat changed.] Consider how great it is to know the thoughts and intentions, and works of one man, from the beginning to the end of his life; to foreknow all these before the being of this man, when he was lodged afar off in the loins of his ancestors, yea, of Adam; how much greater is it to foreknow and know the thoughts and works of three or four men, of a whole village or neighborhood! It is greater still to know the imaginations and actions of such a multitude of men as are contained in London, Paris, or Constantinople; how much greater still to know the intentions and practices, the clandestine contrivances of so many millions that have, do, or shall swarm in all quarters of the world, every person of them having millions of thoughts, desires, designs, affections, and actions! Let this attribute, then, make the blessed God honorable in our eyes, and adorable in all our affections; especially since it is an excellency which hath so lately discovered itself, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, in opening, and in part confounding, the wicked devices of bloody men. Especially let us adore God for it, and admire it in God, since it is so necessary a perfection, that without it the goodness of God had been impotent, and could not have relieved us; for what help can a distressed person expect from a man of the sweetest disposition and the strongest arm, if the eyes which should discover the danger, and direct the defence and rescue, were closed up by blindness and darkness? Adore God for this wonderful perfection.

Instruct. 7. In the consideration of this excellent attribute, what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge, and how humble ought we to be before God! There is nothing man is more apt to be proud of than his knowledge; it is a perfection he glories in; but if our own knowledge of the little

outside and barks of things puffs us up, the consideration of the infiniteness of God's knowledge should abate the tumor: as our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding. We have a spark of being, but nothing to the heat of the sun; we have a drop of knowledge, but nothing to the Divine ocean. What a vain thing is it for a shallow brook to boast of its streams before a sea, whose depths are unfathomable! As it is a vanity to brag of our strength, when we remember the power of God, and of our prudence, when we glance upon the wisdom of God, so it is no less a vanity to boast of our knowledge, when we think of the understanding and knowledge of God. How hard is it for us to know anything! [Note: Pascal, p. 170.] Too much noise deafens us, and too much light dazzles us; too much distance alienates the object from us, and too much nearness bars up our sight from beholding it. When we think ourselves to be near the knowledge of a thing, as a ship to the haven, a puff of wind blows us away, and the object which we desired to know eternally flies from us; we burn with a desire of knowledge, and yet are oppressed with the darkness of ignorance; we spend our days more in dark Egypt, than in enlightened Goshen. In what narrow bounds is all the knowledge of the most intelligent persons included! [Note: Amyrant, de Prædest. pp. 116, 117. somewhat changed.] How few understand the exact harmony of their own bodies, the nature of the life they have in common with other animals! Who understands the nature of his own faculties, how he knows, and how he wills; how the understanding proposeth, and how the will embraceth; how his spiritual soul is united to his material body; what the nature is of the operation of our spirits? Nay, who understands the nature of his own body, the offices of his senses, the motion of his members, how they come to obey the command of the will, and a thousand other things? What a vain, weak, and ignorant thing is man, when compared with God! yet there is not a greater pride to be found among devils, than among ignorant men, with a little, very little, flashy knowledge. Ignorant man is as proud as if he knew as God. As the consideration of God's omniscience should render him honorable in our eyes, so it should render us vile in our own. God, because of his knowledge, is so far from disdaining his creatures, that his omniscience is a minister to his goodness. No knowledge that we are possessed of should make us swell with too high a conceit of ourselves, and a disdain of others. We have infinitely more of ignorance than knowledge. Let us therefore remember, in all our thoughts of God, that he is God, and we are men; and therefore ought to be humble, as becomes men, and ignorant and foolish men, to be; as weak creatures should lie low before an Almighty God, and impure creatures before a holy God, false creatures before a faithful God, finite creatures before an infinite God, so should ignorant creatures before an all-knowing God. All God's attributes teach admiring thoughts of God, and low thoughts of ourselves.

Instruct. 8. It may inform us how much this attribute is injured in the world. The first error after Adam's eating the forbidden fruit was the denial of this, as well as the omnipresence of God, (Genesis 3:10,) "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself;" as if the thickness of the trees could screen him from the eye of his Creator. And after Cain's murder, this is the first perfection he affronts, (Genesis 4:9), "Where is Abel, thy brother?" saith God. How roundly doth he answer, "I know not!" as if God were as weak as man, to be put off with a lie. Man doth as naturally hate this perfection as much as he cannot naturally but acknowledge it; he wishes God stripped of this eminency, that he might be incapable to be an inspector of his crimes, and a searcher of the closets of his heart. In wishing him deprived of this, there is a hatred of God himself; for it is a loathing an essential property of God, without which he would be a pitiful Governor of the world.

What a kind of God should that be, of a sinner's wishing, that had wanted eyes to see a crime, and righteousness to punish it! The want of the consideration of this attribute, is the cause of all sin in the world (Hosea 7:2), "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness;" they speak not to their hearts, or make any reflection upon the infiniteness of my knowledge; it is a high contempt of God, as if he were an idol, a senseless stock or stone; in all evil practices this is denied. We know God sees all things, yet we live and walk as if he knew nothing. We call him omniscient, and live as if he were ignorant; we say he is all eye, yet act as if he were wholly blind. In particular, this attribute is injured, by invading the peculiar rights of it, by presuming on it, and by a practical denial of it. First, By invading the peculiar rights of it. 1. By invocation of creatures. Praying to saints, by the Romanists, is a disparagement to this divine excellency; he that knows all things, is only fit to have the petitions of men presented to him; prayer supposeth an omniscient Being, as the object of it; no other being but God ought to have that honor acknowledged to it; no understanding but his is infinite; no other presence but his is everywhere; to implore any deceased creature for a supply of our wants, is to own in them a property of the Deity, and make them deities that were but men, and increase their glory by a diminution of God's honor, in ascribing that perfection to creatures which belongs only to God. Alas! they are so far from understanding the desires of our souls, that they know not the words of our lips: it is against reason to address our supplications to them that neither understand us nor discern us (Isaiah 63:16), "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not" The Jews never called upon Abraham, though the covenant was made with him for the whole seed; not one departed saint for the whole four thousand years, between the creation of the world, and the coming of Christ, was ever prayed to by the Israelites, or ever imagined to have a share in God's omniscience: so that to pray to St. Peter, St. Paul, much less to St. Roch, St. Swithin, St. Martin, St. Francis, &c. is such a superstition, that hath no footing in the Scripture. To desire the prayers of the living, with whom we have a communion, who can understand and grant our desires, is founded upon a mutual charity; but to implore persons that are absent, at a great distance from us, with whom we have not, nor know how to have, any commerce, supposeth them, in their departure, to have put off humanity, and commenced gods, and endued with some part of the Divinity to understand our petitions; we are, indeed, to cherish their memories, consider their examples, imitate their graces, and observe their doctrines; we are to follow them as saints, but not elevate them as gods, in ascribing to them such a knowledge, which is the only necessary right of their and our common Creator. [Note: Daille, Melang. Part 11., pp. 560, 561.] As the invocation of saints mingles them with Christ, in the exercise of his office, so it sets them equal with God in the throne of his omniscience, as if they had as much credit with God as Christ, by way of mediation, and as much knowledge of men's affairs as God himself. Omniscience is peculiar to God, and incommunicable to any creature; it is the foundation of all religion, and therefore one of the choicest acts of it; viz. prayer and invocation. To direct our vows and petitions to any one else, is to invade the peculiarity of this perfection in God, and to rank some creatures in a partnership with him in it.

2. This attribute is injured by curiosity of knowledge; especially of future things, which God hath not discovered in natural causes, or supernatural revelation. It is a common error of men's spirits to aspire to know what God would have hidden, and to pry into Divine secrets; and many men are more willing to remain without the knowledge of those things which may, with a little industry, be attained, than be divested of the curiosity of inquiring into those things which are above their reach; it is hence that some have laid aside the study of the common remedies of nature to find out

the philosopher's stone, which scarce any ever yet attempted but sunk in the enterprise. [Note: Amyrant. Moral. Tom. III. p. 75, &c.] From this inclination to know the most abstruse and difficult things, it is that the horrors of magic and vanities of astrology have sprung, whereby men have thought to find, in a commerce with devils and the jurisdiction of the stars, the events of their lives, and the disposal of states and kingdoms. Hence, also, arose those multitudes of ways of divination, invented among the heathen, and practised too commonly in these ages of the world. This is an invasion of God's prerogative, to whom secret things belong (Deuteronomy 29:29); "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but revealed things belong to us and our children." It is an intolerable boldness to attempt to fathom those, the knowledge whereof God hath reserved to himself, and to search that which God will have to surpass our understandings, whereby we more truly envy God a knowledge superior to our own, than we, in Adam, imagined that he envied us. Ambition is the greatest cause of this; ambition to be accounted some great thing among men, by reason of a knowledge estranged from the common mass of mankind, but more especially that soaring pride to be equal with God, which lurks in our nature ever since the fall of our first parents: this is not yet laid aside by men, though it was the first thing that embroiled the world with the wrath of God. Some think a curiosity of knowledge was the cause of the fall of devils; I am sure it was the fall of Adam, and is yet the crime of his posterity; had he been contented to know what God had furnished him with, neither he nor his posterity had smarted under the venom of the serpent's breath. All curious and bold inquiries into things not revealed are an attempt upon the throne of God, and are both sinful and pernicious, like to glaring upon the sun, where, instead of a greater acuteness, we meet with blindness, and too dearly buy our ignorance in attempting a superfluous knowledge. As God's knowledge is destined to the government of the world, so should ours be to the advantage of the world, and not degenerate into vain speculations.

3. This attribute is injured by swearing by creatures. To swear by the name of God, in a righteous cause, [Note: Cajetan, Sum. p. 190.] when we are lawfully called to it by a superior power, or for the necessary decision of some controversy, for the ends of charity and justice, is an act of religion, and a part of worship, founded upon, and directed to, the honor of this attribute; by it we acknowledge the glory of his infallible knowledge of all things; but to swear by false gods, or by any creature, is blasphemous; it sets the creature in the place of God, and invests it in that which is the peculiar honor of the Divinity; for when any swear truly, they intend the invocation of an infallible Witness, and the bringing an undoubted testimony for what they do assert: while, any, therefore, swear by a creature, or a false god, they profess that that creature, or that which they esteem to be a god is an infallible witness, which to be is only the right of God; they attribute to the creature that which is the property of God alone, to know the heart, and to be a witness whether they speak true or no: and this was accounted, by all nations, the true design of an oath. As to swear falsely is a plain denial of the all-knowledge of God, so to swear by any creature is to set the creature upon the throne of God, in ascribing that perfection to the creature which sovereignly belongs to the Creator; for it is not in the power of any to witness to the truth of the heart, but of him that is the searcher of hearts.

4. We sin against this attribute by censuring the hearts of others. An open crime, indeed, falls under our cognizance, and therefore under our judgment; for whatsoever falls under the authority of man to be punished, falls under the judgment of man to be censured, as an act contrary to the law of God; yet, when a censure is built upon the evil of the act which is obvious to the view, if we

take a step farther to judge the heart and state, we leave the revealed rule of the law, and ambitiously erect a tribunal equal with God's, and usurp a judicial power, pertaining only to the Supreme Governor of the world, and consequently pretend to be possessed of the perfection of omniscience, which is necessary to render him capable of the exercise of that sovereign authority: for it is in respect of his dominion that God hath the supreme right to judge; and in respect of his knowledge that he hath an incommunicable capacity to judge. In an action that is doubtful, the good or evil whereof depends only upon God's determination, and wherein much of the judgment depends upon the discerning the intention of the agent, we cannot judge any man without a manifest invasion of God's peculiar right such actions are to be tried by God's knowledge, not by our surmises; God only is the master in such cases, to whom a person stands or falls (Romans 14:4). 'Till the true principle and ends of an action be known by the confession of the party acting it, a true judgment of it is not in our power. Principles and ends lie deep and hid from us; and it is intolerable pride to pretend to have a joint key with God to open that cabinet which he hath reserved to himself: Besides the violation of the rule of charity in misconstruing actions which may be great and generous in their root and principle, we invade God's right, as if our ungrounded imaginations and conjectures were in joint commission with this sovereign perfection; and thereby we become usurping judges of evil thoughts (James 2:4). It is, therefore, a boldness worthy to be punished by the judge, to assume to ourselves the capacity and authority of him who is the only Judge: for as the execution of the Divine law, for the inward violation of it, belongs only to God, so is the right of judging a prerogative belonging only to his omniscience; his right is, therefore, invaded, if we pretend to a knowledge of it. This humor of men the apostle checks, when he saith (1 Corinthians 4:5), "He that judgeth me is the Lord; therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will manifest the counsels of all hearts." It is not the time yet for God to erect the tribunal for the trial of men's hearts, and the principles of their actions; he hath reserved the glorious discovery of this attribute for another season: we must not, therefore, presume to judge of the counsels of men's hearts till God hath revealed them by opening the treasures of his own knowledge; much less are we to judge any man's final condition. Manasseh may sacrifice to devils, and unconverted Paul tear the church in pieces; but God had mercy on them, and called them. The actions may be censured, not the state, for we know not whom God may call. In censuring men, we may doubly imitate the devil, in a false accusation of the brethren, as well as in an ambitious usurpation of the rights of God.

Secondly, This perfection is injured by presuming upon it, or making an ill use of it. As in the neglect of prayer for the supply of men's wants, because God knows them already, so that that which is an encouragement to prayer, they make the reason of restraining it before God. Prayer is not to administer knowledge to God, but to acknowledge this admirable perfection of the Divine nature. If God did not know, there were indeed no use of prayer; it would be as vain a thing to send up our prayers to heaven, as to implore the senseless statue, or picture of a prince, for a protection. We pray because God knows: for though he knows our wants with a knowledge of vision, yet he will not know them with a knowledge of supply, till he be sought unto (Matthew 6:32-33; Matthew 7:11.) All the excellencies of God are ground of adoration; and this excellency is the ground of that part of worship we call prayer. If God be to be worshipped, he is to be called upon: invocations of his name in our necessities is a chief act of worship; whence the temple, the place of solemn worship, was not called the house of sacrifice, but the house of prayer. Prayer was not appointed for God's information, as if he were ignorant, but for the expression of our

desires; not to furnish him with a knowledge of what we want, but to manifest to him, by some rational sign convenient to our nature, our sense of that want, which he knows by himself. So that prayer is not designed to acquaint God with our wants, but to express the desire of a remedy of our wants. God knows our wants, but hath not made promises barely to our wants, but to our asking, that his omniscience in hearing, as well as his sufficiency in supplying, many have a sensible honor in our acknowledgments and receipts. It is therefore an ill use of this excellency of God to neglect prayer to him as needless, because he knows already.

Thirdly. This perfection of God is wronged by a practical denial of it. It is the language of every sin, and so God takes it when he comes to reckon with men for their impieties. Upon this he charges the greatness of the iniquity of Israel, the overflowing of blood in the land, and the perverseness of the city: "They say, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not" (Ezekiel 9:9): they deny his eyes to see, and his resolution to punish.

1. It will appear, in forbearing sin from a sense of man's knowledge, not of God's. Open impieties are refrained because of the eye of man, but secret sins are not checked because of the eye of God. Wickedness is committed in darkness, that is restrained in light, as if darkness were as great a clog to God's eyes as it is to ours; as though his eyes were muffled with the curtains of the night (Job 22:14.) This, it is likely, was at the root of Jonah's flight; he might have some secret thought that his Master's eye could not follow him, as though the close hatches of a ship could secure him from the knowledge of God, as well as the sides of a ship could from the dashing of the waves. What lies most upon the conscience when it is graciously wounded, is least regarded or contemned when it is basely inclined. David's heart smote him not only for his sin in the gross, but as particularly circumstantiated by the commission of it in the sight of God (Psalms 1:4): "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." None knew the reason of Uriah's death but myself, and because others knew it not, I neglected any regard to this Divine eye. When Jacob's sons used their brother Joseph so barbarously, they took care to hide it from their father, but cast away all thoughts of God, from whom it could not be concealed. Doth not the presence of a child bridle a man from the act of a longed-for sin, when the eye of God is of no force to restrain him, as if God's knowledge were of less value than the sight of a little boy or girl, as if a child only, could see, and God were blind? He that will forbear an unworthy action for fear of an informer, will not forbear it for God; as if God's omniscience were not as full an intelligencer to him, as man can be an informer to a magistrate. As we acknowledge the power of men seeing us when we are ashamed to commit a filthy action in their view, so we discover the power of God seeing us, when we regard not what we do before the light of his eyes. Secret sins are more against God than open: open sins are against the law; secret sins are against the law, and this prime perfection of his nature. The majesty of God is not only violated, but the omniscience of God disowned, who is the only witness; we must, in all of them, either imagine him to be without eyes to behold us, or without an arm of justice to punish us. And often it is, I believe, in such cases, that if any thoughts of God's knowledge strike upon men, they quickly damp them, lest they should begin to know what they fear, and fear that they might not eat their pleasant sinful morsels.

2. It appears in partial confessions of sin before God. As by a free, full, and ingenious confession, we offer a due glory to this attribute, so by a feigned and curtailed confession, we deny him the honor of it: for, though by any confession we in part own him to be a Sovereign and Judge, yet by a half and pared acknowledgment, we own him to be no more than a humane and ignorant one.

Achan's full confession gave God the glory of his omniscience, manifested in the discovery of his secret crime. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and tnakc confession unto him" (Joshua 7:19.) And so (Psalms 50:23) "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," or confession, as the word signifieth, in which sense I would rather take it, referring to this attribute, which God seems to tax sinners with the denial of (ver. 21), telling them that he would open the records of their sins before them, and indict them particularly for every one. If, therefore, you would glorify this attribute, which shall one day break open your consciences, offer to me a sincere confession. When David speaks of the happiness of a pardoned man, he adds, "in whose spirit there is no guile," [Note: Psalms 32:1; Psalms 32:2. Camero. p. 89, Colossians 1:1-29.] not meaning a sincerity in general, but an ingenuity in confessing. To excuse, or extenuate sin, is to deny God the knowledge of the depths of our deceitful hearts: when we will mince it rather than aggravate it; lay it upon the inducements of others, when it was the free act of our own wills, study shifts to deceive our Judge; this is to speak lies of him, as the expression is (Hosea 7:13), as though he were a God easy to be cheated, and knew no more than we were willing to declare. What did Saul's transferring his sin from himself to the people (1 Samuel 14:15), but charge God with a defect in this attribute? When man could not be like God, in his knowledge, he would fancy a God like to him in his ignorance, and imagine a possibility of hiding himself from his knowledge. And all men tread, more or less, in their father's steps, and are fruitful to devise distinctions to disguise errors in doctrine, and excuses to palliate errors in practice: this crime Job removes from himself, when he speaks of several acts of his sincerity (Job 31:33): "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom:" I hid not any of my sins in my own conscience, but acknowledged God a witness to them, and gave him the glory of his knowledge by a free confession. I did not conceal it from God as Adam did, or as men ordinarily do; as if God could understand no more of their secret crimes than they will let him, and had no more sense of their faults than they would furnish him with. As the first rise of confession is the owning of this attribute (for the justice of God would not scare men, nor the holiness of God awe them, without a sense of his knowledge of their iniquities), so to drop out some fragments of confession, discover some sins, and conceal others, is a plain denial of the extensiveness of the Divine knowledge.

3. It is discovered by putting God off with an outside worship. Men are often flatterers of God, and think to bend him by formal glavering devotions, without the concurrence of their hearts; as though he could not pierce into the darkness of the mind, but did as little know us as one man knows another. There are such things as feigned lips (Psalms 17:1), a contradiction between the heart and the tongue, a clamor in the voice, and scoffing in the soul; a crying out to God, thou art my Father, the guide of my youth, and yet speaking and doing evil to the utmost of our power (Jeremiah 3:4-5). As if God could be imposed upon by fawning pretences; and like old Isaac, take Jacob for Esau, and be cozened by the smell of his garments: as if he could not discern the negro heart under an angel's garb. Thus Ephraim, the ten tribes, apostatized from the true religion, would go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord (Hosea 5:6), would sacrifice multitudes of sheep and heifers, which was the main outside of the Jewish religion; only with their flocks and their herds, not with their hearts, with those inward qualifications of deep humiliation and repentance for sin; as though outside appearances limited God's observation, whereas God had told them before (Hosea 5:3), that he "knew Ephraim, and Israel was not hid from him." Thus to do is to put a cheat upon God, and think to blind his all-seeing eye, and therefore it is called deceit (Psalms 78:36). They did flatter him with their mouths. The word ■■■■ signifies to deceive, as

well as to flatter; not that they or any else, can deceive God, but it implies an endeavor to deceive him, by a few dissembling words and gestures, or an imagination that God was satisfied with bare professions, and would not concern himself in a further inquisition. This is an unworthy conceit of God, to fancy that we can satisfy for inward sins, and avert approaching judgments, by external offerings, by a loud voice with a false heart, as if God (like children) would be pleased with the glittering of an empty shell, or the rattling of stones, the chinkling of money, a mere voice and crying, without inward frames and intentions of service.

4. In cherishing multitudes of evil thoughts. No man but would blush for shame, if the base, impure, slovenly thoughts, either in or out of duties of worship, were visible to the understanding of man; how diligent would he be to curb his luxuriant and unworthy fancies, as well as bite in his words! but when we give the reins to the motions of our hearts, and suffer them to run at random without a curb, it is an evidence we are not concerned for their falling under the notice of the eye of God; and it argues a very weak belief of this perfection, or scarce any belief at all. Who can think any man's heart, possessed with a sense of this infinite excellency, that suffers his mind, in his meditations on God, to wander into every sty, and be picking up stones upon a dunghill? What doth it intimate, but that those thoughts are as invisible, or unaudible to God, as they are to men without the garments of words? [Note: Drexel. Nicetas, lib. ii. cap. 10, p. 357.] When a man thinks of obscene things, his own natural notions, if revived, would tell him that God discerns what he thinks, that the depths of his heart are open to him: and the voice of those notions are—deface those vain imaginations out of your minds. But what is done? Men cast away rational light, muster up conceits that God sees them not, knows them not, and so sink into the puddle of their sordid imaginations, as though they remained in darkness to God. I might further instance. In omissions of prayer, which arise sometimes from a flat atheism: who will call upon a God, that believes no such Being? or from partial atheism, either a denial of God's sufficiency to help, or of his omniscience to know, as if God were like the statue of Jupiter in Crete, framed without ears. In the hypocritical pretences of men, to exempt them from the service God calls them to. When men pretend one thing and intend another: this lurks in the veins sometimes of the best men; sometimes it ariseth from the fear of man; when men are more afraid of the power of man, than of dissembling with the Almighty, it will pretend a virtue to cover a secret wile, and choose the tongue of the crafty as the expression in Job (Job 15:15). The case is plain in Moses, who, when ordered to undertake an eminent service, pretends a want of eloquence, and an ungrateful "slowness of speech" (Exodus 4:10). This generous soul, that before was not afraid to discover himself in the midst of Egypt for his countrymen, answers sneakingly to God, and would veil his carnal fear with a pretence of insufficiency and humility; "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11) He could not well allege an inability to go to Pharaoh, since he had had an education in the Egyptian learning, which rendered him capable to appear at court. God at last uncaseth him, and shews it all to be a dissimulation, and whatsoever was the pretence, fear lay at the bottom. He was afraid of his life upon his appearance before Pharaoh, from whose face he had fled upon the slaying the Egyptians; which God intimates to him (Exodus 4:19), "Go, and return into Egypt, for all the men are dead which sought thy life." What doth this carriage speak, but as if God's eye were not upon our inward parts, as though we could lock him out of our hearts, that cannot be shut out from any creek of the hearts of men and angels?

Use II. is of comfort. It is a ground of great comfort under the present dispensation wherein we are; we have heard the doctrinal part, and God hath given us the experimental part of it in his special providence this day, upon the stage of the world. [Note: Nov. 1678, when the Popish Plot was discovered:] And, blessed be God; that he hath given us a ground of comfort, without going out of our ordinary course to fetch it, whereby it seems to be peculiarly of God's ordering for us.

1. It is a comfort in all the clandestine contrivances of men against the church. His eyes pierce as far as the depths of hell. Not one of his church's adversaries lies in a mist; all are as plain as the stars which he numbers: "Mine adversaries are all before thee" (Psalms 69:19), more exactly known to thee than I can recount them. It is a prophecy of Christ, wherein Christ is brought in speaking to God of his own and the church's enemies: he comforts himself with this, that God hath his eye upon every particular person among his adversaries: he knows where they repose themselves, when they go out to consult, and when they come in with their resolves. He discerns all the rage that spirits their hearts, in what corner it lurks, how it acts; all the disorders, motions of it, and every object of that rage; he cannot be deceived by the closest and subtlest person. Thus God speaks concerning Sennacherib and his host against Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:28-29). After he had spoke of the forming of his church, and the weakness of it, he adds, "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back," &c. He knows all the methods of the counsels, the stages they had laid, the manner of the execution of their designs, all the ways whither they turned themselves, and would use them no better than men do devouring fish and untamed beasts, with a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the mouth. Those statesmen (in Isaiah 29:15) thought their contrivances too deep for God to fathom, and too close for God to frustrate; "they seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay," of no more force and understanding than a potter's vessel, which understands not its own form wrought by the artificer, nor the use it is put to by the buyer and possessor; or shall be esteemed as a potter's vessel, that can be as easily flung back into the mass from whence it was taken, as preserved in the figure it is now endued with. No secret designer is shrouded from God's sight, or can be sheltered from God's arm; he understands the venom of their hearts better than we can feel it, and discovers their inward fury more plainly than we can see the sting or teeth of a viper when they are opened for mischief; and to what purpose doth God know and see them, but in order to deliver his people from them in his own due time? "I know their sorrow, and am come down to deliver them." (Exodus 3:7-8). The walls of Jerusalem are continually before him; he knows, therefore, all that would undermine and demolish them; none can hurt Zion by any ignorance or inadvertency in God. It is observable, that our Saviour, assuming to himself a different title in every epistle to the seven churches, Both particularly ascribe to himself this of knowledge and wrath in that to Thyatira, an emblem or description of the Romish state (Revelation 2:18): "And unto the angel of the church of Thyatira write, These things, saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass." His eyes, like a flame of fire, are of a piercing nature, insinuating themselves into all the pores and parts of the body they encounter with, and his feet like brass, to crush them with, is explained (Revelation 2:23), "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and the heart, and I will give to every one of you according to your works." He knows every design of the Romish party, designed by that church of Thyatira. [Note: For the evidence of it I refer you to Dr.

More's Exposition of the Seven Churches, worthy every learned and understanding man's reading, and of every sober Romanist.] Jezebel, there, signifies a whorish church; such a church as shall act as Jezebel, Ahab's wife, who was not only a worshipper of idols, but propagated idolatry in Israel, slew the prophets, persecuted Elijah, murdered Naboth, the name whereof signifies prophecy, seized upon his possession. And if it be said that (Revelation 2:19) this church was commended for her works, faith, patience, it is true Rome did at first strongly profess Christianity, and maintained the interest of it, but afterwards fell into the practice of Jezebel, and committed spiritual adultery: and is she to be owned for a wife, that now plays the harlot, because she was honest and modest at her first marriage? And though she shall be destroyed, yet not speedily (Revelation 2:22); "I will cast her into a bed," seems to intimate the destruction of Jezebel, not to be at once and speedily, but in a lingering way, and by degrees, as sickness consumes a body. [Note: Coc. in loc.]

2. This perfection of God fits him to be a special object of trust. If he were forgetful, what comfort could we have in any promise? How could we depend upon him, if he were ignorant of our state? His compassion to pity us, his readiness to relieve us, his power to protect and assist us, would be insignificant, without his omniscience to inform his goodness, and direct the arm of his power. This perfection is, as it were, God's office of intelligence: as you go to your memorandum-book to know what you are to do, so doth God to his omniscience; this perfection is God's eye, to acquaint him with the necessities of his church, and directs all his other attributes in their exercise for and about his people. You may depend upon his mercy that hath promised, and upon his truth to reform; upon his sufficiency to supply you, and his goodness to receive you, and his righteousness to reward you; because he hath an infinite understanding to know you and your wants, you and your services. And without this knowledge of his, no comfort could be drawn from any other perfection; none of them could be a sure nail to hang our hopes and confidence upon. This is that the church always celebrated (Psalms 105:7): "He hath remembered his covenant forever, and the word which he hath commanded to a thousand generations;" and (Psalms 105:42), "He remembered his holy promise;" "And he remembered for them his covenant" (Psalms 106:45). He remembers and understands his covenant, therefore his promise to perform it, and therefore our wants to supply them.

3. And the rather, because God knows the persons of all his own. He hath in his infinite understanding, the exact number of all the individual persons that belong to him (2 Timothy 2:19): "The Lord knows them that are his." He knows all things, because he hath created them; and he knows his people because he hath not only made them, but also chose them; he could no more choose he knew not what, than he could create he knew not what; and he knows them under a double title; of creation as creatures, in the common mass of creation; as new creatures by a particular act of separation. He cannot be ignorant of them in time, whom he foreknew from eternity; his knowledge in time is the same he had from eternity; he foreknew them that he intended to give the grace of faith unto; and he knows them after they believe, because he knows his own act, in bestowing grace upon them, and his own mark and seal wherewith he hath stamped them. No doubt but he that "calls the stars of heaven by their names" (Psalms 147:4), knows the number of those living stars that sparkle in the firmament of his church. He cannot be ignorant of their persons, when he numbers the hairs of their heads, and hath registered their names in the book of life. As he only had an infinite mercy to make the choice, so he only hath an

infinite understanding to comprehend their persons. We only know the elect of God by a moral assurance in the judgment of charity, when the conversation of men is according to the doctrine of God. We have not an infallible knowledge of them, we may be often mistaken; Judas, a devil, may be judged by man for a saint, till he be stripped of his disguise. God only hath an infallible knowledge of them, he knows his own records, and the counterparts in the hearts of his people; none can counterfeit his seal, nor can any rase it out. When the church is either scattered like dust by persecution, or overgrown with superstition and idolatry, that there is scarce any grain of true religion appearing, as in the time of Elijah, who complained that he was left alone, as if the church had been rooted out of that corner of the world (1 Kings 19:14; 1 Kings 19:18); yet God knew that he had a number fed in a cave, and had reserved seven thousand men that had preserved the purity of his worship, and not bowed their knee to Baal. [Note: Turretin's Sermons, p. 362.] Christ knew his sheep, as well as he is known of them; yea, better than they can know him (John 10:14). History acquaints us, that Cyrus had so vast a memory, that he knew the name of every particular soldier in his army, which consisted of divers nations; shall it be too hard for an infinite understanding to know every one of that host that march under his banners? may he not as well know them, as know the number, qualities, influences, of those stars which lie concealed from our eye, as well as those that are visible to our sense?

Yes, he knows them, as a general to employ them, as a shepherd to preserve them; he knows them in the world to guard them, and he knows them when they are out of the world to gather them, and cull out their bodies, though wrapped up in a cloud of the putrified carcasses of the wicked. As he knew them from all eternity to elect them, so he knows them in time to clothe their persons with righteousness, to protect their persons in calamity, according to his good pleasure, and at last to raise and reward them according to his promise.

4. We may take comfort from hence, that our sincerity cannot be unknown to an infinite understanding. Not a way of the righteous is concealed from him, and, therefore, "they shall stand in judgment before him" (Psalms 1:6): "The Lord knows the way of the righteous;" he knows them to observe them, and he knows them to reward them. How comfortable is it to appeal to this attribute of God for our integrity, with Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3)! "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." Christ himself is brought in in this prophetic psalm, drawing out the comfort of this attribute (Psalms 40:9): "I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest;" meaning his faithfulness in declaring the righteousness of God. Job follows the same steps, "Also now behold, my record is in heaven, and my witness is on high" (Job 16:19); my innocence hath the testimony of men, but my greatest support is in the records of God. Also now, or, besides the testimony of my own heart, I have another witness in heaven, that knows the heart, and can only judge of the principles of my actions, and clear me from the scorns of my friends and the accusations of men, with a justification of my innocence; he repeats it twice, to take the greater comfort in it. God knows that we do that in the simplicity of our hearts, which may be judged by men to be done for unworthy and sordid ends: he knows not only the outward action, but the inward affection, and praises that which men often dispraise, and writes down that with an Euge! "Well done, good and faithful servant," which men daub with their severest censures (Romans 2:29). How refreshing is it to consider, that God never mistakes the appearance for reality, nor is led by the judgment of man! He sits in heaven, and laughs at their follies and censures. If God had no sounder and no more piercing a judgment than man, woe be to the

sincerest souls that are often judged hypocrites by some. What a happiness is it for integrity to have a judge of infinite understanding, who will one day wipe off the dirt of worldly reproaches! Again, God knows the least dram of grace and righteousness in the hearts of his people, though but as a smoking flax, or the least bruise of a saving conviction (Matthew 12:20), and knows it so as to cherish it; he knows that work he hath begun, and never hath his eye off from it to abandon it.

5. The consideration of this excellent perfection in God may comfort us in our secret prayers, sighs, and works. If God were not of infinite understanding to pierce into the heart, what comfort hath a poor creature that hath a scantiness of expressions but a heart in a flame? If God did not understand the heart, faith and prayer, which are eternal works, would be in vain. How could he give that mercy our hearts plead for if he were ignorant of our inward affections? Hypocrites might scale heaven by lofty expressions, and a sincere soul come short of the happiness he is prepared for, for want of flourishing gifts. Prayer is an eternal work; words are but the garment of prayer; meditation is the body, and affection the soul and life of prayer; "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation" (Psalms 5:1). Prayer is a rational act; an act of the mind. not the act of a parrot: prayer is an act of the heart, though the speaking prayer is the work of the tongue; now God gives ear to the words, but he considers the meditation of the frame of the heart. Consideration is a more exact notice than hearing; the act only of the ear. Were not God of an infinite understanding, and omniscient, he might take fine clothes, a heap of garments, for the man himself, and be put off by glittering words, without a spiritual frame. What matter of rejoicing is it that we call not upon a deaf and ignorant idol, but on one that listens to our secret petitions, to give them a dispatch, that knows our desires afar off, and from the infiniteness of his mercy, joined with his omniscience, stands ready to give us a return? Hath he not a book of remembrance for them that fear him, and for their sighs and ejaculations to him, as well as their discourses of him, (Malachi 3:16); and not only what prayers they utter, but what gracious and holy thoughts they have of him that thought upon his name? Though millions of supplications be put up at the same time, yet they have all a distinct file (as I may say) in an infinite understanding, which perceives and comprehends them all. As he observes millions of sins committed at the same time, by a vast number of persons, to record them in order to punishment, so he distinctly discerns an infinite number of cries, at the same moment, to register them in order to an answer. A sigh cannot escape an infinite understanding, though crowded among a mighty multitude of cries from others, or covered with many unwelcome distractions in ourselves, no more than a believing touch from the woman that had the bloody issue could be concealed from Christ, and be undiscerned from the press of the thronging multitudes: our groans are as audible and intelligible to him as our words, and he knows what is the mind of his own Spirit, though expressed in no plainer language than sobs and heavings (Romans 8:27). Thus David cheers up himself under the neglects of his friends (Psalms 38:9); "Lord, my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." Not a groan of a panting spirit shall be lost, till God hath lost his knowledge; not a petition forgotten while God hath a record, nor a tear dried while God hath a bottle to reserve it in (Psalms 6:8). Our secret works are also known and observed by him; not only our outward labor, but our inward love in it (Hebrews 6:10). If, with Isaac, we go privately into the field to meditate, or secretly "cast our bread upon the waters," he keeps his eye upon us to reward us, and returns the fruit into our own bosoms (Matthew 6:4; Matthew 6:6); yea, though it be but a cup of cold water, from an inward spring of love, given to a disciple, "He sees your works, and your labor, and faith, and patience" in working them (Revelation 2:2); all the marks of your industry, and strength of your intentions, and

will be as exact at last, in order to a due praise, as to open sins, in order to a just recompense (1 Corinthians 4:5).

6. The consideration of this excellent attribute affords comfort in the afflictions of good men. He knows their pressures, as well as hears their cries (Exodus 3:7). His knowledge comes not by information from us; but his compassionate listening to our cries springs from his own inspection into our sorrows; he is affected with them, before we make any discovery of them; he is not ignorant of the best season, when they may be usefully inflicted, and when they may be profitably removed. The tribulation and poverty of his church is not unknown to him (Revelation 2:8-9); "I know thy works and tribulation," &c. He knows their works, and what tribulation they meet with for him; he sees their extremities, when they are toiling against the wind and tide of the world (Mark 6:48); yea, the natural exigencies of the multitude are not neglected by him; he discerns to take care of them. Our Saviour considered the three days' fasting of his followers, and miraculously provides a dish for them in the wilderness. No good man is ever out of God's mind, and therefore never out of his compassionate care: his eye pierceth into their dungeons, and pities their miseries. Joseph may forget his brethren, and the disciples not know Christ, when he walks upon the midnight waves and turbulent sea, [Note: Barlow's Man's Refuge, pp. 29, 30.] but a lion's den cannot obscure a Daniel from his sight, nor the depths of the whale's belly bury Jonah from the Divine understanding: he discerns Peter in his chains, and Stephen under the stones of martyrdom; he knows Lazarus under his tattered rags, and Abel wallowing in his blood; his eye and knowledge goes along with his people, when they are transplanted into foreign countries, and sold for slaves into the islands of the Grecian, "for he will raise them out of the place" (Joel 3:6-7). He would defeat the hopes of the persecutors, and applaud the patience of his people. He knows his people in the tabernacle of life, and in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalms 23:1-6). He knows all penal evils, because he commissions and directs them. He knows the instruments, because they are his sword (Psalms 17:13); and he knows his gracious sufferer because he hath his mark. He discerns Job in his anguish, and the devil in his malice. By the direction of this attribute he orders calamities, and rescues from them. "Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite" (Psalms 10:14). That is the comfort of the psalmist, and the comfort of every believer, and the ground of committing themselves to God under all the injustice of men.

7. It is a comfort in all our infirmities. As he knows our sins to charge them, so he knows the weakness of our nature to pity us. As his infinite understanding may scare us, because he knows our transgressions, so it may relieve us, because he knows our natural mutability in our first creation, "he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust" (Psalms 103:14). 'Tis the reason of the precedent verses why he removes our transgression from us, why he is so backward in punishing, so patient in waiting, so forward in pitying; Why? He doth not only remember our sins, but remember our frame of forming; what brittle, though clear glasses we were by creation, how easy to be cracked! He remembers our impotent and weak condition by corruption; what a sink we have of vain imaginations that remain in us after regeneration; he doth not only consider that we were made according to his image, and therefore able to stand, but that we were made of dust and weak matter, and had a sensitive soul, like that of beasts, as well as an intellectual nature, like that of angels, and therefore liable to follow the dictates of it, without exact care and watchfulness. If he remembered only the first, there would be no issue but indignation; but the consideration of the latter moves his compassion. How miserable should we be for want of this perfection in the Divine

nature, whereby God remembers and reflects upon his past act in our first frame, and the mindfulness of our condition excites the motion of his bowels to us! Had he lost the knowledge how he first framed us, did he not still remember the mutability of our nature, as we were formed and stamped in his mint, how much more wretched would our condition be than it is! If his remembrance of our original be one ground of his pity, the sense of his omniscience should be a ground of our comfort in the stirring of our infirmities: he remembers we were but dust when he made us, and yet remembers we are but dust while he preserves and forbears us.

8. It is some comfort in the fears of some lurking corruption in our hearts. We know by this whither to address ourselves for the search and discovery of it: perhaps some blessings we want are retarded; some calamities we understand not the particular cause of, are inflicted; some petitions we have put up, hang too long for an answer; and the chariot wheels of Divine goodness move slow, and are long in coming. Let us beg the aid of this attribute to open to us the remoras, to discover what base affection there is that retards the mercies we want, or attracts the affliction we feel, or bars the door against the return of our supplications. What our dim sight cannot discover, the clear eye of God can make visible to us (Job 10:2): "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." As in want of pardon, we particularly plead his mercy, and in our desires for the performance of his promise, we argue with him from his faithfulness, so in the fear of any insincerity or hidden corruption we should implore his omniscience: for as God is a God in covenant, our God, our God in the whole of his nature, so the perfections of his nature are employed in their several stations, as assistances of his creatures. This was David's practice and comfort, after that large meditation, on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, he turns his thoughts of it into petitions for the employment of it in the concerns of his soul, and begs a mercy suitable to the glory of this perfection (Psalms 139:23): "Search me, O God, and try my heart, try me, and know my thoughts;" dive to the bottom (Psalms 139:24), "and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." His desire is not barely that God should know him, for it would be senseless to beg of God that he should have mercy, or faithfulness, or power, or knowledge in his nature; but he desires the exercise of this attribute, in the discovery of himself to himself, in order to his sight of any wicked way, and humiliation for it, and reformation of it, in order to his conduct to everlasting life. As we may appeal to this perfection to judge us when the sincerity of our actions is censured by others, so we may implore it to search us when our sincerity is questioned by ourselves, that our minds may be enlightened by a beam from his knowledge, and the little thieves may be pulled out of their dens in our hearts by the hand of his power. In particular, it is our comfort that we can, and our necessity that we must address particularly to this, when we engage solemnly in a work of self-examination; that we may have a clearer eye to direct us than our own, that we may not mistake brass for gold, or counterfeit graces for true; that nothing that is filthy and fit to be cast out, may escape our sight, and preserve its station. And we need not question the laying at the door of this neglect (viz. not calling in this attribute to our aid, whose proper office it is, as I may so say, to search and inquire) all the mistakes, ill success, and fruitlessness of our endeavors in self-examination, because we would engage in it in the pitiful strength of our own dimness, and not in the light of God's countenance, and the assistance of his eye, which can discern what we cannot see, and discover that to us which we cannot manifest to ourselves. It is a comfort to a learner of an art to have a skilful eye to overlook his work, and inform him of the defects. Beg the help of the eye of God in all your searches and self-examinations.

9. The consideration of this attribute is comfortable in our assurances of, and reflections upon, the pardon of sin, or seeking of it. As God punishes men for sin according to his knowledge of them, which is greater than the knowledge their own consciences have of them, so he pardons according to his knowledge: he pardons not only according to our knowledge, but according to his own; he is greater than any man's heart, to condemn for that which a man is at present ignorant of; and greater than our hearts, to pardon that which is not at present visible to us; he knows that which the most watchful conscience cannot take a survey of: if God had not an infinite understanding of us, how could we have a perfect and full pardon from him? It would not stand with his honor to pardon he knew not what. He knows what crimes we have to be pardoned, when we know not all of them ourselves, that stand in need of a gracious remission; his omniscience beholds every sin to charge it upon our Saviour. If he knows our sins that are black, he knows every mite of Christ's righteousness which is pure, and the utmost extent of his merits, as well as the demerit of our iniquities. As he knows the filth of our sin, he also knows the covering of our Saviour: he knows the value of the Redeemer's sufferings, and exactly understands every plea in the intercession of our Advocate. Though God knows our sins oculo indice, yet he doth not see them oculo judice, with a judicial eye: his omniscience stirs not up his justice to revenge, but his mercy to pity. His infinite understanding of what Christ hath done, directs him to disarm his justice, and sound an alarm to his bowels. As he understands better than we what we have committed, so he understands better than we what our Saviour hath merited; and his eye directs his hand in the blotting out guilt, and applying the remedy.

Use III. shall be to sinners, to humble them, and put them upon serious consideration. This attribute speaks terrible things to a profligate sinner. Basil thinks that the ripping open the sins of the damned to their faces by this perfection of God, is more terrible than their other torments in hell. God knows the persons of wicked men, not one is exempted from his eye; he sees all the actions of men, as well as he knows their persons (Job 11:11): "He knows vain men, he sees wickedness also" (Job 34:21): "His eye is upon all their goings." He hears the most private whispers (Psalms 139:4), the scope, manner, circumstance of speaking, he knows it altogether: he understands all our thoughts, the first bubblings of that bitter spring (Psalms 139:2); the quickest glances of the fancy, the closest musings of the mind, and the abortive wouldings or wishes of the will, the language of the heart, as well as the language of the tongue; not a foolish thought, or an idle word, not a wanton glance, or a dishonest action, not a negligent service, or a distracting fancy, but is more visible to him, than the filth of a dunghill can be to any man by the help of a sun beam. How much better would it be for desperate sinners to have their crimes known to all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, and devils in hell, than that they should be known to their Sovereign, whose laws they have violated, and to their Judge, whose righteousness obligeth him to revenge the injury!

1. Consider what a poor refuge is secrecy to a sinner. Not the mists of a foggy day, nor the obscurity of the darkest night, not the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon, can hide any sin from the eye of God. Adam is known in his thickets, and Jonah in his cabin. Achan's wedge of gold is discerned by him, though buried in the earth, and hooded with a tent. Shall Sarah be unseen by him, when she mockingly laughs behind the door? Shall Gehazi tell a lie, and comfort himself with an imagination of his master's ignorance, as long as God knows it? Whatsoever works men do, are not hid from God, whether done in the darkness or daylight, in the midnight darkness, or the

noon-day sun: he is all eye to see, and he hath a great wrath to punish. The wheels of Ezekiel are full of eyes: a piercing eye to behold the sinner, and a swift wheel of wrath to overtake him. God is light, and of all things light is most difficultly kept out. The secretest sins are set in the light of his countenance (Psalms 90:8), as legible to him, as if written with a sun-beam; more visible to him than the greatest print to the sharpest eye. The fornications of the Samaritan woman, perhaps known only to her own conscience, were manifest to Christ (John 4:16.) There is nothing so secretly done, but there is an infallible witness to prepare a charge. Though God be invisible to us, we must not imagine we are so to him; it is a vanity, therefore, to think that we can conceal ourselves from God, by concealing the notions of God from our sense and practice. If men be as close from the eyes of all men, as from those of the sun, yea, if they could separate themselves from their own shadow, they could not draw themselves from God's understanding: how, then, can darkness shelter us, or crafty artifices defend us? With what shame will sinners be filled, when God, who hath traced their steps, and writ their sins in a book, shall make a repetition of their ways, and unveil the web of their wickedness!

2. What a dreadful consideration is this to the juggling hypocrite, that masks himself with an appearance of piety? An infinite understanding judges not according to veils and shadows, but according to truth; "He judges not according to appearance" (1 Samuel 16:7). The outward comeliness of a work imposeth not on him, his knowledge, and therefore his estimations are quite of another nature than those of men. By this perfection God looks through the veil, and beholds the litter of abominations in the secrets of the soul; the true quality and principle of every work, and judges of them as they are, and not as they appear. Disguised pretexts cannot deceive him; the disguises are known afar off, before they are weaved; he pierceth into the depths of the most abstruse wills; all secret ends are dissected before him; every action is naked in its outside, and open in its inside; all are as clear to him as if their bodies were of crystal; so that if there be any secret reserves, he will certainly reprove us (Job 13:10). We are often deceived; we may take wolves for sheep, and hypocrites for believers; for the eyes of men are no better than flesh, and dive no further than appearance; but an infinite understanding, that fathoms the secret depths of the heart, is too knowing to let a dream pass for a truth, or mistake a shadow for a body. Though we call God Father all our days, speak the language of angels, or be endowed with the gifts of miracles, he can discern whether we have his mark upon us; he can espy the treason of Judas in a kiss; Herod's intent of murdering under a specious pretence of worship; a Pharisee's fraud under a broad phylactery; a ravenous wolf under the softness of a sheep's skin; and the devil in Samuel's mantle, or when he would shroud himself among the sons of God (Job 1:6-7). All the rooms of the heart, and every atom of dust in the least chink of it, is clear to his eye; he can strip sin from the fairest excuses, pierce into the heart with more ease than the sun can through the thinnest cloud or vapor; and look through all Ephraim's ingenuous inventions to excuse his idolatry (Hosea 5:3). Hypocrisy, then, is a senseless thing, since it cannot escape unmasking, by an infinite understanding. As all our force cannot stop his arm, when he is resolved to punish, so all our sophistry cannot blind his understanding, when he comes to judge. Woe to the hypocrite, for God sees him; all his juggling is open and naked to infinite understanding.

3. Is it not also a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding: time cannot rase out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were

foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practise them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves (1 Samuel 15:2). Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers, to be requited upon their posterity. [Note: Isaiah 65:6. "Behold it is written."] What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us! because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt; the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up (Hosea 13:12). As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done, We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world. The former ages of the world are no further distant from him than the latter. God hath a calendar (as it were) or an account book of men's sins ever since the beginning of the world, what they did in their childhood, what in their youth, what in their manhood, and what in their old age: he hath them in store among his treasures (Deuteronomy 32:34): he hath neither lost his understanding to know them, nor his resolution to revenge them as it follows, "to me vengeance belongs" (Deuteronomy 32:35). He intends to enrich his justice with a glorious manifestation, by rendering a due recompense. And it is to be observed, that God doth not only necessarily remember them, but sometimes binds himself by an oath to do it (Amos 8:7); "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." Or, in the Hebrew, "If I ever forget any of their works;" that is, let me not be accounted a God forever, if I do forget; let me lose my godhead, if I lose my remembrance. It is not less a misery to the wicked, than it is a comfort to the godly, that their record is in heaven.

4. Let it be observed, that this infinite understanding doth exactly know the sins of men; he knows so as to consider. He doth not only know them, but intently behold them (Psalms 11:4): "His eyelids try the children of men," a metaphor taken from men that contract the eyelids, when they would wistly and accurately behold a thing; it is not a transient and careless look (Psalms 10:14): "Thou hast seen it;" thou hast intently beheld it, as the word properly signifies: he beholds and knows the actions of every particular man, as if there were none but he in the world; and doth not only know, but ponder (Proverbs 5:21), and consider their works (Psalms 33:15); he is not a bare spectator, but a diligent observer (1 Samuel 2:3); "By him actions are weighed:" to see what degree of good or evil there is in them, what there is to blemish them, what to advantage them, what the quality and quantity of every action is. Consideration takes in every circumstance of the considered object: notice is taken of the place where, the minute when, the mercy against which it is committed; the number of them is exact in God's book: "They have tempted me now these ten times" (Numbers 14:22), against the demonstrations of my glory in Egypt and the wilderness. The whole guilt in every circumstance is spread before him: his knowledge of men's sins is not confused; such an imperfection an infinite understanding cannot be subject to: it is exact, for iniquity is marked before him (Jeremiah 2:22).

5. God knows men's miscarriage so as to judge. This use his omniscience is put to, to maintain his sovereign authority in the exercise of his justice. His notice of the sins of men is in order to a just retribution (Psalms 10:14): "Thou hast seen mischief to requite it with thy hand." The eye of his knowledge directs the hand of his justice; and no sinful action that falls under his cognizance, but

will fall under his revenge; they can as little escape his censure as they can his knowledge: he is a witness in his omniscience, that he may be a judge in his righteousness; he knows the hearts of the wicked, so as to hate their works, and testify his abhorrence of that which is of high value with men (Luke 16:15). Sin is not preserved in his understanding, or written down in his book to be moth-eaten as an old manuscript, but to be opened one day, and copied out in the consciences of men: he writes them to publish them, and sets them in the light of his countenance, to bring them to the light of their consciences. What a terrible consideration is it, to think that the sins of a day are upon record in an infallible understanding, much more the sins of a week; what a number, then, do the sins of a month, a year, ten or forty years, arise to! How many actions against charity, against sincerity! what an infinite number is there of them, all bound up in the court rolls of God's omniscience, in order to a trial, to be brought out before the eyes of men! Who can seriously consider all those bonds, reserved in the cabinet of God's knowledge, to be sued out against the sinner in due time, without an inexpressible horror?

Use IV. is of exhortation. Let us have a sense of God's knowledge upon our hearts. All wickedness hath a spring from a want of due consideration and sense of it. David concludes it so (Psalms 86:14), "the proud rose against him, and violent men sought after his son, because they did not set God before them," They think God doth not know, and therefore care not what, nor how they act. When the fear of this attribute is removed, a door is opened to all impiety. What is there so villanous, but the minds of men will attempt to act? What reverence of a Deity can be left, when the sense of his infinite understanding is extinguished? What faith could there be in judgments in witnesses? How would the foundations of human society be overturned; the pillars upon which commerce stands, be utterly broken and dissolved! What society can be preserved, if this be not truly believed, and faithfully stuck to! But how easily would oaths be swallowed and quickly violated, if the sense of this perfection were rooted out of the minds of men! What fear could they have of calling to witness a Being they imagine blind and ignorant? Men secretly imagine, that God knows not, or soon forgets, and then make bold to sin against him (Ezekiel 8:12). How much does it therefore concern us to cherish and keep alive the sense of this? "If God writes us upon the palms of his hands," as the expression is, to remember us, let us engrave him upon the tables of our hearts to remember him. It would be a good motto to write upon our minds, God knows all, he is of infinite understanding.

1. This would give check to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eyes of his holiness, and renders the actor odious to him? "Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps," saith Job (31:4)? To what end doth he fix this consideration? To keep him from wanton glances; temptations have no encouragement to come near him, that is constantly armed with the thoughts that his sin is booked in God's omniscience. If any impudent devil hath the face to tempt us, we should not have the impudence to join issue with him under the sense of an infinite understanding. How fruitless would his wiles be against this consideration! How easily would his snares be cracked by one sensible thought of this! This doth Solomon prescribe to allay the heat of carnal imaginations (Proverbs 5:20-21). It were a useful question to ask, at the appearance of every temptation, at the entrance upon every action, as the church did in temptations to idolatry (Psalms 44:21): "Shall not God search this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart?" His understanding comprehends us more than our consciences can our acts, or our understanding our thoughts.

Who durst speak treason against a prince, if he were sure he heard him, or that it would come to his knowledge? A sense of God's knowledge of wickedness in the first motion, and inward contrivance, would bar the accomplishment and execution. The consideration of God's infinite understanding would cry stand to the first glances of the heart to sin.

2. It would make us watchful over our hearts and thoughts. Should we harbor any unworthy thoughts in our cabinet, if our heads and hearts were possessed with this useful truth, that God knows everything which comes into our minds (Ezekiel 11:5)? We should as much blush at the rising of impure thoughts before the understanding of God, as at the discovery of unworthy actions to the knowledge of men, if we lived under a sense, that not a thought of all those millions, which flutter about our minds, can be concealed from him. How watchful and careful should we be of our hearts and thoughts!

3. It would be a good preparation to every duty. This consideration should be the preface to every service; the Divine understanding knows how I now act. This would engage us to serious intention, and quell wandering and distracting fancies. Who would come before God, with a careless and ignorant soul, under a sense of his infinite understanding, and prerogative of searching the heart? "O thou that sittest in heaven!" was a consideration the psalmist had at the beginning of his prayer (Psalms 123:1?): whereby he testifies not only an apprehension of the majesty and power of God, but of his omniscience; as one sitting above, beholds all that is below; would we offer to God such raw and undigested petitions? would there be so much flatness in our services? should our hearts so often give us the slip? would any hang down their heads like a bulrush, by an affected or counterfeit humility, while the heart is filled with pride, if we did actuate faith in this attribute? No; our prayers would be more sound, our devotions more vigorous, our hearts more close, our spirits like the chariots of Aminadab, more swift in their motions: everything would be done by us with all our might, which would be very feeble and faint, if we conceived God to be of a finite understanding like ourselves. Let us therefore, before every duty, not draw, but open the curtains between God and our souls, and think that we are going before him that sees us, before him that knows us (Genesis 1:12). And the stronger impressions of the Divine knowledge are upon our minds, the better would our preparation be for, and the more active our frames in every service: and certainly we may judge of the suitableness of our preparations, by the strength of such impressions upon us.

4. This would tend to make us sincere in our whole course. This prescription David gave to Solomon, to maintain a soundness and health of spirit in his walk before God (1 Chronicles 28:9): "And thou, Solomon, my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, for the Lord understands all the imaginations of the thoughts." Josephus gives this reason for Abel's holiness, that he believed God was ignorant of nothing. [Note: Antiquit. lib. i. eap. 3.] As the doctrine of omniscience is the foundation of all religion, so the impression of it would promote the practice of all religion. When all our ways are imagined by us to be before the Lord, we shall then keep his precepts (Psalms 119:168). And we can never be perfect or sincere till we "walk before God" (Genesis 17:1); as under the eye of God's knowledge. What we speak, what we think, what we act, is in his sight; he knows every place where we are, everything that we do, as well as Christ knew Nathaniel under the fig-tree. As he is too powerful to be vanquished, so he is too understanding to be deceived; the sense of this would make us walk with as much care, as if the understanding of all men did comprehend us and our actions.

5. The consideration of this attribute would make us humble. How dejected would a person be if he were sure all the angels in heaven and men upon on earth, did perfectly know his crimes, with all their aggravations! But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding! When we consider that he knows our actions, whereof there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violations of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance; and add to this his knowledge, the wonders of his patience, which are miraculous upon the score of his omniscience, that he is not as quick in his revenge as he is in his understanding, but is so far from inflicting punishment, that he continues his former benefits, arms not his justice against us, but solicits our repentance, and. waits to be gracious with all this knowledge of our crimes; should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging pardon and forgiveness of him? Again, do we not all find a worm in our best fruit, a flaw in our soundest duties? Shall any of us vaunt, as if God beheld only the gold, and not any dross; as if he knew one thing only, and not another? If we knew something by ourselves to cheer us, do we not also know something, yea, many things, to condemn us, and therefore to humble us? Let the sense of God's infinite knowledge, therefore, be an incentive and argument for more humiliation in us. If we know enough to render ourselves vile in our own eyes, how much more doth God know to render us vile in his!

6. The consideration of this excellent perfection should make us to acquiesce in God, and rely upon him in every strait. In public, in private; he knows all cases, and he knows all remedies; he knows the seasons of bringing them, and he knows the seasons of removing them, for his own glory. What is contingent in respect of us, and of our foreknowledge, and in respect of second causes, is not so in regard of God's, who hath the knowledge of the futuration of all things; he knows all causes in themselves, and, therefore, knows what every cause will produce, what will be the event of every counsel and of every action. How should we commit ourselves to this God of infinite understanding, who knows all things, and foreknows everything; that cannot be forced through ignorance to take new counsel, or be surprised with anything that can happen to us! This use the Psalmist makes of it (Psalms 10:14): "Thou hast seen it, the poor committeth himself unto thee." Though "some trust in chariots and horses" (Psalms 20:7), some in counsels and counsellors, some in their arms and courage, and some in mere vanity and nothing; yet, let us remember the name and nature of the Lord our God, his divine perfections, of which this of his infinite understanding and omniscience is none of the least, but so necessary, that without it he could not be God, and the whole world would be a mere chaos and confusion.

On God's Omnipresence

ON GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

Jeremiah 23:24.—Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him! saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. The occasion of this discourse begins Jeremiah 23:16, where God admonisheth the people, not to hearken to the words of the false prophets which spake a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They made the people vain by their insinuations of peace, when God had proclaimed war and calamity; and uttered the dreams of their fancies, and not the visions of the Lord; and so turned the people from the expectation of the evil day which God had threatened (Jeremiah 23:17): “They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.” And they invalidate the prophecies of those whom God had sent, Jeremiah 23:18 : “Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?” Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord? Are they acquainted with the secrets of God more than we? Who have the word of the Lord, if we have not? Or, it may be a continuation of God’s admonition: believe not those prophets; for who of them have been acquainted with the secrets of God? or by what means should they learn his counsel? No; assure yourselves “a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked” (Jeremiah 23:19). A whirlwind shall come from Babylon; it is just at the door, and shall not be blown over; it shall fall with a witness upon the wicked people and the deceiving prophets, and sweep them together into captivity. For (Jeremiah 23:20), “The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart.” My fury shall not be a childish fury, that quickly languisheth, but shall accomplish whatsoever I threaten; and burn so hot, as not to be cool, till I have satisfied my vengeance; “in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly” (Jeremiah 23:20), when the storm shall beat upon you, you shall then know that the calamities shall answer the words you have heard. When the conqueror shall waste your grounds, demolish your houses, and manacle your hands, then shall you consider it, and have the wishes of fools, that you had had your eyes in your heads before; you shall then know the falseness of your guides, and the truth of my prophets, and discern who stood in the counsel of the Lord, and subscribe to the messages I have sent you.

Some understand this not only of the Babylonish captivity, but refer it to the time of Christ, and the false doctrine of men’s own righteousness in opposition to the righteousness of God; understanding this verse to be partly a threatening of wrath, which shall end in an advantage to the Jews, who shall in the latter time consider the falseness of their notions about a legal righteousness, and so make it a promise; they shall then know the intent of the Scripture, and in the latter days, the latter end of the world, when time shall be near the rolling up, they shall reflect upon themselves; they shall “look upon Him whom they have pierced;” and till these latter days, they shall be hardened, and believe nothing of evangelical truths. Now God denieth that he sent those prophets (Jeremiah 23:21): “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken

to them, yet they prophesied." They have intruded themselves without a commission from me, whatsoever their brags are. The reason to prove it is (Jeremiah 23:22), "If they had stood in my counsel," if they had been instructed, and inspired by me, "they would have caused my people to hear my words;" they would have regulated themselves according to my word, "and have turned them from their evil way;" i. e. endeavored to shake down their false confidences of peace, and make them sensible of their false notions of me, and my ways. Now because those false prophets could not be so impudent as to boast that they prophesied in the name of God, when they had not commission from him, unless they had some secret sentiment, that they and their intentions were hid from the knowledge and eye of God; he adds (Jeremiah 23:33), "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Have I not the power of seeing and knowing what they do, what they design, what they think? Why should I not have such a power, since I fill heaven and earth by my essence?" Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? He excludes here the doctrine of those that excluded the providence of God from extending itself to the inferior things of the earth; which error was ancient, as ancient as the time of Job, as appears by their opinion, that God's eyes were hood-winked and muffled by the thickness of the clouds, and could not pierce through their dark and dense body (Job 22:14): "Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not."

Some refer it to time. [Note: Munster, Vatablus, Castalio Oecolanp.] Do you imagine me a God new framed like your idols, beginning a little time ago, and not existing before the foundation of the world; yea, from eternity? a God afar off, further than your acutest understandings can reach? I am of a longer standing, and you ought to know my majesty. But it rather refers to place than time. Do you think I do not behold everything in the earth, as well as in heaven? Am I locked up within the walls of my palace, and cannot peep out to behold the things done in the world? or that am I so linked to pleasure in the place of my glory, as earthly kings are in their courts, that I have no mind or leisure to take notice of the carriages of men upon earth?

God doth not say, He was afar off, but only gives an account of the inward thoughts of their minds, or at least of the language expressed by their actions. The interrogation carries in it a strong affirmation, and assures us more of God's care, and the folly of men in not considering it. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places?" (Heb.) In hiddennesses, in the deepest cells. What I are you besotted by your base lusts, that you think me a God careless, ignorant, blind, that I can see nothing, but as a purblind man, what is very near my eye? Are you so out of your wits, that you imagine you can deceive me? Do not all your behaviors speak such a sentiment to lie secret in your heart, though not formed into a full conception, yet testified by your actions? No, you are much mistaken; it is impossible but that I should see and know all things, since I am present with all things, and am not at a greater distance from the things on earth than from the things in heaven; for I fill all that vast fabric which is divided into those two parts of heaven and earth; and he that hath such an infinite essence, cannot lie distant, cannot be ignorant; nothing can be far from his eyes, since everything is so near to his essence. So that it is an elegant expression of the omniscience of God, and a strong argument for it. He asserts, first, the universality of his knowledge; but lest they should mistake, and confine his presence only to heaven, he adds, That he "fills heaven and earth." I do not see things so, as if I were in one place, and the things seen in another, as it is with man; but whatsoever I see, I see not without myself, because every corner of heaven and earth is filled by me. He that fills all, must needs see and

know all. And indeed, men that question the knowledge of God, would be more convinced by the doctrine of his immediate presence with them. And this seems to be the design and manner of arguing in this place. Nothing is remote from my knowledge, because nothing is distant from my presence.

I fill heaven and earth: he doth not say, "I am in heaven and earth," but I fill heaven and earth; i. e. say some, with my knowledge, others, with my authority or my power. [Note: Tum perspicacia, tum efficacia, Grot.] But,

1. The word filling cannot properly be referred to the act of understanding and will. A presence by knowledge is to be granted, but to say such a presence fills a place is an improper speech: knowledge is not enough to constitute a presence. A man at London knows there is such a city as Paris, and knows many things in it; can he be concluded, therefore, to be present in Paris, or fill any place there, or be present with the things he knows there? If I know anything to be distant from me, how can it be present with me? For by knowing it to be distant, I know it not to be present. Besides, filling heaven and earth is distinguished here from knowing or seeing: his presence is rendered as an argument to prove his knowledge. Now a proposition, and the proof of that proposition, are distinct, and not the same. It cannot be imagine that God should prove idem per idem, as we say; for what would be the import of the speech then? I know all things, I see all things, because I know and see all things. [Note: Suarez.] The Holy Ghost here accommodates himself to the capacity of men; because we know that a man sees and knows that which is done, where he is corporally present; so he proves that God knows all things that are done in the most secret caverns of the heart, because he is everywhere in heaven and earth, as light is everywhere in the air, and air everywhere in the world. Hence the schools use the term repletive for the presence of God.

2. Nor by filling of heaven and earth is meant his authority and power. It would be improperly said of a king, that in regard of the government of his kingdom, is everywhere by his authority, that he fills all the cities and countries of his dominions. "I, do not I fill?" [Note: Amiral. de Trinitate, p. 57.] That "I" notes the essence of God, as distinguished according to our capacity, from the perfections pertaining to his essence, and is in reason better referred to the substance of God, than to those things we conceive as attributes in him. Besides, were it meant only of his authority or power, the argument would not run well. I see all things, because my authority and power fills heaven and earth. Power doth not always rightly infer knowledge, no, not in a rational agent. Many things in a kingdom are done by the authority of the king, that never arrive to the knowledge of the king. Many things in us are done. by the power of our souls, which yet we have not a distinct knowledge of in our understandings. There are many motions in sleep, by the virtue of the soul informing the body, that we have not so much as a simple knowledge of in our minds. Knowledge is not rightly inferred from power, or power from knowledge. By filling heaven and earth is meant, therefore, a filling it with his essence. No place can be imagined that is deprived of the presence of God; and therefore when the Scripture anywhere speaks of the presence of God, it joins heaven and earth together. He so fills them, that there is no place without him. We do not say a vessel is full so long as there is any space to contain more. Not a part of heaven, nor a part of earth, but the whole heaven, the whole earth, at one and the same time. If he were only in one part of heaven, or one part of earth; nay, if there were any part of heaven, or any part of earth void of him, he could not be said to fill them. "I fill heaven and earth," not a part of me fills one place, and another part of me fills another,

but I, God, fill heaven and earth; I am whole God filling the heaven, and whole God, filling the earth. I fill heaven, and yet fill earth; I fill earth, and yet fill heaven, and fill heaven and earth at one and the same time. "God fills his own works," a heathen philosopher saith. [Note: Seneca de Benefic. lib. 4. c. 8. Ipse opus suum implet.]

I. Here is then a description of God's presence. 1. By power, "Am I not a God afar off?" a God in the extension of his arm. 2. By knowledge, "Shall I not see them?" 3. By essence; as an undeniable ground for inferring the two former: "I fill heaven and earth."

Doctrine. God is essentially everywhere present in heaven and earth. If God be, he must be somewhere; that which is nowhere, is nothing. Since God is, he is in the world; not in one part of it; for then he were circumscribed by it: if in the world, and only there, though it be a great space, he were also limited. Some therefore said, "God was everywhere, and nowhere." [Note: Chrysostom.] Nowhere, i. e. not bounded by any place, nor receiving from any place anything for his preservation or sustainment. He is everywhere, because no creature, either body or spirit, can exclude the presence of his essence; for he is not only near, but in everything (Acts 17:28) "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Not absent from anything, but so present with them, that they live and move in him, and move more in God, than in the air or earth wherein they are; nearer to us than our flesh to our bones, than the air to our breath; he cannot be far from them that live, and have every motion in him. The apostle doth not say, By him, but in him, to show the inwardness of his presence. As eternity is the perfection whereby he hath neither beginning nor end, immutability is the perfection whereby he hath neither increase nor diminution, so immensity or omnipresence is that whereby he hath neither bounds nor limitation. As he is in all time, yet so as to be above time; so is he in all places, yet so as to be above limitation by any place. It was a good expression of a heathen to illustrate this, "That God is a sphere or circle, whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere." His meaning was, that the essence of God was indivisible; i. e. could not be divided. It cannot be said, here and there the lines of it terminate; it is like a line drawn out in infinite spaces, that no point can be conceived where its length and breadth ends. The sea is a vast mass of waters; yet to that it is said, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." But it cannot be said of God's essence, hitherto it reaches, and no further; here it is, and there it is not. It is plain, that God is thus immense, because he is infinite; we have reason and Scripture to assent to it, though we cannot conceive it. We know that God is eternal, though eternity is too great to be measured by the short line of a created understanding. We cannot conceive the vastness and glory of the heavens, much less that which is so great, as to fill heaven and earth, yea (1 Kings 8:27), "not to be contained in the heaven of Heavens." Things are said to be present, or in a place,

1. Circumscriptive, as circumscribed. This belongs to things that have quantity, as bodies that are encompassed by that place wherein they are; and a body fills but one particular space wherein it is, and the space is commensurate to every part of it, and every member hath a distinct place. The hand is not in the same particular space that the foot or head is.

2. Definitive, which belongs to angels and spirits, which are said to be in a point, yet so as that they cannot be said to be in another at the same time.

3. Repletive, filling all places. This belongs only to God: as he is not measured by time, so he is not limited by place. A body or spirit, because finite, fills but one space; God, because infinite, fills

all, yet so as not to be contained in them, as wine and water is in a vessel. He is from the height of the heavens to the bottom of the deeps, in every point of the world, and in the whole circle of it, yet not limited by it, but beyond it. Now this hath been acknowledged by the wisest in the world. Some indeed had other notions of God. The more ignorant sort of the Jews confined him to the temple. [Note: Hierom on Isaiah 66:1.] And God intimates, that they had such a thought when he asserts his presence in heaven and earth, in opposition to the temple they built as his house, and the place of his rest. [Note: Hammond on Matthew 6:7.] And the idolaters among them, thought their gods might be at a distance from them, which Elias intimates in the scoff he puts upon them (1 Kings 18:17), "Cry aloud, for he is a god," meaning Baal; "either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey;" and they followed his advice, and cried louder (1 Kings 18:28), whereby it is evident, they looked not on it as a mock, but as a truth. And the Syrians called the God of Israel the God of the hills, as though his presence were fixed there, and not in the valleys (1 Kings 10:23); and their own gods in the valleys, and not in the mountains; they fancied every god to have a particular dominion and presence in one place and not in another, and bounded the territories of their gods as they did those of their princes. [Note: Med. Diatrib. Vol. I. pp. 71, 72.] And some thought him tied to and shut up in their temples and groves wherein they worshipped him. [Note: Dought Analec. excurs. 61, 113.] Some of them thought God to be confined to heaven, and therefore sacrificed upon the highest mountains, that the steam might ascend nearer heaven, and their praises be heard better in those places which were nearest to the habitation of God. But the wiser Jews acknowledged it, and therefore called God place, [Note: ■■■■ Grot. upon Matthew 5:16. Mares. contra Volk. lib. i cap. 27. p. 494.] whereby they denoted his immensity; he was not contained in any place; every part of the world subsists by Him: he was a place to himself, greater than anything made by Him. And the wiser heathens acknowledged it also. One calls God a mind passing through the universal nature of things; [Note: Vide Minut. Fel. p. 20.] another, that He was an infinite and immense air; [Note: Plotin. Enead. 6. lib. 5. cap. 4.] another, that it is as natural to think God is everywhere, as to think that God is: hence they called God the soul of the world; that as the soul is in every part of the body to quicken it, so is God in every part of the world to support it. And there are some resemblances of this in the world, though no creature can fully resemble God in any one perfection; for then it would not be a creature, but God. But air and light are some resemblances of it: air is in all the spaces of the world, in the pores of all bodies, in the bowels of the earth, and extends itself from the lowest earth to the highest regions; and the heavens themselves are probably nothing else but a refined kind of air; and light diffuseth itself through the whole air, and every part of it is truly light, as every part of the air is truly air; and though they seem to be mingled together, yet they are distinct things, and not of the same essence; so is the essence of God in the whole world, not by diffusion as air or light, not mixed with any creature, but remaining distinct from the essence of any created being. Now, when this hath been owned by men instructed only in the school of nature, it is a greater shame to any acquainted with the Scripture to deny. For the understanding of this, there shall be some propositions premised in general.

Prop. I. This is negatively to be understood. Our knowledge of God is most by withdrawing from him, or denying to him in our conceptions any weaknesses or imperfections in the creature. As the infiniteness of God is a denial of limitation of being, so immensity or omnipresence is a denial of limitation of place: and when we say, God is totus in every place, we must understand it thus; that he is not everywhere by parts, as bodies are, as air and light are; He is everywhere, i. e. his nature

hath no bounds; he is not tied to any place, as the creature is, who, when he is present in one place, is absent from another. As no place can be without God, so no place can compass and contain him.

Prop. II. There is an influential omnipresence of God.

1. Universal with all creatures. He is present with all things by his authority, because all things are subject to him by his power, because all things are sustained by him: by his knowledge, because all things are naked before him. He is present in the world, as a king is in all parts of his kingdom regally present: providentially present with all, since his care extends to the meanest of his creatures. His power reacheth all, and his knowledge pierceth all. As everything in the world was created by God, so everything in the world is preserved by God; and since preservation is not wholly distinct from creation, it is necessary God should be present with everything while he preserves it, as well as present with it when he created it. "Thou preservest man and beast" (Psalms 36:6). "He upholds all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). There is a virtue sustaining every creature, that it may not fall back into that nothing from whence it was elevated by the power of God. All those natural virtues we call the principles of operation, are fountains springing from his goodness and power; all things are acted and managed by him, as well as preserved by him; and in this sense God is present with all creatures; for whatsoever acts another, is present with that which it acts, by sending forth some virtue and influence whereby it acts: if free agents do not only live, but move in him and by him (Acts 17:28), much more are the motions of other natural agents by a virtue communicated to them, and upheld in them in the time of their acting. This virtual presence of God is evident to our sense, a presence we feel; his essential presence is evident in our reason. This influential presence may be compared to that of the sun, which though at so great a distance from the earth, is present in the air and earth by its light, and within the earth by its influence in concocting those metals which are in the bowels of it, without being substantially either of them. God is thus so intimate with every creature, that there is not the least particle of any creature, but the marks of his power and goodness are seen in it, and his goodness doth attend them, and is more swift in its effluxes than the breakings out of light from the sun, which yet are more swift than can be declared; but to say he is in the world only by his virtue, is to acknowledge only the effects of his power and wisdom in the world, that his eye sees all, his arm supports all, his goodness nourisheth all, but himself and his essence at a distance from them; [Note: Zanch.] and so the soul of man according to its measure would have in some kind a more excellent manner of presence in the body, than God according to the infiniteness of his Being with his creatures; for that doth not only communicate life to the body, but is actually present with it, and spreads its whole essence through the body and every member of it. All grant, that God is efficaciously in every creek of the world; but some say he is only substantially in heaven.

2. Limited to such subjects that are capacitated for this or that kind of presence. Yet it is an omnipresence, because it is a presence in all the subjects capacitated for it; thus there is a special providential presence of God with some in assisting them when he sets them on work as his instruments for some special service in the world. As with Cyrus (Isaiah 45:2), "I will go before thee;" and with Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander, whom he protected and directed to execute his counsels in the world; such a presence Judas and others [Note: Matthew 7:22. "In thy name we have done many wonderful works."] that shall not enjoy his glorious presence, had in the working of miracles in the world. Besides, [Note: Cajetan in Aquin. Par. i. Qu. 8. Art. 3.] as there is an

effective presence of God with all creatures, because he produced them and preserves them, so there is an objective presence of God with rational creatures, because he offers himself to them to be known and loved by them. He is near to wicked men in the offers of his grace, "Call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6); besides, there is a gracious presence of God with his people in whom he dwells and makes his abode, as in a temple consecrated to him by the graces of the Spirit. "We will come" (John 14:23), i. e. the Father and the Son, and make our abode with him. He is present with all by the presence of his Divinity, but only in his saints by a presence of a gracious efficacy; he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and hath dignified the congregation of his people with the title of Jehovah Shammah, "the Lord is there" (Ezekiel 48:35): "in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion" (Psalms 76:2). As he filled the tabernacle, so he doth the church with the signs of his presence; this is not the presence wherewith he fills heaven and earth. His Spirit is not bestowed upon all to reside in their hearts, enlighten their minds, and bedew them with refreshing comforts. When the Apostle speaks of God being "above all and through all" (Ephesians 4:6), above all in his majesty, through all in his providence; he doth not appropriate that as he doth what follows, "and in you all;" in you all by a special grace; as God was specially present with Christ by the grace of union, so he is specially present with his people by the grace of regeneration. So there are several manifestations of his presence; he hath a presence of glory in heaven, whereby he comforts the saints; a presence of wrath in hell, whereby he torments the damned; in heaven he is a God spreading his beams of light; in hell, a God distributing his strokes of justice; by the one he fills heaven; by the other he fills hell; by his providence and essence he fills both heaven and earth.

Prop. III. There is an essential presence of God in the world. He is not only everywhere by his power upholding the creatures, by his wisdom understanding them, but by his essence containing them. That anything is essentially present anywhere, it hath from God; God is therefore much more present everywhere, for he cannot give that which he hath not.

1. He is essentially present in all places. [Note: Ficin.] It is as reasonable to think the essence of God to be everywhere as to be always. Immensity is as rational as eternity. That indivisible essence which reaches through all times may as well reach through all places. It is more excellent to be always than to be everywhere; for to be always in duration is intrinsic; to be everywhere is intrinsic. If the greater belongs to God, why not the less? As all times are a moment to his eternity, so all places are as a point to his essence. As he is larger than all time, so he is vaster than all place. The nations of the world are to hire "as the dust of the balance" or "drop of a bucket" (Isaiah 40:15.). "The nations are accounted as the small dust." The essence of God may well be thought to be present everywhere with that which is no more than a grain of dust to him, and in all those isles, which, if put together, "are a very little thing" in his hand. Therefore, saith a learned Jew, [Note: Maimonid.] if a man were set in the highest heavens he would not be nearer to the essence of God than if he were in the centre of the earth. Why may not the presence of God in the world be as noble as that of the soul in the body, which is generally granted to be essentially in every part of the body of man, which is but a little world, and animates every member by its actual presence, though it exerts not the same operation in every part? [Note: Ficin.] The world is less to the Creator than the body to the soul, and needs more the presence of God than the body needs the presence of the soul. That glorious body of the sun visits every part of the habitable earth in twenty-four hours by its beams, which reaches the troughs of the lowest valleys as well as the

pinnacles of the highest mountains; must we not acknowledge in the Creator of this sun an infinite greater proportion of presence? Is it not as easy, with the essence of God, to overspread the whole body of heaven and earth as it is for the sun to pierce and diffuse itself through the whole air, between it and the earth, and send up its light also as far to the regions above? Do we not see something like it in sounds and voices? Is not the same sound of a trumpet, or any other musical instrument, at the first breaking out of a blast, in several places within such a compass at the same time? Doth not every ear that hears it receive alike the whole sound of it? And fragrant odors, scented in several places at the same time, in the same manner; and the organ proper for smelling takes in the same in every person within the compass of it. How far is the noise of thunder heard alike to every ear in places something distant from one another! And do we daily find such a manner of presence in those things of so low a concern, and not imagine a kind of presence of God greater than all those? Is the sound of thunder, the voice of God as it is called, everywhere in such a compass? and shall not the essence of an infinite God be much more everywhere? Those that would confine the essence of God only to heaven, and exclude it from the earth, run into great inconveniences. It may be demanded whether he be in one part of the heavens or in the whole vast body of them. If in one part of them, his essence is bounded; if he moves from that part he is mutable, for he changes a place wherein he was, for another wherein he was not. If he be always fixed in one part of the heavens, such a notion would render him little better than a living statue. [Note: Hornbeck Soun. Part I. p. 303.] If he be in the whole heaven, why cannot his essence possess a greater space than the whole heavens, which are so vast? How comes he to be confined within the compass of that, since the whole heaven compasseth the earth? If he be in the whole heaven he is in places farther distant one from another than any part of the earth can be from the heavens; since the earth is like a centre in the midst of a circle, it must be nearer to every part of the circle than some parts of the circle can be to one another. If, therefore, his essence possesses the whole heavens, no reason can be rendered why he doth not also possess the earth, since also the earth is but a little point in comparison of the vastness of the heavens: if, therefore, he be in every part of the heavens, why not in every part of the earth? The Scripture is plain (Psalms 139:7-9), "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; if make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall uphold me." If he be in heaven, earth, hell, sea, he fills all places with his presence. His presence is here asserted in places the most distant from one another. All the places then between heaven and earth are possessed by his presence. It is not meant of his knowledge, for that the Psalmist had spoken of before (Psalms 139:2-3), "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou art acquainted with all my ways:" besides, "thou art there;" not thy wisdom or knowledge, but thou, thy essence, not only thy virtue. For, having before spoken of his omniscience, he proves that such knowledge could not be in God, unless he were present in his essence in all places, so as to be excluded from none. He fills the depths of hell, the extension of the earth, and the heights of the heavens. When the Scripture mentions the power of God only, it expresseth it by hand or arm; but when it mentions the Spirit of God, and doth not intend the Third Person in the Trinity, it signifies the nature and essence of God. And so here, when he saith, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" he adds, exegetically, "Whither shall I fly from thy presence?" or (Heb.) "face:" and the face of God in Scripture signifies the essence of God (Exodus 33:20; Exodus 33:23); "Thou canst not see my face," and "My face shall not be seen." The effects of his

power, wisdom, and providence are seen, which are his back parts, but not his face. The effects of his power and wisdom are seen in the world, but his essence is invisible; and this the Psalmist elegantly expresseth, Had I wings endued with as much quickness as the first dawns of the morning light, or the first darts of any sunbeam that spreads itself through the hemisphere, and passeth many miles in as short a space as I can think a thought, I should find thy presence in all places before me, and could not fly out of the infinite compass of thy essence.

2. "He is essentially present with all creatures." If he be in all places, it follows that he is with all creatures in those places; as he is in heaven, so he is with all angels; as he is in hell, so he is with all devils: as he is in the earth and sea, he is with all creatures inhabiting those elements; as his essential presence was the ground of the first being of things by creation, so it is the ground of the continued being of things by conservation; as his essential presence was the original, so it is the support of the existence of all the creatures. What are all those magnificent expressions of his creative virtue, but testimonies of his essential presence at the laying the foundation of the world (Isaiah 40:12), "when he measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" He sets forth the power and majesty of God in the creation and preservation of things, and every expression testifies his presence with them. The waters that were upon the face of the earth at first were no more than a drop in the palm of a man's hand, which in every part is touched by his hand; and thus he is equally present with the blackest devils, as well as the brightest angels; with the lowest dust, as well as with the most sparkling sun. He is equally present with the damned and the blessed, as he is an infinite Being, but not in regard of his goodness and grace. He is equally present with the good and the bad, with the scoffing Athenians, as well as the believing apostles, in regard of his essence, but not in regard of the breathing of his divine virtues upon them to make them like himself (Acts 17:27). "He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." The apostle includes all; he tells them they should seek the Lord; the Lord that they were to seek, is God essentially considered. We are, indeed, to seek the perfections of God, that glitter in his works, but to the end that they should direct us to the seeking of God himself in his own nature and essence; [Note: Amyrald. de Trinit.] and, therefore, what follows, "In him we live," is to be understood, not of his power and goodness, perfections of his nature, distinguished according to our manner of conception from his essence, but of the essential presence of God with his creatures. If he had meant it of his efficacy in preserving us, it had not been any proof of his nearness to us. Who would go about to prove the body or substance of the sun to be near us because it doth warm and enlighten us, when our sense evidenceth the distance of it? We live in the beams of the sun, but we cannot be said to live in the sun, which is so far distant from us. The expression seems to be more emphatical than to intend any less than his essential presence; but we live in him not only as the efficient cause of our life, but as the foundation sustaining our lives and motions, as if he were like air, diffused round about us; and we move in him, as Austin saith, as a sponge in the sea, not containing him, but being contained by him. He compasseth all, is encompassed by none; he fills all, is comprehended by none. The Creator contains the world, the world contains not the Creator; as the hollow of the hand contains the water, the water in the hollow of the hand contains not the hand; and therefore some have chose to say, rather, that the world is in God, it lives and moves in him, than that God is in the world. If all things thus live and move in him, then he is present with everything that hath life and motion; and as long as the devils and damned have life, and motion, and being, so long is

- he with them; for whatsoever lives and moves, lives and moves in him. This essential presence is,
- (1) Without any mixture. I fill heaven and earth; not, I am mixed with heaven and earth: his essence is not mixed with the creatures; it remains entire in itself. The sponge retains the nature of a sponge, though encompassed by the sea, and moving in it; and the sea still retains its own nature. God is most simple; his essence therefore is not mixed with anything. The light of the sun is present with the air, but not mixed with it; it remains light, and the air remains air; the light of the sun is diffused through all the hemisphere, it pierceth all transparent bodies, it seems to mix itself with all things, yet remains unmixed and undivided; the light remains light, and the air remains air; the air is not light, though it be enlightened. Or, take this similitude: When many candles are lighted up in a room, the light is all together, yet not mixed with one another; every candle hath a particular light belonging to it, which may be separated in a moment, by removing one candle from another; but if they were mixed, they could not be separated, at least so easily. God is not formally one with the world, or with any creature in the world by his presence in it; nor can any creature in the world, no, not the soul of man, or an angel, come to be essentially one with God, though God be essentially present with it.
- (2.) The essential presence is without any division of himself. "I fill heaven and earth," not part in heaven, and part in earth; I fill one as well as the other: one part of his essence is not in one place, and another part of his essence in another place, he would then be changeable; for that part of his essence which were now in this place, he might alter it to another, and place that part of his essence which were in another place to this; but he is undivided everywhere. As his eternity is one indivisible point, though in our conception we divide it into past, present, and to come, so the whole world is as a point to him, in regard of place, as before was said; it is as a small dust, and grain of dust: it is impossible that one part of his essence can be separated from another, for he is not a body, to have one part separable from another. The light of the sun cannot be cut into parts, it cannot be shut into any place and kept there, it is entire in every place. Shall not God, who gives the light that power, be much more present himself? Whatsoever hath parts is finite, but God is infinite, therefore hath no parts of his essence. Besides, if there were such a division of his being, he would not be the most simple and uncompounded being, but would be made up of various parts; he would not be a Spirit, for parts are evidences of composition; and it could not be said that God is here or there, but only, a part of God here, and a part of God there. But he fills heaven and earth; he is as much a God in the earth beneath as in heaven above (Deuteronomy 4:39); entirely in all places, not by scraps and fragments of his essence.
- (3.) This essential presence is not by multiplication. For that which is infinite cannot multiply itself, or make itself more or greater than it was.
- (4.) This essential presence is not by extension or diffusion, as a piece of gold may be beaten out to cover a large compass of ground; no, if God should create millions of worlds he would be in them all, not by stretching out his being, but by the infiniteness of his being; not by a new growth of his being, but by the same essence he had from eternity: upon the same reasons mentioned before, his simplicity and indivisibility.
- (5.) But totally. There is no space, not the least, wherein God is not wholly, according to his essence, and wherein his whole substance doth not exist; not a part of heaven can be designed wherein the Creator is not wholly; as he is in one part of heaven, he is in every part of heaven.

Some kind of resemblance we may have from the water of the sea, which fills the great space of the world, and is diffused through all; yet the essence of water is in every drop of water in the sea, as much as the whole; and the same quality of water, though it comes short in quantity; and why shall we not allow God a nobler way of presence without diffusion, as is in that? or take this resemblance; since God likens himself to light in the Scripture, "he covereth himself with light." [Note: Psalms 104:2; John 1:5. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."] A crystal globe hung up in the air hath light all about it, all within it, every part is pierced by it, wherever you see the crystal you see the light; the light in one part of the crystal cannot be distinguished from the light in the other part; and the whole essence of light is in every part; and shall not God be as much present with his creatures, as one creature can be with another? [Note: Bernard.] God is totally everywhere by his own simple substance.

Prop. IV. God is present beyond the world. He is within and above all places, though places should be infinite in number; as he was before and beyond all time, so he is above and beyond all place; being from eternity before any real time, he must also be without as well as within any real space; if God were only confined to the world, he would be no more infinite in his essence than the world is in quantity; as a moment cannot be conceived from eternity, wherein God was not in being, so a space cannot be conceived in the mind of man, wherein God is not present; he is not contained in the world nor in the heavens (1 Kings 8:27). "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." Solomon wonders that God should appoint a temple to be erected to him upon the earth, when he is not contained in the vast circuit of the heavens; his essence is not straitened in the limits of any created work; he is not contained in the heavens, i. e. in the manner that he is there; but he is there in his essence, and therefore cannot be contained there in his essence. If it should be meant only of his power and providence, it would conclude also for his essence; if his power and providence were infinite, his essence must be so too; for the infiniteness of his essence is the ground of the infiniteness of his power. It can never enter into any thought, that a finite essence can have an infinite power, and that an infinite power can be without an infinite essence; it cannot be meant of his providence, as if Solomon should say, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thy providence; for naming the heaven of heavens, that which encircles and bounds the other parts of the world, he could not suppose a providence to be exercised where there was no object to exercise it about; as no creature is mentioned to be beyond the uttermost heaven, which he calls here the heaven of heavens: besides, to understand it of his providence, doth not consist with Solomon's admiration: he wonders that God, that hath so immense an essence, should dwell in a temple made with hands; he could not so much wonder at his providence in those things that immediately concern his worship. Solomon plainly asserts this of God, That he was so far from being bounded within the rich wall of the temple, which with so much cost he had framed for the glory of his name, that the richer palace of the heaven of heavens could not contain him; it is true, it could not contain his power and wisdom, because his wisdom could contrive other kind of worlds, and his power erect them. But doth the meaning of that wise king reach no farther than this? Will the power and wisdom of God reside on the earth? He was too wise to ask such a question, since every object that his eyes met with in the world resolved him, that the wisdom and power of God dwelt upon the earth, and glittered in everything he had created; and reason would assure him that the power that had framed this world, was able to frame any more; but Solomon, considering the immensity of God's essence, wonders that God should order a house to be built for him, as if he wanted roofs and coverings, and habitation, as

bodily creatures do. Will God indeed dwell in a temple, who hath an essence so immense as not to be contained in the heaven of heavens? It is not the heaven of heavens that can contain him, his substance. Here he asserts the immensity of his essence, and his presence not only in the heaven, but beyond the heavens; he that is not contained in the heavens, as a man is in a chamber, is without, and above, and beyond the heavens; it is not said, they do not contain him, but it is impossible they should contain him; they cannot contain him. It is impossible, then, but that he should be above them; he that is without the compass of the world, is not bounded by the limits of the world, as his power is not limited by the things he hath made, but can create innumerable worlds, so can his essence be in innumerable spaces; for as he hath power enough to make more worlds, so he hath essence enough to fill them, and therefore cannot be confined to what he hath already created; innumerable worlds cannot be a sufficient place to contain God; he can only be a sufficient place to himself; [Note: Petar.] He that was before the world, and place, and all things, was to himself a world, a place, and everything: [Note: Maccor. loc. commun. cap. 19, p. 153.] He is really out of the world in himself, as he was in himself before the creation of the world: as because God was before the foundation of the world, we conclude his eternity; so because he is without the bounds of the world, we conclude his immensity, and from thence his omnipresence. The world cannot be said to contain him, since it was created by him; it cannot contain him now, who was contained by nothing before the world was: as there was no place to contain him before the world was, there can be no place to contain him since the world was. God might create more worlds, circular and round as this, and those could not be so contiguous, but some spaces would be left between; as, take three round balls, lay them as close as you can to one another, there will be some spaces between; none would say but God would be in these spaces, as well as in the world he had created, though there were nothing real and positive in those spaces: why should we then exclude God from those imaginary spaces without the world? God might also create many worlds, and separate them by distances, that they might not touch one another, but be at a great distance from one another; and would not God fill them as well as he doth this? if so, he must also fill the spaces between them; for if he were in all those worlds, and not in the spaces between those worlds, his essence would be divided; there would be gaps in it, his essence would be cut into parts, and the distance between every part of his essence, would be as great as the space between each world. The essence of God may be conceived then well enough to be in all those infinite spaces where he can erect new worlds.

I shall give one place more to prove both these propositions, viz. that God is essentially in every part of the world, and essentially above ours without the world (Isaiah 66:1): "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." He is essentially in every part of the world; he is in heaven and earth at the same time, as a man is upon his throne and his footstool. God describes himself in a human shape, accommodated to our capacity; as if he had his head in heaven, and his feet on earth. Doth not his essence then, fill all intermediate spaces between heaven and earth? As when the head of a man is in the upper part of a room, and his feet upon the floor, his body fills up the space between the head and his feet: this is meant of the essence of God; it is a similitude drawn from kings sitting upon the throne, and not their power and authority, but the feet of their persons are supported by the footstool; so here it is not meant only of the perfections of God, but the essence of God. Besides, God seems to tax them with an erroneous conceit they had, as though his essence were in the temple, and not in any part of the world; therefore God makes an opposition between heaven and earth, and the temple: "Where is the house that you built unto

me? and where is the place of my rest?" Had he understood it only of his providence, it had not been anything against their mistake; for they granted his providence to be not only in the temple, but in all parts of the world. "Where is the house that you build to me;" to Me, not to my power or providence, but think to include Me within those walls. Again, it shows God to be above the heavens, if the heavens be his throne; he sits upon them, and is above them, as kings are above the thrones on which they sit. So it cannot be meant of his providence, because no creature being without the sphere of the heavens, there is nothing of the power and the providence of God visible there, for there is nothing for him to employ his providence about; for providence supposeth a creature in actual being; it must be therefore meant of his essence, which is above the world and in the world. And the like proof you may see (Job 11:7-8), "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Where he intends the unsearchableness of God's wisdom, but proves it by the infiniteness of his essence, (Heb.) "he is the height of the heavens," he is the top of all the heavens; so that, when you have begun at the lowest part, and traced him through all the creatures, you will find his essence filling all the creatures, to be at the top of the world, and infinitely beyond it.

Prop. V. This is the property of God, incommunicable to any creature. As no creature can be eternal and immutable, so no creature can be immense, because it cannot be infinite; nothing can be of an infinite nature, and therefore nothing of an immense presence but God. It cannot be communicated to the human nature of Christ, though in union with the Divine; [Note: Rivet. Psalms 110:1-7. p. 301, Colossians 2:1-23.] some indeed argue, that Christ in regard of his human nature is everywhere, because he sits at the right hand of God, and the right hand of God is everywhere. His sitting at the right hand of God signifies his exaltation, and cannot with any reason, be extended to such a kind of arguing. "The hearts of kings are in the hand of God;" are the hearts of kings everywhere, because God's hand is everywhere? The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; is the soul, therefore, of every righteous man everywhere in the world? The right hand of God is from eternity; is the humanity of Christ, therefore, from eternity, because it sits at the right hand of God? The right hand of God made the world; did the humanity of Christ, therefore, make heaven and earth? the humanity of Christ must then be confounded with his divinity; be the same with it, not united to it. All creatures are distinct from their Creator, and cannot inherit the properties essential to his nature, as eternity, immensity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience; no angel, no soul, no creature can be in all places at once; before they can be so they must be immense, and so must cease to be creatures, and commence God; this is impossible.

II. Reasons to prove God's essential presence. Reason I. Because he is infinite. As he is infinite, he is everywhere; as he is simple, his whole essence is everywhere: for, in regard of his infiniteness, he hath no bounds; in regard of his simplicity, he hath no parts and, therefore, those that deny God's omnipresence, though they pretend to own him infinite, must really conceive him finite.

1. God is infinite in his perfections. None can set bounds to terminate the greatness and excellency of God (Psalms 145:3): "His greatness is unsearchable," Sept. ο■χ ■στι π■ρας, there is no end, no limitation. What hath no end is infinite; his power is infinite (Job 5:9): "which doth great things and unsearchable;"—no end of those things he is able to do. His wisdom infinite (Psalms 147:5); he understands all things past, present, and to come; what is already made, what

is possible to be made. His duration infinite (Job 36:26): “The number of his years cannot be searched out” πρᾶντος. To make a finite thing of nothing is an argument of an infinite virtue. Infinite power can only extract something out of the barren womb of nothing; but all things were drawn forth by the word of God, the heavens, and all the host of them; the sun, moon, stars, the rich embellishments of the world, appeared in being “at the breath of his mouth” (Psalms 33:6). The author, therefore, must be infinite; and since nothing is the cause of God, or of any perfection in him,—since he derives not his being, or the least spark of his glorious nature, from anything without him,—he cannot be limited in any part of his nature by anything without him; and, indeed, the infiniteness of his power and his other perfections is asserted by the prophet, when he tells us that “the nations are as a drop of a bucket, or the dust of the balance, and less than nothing and vanity” (Isaiah 40:15; Isaiah 40:17), they are all so in regard of his power, wisdom, &c. Conceive what a little thing a grain of dust or sand is to all the dust that may be made by the rubbish of a house: what a little thing the heap of the rubbish of a house is to the vast heap of the rubbish of a whole city, such an one as London; how little that, also, would be to the dust of a whole empire; how inconsiderable that, also, to the dust of one quarter of the world, Europe or Asia; how much less that, still, to the dust of the whole world! The whole world is composed of an unconceivable number of atoms, and the sea of an unconceivable number of drops; now what a little grain of dust is in comparison to the dust of the whole world—a drop of water from the sea, to all the drops remaining in the sea—that is the whole world to God. Conceive it still less, a mere nothing, yet is it all less than this in comparison of God; there can be nothing more magnificently expressive of the infiniteness of God to a human conception, than this expression of God himself in the prophet. In the perfection of a creature, something still may be thought greater to be added to it; but God containing all perfections in himself formally, if they be mere perfections, and eminently, if they be but perfections in the creature, mixed with imperfection, nothing can be thought greater, and therefore every one of them is infinite.

2. If his perfections be infinite, his essence must be so. How God can have infinite perfections, and a finite essence, is unconceivable by a human or angelical understanding; an infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite duration, must needs speak an infinite essence; since the infiniteness of his attributes is grounded upon the infiniteness of his essence: to own infinite perfections in a finite subject is contradictory. The manner of acting by his power, and knowing his wisdom, cannot exceed the manner of being by his essence. His perfections flow from his essence, and the principle must be of the same rank with what flows from it; and, if we conceive his essence to be the cause of his perfections, it is utterly impossible that an infinite effect should arise from a finite cause: but, indeed, his perfections are his essence; for though we conceive the essence of God as the subject, and the attributes of God as faculties and qualities in that subject, according to our weak model, who cannot conceive of an infinite God without some manner of likeness to ourselves—who find understanding, and will, and power in us distinct from our substance; yet truly and really there is no distinction between his essence and attributes; one is inseparable from the other. His power and wisdom are his essence; and therefore to maintain God infinite in the one, and finite in the other, is to make a monstrous god, and have an unreasonable notion of the Deity; for there would be the greatest disproportion in his nature, since there is no greater disproportion can possibly be between one thing and another than there is between finite and infinite. God must not only then be compounded, but have parts of the greatest distance from one another in nature; but God, being the most simple being without the least composition, both must be equally infinite:

if, then, his essence be not infinite, his power and wisdom cannot be infinite, which is both against scripture and reason. Again, how should his essence be finite, and his perfections be infinite, since nothing out of himself gave them either the one or the other? [Note: Amyrald de Trinitat. p. 89.] Again, either the essence can be infinite, or it cannot; if it cannot, there must be some cause of that impossibility; that can be nothing without him, because nothing without him can be as powerful as himself, much less too powerful for him; nothing within him can be an enemy to his highest perfection; since he is necessarily what he is, he must be necessarily the most perfect being, and therefore necessarily infinite, since to be something infinitely is a greater perfection than to be something finitely: [Note: Deus eat actus parvus et nullam habet potentiam passivam.] if he can be infinite he is infinite, otherwise he could be greater than he is, and so more blessed and more perfect than he is, which is impossible: for being the most perfect Being, to whom nothing can be added, he must needs be infinite.

3. If, therefore, God have an infinite essence, he hath an infinite presence. An infinite essence cannot be contained in a finite place, as those things which are finite have a bounded space wherein they are; so that which is infinite hath an unbounded space; for, as finiteness speaks limitedness, so infiniteness speaks unboundedness; and if we grant to God an infinite duration, there is no difficulty in acknowledging an infinite presence: indeed, the infiniteness of God is a property belonging to him in regard of time and place; he is bounded by no place, and limited to no time. Again, infinite essence may as well be everywhere, as infinite power reaches everything; it may as well be present with every being, as infinite power in its working may be present with nothing to bring it into being. Where God works by his power, he is present in his essence; because his power and his essence cannot be separated; and therefore his power, wisdom, goodness, cannot be anywhere where his essence is not: his essence cannot be severed from his power, nor his power from his essence; for the power of God is nothing but God acting, and the wisdom of God nothing but God knowing. As the power of God is always, so is his essence—as the power of God is everywhere, so is his essence: whatsoever God is, he is alway, and everywhere. To confine him to a place, is to measure his essence; as to confine his actions, is to limit his power; his essence being no less infinite than his power and his wisdom, can be no more bounded than his power and wisdom; but they are not separable from his essence, yea, they are his essence. If God did not fill the whole world, he would be determined to some place, and excluded from others; and so his substance would have bounds and limits, and then something might be conceived greater than God; for we may conceive that a creature may be made by God of so vast a greatness as to fill the whole world, for the power of God is able to make a body that should take up the whole space between heaven and earth, and reach to every corner of it. But nothing can be conceived by any creature greater than God; he exceeds all things, and is exceeded by none. God, therefore, cannot be included in heaven, nor included in the earth; cannot be contained in either of them; for, if we should imagine them vaster than they are, yet still they would be finite; and if his essence were contained in them, it could be no more infinite than the world which contains it, as water is not of a larger compass than the vessel which contains it. If the essence of God were limited, either in the heavens or earth, it must needs be finite, as the heaven and earth are; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite; God, therefore, cannot be contained in them. If there were an infinite body, that must be everywhere; certainly, then, an infinite Spirit must be everywhere; unless we will account him finite, we can render no reason why he should not be in one creature as well as in another. If he be in heaven, which is his creature,

why can he not be in the earth, which is as well his creature as the heavens?

Reason II. Because of the continual operation of God in the world. This was one reason which made the heathen believe that there was an infinite Spirit in the vast body of the world, acting in every thing, and producing those admirable motions which we see everywhere in nature: that cause which acts in the most perfect manner, is also in the most perfect manner present with its effects.

God preserves all, and therefore is in all; the apostle thought it a good induction (Acts 17:27), "He is not far from us, for in him we live." For being as much as because, shows, that from his operation he concluded his real presence with all: it is not, His virtue is not far from every one of us, but He, his substance, himself; for, none that acknowledge a God will deny the absence of the virtue of God from any part of the world. He works in everything, everything lives and works in him; therefore he is present with all: [Note: Pont.] or rather, if things live, they are in God, who gives them life. If things live, God is in them, and gives them life; if things move, God is in them, and gives them motion; if things have any being, God is in them, and gives them being; if God withdraws himself; they presently lose their being, and therefore some have compared the creature to the impression of a seal upon the water, that cannot be preserved but by the presence of the seal. As his presence was actual with what he created, so his presence is actual with what he preserves, since creation and preservation do so little differ; if God creates things by his essential presence, by the same he supports them; if his substance cannot be disjoined from his preserving power, his power and wisdom cannot be separated from his essence; where there are the marks of the one, there is the presence of the other; for it is by his essence that he is powerful and wise; no man can distinguish the one from the other in a simple being; God doth not preserve and act things by a virtue diffused from him. It may be demanded whether that virtue be distinct from God; if it be not, it is then the essence of God; if it be distinct it is a creature, and then it may be asked, how that virtue which preserves other things, is preserved itself; it must be ultimately resolved into the essence of God, or else there must be a running in infinitum: or else, [Note: Amyrald de Trinitat, p. 106, 107.] is that virtue of God a substance, or not? Is it endued with understanding, or not? If it hath understanding, how doth it differ from God? If it wants understanding, can any imagine that the support of the world, the guidance of all creatures, the wonders of nature, can be wrought, preserved, managed by a virtue that hath nothing of understanding in it? If it be not a substance, it can much less be able to produce such excellent operations as the preserving all the kinds of things in the world, and ordering them to perform such excellent ends; this virtue is, therefore, God himself—the infinite power and wisdom of God; and therefore, wheresoever the effects of these are seen in the world, God is essentially present: some creatures, indeed, act at a distance by a virtue diffused. But such a manner of acting comes from a limitedness of nature, that such a nature cannot be everywhere present and extend its substance to all parts. To act by a virtue, speaks the subject finite, and it is a part of indigence: kings act in their kindoms by ministers and messengers, because they cannot act otherwise; but God being infinitely perfect, works all things in all immediately (1 Corinthians 12:6). Illumination, sanctification, grace, &c., are the immediate works of God in the heart, and immediate agents are present with what they do: it is an argument of the greater perfection of a being, to know things immediately, which are done in several places, than to know them at the second hand by instruments; it is no less a perfection to be everywhere, rather than to be tied to one place of action, and to act in other

places lay instruments, for want of a power to act immediately itself. God, indeed, acts by means and second causes in his providential dispensations in the world, but this is not out of any defect of power to work all immediately himself; but he thereby accommodates his way of acting to the nature of the creature, and the order of things which he hath settled in the world. And when he works by means, he acts with those means, in those means, sustains their faculties and virtues in them, concurs with them by his power; so that God's acting by means doth rather strengthen his essential presence than weaken it, since there is a necessary dependence of the creatures upon the Creator in their being and acting; and what they are, they are by the power of God; what they act, they act in the power of God, concurring with them; they have their motion in him as well as their being; and where the power of God is, his essence is, because they are inseparable; and so this omnipresence ariseth from the simplicit of the nature of God; the more vast anything is, the less confined. All that will acknowledge God so great, as to be able to work all things by his will, without an essential presence, cannot imagine him upon the same reason, so little as to be contained in, and bounded by any place.

Reason III. Because of his supreme perfection. No perfection is wanting to God; but an unbounded essence is a perfection; a limited one is an imperfection. Though it be a perfection in a man to be wise, yet it is an imperfection that his wisdom cannot rule all the things that concern him; though it be a perfection to be present in a place where his affairs lie, yet is it an imperfection that he cannot be present everywhere in the midst of all his concerns; if any man could be so, it would be universally owned as a prime perfection in him above others: is that which would be a perfection in man to be denied to God? [Note: Amyruld de Trinitat, p. 74, 75.] as that which hath life is more perfect than that which hath not life; and that which hath sense is more perfect than that which hath only life as the plants have; and what hath reason, is more perfect than that which hath only life and sense, as the beasts have; so what is everywhere, is more perfect than that which is bounded in some narrow confines: if a power of motion be more excellent than to be bed-ridden, and swiftness in a creature be a more excellent endowment than to be slow and snail-like, then to be everywhere without motion, is inconceivably a greater excellency than to be everywhere successively by motion. God sets forth his readiness to help his people and punish his enemies, or his omnipresence, by swiftness, or "flying upon the wings of the wind" (Psalms 18:10): the wind is in every part of the air, where it blows; it cannot be said that it is in this or that point of the air where you feel it, so as to exclude it from another part of the air where you are not; it seems to possess all at once. If the Divine essence had any bounds of place, it would be imperfect, as well as if it had bounds of time; where anything hath limitation, it hath some defect in being; and therefore if God were confined or concluded, he would be as good as nothing in regard of infiniteness. Whence should this restraint arise? there is no power above him to restrain him to a certain space; if so, then he would not be God, but that power which restrained him would be God: not from his own nature, for the being everywhere implies no contradiction to his nature; if his own nature determined him to a certain place, then if he removed from that place, he would act against his nature; to conceive any such thing of God is highly absurd. It cannot be thought God should voluntarily impose any such restraint or confinement upon himself; this would be to deny himself a perfection he might have; if God have not this perfection, it is either because it is inconsistent with his nature; or, because he cannot have it; or, because he will not. The former cannot be; for if he hath impressed upon air and light a resemblance of his excellency, to diffuse themselves and fill so vast a space, is such an excellency inconsistent with the Creator more than the creature?

whatsoever perfection the creature hath, is eminently in God. "Understand, O ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" (Psalms 94:8-9.) By the same reason he that hath given such a power to those creatures, air and light, shall not he be much more filling all spaces of the world? It is so clear a rule, that the Psalmist fixes a folly and brutishness upon those that deny it; it is not therefore inconsistent with his nature, it were not then a perfection but an imperfection; but whatsoever is an excellency in creatures, cannot in a way of eminency be an imperfection in God; if it be then a perfection, and God want it, it is because he cannot have it; where, then, is his power? How can he be then the fountain of his own Being? If he will not, where is his love to his own nature and glory? since no creature would deny that to itself which it can have, and is an excellency to it; God, therefore, hath not only a power or fitness to be everywhere, but he is actually everywhere.

Reason IV. Because of his immutability. If God did not fill all the spaces of heaven and earth, but only possess one, yet it must be acknowledged that God hath a power to move himself to another. It were absurd to fix God in a part of the heavens, like a star in an orb, without a power of motion to another place. If he be therefore essentially in heaven, may he not be upon the earth if he please, and transfer his substance from one place to another? to say he cannot, is to deny him a perfection which he hath bestowed upon his creatures; the angels, his messengers, are sometimes in heaven, sometimes on the earth; the eagles, meaner creatures, are sometimes in the air out of sight, sometimes upon the earth. If he doth move, therefore, and recede from one place and settle in another, doth he not declare himself mutable by changing places?—by being where he was not before, and in not being where he was before? He would not fill heaven and earth at once, but successively; no man can be said to fill a room, that moves from one part of a room to another; if therefore any in their imaginations stake God to the heavens, they render him less than his creatures; if they allow him a power of motion from one place to another, they conceive him changeable; and in either of them they own him no greater than a finite and limited Being; limited to heaven, if they fix him there; limited to that space to which they imagine him to move.

Reason V. Because of his omnipotency. The Almightyness of God is a notion settled in the minds of all,—that God can do whatsoever he pleases, everything that is not against the purity of his nature, and doth not imply a contradiction in itself; he can therefore create millions of worlds greater than this; and millions of heavens greater than this heaven he hath already created; if so, he is then in inconceivable spaces beyond this world, for his essence is not less narrower than his power; and his power is not to be thought of a further extent than his essence; he cannot be excluded therefore from those vast spaces where his power may fix those worlds if he please; if so, it is no wonder that he should fill this world: and there is no reason to exclude God from the narrow space of this world, that is not contained in infinite spaces beyond the world. God is wheresoever he hath a power to act; but he hath a power to act everywhere in the world, everywhere out of the world; he is therefore everywhere in the world, everywhere out of the world. Before this world was made, he had a power to make it in the space where now it stands; was he not then unlimitedly where the world now is, before the world received a being by his powerful word? Why should he not then be in every part of the world now? Can it be thought that God who was immense before, should, after he had created the world, contract himself to the limits of one of

his creatures, and tie himself to a particular place of his own creation, and be less after his creation than he was before? This might also be prosecuted by an argument from his eternity. What is eternal in duration, is immense in essence; the same reason which renders him eternal, renders him immense; that which proves him to be always, will prove him to be everywhere.

III. The third thing is, Propositions for the further clearing this doctrine from any exceptions.

1. This truth is not weakened by the expressions in Scripture, where God is said to dwell in heaven and in the temple.

(1.) He is indeed said to sit in heaven (Psalms 2:4), and to dwell on high (Psalms 113:5), but he is nowhere said to dwell only in the heavens, as confined to them. It is the court of his majestical presence, but not the prison of his essence: for when we are told that “the heaven is his throne,” we are told with the same breath that the “earth is his footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). He dwells on high, in regard of the excellency of his nature, but he is in all places, in regard of the diffusion of his presence. The soul is essentially in all parts of the body, but it doth not exert the same operations in all; the more noble discoveries of it are in the head and heart. In the head where it exerciseth the chiefest senses for the enriching the understanding; in the heart, where it vitally resides, and communicates life and motion to the rest of the body. It doth not understand with the foot or toe, though it be in all parts of the body it informs; and so God may be said to dwell in heaven, in regard of the more excellent and majestic representations of himself, both to the creatures that inhabit the place, as angels and blessed spirits, and also in those marks of his greatness which he hath planted before, those spiritual natures which have a nobler stamp of God upon them, and those excellent bodies, as sun and stars, which, as so many toppers, light us to behold his glory (Psalms 19:1), and astonish the minds of men when they gaze upon them. It is his court, where he hath the most solemn worship from his creatures, all his courtiers attending there with a pure love and glowing zeal. He reigns there in a special manner, without any opposition to his government; it is, therefore, called his “holy dwelling place” (2 Chron. 3:27). The earth hath not that title, since sin cast a stain and a ruining curse upon it. The earth is not his throne, because his government is opposed: but heaven is none of Satan’s precinct, and the rule of God is uncontradicted by the inhabitants of it. It is from thence also he hath given the greatest discoveries of himself; thence he sends the angels his messengers, his Son upon Redemption, his Spirit for sanctification. From heaven his gifts drop down upon our heads, and his grace upon our hearts (James 3:17). From thence the chiefest blessings of earth descend. The motions of the heavens fatten the earth; and the heavenly bodies are but stewards to the earthly comforts for man by their influence. Heaven is the richest, vastest, most steadfast, and majestic part of the visible creation. It is there where he will at last manifest himself to his people in a full conjunction of grace and glory, and be forever open to his people in uninterrupted expressions of goodness, and discoveries of his presence, as a reward of their labor and service; and in these respects it may peculiarly be called his throne. And this doth no more hinder his essential presence in all parts of the earth, than it doth his gracious presence in all the hearts of his people. God is in heaven, in regard of the manifestation of his glory; in hell, by the expressions of his justice; in the earth, by the discoveries of his wisdom, power, patience, and compassion; in his people, by the monuments of his grace; and in all, in regard of his substance.

(2.) He is said also to dwell in the ark and temple. It is called (Psalms 26:8) "the habitation of his house, and the place where his honor dwells;" and to dwell in Jerusalem as in his holy mountain, "The mountain of the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 8:3), in regard of publishing his oracles, answering their prayers, manifesting more of his goodness to the Israelites, than to any other nation in the world; erecting his true worship among them, which was not settled in any part of the world besides: and his worship is principally intended in that psalm. The ark is the place where his honor dwells. The worship of God is called the glory of God; "They changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23), i. e., they changed the worship of God into idolatry; and to that also doth the place in Zechariah refer. Now, because he is said to dwell in heaven, is he essentially only there? Is he not as essentially in the temple and ark as he is in heaven, since there are as high expressions of his habitation there as of his dwelling in heaven? If he dwell only in heaven, how came he to dwell in the temple? both are asserted in Scripture, one as much as the other. If his dwelling in heaven did not hinder his dwelling in the ark, it could as little hinder the presence of his essence on the earth. To dwell in heaven, and in one part of the earth at the same time, is all one as to dwell in all parts of heaven, and all parts of earth. If he were in heaven, and in the ark and temple, it was the same essence in both, though not the same kind of manifestation of himself. If by his dwelling in heaven he meant his whole essence, why is it not also to be meant by his dwelling in the ark? It was not, sure, part of his essence that was in heaven, and part of his essence that was on earth; his essence would then be divided; and can it be imagiued that he should be in heaven and the ark at the same time, and not in the spaces between? Could his essence be split into fragments, and a gap made in it, that two distant spaces should be filled by him, and all between be empty of him, so that God's being said to dwell in heaven, and in the temple, is so far from impairing the truth of this doctrine, that it more confirms and evidences it.

2. Nor do the expressions of God's coming to us, or departing from us, impair this doctrine of his omnipresence. God is said to hide his face from his people (Psalms 10:1); to be far from the wicked; and the Gentiles are said to be afar off, viz. from God (Proverbs 15:29; Ephesians 2:17), and upon the manifestation of Christ made near. These must not be understood of any distance or nearness of his essence, for that is equally hear to all persons and things; but of some other special way and manifestation of his presence. Thus, God is said to be in believers by love, as they are in him (1 John 4:15); "He that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him." He that loves, is in the thing beloved; and when two love one another, they are in one another. God is in a righteous man by a special grace, and far from the wicked in regard of such special works; and God is said to be in a place by a special manifestation, as when he was in the bush (Exodus 3:1-22), or manifesting his glory upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:16); "The glory of the Lord abode about Mount Sinai." God is said to hide his face when he withdraws his comforting presence, disturbs the repose of our hearts, flasheth terror into our consciences, when he puts men under the smart of the cross; as though he had ordered his mercy utterly to depart from them, or when he doth withdraw his special assisting providence from us in our affairs; so he departed from Saul, when he withdrew his direction and protection from him in the concerns of his government (1 Samuel 16:14); "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul," i. e. the spirit of government. God may be far from us in one respect, and near to us in another; far from us in regard of comfort, yet near to us in regard of support, when his essential presence continues the same: this is a necessary consequent upon the infiniteness of God, the other is an act of the will of God; so he was said to

forsake Christ, in regard of his obscuring his glory from his human nature, and inflicting his wrath, though he was near to him in regard of his grace, and preserved him from contracting any spot in his sufferings. We do not say the sun is departed out of the heavens when it is bemisted; it remains in the same part of the heavens, passes on its course, though its beams do not reach us by reason of the bar between us and it. The soul is in every part of the body, in regard of its substance, and constantly in it, though it doth not act so sprightly and vigorously at one time as at another in one and the same member, and discover itself so sensibly in its operations; so all the various effects of God towards the sons of men, are but divers operations of one and the same essence. He is far from us, or near to us, as he is a judge or a benefactor. When he comes to punish, it notes not the approach of his essence, but the stroke of his justice; when he comes to benefit, it is not by a new access of his essence, but an efflux of his grace: he departs from us when he leaves us to the frowns of his justice; he comes to us when he encircles us in the arms of his mercy; but he was equally present with us in both dispensations, in regard of his essence. And, likewise, God is said to come down (Genesis 11:5, "And the Lord came down to see the city"), when he doth some signal and wonderful works which attract the minds of men to the acknowledgment of a Supreme Power and Providence in the world, who judged God absent and careless before.

3. Nor is the essential presence of God with all creatures any disparagement to him. Since it was no disparagement to create the heaven and the earth, it is no disparagement to him to fill them; if he were essentially present with them when he created them, it is no dishonor to him to be essentially present with them to support them; if it were his glory to create them by his essence, when they were nothing, can it be his disgrace to be present by his essence, since they are something, and something good, and very good in his eye (Genesis 1:31)? God saw every thing, and behold it was very good, or mighty good; all ordered to declare his goodness wisdom, power, and to make him adorable to man, and therefore took complacency in them. There is a harmony in all things, a combination in them for those glorious ends for which God created them; and is it a disgrace for God to be present with his own harmonious composition? Is it not a musician's glory to touch with his fingers the treble, the least and tenderest string, as well as the strongest and greatest bass? Hath not everything some stamp of God's own being upon it, since he eminently contains in himself the perfections of all his works? Whatsoever hath being, hath a footstep of God upon it, who is all being; everything in the earth is his footstool, having a mark of his foot upon it; all declare the being of God, because they had their being from God; and will God account it any disparagement to him to be present with that which confirms his being, and the glorious perfections of his nature, to his intelligent creatures? The meanest things are not without their virtues, which may boast God's being the Creator of them, and rank them in the midst of his works of wisdom as well as power. Doth God debase himself to be present by his essence, with the things he hath made, more than he doth to know them by his essence? Is not the least thing known by him? How? not by a faculty or act distinct from his essence, but by his essence itself. How is anything disgraceful to the essential presence of God, that is not disgraceful to his knowledge by his essence? Besides, would God make anything that should be an invincible reason to him to part with his own infiniteness, by a contraction of his own essence into a less compass than before? it was immense before, it had no bounds; and would God make a world that he would be ashamed to be present with, and continue it to the diminution and lessening of himself, rather than annihilate it to avoid the disparagement? This were to impeach the wisdom of

God, and cast a blemish upon his infinite understanding, that he knows not the consequences of his work, or is well contented to be impaired in the immensity of his own essence by it. No man thinks it a dishonor to light, a most excellent creature, to be present with a toad or serpent; and though there be an infinite disproportion between light, a creature, and the Father of lights, the Creator: yet God, being a Spirit, knows how to be with bodies as if they were not bodies; [Note: Gassend.] and being jealous of his own honor, would not, could not do any thing that might impair it.

4. Nor will it follow, That because God is essentially everywhere, that everything is God. God is not everywhere by any conjunction, composition or mixture with anything on earth. When light is in every part of a crystal globe, and encircles it close on every side, do they become one? No; the crystal remains what it is, and the light retains its own nature; God is not in us as a part of us, but as an efficient and preserving cause; it is not by his essential presence, but his efficacious presence, that he brings any person into a likeness to his own nature; God is so in his essence with things, as to be distinct from them, as a cause from the effect; as a Creator different from the creature, preserving their nature, not communicating his own; his essence touches all, is in conjunction with none; finite and infinite cannot be joined; he is not far from us, therefore near to us; so near that we live and move in him (Acts 17:28). Nothing is God because it moves in him, any more than a fish in the sea, is the sea, or a part of the sea, because it moves in it. Doth a man that holds a thing in the hollow of his hand, transform it by that action, and make it like his hand? [Note: Amyrald de Trinit. pp. 99, 100.] The soul and body are more straitly united, than the essence of God is, by his presence, with any creature. The soul is in the body as a form in matter, and from their union doth arise a man; yet in this near conjunction, both body and soul remain distinct; the soul is not the body, nor the body the soul; they both have distinct natures and essences; the body can never be changed into a soul, nor the soul into a body; no more can God into the creature, or the creature into God. Fire is in heated iron in every part of it, so that it seems to be nothing but fire; yet is not fire and iron the same thing. But such a kind of arguing against God's omnipresence, that if God were essentially present, everything would be God, would exclude him from heaven as well as from earth. By the same reason, since they acknowledge God essentially in heaven, the heaven where he is should be changed into the nature of God; and by arguing against his presence in earth, upon this ground they run such an inconvenience, that they must own him to be nowhere, and that which is nowhere is nothing. Doth the earth become God, because God is essentially there, any more than the heavens, where God is acknowledged by all to be essentially present? Again, if where God is essentially, that must be God; then if they place God in a point of the heavens, not only that point must be God, but all the world; because if that point be God, because God is there, then the point touched by that point must be God, and so consequently as far as there are any points, touched by one another. We live and move in God, so we live and move in the air; we are no more God by that, than we are mere air because we breathe in it, and it enters into all the pores of our body; nay, where there was a straiter union of the divine nature to the human in our Saviour, yet the nature of both was distinct, and the humanity was not changed into the divinity, nor the divinity into the humanity.

5. Nor doth it follow, that because God is everywhere, therefore a creature may be worshipped without idolatry. Some of the heathens who acknowledged God's omnipresence, abused it to the countenancing idolatry; because God was resident in everything, they thought everything might be

worshipped; and some have used it as an argument against this doctrine; the best doctrines may by men's corruption be drawn out into unreasonable and pernicious conclusions. Have you not met with any, that from the doctrine of God's free mercy, and our Saviour's satisfactory death, have drawn poison to feed their lusts, and consume their souls?—a poison composed by their own corruption, and not offered by those truths. The Apostle intimates to us, that some did, or at least were ready to be more lavish in sinning, because God was abundant in grace; [Note: Romans 6:1-2; Romans 6:16. "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law. but under grace?"] "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" when he prevents an objection that he thought might be made by some: but as to this case, since though God be present in everything, yet everything retains its nature distinct from the nature of God; therefore it is not to have a worship due to the excellency of God. As long as anything remains a creature, it is only to have the respect from us, which is due to it in the rank of creatures. When a prince is present with his guard, or if he should go arm in arm with a peasant, is, therefore, the veneration and honor due to the prince to be paid to the peasant, or any of his guard? Would the presence of the prince excuse it, or would it not rather aggravate it? He acknowledged such a person equal to me, by giving him my rights, even in my sight. Though God dwelt in the temple, would not the Israelites have been accounted guilty of idolatry had they worshipped the images of the cherubims, or the ark, or the altar, as objects of worship, which were erected only as means for his service? Is there not as much reason to think God was as essentially present in the temple as in heaven, since the same expressions are used of the one and the other? The sanctuary is called the glorious high throne (Jeremiah 17:13); and he is said to dwell between the cherubims (Psalms 80:1), i. e. the two cherubims that were at the two ends of the mercy seat, appointed by God as the two sides of his throne in the sanctuary (Exodus 25:18), where he was to dwell Exodus 25:8), and meet, and commune, with his people Exodus 25:22). Could this excuse Manasseh's idolatry in bringing in a carved image into the house of God (1 Chron. 33:7)? had it been a good answer to the charge, God is present here, and therefore everything may be worshipped as God? If he be only essentially in heaven, would it not be idolatry to direct a worship to the heavens, or any part of it as a due object, because of the presence of God there? Though we look up to the heavens, where we pray and worship God, yet heaven is not the object of worship; the soul abstracts God from the creature.

6. Nor is God defiled by being present with those creatures which seem filthy to us. Nothing is filthy in the eye of God as his creature; he could never else have pronounced all good; whatsoever is filthy to us, yet, as it is a creature, it owes itself to the power of God: his essence is no more defiled by being present with it, than his power by producing it: no creature is foul in itself, though it may seem so to us. Doth not an infant lie in a womb of filthiness and rottenness? yet is not, the power of God present with it, in working it curiously in the lower parts of the earth? Are his eyes defiled by seeing the substance when it is yet imperfect? or his hand defiled by writing every member in his book (Psalms 139:15-16)? Have not the vilest and most noisome things excellent medicinal virtues? How are they endued with them? How are those qualities preserved in them? by anything without God, or no? Every artificer looks with pleasure upon the work he hath wrought with art and skill. Can his essence be defiled by being present with them, any more than it was in giving them such virtues, and preserving them in them? God measures the heavens and the earth with his hand; is his hand defiled by the evil influences of the planets, or the corporeal impurities of the earth? Nothing can be filthy in the eye of God but sin, since everything else owes its being to him. What may appear deformed and unworthy to us, is not so to the Creator; he sees beauty

where we see deformity; finds goodness where we behold what is nauseous to us. All creatures being the effects of his power, may be the objects of his presence. Can any place be more foul than hell, if you take it either for the hell of the damned, or for the grave where there is rottenness? yet there he is (Psalms 139:8). When Satan appeared before God, and God spake with him (Job 1:7), could God contract any impurity by being present where that filthy spirit was, more impure than any corporeal, noisome, and defiling thing can be? No; God is purity to himself in the midst of noisomeness; a heaven to himself in the midst of hell. Whoever heard of a sunbeam stained by shining upon a quagmire, any more than sweetened by breaking into a perfumed room? [Note: Shelford on the Attributes, p. 170.] Though the light shines upon pure and impure things, yet it mixes not itself with either of them; so though God be present with devils and wicked men, yet without any mixture; he is present with their essence to sustain it and support it; not in their defection, wherein lies their defilement, and which is not a physical, but a moral evil; bodily filth can never touch an incorporeal substance. Spirits are not present with us in the same maner that one body is present with another; bodies can by a touch only, defile bodies. Is the glory of an angel stained by being in a coal-mine? or could the angel that came into the lion's den to deliver Daniel, be any more disturbed by the stench of the place, than he could be scratched by the paws, or torn by the teeth, of the beasts (Daniel 6:22)? Their spiritual nature secures them against any infection when they are ministering spirits to persecuted believers in their nasty prisons (Acts 12:7). The soul is straitly united with the body, but it is not made white or black by the whiteness or blackness of its habitation. Is it infected by the corporeal impurities of the body, while it continually dwells in a sea of filthy pollution? If the body be cast into a common shore, is the soul filed by it? Can a diseased body derive a contagion to the spirit that animates it? Is it not often the purer by grace, the more the body is infected by nature? Hezekiah's spirit was scarce ever more fervent with God, than when the sore, which some think to be a plague sore, was upon him (Isaiah 38:3). How can any corporeal filth impair the purity of the divine essence? It may as well be said, that God is not present in battles and fights for his people (Joshua 23:10), because he would not be disturbed by the noise of cannons, and clashing of swords, as that he is not present in the world because of the ill scents. Let us therefore conclude this with the expresssion of a learned man of our own: [Note: Dr. More.] "To deny the omnipresence of God, because of ill scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason."

IV. Use. First, of information.

1. Christ hath a divine nature. As eternity and immutability, two incommunicable properties of the divine nature, are ascribed to Christ, so also is this of omnipresence or immensity (John 3:13 :) "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Not which was, but which is. He comes from heaven by incarnation, and remains in heaven by his divinity. He was, while he spake to Nicodemus, locally on earth, in regard of his humanity; but in heaven according to his deity, as well as upon earth in the union of his divine and human nature. He descended upon earth, but he left not heaven; he was in the world before he came in the flesh (John 1:10): "He was in the world, and the world was made by him." He was in the world, as the "light that enlightens every man that comes into the world." In the world as God, before he was in the world as man. He was then in the world as man, while he discoursed with Nicodemus; yet so, that he was also in heaven as God. No creature but is bounded in place, either circumscribed as body, or determined as spirit to be in one space, so as not to be in another

at the same time; to leave a place where they were, and possess a place where they were not. But Christ is so on earth, that at the same time he is in heaven; he is therefore infinite. To be in heaven and earth at the same moment of time, is a property solely belonging to the Deity, wherein no creature can be a partner with him. He was in the word before he came to the world, and "the world was made by him" (John 1:10). His coming was not as the coming of angels, that leave heaven, and begin to be on earth, where they were not before; but such a presence as can be ascribed only to God, who fills heaven and earth. Again, if all things were made by him, then he was present with all things which were made; for where there is a presence of power, there is also a presence of essence, and therefore he is still present; for the right and power of conservation follows the power of creation. And, according to this divine nature, he promiseth his presence with his church (Matthew 18:20): "There am I in the midst of them:" and (Matthew 28:20), "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," i. e. by his divinity: for he had before told them (Matthew 26:11), that they were not to have him away with them, i. e. according to his humanity; but in his Divine nature he is present with, and walks in the midst of, the golden candlesticks. If we understand it of a presence by his Spirit in the midst of the church, doth it invalidate his essential presence? No; he is no less than the Spirit whom he sends; and therefore as little confined as the Spirit is, who dwells in every believer: and this may also be inferred from John 10:30: "My father and I are one;" not one by consent, though that be included, but one in power: for he speaks not of their consent, but of their joint power in keeping his people. Where there is a unity of essence, there is a unity of presence.

2. here is a confirmation of the spiritual nature of God. If he were an infinite body, he could not fill heaven and earth, but with the exclusion of all creatures. Two bodies cannot be in the same space; they may be near one another, but not in any of the same points together. A body bounded he hath not, for that would destroy his immensity; he could not then fill heaven and earth, because a body cannot be at one and the same time in two different spaces; but God doth not fill heaven at one time, and the earth at another, but both at the same time. Besides a limited body cannot be said to fill the whole earth, but one particular space in the earth at a time. A body may fill the earth with its virtue, as the sun, but not with its substance. Nothing can be everywhere with a corporeal weight and mass; but God being infinite, is not tied to any part of the world, but penetrates all, and equally acts by his infinite power in all.

3. Here is an argument for providence. His presence is mentioned in the text, in order to his government of the affairs of the world. Is he everywhere, to be unconcerned with everything? Before the world had a being, God was present with himself; since the world hath a being, he is present with his creatures, to exercise his wisdom in the ordering, as he did his power in the production of them. As the knowledge of God is not a bare contemplation of a thing, so his presence is not a bare inspection into a thing. Were it an idle careless presence, it were a presence to no purpose, which cannot be imagined of God. Infinite power, goodness, and wisdom, being everywhere present with his essence, are never without their exercise. He never manifests any of his perfections, but the manifestation is full of some indulgence and benefit to his creatures. It cannot be supposed God should neglect those things, wherewith he is constantly present in a way of efficiency and operation. He is not everywhere without acting everywhere. "Wherever his essence is, there is a power and virtue worthy of God everywhere dispensed." [Note: Cyril.] He governs by his presence what he made by his power; and is present as an agent with all his works.

His power and essence are together, to preserve them while he pleases, as his power and his essence were together, to create them when he saw good to do it. Every creature hath a stamp of God, and his presence is necessary to keep the impression standing upon the creature. As all things are his works, they are the objects of his cares; and the wisdom he employed in framing them will not suffer him to be careless of them. His presence with them engageth him in honor not to be a negligent Governor. His immensity fits him for government; and where there is a fitness, there is an exercise of government, where there are objects for the exercise of it. He is worthy to have the universal rule of the world; he can be present in all places of his empire; there is nothing can be done by any of his subjects, but in his sight. As his eternity renders him King alway, so his immensity renders him King everywhere. If he were only present in heaven, it might occasion a suspicion that he minded only the things of heaven, and had no concern for things below that vast body; but if he be present here, his presence hath a tendency to the government of those things with which he is present. We are all in him as fish in the sea; and he bears all creatures in the womb of his providence, and the arms of his goodness. It is most certain that his presence with his people is far from being an idle one; for when he promises to be with them, he adds some special cordial, as, "I will be with thee, and bless thee" (Genesis 26:3.) "I am with thee, and I will strengthen thee" (Jeremiah 15:20.) "I will help thee, I will uphold thee" (Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:14.) Infinite goodness will never countenance a negligent presence.

4. The omniscience of God is inferred from hence. If God be present everywhere, he must needs know what is done everywhere. It is for this end he proclaims himself a God filling heaven and earth, in the text, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? I have heard what the prophets say, that prophesy lies in my name: if I fill heaven and earth, the most secret thing cannot be hid from my sight." An intelligent being cannot be everywhere present, and more intimate in everything, than it can be in itself; but he must know what is done without, what is thought within. Nothing can be obscure to Him who is in every part of the world, in every part of his creatures. Not a thought can start up but in his sight, who is present in the souls and minds of everything. How easy is it with him, to whose essence the world is but a point, to know and observe everything done in this world, as any of us can know what is done in one point of place where we are present! If light were an understanding being, it would behold and know everything done where it diffuseth itself. God is light (as light in a crystal glass all within it, all without it), and is not ignorant of what is done within and without; no ignorance can be fastened upon him who hath an universal presence. Hence, by the way, we may take notice of the wonderful patience of God, who bears with so many provocations; not from a principal of ignorance, for he bears with sins that are committed near him in his sight, sins that he sees, and cannot but see.

5. Hence may be inferred the incomprehensibility of God. He that fills heaven and earth cannot be contained in anything; he fills the understandings of men, the understandings of angels, but is comprehended by neither; it is a rashness to think to find out any bounds of God; there is no measuring of an infinite Being; if it were to be measured it were not infinite; but because it is infinite, it is not to be measured. God sits above the cherubims (Ezekiel 10:1), above the fulness, above the brightness, not only of a human, but a created understanding. Nothing is more present than God, yet nothing more hid; he is light, and yet obscurity; [Note: Κρῡφτῡτης, Dionysius called God.] his perfections are visible, yet unsearchable; we know there is an infinite God, but it

surpasseth the compass of our minds; we know there is no number so great, but another may be added to it; but no man can put it in practice, without losing himself in a maze of figures. What is the reason we comprehend not many, nay, most things in the world? partly from the excellency of the object, and partly from the imperfection of our understandings. How can we then comprehend God, who exceeds all, and is exceeded by none; contains all, and is contained by none; is above our understanding, as well as above our sense? as considered in himself infinite; as considered in comparison with our understandings, incomprehensible; who can, with his eye, measure the breadth, length and depth of the sea, and at one cast, view every dimension of the heavens? God is greater, and we cannot know him (Job 3:26); he fills the understanding as he fills heaven and earth; yet is above the understanding as he is above heaven and earth. He is known by faith, enjoyed by love, but comprehended by no mind. God is not contained in that one syllable, God; by it we apprehend an excellent and unlimited nature; himself only understands himself, and can unveil himself.

6. How wonderful is God, and how nothing are creatures! "Ascribe the greatness to our God" (Deuteronomy 33:3); he is admirable in the consideration of his power, in the extent of his understanding, and no less wonderful in the immensity of his essence that, as Austin saith, he is in the world, yet not confined to it; he is out of the world, yet not debarred from it; he is above the world, yet not elevated by it; he is below the world, yet not depressed by it; he is above all, equalled by none; he is in all, not because he needs them, but they stand in need of him; this, as well as eternity, makes a vast disproportion between God and the creature: the creature is bounded by a little space, and no space is so great as to bound the Creator. By this we may take a prospect of our own nothingness: as in the consideration of God's holiness we are minded of our own impurity; and in the thoughts of his wisdom have a view of our own folly; and in the meditation of his power, have a sense of our weakness; so his immensity should make us, according to our own nature, appear little in our own eyes. What little, little, little things are we to God! less than an atom in the beams of the sun; poor drops to a God that fills heaven and earth, and yet dare we to strut against him, and dash ourselves against a rock? If the consideration of ourselves in comparison with others, be apt to puff us up, the consideration of ourselves in comparison with God, will be sufficient to pull us down. If we consider him in the greatness of his essence, there is but little more proportion between him and us, than between being and not being, than between a drop and the ocean. How should we never think of God without a holy admiration of his greatness, and a deep sense of our own littleness! and as the angels cover their faces before him, with what awe should creeping worms come into his sight! and since God fills heaven and earth with his presence, we should fill heaven and earth with his glory; for this end he created angels to praise him in heaven, and men to worship him on earth, that the places he fills with his presence may be filled with his praise: we should be swallowed up in admiration of the immensity of God, as men are at the first sight of the sea, when they behold a mass of waters, without beholding the bounds and immense depth of it.

7. How much is this attribute of God forgotten or contemned! We pretend to believe him to be present everywhere, and yet many live as if he were present nowhere.

(1.) It is commonly forgotten, or not believed. All the extravagances of men may be traced to the forgetfulness of this attribute as their spring. The first speech Adam spake in paradise after his fall, testified his unbelief of this (Genesis 3:10; "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself;" his

ear understood the voice of God, but his mind did not conclude the presence of God; he thought the trees could shelter him from Him whose eye was present in the minutest parts of the earth; he that thought after his sin, that he could hide himself from the presence of his justice, thought before that he could hide himself from the presence of his knowledge; and being deceived in the one, he would try what would be the fruit of the other. In both he forgets, if not denies, this attribute; either corrupt notions of God, or a slight belief of what in general men assent unto, gives birth to every sin. In all transgressions there is something of atheism; either denying the being of God, or a dash upon some perfection of God;—a not believing his holiness to hate it, his truth that threatens, his justice to punish it, and his presence to observe it. Though God be not afar off in his essence, he is “afar off in the apprehension of the sinner.” [Note: Drexel. Nicet. lib. ii. cap. 2.] There is no wicked man, but if he be an atheist, he is a heretic; and to gratify his lust, will fancy himself to be out of the presence of his Judge. His reason tells him, God is present with him, his lust presseth him to embrace the season of sensual pleasure; he will forsake his reason, and prove a heretic, that he may be an undisturbed sinner; and sins doubly, both in the error of his mind, and the vileness of his practice; he will conceit God with those in Job, “veiled with thick clouds” (Job 22:14), and not able to pierce into the lower world, as if his presence and cares were confined to celestial things, and the earth were too low a sphere for his essence to reach, at least with any credit. It is forgotten by good men, when they fear too much the designs of their enemies; “Fear not, for I am with thee” (Isaiah 43:5). If the presence of God be enough to strengthen against fear, then the prevailing of fear issues from our forgetfulness of it.

(2.) This attribute of God’s omnipresence is for the most part contemned. When men will commit that in the presence of God which they would be afraid or ashamed to do before the eye of man, men do not practice that modesty before God as before men. He that would restrain his tongue out of fear of men’s eye, will not restrain either tongue or hands out of fear of God’s. What is the language of this, but that God is not present with us, or his presence ought to be of less regard with us, and influence upon us, than that of a creature? [Note: Drexel, Nicet. lib. ii. cap. 10.] Ask the thief why he dares to steal? will he not answer, “No eye sees him?” Ask the adulterer why he strips himself of his chastity, and invades the rights of another? will he not answer (Job 24:15), “No eye sees me?” He disguiseth himself to be unseen by man, but slights the all-seeing eye of God. If only a man know them, they are in terror of the shadow of death; they are planet-struck, but stand unshaken at the presence of God (Job 24:17). Is not this to account God as limited as man—as ignorant, as absenting, as if God were something less than those things which restrain us? ’Tis a debasing God below a creature. If we can forbear sin from an awe of the presence of man, to whom we are equal in regard of nature, or from the presence of a very mean man, to whom we are superior in regard of condition, and not forbear it because we are within the ken of God, we respect him not only as our inferior, but inferior to the meanest man or child of his creation, in whose sight we would not commit the like action: it is to represent him as a sleepy, negligent, or careless God; as though anything might be concealed from him, before whom the least fibres of the heart are anatomised and open, who sees as plainly midnight as noon-day sins (Hebrews 4:13). Now this is a high aggravation of sin to break a king’s laws, in his sight, is more bold than to violate them behind his back; as it was Haman’s offence when he lay upon Esther’s bed, to force the queen before the king’s face. The least iniquity receives a high tincture from this; and no sin can be little that is an affront in the face of God, and casing the filth of the creature before the eyes of his holiness: as if a wife should commit adultery before her husband’s face, or a slave dishonor

his master, and disobey his commands in his presence. And hath it not often been thus with us? have we not been disloyal to God in his sight, before his eyes, those pure eyes that cannot behold iniquity without anger and grief? (Isaiah 65:12), "Ye did evil before my eyes." Nathan chargeth this home upon David (2 Samuel 12:9), "Thou hast despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight;" and David, in his repentance, reflects upon himself for it (Psalms 51:4); "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." I observed not thy presence, I neglected thee while thy eye was upon me. And this consideration should sting our hearts in all our confessions of our crimes. Men will be afraid of the presence of others, whatsoever they think in their heart. How unworthily do we deal with God, in not giving him so much as an eye-service, which we do man!

8. How terrible should the thoughts of this attribute be to sinners! How foolish is it, to imagine any hiding-place from the incomprehensible God, who fills and contains all things, and is present in every point of the world! [Note: Quo fugis Encelade quas cunque accesseris oras, sub Jove semper eris.] When men have shut the door, and made all darkness within, to meditate or commit a crime, they cannot in the most intricate recesses be sheltered from the presence of God. If they could separate themselves from their own shadows, they could not avoid his company, or be obscured from his sight. [Note: Psalms 139:12. "The darkness and light are both alike to him."] Hypocrites cannot disguise their sentiments from him; he is in the most secret nook of their hearts. No thought is hid, no lust is secret, but the eye of God beholds this, and that, and the other. He is present with our heart when we imagine, with our hands when we act. We may exclude the sun from peeping into our solitudes, but not the eyes of God from beholding our actions. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and good" (Proverbs 15:3). He lies in the depths of our souls, and sees afar off our designs before we have conceived them. He is in the greatest darkness, as well as the clearest light; in the closest thought of the mind, as well as the openest expressions. Nothing can be hid from him, no, not in the darkest cells or thickest walls. "He compasseth our path wherever we are" (Psalms 139:3), and "is acquainted with all our ways." He is as much present with wicked men to observe their sins, as he is to detest them. Where he is present in his essence, he is present in his attributes: his holiness to hate, and his justice to punish, if he please to speak the word. It is strange men should not be mindful of this, when their very sins themselves might put them in mind of his presence. Whence hast thou the power to act? who preserves thy being, whereby thou art capable of committing that evil? Is it not his essential presence that sustains us, and his arm that supports us? and where can any man fly from his presence? Not the vast regions of heaven could shelter a sinning angel from his eye: how was Adam ferreted out of his hiding-places in paradise? Nor can we find the depths of the sea a sufficient covering to us. If we were with Jonah, closeted up in the belly of a whale; if we had the "wings of the morning," as quick a motion as the light at the dawning of the day, that doth in an instant surprise and overpower the regions of darkness, and could pass to the utmost parts of the earth or hell, there we should find him, there his eye would be upon us, there would his hand lay hold of us, and lead us as a conqueror triumphing over a captive (Psalms 139:8-10). Nay, if we could leap out of the compass of heaven and earth, we should find as little reserves from him: he is without the world in those infinite spaces which the mind of man can imagine. In regard of his immensity, nothing in being can be distant from him, wheresoever it is.

Second, Use is for comfort. That God is present everywhere, is as much a comfort to a good man, as it is a terror to a wicked one, He is everywhere for his people, not only by a necessary perfection of his nature, but an immense diffusion of his goodness. He is in all creatures as their preserver: in the damned, as their terror; in his people, as their protector. He fills hell with his severity, heaven with his glory, his people with his grace. He is with his people as light in darkness, a fountain in a garden, as manna in the ark. God is in the world as a spring of preservation; in the church as his cabinet, his spring of grace and consolation. A man is present sometimes in his field, but more delightfully in his garden. A vine yard, as it hath more of cost, so more of care, and a watchful presence of the owner (Isaiah 27:3); "I, the Lord, do keep it," viz. his vineyard; "I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day." As there is a presence of essence, which is natural, so there is a presence of grace, which is federal: a presence by covenant; "I will not leave thee, I will be with thee." This latter depends upon the former; for, take away the immensity of God, and you leave no foundation for his universal gracious presence with his people in all their emergencies, in all their hearts. And, therefore, where he is present in his essence, he cannot be absent in his grace, from them that fear him. It is from his filling heaven and earth he proves his knowledge of the designs of the false prophets; and from the same topic may as well be inferred the employment of his power and grace for his people.

1. The omnipresence of God is a comfort in all violent temptations. No fiery dart can be so present with us, as God is present both with that and the marksman. The most raging devils cannot be so near us, as God is to us and them. He is present with his people to relieve them, and present with the devil to manage him to his own holy purposes: so he was with Job, defeating his enemies, and bringing him triumphantly out of those pressing trials. This presence is such a terror, that whatsoever the devil can despoil us of, he must leave this untouched. He might scratch the apostle with a thorn (2 Corinthians 12:7; 2 Corinthians 12:9), but he could not rifle him of the presence of divine grace, which God promised him. He must prevail so far as to make God cease to be God, before he can make him to be distant from us; and while this cannot be, the devils and men can no more hinder the emanations of God to the soul, than a child can cut off the rays of the sun from embellishing the earth. It is no mean support for a good man, at any time, buffeted by a messenger of Satan, to think God stands near him, and behold how ill he is used. It would be a satisfaction to a king's favorite, in the midst of the violence some enemies might use to him upon a surprise, to understand that the king who loves him stands behind a curtain, and through a hole sees the injuries he suffers: and were the devil as considering as he is malicious, he could not but be in great fear at God's being in the generation of the righteous, as his serpentine seed is (Proverbs 3:6): "They were in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous."

2. The omnipresence of God is a comfort in sharp afflictions. Good men have a comfort in this presence in their nasty prisons, oppressing tribunals; in the overflowing waters or scorching flames he is still with them (Isaiah 43:2); and many times by his presence keeps the bush from consuming, when it seems to be all in a flame. In afflictions God shows himself most present, when friends are most absent: "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord shall take me up" (Psalms 27:10), then God will stoop and gather me into his protection; or, (Heb.) "shall gather me," alluding to those tribes that were to bring up the rear in the Israelites' march, to take care that none were left behind, and exposed to famine or wild beasts, by reason of some disease

that disenabled them to keep pace with their brethren. He that is the sanctuary of his people in all calamities, is more present with them to support them, than their adversaries can be present with them to afflict them (Psalms 4:2), a present help in the time of trouble; He is present with all things for this end; though his presence be a necessary presence in regard of the immensity of his nature, yet the end of this presence in regard that it is for the good of his people, is a voluntary presence. It is for the good of man he is present in the lower world, and principally for the good of his people, for whose sake he keeps up the world (2 Chronicles 16:9). "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." If he doth not deliver good men from afflictions, he will be so present as to manage them in them, as that his glory shall issue from them, and their grace be brightened by them. [Note: Chrysostome.] What a man was Paul when he was lodged in a prison, or dragged to the courts of judicature, when he was torn with rods, or laden with chains! then did he show the greatest miracles, made the judge tremble upon the bench, and brake the heart, though not the prison, of the jailor; so powerful is the presence of God in the pressures of his people. This presence outweighs all other comforts, and is more valuable to a Christian than barns of corn, or cellars of wine can be to a covetous man (Psalms 4:7): it was this presence was David's cordial in the mutinying of his soldiers (1 Samuel 30:6). What a comfort is this in exile, or a forced desertion of our habitations! Good men may be banished from their country, but never from the presence of their Protector; ye cannot say of any corner of the earth, or of any dungeon in a prison, God is not here; if you were cast out of your country a thousand miles off, you are not out of God's precinct; his arm is there to cherish the good, as well as to drag out the wicked; it is the same God, the same presence in every country, as well as the same sun, moon, and stars; and were not God everywhere, yet he could not be meaner than his creature the sun in the firmament, which visits every part of the habitable world in twenty-four hours.

3. The omnipresence of God is a comfort in all duties of worship. He is present to observe, and present to accept our petitions, and answer our suits. Good men have not only the essential presence, which is common to all, but his gracious presence; not only the presence that flows from his nature, but that which flows from his promise; his essential presence makes no difference between this and that man in regard of spirituals, without this in conjunction with it; his nature is the cause of the presence of his essence; his will engaged by his truth is the cause of the presence of his grace. He promised to meet the Israelites in the place where he should set his name, and in all places where he doth record it (Exodus 20:4). "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee;" in every place where I shall manifest the special presence of my divinity. In all places, hands may be lifted up, without doubting of his ability to hear; he dwells in the contrite hearts, wherever it is most in the exercise of contrition; which is usually in times of special worship (Isaiah 7:15), and that to revive and refresh them. Habitation notes a special presence, though he dwell in the highest heavens in the sparklings of his glory, he dwells also in the lowest hearts in the beams of his grace; as none can expel him from his dwelling in heaven, so none can reject him from his residence in the heart. The tabernacle had his peculiar presence fixed to it (Leviticus 26:11); his soul should not abhor them, as they are washed by Christ, though they are loathsome by sin: in a greater dispensation there cannot be a less presence, since the church under the New Testament is called the temple of the Lord, wherein he will both dwell and walk (2 Corinthians 6:6); or, I will indwell in them; as if he should say, I will dwell in and in them; I will, dwell in them by grace, and walk in them by exciting their graces; he will be

more intimate with them than their own souls, and converse with them as the living God, i. e. as a God that hath life in himself, and life to convey to them in their converse with him; and show his spiritual glory among them in a greater measure than in the temple, since that was but a heap of stones, and the figure of the Christian church the mystical body of his Son. His presence is not less in the substance than it was in the shadow; this presence of God in his ordinances, is the glory of a church, as the presence of a king is the glory of a court, the defence of it, too, as a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5); alluding to the fire travellers in a wilderness made to fright away wild beasts. It is not the meanness of the place of worship can exclude him; the second temple was not so magnificent as the first of Solomon's erecting, and the Jews seemed to despond of so glorious a presence of God in the second, as they had in the first, because they thought it not so good for the entertainment of Him that inhabits eternity; but God comforts them against this conceit again and again (Haggai 2:3-4): "be strong, be strong, be strong, I am with you;" the meanness of the place shall not hinder the grandeur of my presence, no matter what the room is, so it be the presence-chamber of the king, wherein he will favor our suits; he can everywhere slide into our souls with a perpetual sweetness, since he is everywhere, and so, intimate with every one that fears him. If we should see God on earth in his amiableness, as Moses did, should we not be encouraged by his presence, to present our requests to him, to echo out our praises of him? and have we not as great a ground now to do it, since he is as really present with us, as if he were visible to us? he is in the same room with us, as near to us as our souls to our bodies, not a word but he hears, not a motion but he sees, not a breath but he perceives; he is through all, he is in all.

4. The omnipresence of God is a comfort in all special services. God never puts any upon a hard task, but he makes promises to encourage them and assist them, and the matter of the promise is that of his presence; so he did assure the prophets of old when he set them difficult tasks, and strengthened Moses against the face of Pharaoh, by assuring him "he would be with his mouth" (Exodus 4:12); and when Christ put his apostles upon a contest with the whole world, to preach a gospel that would be foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling block to the Jews, he gives them a cordial only composed of his presence (Matthew 28:20), I will be with you; it is this presence scatters by its light the darkness of our spirits; it is this that is the cause of what is done for his glory in the world; it is this that mingles itself with all that is done for his honor; it is this from whence springs all the assistance of his creatures, marked out for special purposes.

5. This presence is not without the special presence of all his attributes. Where his essence is, his perfections are, because they are one with his essence; yea, they are his essence, though they have their several degrees of manifestation. As in the covenant, he makes over himself, not a part of himself, but his whole deity; so in promising of his presence, he means not a part of it, but the whole, the presence of all the excellencies of his nature to be manifested for our good. It is not a piece of God is here and another parcel there, but God in his whole essence and perfections; in his wisdom to guide us, his power to protect and support us, his mercy to pity us, his fulness to refresh us, and his goodness to relieve us: he is ready to sparkle out in this or that perfection, as the necessities of his people require, and his own wisdom directs for his own honor; so that being not far from us in an excellency of his nature, we can quickly have recourse to him upon any emergency; so that if we are miserable, we have the presence of his goodness; if we want direction, we have the presence of his wisdom; if we are weak, we have the presence of his power; and should we not rejoice in it, as a man doth in the presence of a powerful, wealthy, and

compassionate friend?

Third, Use. Of Exhortation.

1. Let us be much in the actual thoughts of this truth. How should we enrich our understandings with the knowledge of the excellency of God, whereof this is none of the least; nor hath less of honey in its bowels, though it be more terrible to the wicked than the presence of a lion; it is this that makes all other excellencies of the divine nature sweet. What would grace, wisdom, power, signify at a distance from us? Let us frame in our minds a strong idea of it; it is this makes so great a difference between the actions of one man and another; one maintains actual thoughts of it, another doth not: though all believe it as a perfection pertaining to the infiniteness of his essence. David, or rather a greater than David, had God always before him; there was no time, no occasion, wherein he did not stir up some lively thoughts of him (Psalms 16:8). Let us have right notions of it; imagine not God as a great King, sitting only in his majesty in heaven; acting all by his servants and ministers. This, saith one, [Note: Musculus.] is a childish and unworthy conceit of God, and may in time bring such a conceiver by degrees to deny his providence; the denial of this perfection is an axe at the root of religion; if it be not deeply imprinted in the mind, personal religion grows faint and feeble. Who would fear that God that is not imagined to be a witness of his actions? Who would worship a God at a distance both from the worship and the worshipper? [Note: Drexel.] Let us believe this truth, but not with an idle faith, as if we did not believe it. Let us know, that as wheresoever the fish moves, it is in the water; wheresoever the bird moves, it is in the air; so wheresoever we move, we are in God. As there is not a moment but we are under his mercy, so there is not a moment that we are out of his presence. Let us therefore look upon nothing, without thinking who stands by, without reflecting upon him in whom it lives, moves and hath its being. When you view a man, you fix your eyes upon his body, but your mind upon that invisible part that acts every member by life and motion, and makes them fit for your converse. Let us not bound our thoughts to the creatures we see, but pierce through the creature to that boundless God we do not see: we have continual remembrances of his presence; the light, whereby we see, and the air, whereby we live, give us perpetual notices of it, and some weak resemblance; why should we forget it? yea, what a shame is our unmindfulness of it, when every cast of our eye, every motion of our lungs, jogs us to remember it? Light is in every part of the air, in every part of the world, yet not mixed with any, both remain entire in their own substance. Let us not be worse than some of the heathens, who pressed this notion upon themselves for the spiriting their actions with virtue, that all places were full of God. This was the means Basil used to prescribe, upon a question asked him, How shall we do to be serious? mind God's presence. How shall we avoid distractions in service? think of God's presence. How shall we resist temptation? oppose to them the presence of God. [Note: Omnia diis plena.]

(1.) This will be a shield against all temptations. God is present, is enough to blunt the weapons of hell; this will secure us from a ready compliance with any base and vile attractives, and curb that headstrong principle in our nature, that would join hands with them; the thoughts of this would, like the powerful presence of God with the Israelites, take off the wheels from the chariots of our sensitive appetites, and make them perhaps move slower, at least, towards a temptation. How did Peter fling off the temptation which had worsted him, upon a look from Christ! The actuated faith of this would stifle the darts of Satan, and fire us with an anger against his solicitations, as strong as the fire that inflames the darts. Moses' sight of Him that was invisible, strengthened him against

the costly pleasures and luxuries of a prince's court (Hebrews 11:27). We are utterly senseless of a Deity, if we are not moved with this item from our consciences, God is present. Had our first parents actually considered the nearness of God to them, when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit, they had not probably been so easily overcome by the temptation. What soldier would be so base as to revolt under the eye of a tender and obliging general? or what man so negligent of himself, as to rob a house in the sight of a judge? Let us consider that God is as near to observe us, as the devil to solicit us, yea, nearer; the devil stands by us, but God is in us; we may have a thought the devil knows not, but not a thought but God is actually present with, as our souls are with the thoughts they think; nor can any creature attract our heart, if our minds were fixed on that invisible presence that contributes to that excellency, and sustains it, and considered that no creature could be so present with us as the Creator is.

(2.) It will be a spur to holy actions. What man would do an unworthy action, or speak an unhandsome word, in the presence of his prince? The eye of the general inflames the spirit of a soldier. Why did David keep God's testimonies (Psalms 119:168)? because he considered that all his ways were before him; because he was persuaded his ways were present with God; God's precepts should be present with him. The same was the cause of Job's integrity (Job 31:4): "Doth he not see my ways?" To have God in our eye is the way to be sincere (Genesis 17:1); "walk before me" as in my sight, "and be thou perfect." Communion with God consists chiefly in an ordering our ways as in the presence of him that is invisible. This would make us spiritual, raise and watchful in all our passions, if we considered that God is present with us in our shops, in our chambers, in our walks, and in our meetings, as present with us as with the angels in heaven; who, though they have a presence of glory above us, yet have not a greater measure of his essential presence than we have. What an awe had Jacob upon him when he considered God was present in Bethel (Genesis 28:16-17)! If God should appear visibly to us when we were alone, should we not be reverend and serious before him? God is everywhere about us, he doth encompass us with his presence. Should not God's seeing us have the same influence upon us as our seeing God? He is not more essentially present if he should so manifest himself to us, than when he doth not. Who would appear besmeared in the presence of a great person? or not be ashamed to be found in his chamber in a nasty posture by some visitant? Would not a man blush to be caught about some mean action, though it were not an immoral crime? If this truth were impressed upon our spirits, we should more blush to have our souls daubed with some loathsome lust; swarms of sin, like Egyptian lice and frogs, creeping about our heart in his sight. If the most sensual man be ashamed to do a dishonest action in the sight of a grave and holy man, one of great reputation for wisdom and integrity, how much more should we lift up ourselves in the ways of God, who is infinite and immense, is everywhere, and infinitely superior to man, and more to be regarded! We could not seriously think of his presence but there would pass some intercourse between us; we should be putting up some petition upon the sense of our indigence, or sending up our praises to him upon the sense of his bounty. The actual thoughts of the presence of God is the life and spirit of all religion; we could not have sluggish spirits and a careless watch if we considered that his eye is upon us all the day.

(3.) It will quell distractions in worship. The actual thoughts of this would establish our thoughts, and pull them back when they begin to rove: the mind could not boldly give God the slip if it had lively thoughts of it; the consideration of this would blow off all the froth that lies on the top of our

spirits. An eye, taken up with the presence of one object, is not at leisure to be filled with another: he that looks intently upon the sun, shall have nothing for a while but the sun in his eye. Oppose to every intruding thought the idea of the Divine omnipresence, and put it to silence by the awe of his Majesty. When the master is present, scholars mind their books, keep their places, and run not over the forms to play with one another; the master's eye keeps an idle servant to his work, that otherwise would be gazing at every straw, and prating to every passenger. How soon would the remembrance of this dash all extravagant fancies out of countenance, just as the news of the approach of a prince would make the courtiers bustle up themselves, huddle up their vain sports, and prepare themselves for a reverent behavior in his sight! We should not dare to give God a piece of our heart when we apprehended him present with the whole: we should not dare to mock one that we knew were more inwards with us than we are with ourselves, and that beheld every motion of our mind, as well as action of our body.

2. Let us endeavor for the more special and influential presence of God. Let the essential presence of God be the ground of our awe, and his gracious influential presence the object of our desire. The heathen thought themselves secure if they had their little petty household gods with them in their journeys: such seem to be the images Rachel stole from her father (Genesis 31:19) to company her travel with their blessings: she might not at that time have cast off all respect to those idols, in the acknowledgment of which she had been educated from her infancy; and they seem to be kept by her till God called Jacob to Bethel, after the rape of Dinah (Genesis 35:4), when Jacob called for the strange gods, and hid them under the oak. The gracious presence of God we should look after, in our actions, as travellers, that have a charge of money or jewels, desire to keep themselves in company that may protect them from highwaymen that would rifle them. Since we have the concerns of the eternal happiness of our souls upon our hands, we should endeavor to have God's merciful and powerful presence with us in all our ways (Psalms 14:5); "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths:" acknowledge him before any action, by imploring; acknowledge him after, by rendering him the glory; acknowledge his presence before worship, in worship, after worship: it is this presence makes a kind of heaven upon earth; causeth affliction to put off the nature of misery. How much will the presence of the sun outshine the stars of lesser comforts, and fully answer the want of them! The ark of God going before us, can only make all things successful. It was this led the Israelites over Jordan, and settled them in Canaan. Without this we signify nothing: though we live without this, we cannot be distinguished forever from evils; his essential presence they have; and if we have no more, we shall be no better. It is the enlivening fructifying presence of the sun that revives the languishing earth; and this only can repair our ruined soul. Let it be, therefore, our desire, that as he fills heaven and earth by his essence, he may fill our understandings and wills by his grace, that we may have another kind of presence with us than animals have in their brutish state, or devils in their chains: his essential presence maintains our beings, but his gracious presence confers and continues a happiness.

On God's Patience

ON GOD'S PATIENCE

Nahum 1:3.—The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The subject of this prophecy is God's sentence against Nineveh, the head and metropolis of the Assyrian empire: a city famous for its strength, and thickness of its walls, and the multitude of its towers for defence against an enemy. The forces of this empire did God use as a scourge against the Israelites, and by their hands ruined Samaria, the chief city of the ten tribes, and transplanted them as captives into another country (2 Kings 17:5-6), about six years after Hezekiah came to the crown of Judah (2 Kings 18:1-37 compared with 1 Kings 17:6), in whose time, or, as some think, later, Nahum uttered this prophecy. The name, Nahum, signifies Comforter; though the matter of his prophecy be dreadful to Nineveh, it was comfortable to the people of God: for a promise is made, (2 Kings 17:7), "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." And an encouragement to Judah, to keep their solemn feasts, (2 Kings 17:15 : and also in 2 Kings 2:3), with a declaration of the misery of Nineveh, and the destruction of it. Observe,

1. In all the fears of God's people, God will have a Comforter for them. Judah might well be dejected with the calamity of their brethren, not knowing but it might be their own turn shortly after. They knew not where the ambition of the Assyrian would stop; but God by his prophets calms their fears of their furious neighbor, by predicting to them the ruin of their feared adversary.
2. The destruction of the church's enemies is the comfort of the church. By that God is glorified in his justice, and the church secured in its worship.
3. The victories of persecutors secure them not from being the triumphs of others. The Assyrians that conquered and captived Israel, were themselves to be conquered and captived by the Medes. The whole oppressing empire is threatened with destruction in the ruin of their chief city; accordingly it was accomplished, and the empire extinguished by a greater power. God burns the rod when it hath done the work he appointed it for; and the wisp of straw wherewith the vessels are scoured, is flung into the fire, or upon the dunghill.

Nahum begins his prophecy majestically, with a description of the wrath and fury of God. (Nahum 1:2), "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and reserveth wrath for his enemies." And therefore the whole of it is called (Nahum 1:1), "The burden of Nineveh," as those prophecies are, which are composed of threatenings of judgments, which he as a mighty weight upon the heads and backs of sinners.

God is jealous—jealous of his glory and worship, and jealous for his people, and their security. He cannot long bear the oppressions of his people, and the boasts of his enemies. He is jealous for himself, and is jealous for you of Judah, who retain his worship. He is not forgetful of those that remember him, nor of the danger of those that are desirous to maintain his honor in the world. In

this first expression, the prophet uses the covenant name, God; the covenant runs, "I am your God," or "the Lord your God;" mostly God without Lord, never Lord without God: and, therefore, his jealousy here is meant of the care of his people, and the relation that his actions against his enemies have to his servants. He is a lover of his own, and a revenger on his enemies. The Lord revengeth, and is furious.—He now describes God by a name of sovereignty and power, when he describes him in his wrath and fury, and is furious. Heb. **אֵל אֵלֹהִים**, Lord of hot anger. God will vindicate his own glory, and have his right on his enemies in a way of punishment, if they will not give it him in a way of obedience. It is three times repeated, to show the certainty of the judgment; [Note: Ribera, in loc.] and the name of "Lord" added to every one, to intimate the power wherewith the judgment should be executed. It is not a fatherly correction of children in a way of mercy, but an offended Sovereign a destruction of his enemies in a way of vengeance. There is an anger of God with his own people, which hath more of mercy than wrath; in this his rod is guided by his bowels. There is a fury of God against his enemies, where there is sole wrath without any tincture of mercy; when his sword is all edge, without any balsam drops upon it. Such a fury as David deprecates (Psalms 6:1): "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy sore displeasure," with a fury untempered with grace, and insupportable wrath.

He reserves wrath for his enemies.—He lays it up in his treasury, to be brought out and expended in a due season. "Wrath" is supplied by our translators, and is not in the Hebrew. He reserves, what?—that which is too sharp to be expressed, too great to be conceived: a vengeance it is. And **אֵל אֵלֹהִים**, He reserves it. He that hath an infinite wrath, he reserves it; that hath a strength and power to execute it.

(ver. 3.) The Lord is slow to anger, Heb. **אֵל אֵלֹהִים**, of broad nostrils. The anger of God is expressed by this word, which signifies "nostrils:" as, Job 9:13, "If God will not withdraw his anger," Heb. "his nostrils." And the anger whereby the wicked are consumed, is called the "breath of nostrils" (Job 4:9); and when he is angry, smoke and fire are said to go out of his nostrils (2 Samuel 2:9); and in Psalms 74:1, "Why doth thy anger smoke?" Heb. "Why do thy nostrils smoke?" So the rage of a horse, when he is provoked in battle, is called the glory of his nostrils (Job 39:20). He breathes quick fumes, and neighs with fury. And slowness to anger is here expressed by the phrase of "long or wide nostrils:" because in a vehement anger, the blood boiling about the heart, exhales men's spirit, which fume up, and break out in dilated nostrils. But where the passages are straighter the spirits have not so quick a vent, and therefore raise more motions within; or, because the wider the nostrils are, the more cool air is drawn in to temper the heat of the heart, where the angry spirits are gathered; and so the passion is allayed, and sooner calmed. God speaks of himself in Scripture often after the rate of men; Jeremiah prays (ch. 15:15) that God would not take him away in his long-suffering, Heb. "in the length of his nostrils," i. e. Be not slow and backward in thy anger against my persecutors, as to give them time and opportunity to destroy me. The nostrils, as well as other members of a human body, are ascribed to God. He is slow to anger; he hath anger in his nature, but is not always in the execution of it. And great in power.—This may refer to his patience as the cause of it, or as a bar to the abuse of it.

1. "He is slow to anger, and great in power," i. e. his power moderates his anger; he is not so impotent as to be at the command of his passions, as men are; he can restrain his anger under just provocations to exercise it. His power over himself is the cause of his slowness to wrath, as Numbers 14:17 : "Let the power of my Lord be great," saith Moses, when he pleads for the

Israelites' pardon. Men that are great in the world are quick in passions, and are not so ready to forgive an injury, or bear with an offender, as one of a meaner rank. It is a want of a power over a man's self that makes him do unbecoming things upon a provocation. A prince that can bridle his passion, is a king over himself, as well as over his subjects. God is slow to anger, because great in power: he hath no less power over himself than over his creatures: he can sustain great injuries without an immediate and quick revenge: he hath a power of patience, as well as a power of justice.

2. Or thus: "He is slow to anger and great in power." He is slow to anger, but not for want of power to revenge himself; his power is as great to punish, as his patience to spare. It seems thus, that slowness to anger is brought in as an objection against the revenge proclaimed. What do you tell us of vengeance, vengeance, nothing but such repetitions of vengeance?—as though we were ignorant that God is slow to anger. It is true, saith the prophet, I acknowledge it as much as you, that God is slow to anger; but withal, great in power. His anger certainly succeeds his abused patience; he will not always bridle in his wrath, but one time or other let it march out in fury against his adversaries. The Assyrians, who had captived the ten tribes, and been victorious a little against the Jews, might think that the God of Israel had been conquered by their gods, as well as the people professing him had been subdued by their arms; that God had lost all his power; and the Jews might argue, from God's patience to his enemies, against the credit of the prophet's denouncing revenge. The prophet answers, to the terror of the one, and the comfort of the other, that this indulgence to his enemies, and not accounting with them for their crimes, proceeded from the greatness of his patience, and not from any debility in his power. As it refers to the Assyrian, it may be rendered thus: You Ninevites, upon your repentance after Jonah's thundering of judgments, are witnesses of the slowness of God to anger, and had your punishments deferred; but, falling to your old sins, you shall find a real punishment, and that he hath as much power to execute his ancient threatenings, as he had then compassion to recall them; his patience to you then was not for want of power to ruin you, but was the effect of his goodness towards you. As it refers to the Jews, it may be thus paraphrased: Do not despise this threatening against your enemies because of the greatness of their might, the seeming stability of their empire, and the terror they possess all the nations with round about them: it may be long before it comes, but assure yourselves the threatening I denounce shall certainly be executed; though he hath patience to endure them a hundred and thirty-five years (for so long as it was before Nineveh was destroyed after this threatening, as Ribera, in loc. [Note: Page 359, Colossians 1:1-29.] computes from the years of the reign of the kings of Judah), yet he hath also power to verify his word, and accomplish his will: assure yourselves, he will not at all acquit the wicked.

He will not acquit the wicked.—He will not always account the criminal an innocent, as he seems to do by a present sparing of them, and dealing with them as if they were destitute of any provoking carriage towards him, and he void of any resentment of it. He will "not acquit the wicked;" how is this? Who then can be saved? Is there no place for remission? He will "not acquit the wicked." i. e. he will not acquit obstinate sinners. As he hath patience for the wicked, so he hath mercy for the penitent. The wicked are the subjects of his long-suffering, but not of his acquitting grace; he doth not presently punish their sins, because he is slow to anger; but without their repentance he will not blot out their sins, because he is righteous in judgment: if God should acquit them without repentance for their crimes, he must himself repent of his own law and

righteous sanction of it. "He will not acquit," i. e. he will not go back from the thing he hath spoken, and forbear, at long run, the punishment he hath threatened. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind.—The way of God signifies sometimes the law of God, sometimes the providential operations of God: "Is not my way equal?" (Ezekiel 18:25). It seems there to take in both. And in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.—The prophet describes here the fight of God with the Assyrians, as if he rushed upon them with a mighty noise of an army, raising the dust with the feet of their horses, and motion of their chariots. [Note: Tirinus, in loc.] Symbolically, it signifies the multitude of the Chaldean and Median forces, invading, besieging, and storming the city. It signifies,

1. The rule of providence. The way of God is in every motion of the creature; he rules all things, whirlwinds, storms, and clouds; his way is in all their walks, in the whirlings and blusterings of the one, in the raising and dissolving the other. He blows up the winds, and compacts the clouds, to make them serviceable to his designs.

2. The management of wars by god. His way is in the storm as he was the Captain of the Assyrians against Samaria, so he will be the Captain of the Medes against Nineveh: as Israel was not so much wasted by the Assyrians as by the Lord, who levied and armed their forces; so Nineveh shall be subverted, rather by God, than by the arms of the Medes. Their force is described not to be so much from human power as Divine. God is President in all the commotions of the world, his way is in every whirlwind.

3. The easiness of executing the judgment. He is of so great power that he can excite tempests in the air, and overthrow them with the clouds, which are the dust of his feet: he can blind his enemies, and avenge himself on them: he is Lord of clouds, and can fill their womb with hail, lightnings, and thunders, to burst out upon those he kindles his anger against: he is of so great force, that he needs not use the strength of his arm, but the dust of his feet, to effect his destroying purpose.

4. The suddenness of the judgment. Whirlwinds come suddenly, without any harbingers to give notice of their approach: clouds are swift in their motion; "Who are those that fly as a cloud?" (Isaiah 60:8), i. e. with a mighty nimbleness. What God doth, he shall do on the sudden, come upon them before they are aware, be too quick for them in his motion to overrun and overreach them. The winds are described with wings, in regard of the quickness of their motion.

5. The terror of judgments. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind," i. e. in great displeasure. The anger of the Lord is often compared to a storm; he shall bring clouds of judgments upon them, many and thick, as terrible as when a day is turned into night, by the mustering of the darkest clouds that interpose between the sun and the earth. "Clouds and darkness are round about him, and a fire goes before him," when he "burns up his enemies" (Psalms 97:2-3). The judgments shall have terror without mercy, as clouds obscure the light, and are dark masks before the face and glory of the sun, and cut off its refreshing beams from the earth. Clouds note multitude and obscurity; God could crush them without a whirlwind, beat them to powder with one touch, but he will bring his judgments in the most surprising and amazing manner to flesh and blood, so that all their glory shall be changed into nothing but terror, by the noise of the bellowing winds, and the clouds, like ink, blacking the heavens.

6. The confusion of the offenders upon God's proceeding. A whirlwind is not only a boisterous wind, that hurls and rolls everything out of its place, but, by its circular motion, by its winding to all points of the compass, it confounds things, and jumbles them together. It keeps not one point, but, by a circumgyration, toucheth upon all. Clouds, like dust, shall be blown in their face, and gum up their eyes: they shall be in a posture of confusion, not know what counsels to take, what motions to resolve upon. Let them look to every point of heaven and earth, they shall meet with a whirlwind to confound them, and cloudy dust to blind them.

7. The irresistibleness of the judgment. Winds have more than a giant-like force, a torrent of compacted air, that, with an invincible wiffulness, bears all before it, displaceth the firmest trees, and levels the tallest towers, and pulls up bodies from their natural place. Clouds also are over our heads, and above our reach; when God places them upon his people for defence they are an invincible security (Isaiah 4:5); and when he moves them, as his chariot, against a people, they end in an irresistible destruction. Thus the ruin of the wicked is described (Proverbs 10:25): "As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more:" it blows them down, sweeps them away, they irrecoverably fall before the force of it. What heart can endure, and what hands can be strong, in the days wherein God doth deal with them! (Ezekiel 22:14). Thus is the judgment against Nineveh described: God hath his way in the whirlwind, to thunder down their strongest walls, which were so thick that chariots could march abreast upon them; and batter down their mighty towers, which that city had in multitudes upon their walls.

They are the first words I intend to insist upon, to treat of the Patience of God described in those words, "The Lord is slow to anger."

Doctrine. Slowness to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the Divine nature. As patience signifies suffering, so it is not in God. The Divine nature is impassible, incapable of any impair, it cannot be touched by the violences of men, nor the essential glory of it be diminished by the injuries of men; but as it signifies a willingness to defer, and an unwillingness to pour forth his wrath upon sinful creatures, he moderates his provoked justice, and forbears to revenge the injuries he daily meets with in the world. He suffers no grief by men's wronging him, but he restrains his arm from punishing them according to their merits; and thus there is patience in every cross a man meets with in the world, because, though it be a punishment, it is less than is merited by the unrighteous rebel, and less than may be inflicted by a righteous and powerful God. This patience is seen in his providential works in the world: "He suffered the nations to walk in their own way," and the witness of his providence to them was his "giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their heart with food and gladness" (Acts 16:17). The heathens took notice of it, and signified it by feigning their god Saturn, to be bound a whole year in a soft cord, a cord of wool, and expressed it by this proverb: "The mills of the gods grind slowly;" i. e. God doth not use men with that severity that they deserve; the mills being usually turned by criminals condemned to that work. [Note: Rhodigi, lib. vi. c. 14.] This, in Scripture, is frequently expressed by a slowness to anger (Psalms 103:8), sometimes by long-suffering, which is a patience with duration (Psalms 145:8; Psalms 8:1-9; Joel 2:13). He is slow to anger, he takes not the first occasions of a provocation; he is long-suffering (Romans 9:22), and (Psalms 86:15) he forbears punishment upon many occasions offered him. It is long before he consents to give fire to his wrath, and shoot out his thunderbolts. Sin hath a loud cry, but God seems to stop his ears, not to hear the clamor it raises and the charge it presents. He keeps his sword a long time in the sheath; one calls the patience of

I. The nature of this patience.

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crawls upon the ground. The object of patience is, primarily, man, and secondarily; those creatures that respect men's support, conveniency, and delight; but they are not the objects of patience, as considered in themselves, but in relation to man, for whose use they were created; and therefore God's patience to them is properly his patience with man. The lower creatures do not injure God, and therefore are not the objects of his patience, but as they are forfeited by man, and man deserves to be deprived of them; as man in this regard falls under the patience of God, so do those creatures which are designed for man's good. That patience which spares man, spares other creatures for him, which were all forfeited by man's sin, as well as his own life, and are rather the testimonies of God's patience, than the proper objects of it. The object of God's goodness, then, is the whole creation; not a devil in hell, but as a creature, is a mark of his goodness, but not of his patience. There is a kind of sparing exercised to the devils, in deferring their complete punishment, and hitherto keeping off the day wherein their final sentence is to be pronounced; yet the Scripture never mentions this by the name of slowness to anger, or long-suffering. It can no more be called patience, than a prince's keeping a malefactor in chains, and not pronouncing a condemning sentence, or not executing a sentence already pronounced, can be called a patience with him, when it is not out of kindness to the offender, but for some reasons of state. God's sparing the devils from their total punishment—which they have not yet, but are "reserved in chains, under darkness for it" (Jude 1:6)—is not in order to repentance, or attended with any invitations from God, or hopes in them; and, therefore, cannot come under the same title as God's sparing man: where there is no proposal of mercy, there is no exercise of patience. The fallen angels had no mercy reserved for them, nor any sacrifices prepared for them; God "spared not the angels" (2 Peter 2:4), "but delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," i. e. he had no patience for them; for patience is properly a temporary sparing a person, with a waiting of his relenting, and a change of his injurious demeanor. The object of goodness is more extensive than that of patience: nor do they both consider the object under the same relation. Goodness respects things in a capacity, or in a state of creation, and brings them forth into creation, and nurseth and supports them as creatures. Patience considers them already created, and fallen short of the duty of creatures; it considers them as sinners, or in relation to sinners. Had not sin entered, patience had never been exercised; but goodness had been exercised, had the creature stood firm in its created state without any transgression; nay, creation could not have been without goodness, because it was goodness to create; but patience had never been known without an object, which could not have been without an injury. Where there is no wrong, no suffering, nor like to be any, patience hath no prospect of any operation. So, then, goodness respects persons as creatures, patience as transgressors; mercy eyes men as miserable and obnoxious to punishment; patience considers men as sinful, and provoking to punishment.

2. Since it is a part of goodness and mercy, it is not an insensible patience. What is the fruit of pure goodness cannot be from a weakness of resentment; he is "slow to anger;" the prophet doth not say, he is incapable of anger, or cannot discern what is a real object of anger; it implies, that he doth consider every provocation, but he is not hasty to discharge his arrows upon the offenders; he sees all, while he bears with them; his omniscience excludes any ignorance; he cannot but see every wrong; every aggravation in that wrong, every step and motion from the beginning to the completing it; for he knows all our thoughts; he sees the sin and the sinner at the same time; the sin with an eye of abhorrency, and the sinner with an eye of pity. His eye is upon their iniquities,

and his hatred edged against them; while he stands with arms open, waiting a penitent return. When he publisheth his patience in his keeping silence, he publisheth also his resolution, to set sin in order before their eyes (Psalms 50:21): "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thy eyes." Think me not such a piece of phlegm, and so dull as not to resent your insolences; you shall see, in my final charge, when I come to judge, that not a wry look escaped my knowledge, that I had an eye to behold, and a heart to loathe every one of your transgressions. The church was ready to think that God's slowness to deliver her, and his bearing with her oppressors, was not from any patience in his nature, but a drowsy carelessness, a senseless lethargy (Psalms 44:23): "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" We must conclude him an inapprehensive God, before we can conclude him an insensible God. As his delaying his promise is not slackness to his people (2 Peter 3:9), so his deferring of punishment is not from a stupidity under the affronts offered him.

3. Since it is a part of his mercy and goodness, it is not a constrained or faint-hearted patience. It is not a slowness to anger, arising from a despondency of his own power to revenge. He hath as much power to punish as he hath to forbear punishment. He that created a world in six days, and that by a word, wants not a strength to crush all mankind in one minute; and with as much ease as a word imports, can give satisfaction to his justice in the blood of the offender. Patience in man is many times interpreted, and truly too, a cowardice, a feebleness of spirit, and a want of strength. But it is not from the shortness of the Divine arm, that he cannot reach us, nor from the feebleness of his hand, that he cannot strike us. It is not because he cannot level us with the dust, dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel, or consume us as a moth. He can make the mightiest to fall before him, and lay the strongest at his feet the first moment of their crime. He that did not want a powerful word to create a world, cannot want a powerful word to dissolve the whole frame of it, and raze it out of being. It is not, therefore, out of a distrust of his own power, that he hath supported a sinful world for so many ages, and patiently borne the blasphemies of some, the neglects of others, and the ingratitude of all, without inflicting that severe justice which righteously he might have done; he wants no thunder to crush the whole generation of men, nor waters to drown them, nor earth to swallow them up. How easy is it for him to single out this or that particular person to be the object of his wrath, and not of his patience! What he hath done to one, he may to another; any signal judgment he hath sent upon one, is an evidence that he wants not power to inflict it upon all. Could he not make the motes in the air to choke us at every breath, rain thunderbolts instead of drops of water, fill the clouds with a consuming lightning, take off the reverence and fear of man, which he hath imprinted upon the creature, spirit our domestic beasts to be our executioners, unloose the tiles from the house-top to brain us, or make the fall of a house to crush us? It is but taking out the pins, and giving a blast, and the work is done. And doth he want a power to do any of those things? It is not then a faint-hearted, or feeble patience, that he exerciseth towards man.

4. Since it is not for want of power over the creature, it is from a fulness of power over himself. This is in the text, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power;" it is a part of his dominion over himself, whereby he can moderate, and rule his own affections according to the holiness of his own will. As it is the effect of his power, so it is an argument of his power; the greatness of the effect demonstrates the fulness and sufficiency of the cause. The more feeble any man is in reason the less command he hath over his passions, and he is the more heady to revenge. Revenge is a sign of a childish mind; the stronger any man is in reason, the more command he

hath over himself. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his own spirit, than he that takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32); he that can restrain his anger, is stronger than the Caesars and Alexanders of the world, that have filled the earth with slain carcasses and ruined cities. By the same reason, God's slowness to anger is a greater argument of his power than the creating a world, or the power of dissolving it by a word; in this he hath a dominion over creatures, in the other over himself; this is the reason he will not return to destroy; because "I am God, and not man" (Hosea 11:9); I am not so weak and impotent as man, that cannot restrain his anger. This is a strength possessed only by a God, wherein a creature is no more able to parallel him, than in any other; so that he may be said to be the Lord of himself; as it is in the verse before the text, that he is the Lord of anger, in the Hebrew, instead of "furious," as we translate it; so he is the Lord of patience. The end why God is patient, is to show his power. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" (Romans 11:22). To show his wrath upon sinners, and his power over himself in bearing such indignities, and forbearing punishment so long, when men were vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, of whom there was no hopes of amendment. Had he immediately broken in pieces those vessels, his power had not so eminently appeared as it hath done, in tolerating them so long, that had provoked him to take them off so often; there is indeed the power of his anger, and there is the power of his patience; and his power is more seen in his patience than in his wrath: it is no wonder that He that is above all, is able to crush all; but it is a wonder, that he that is provoked by all, doth not, upon the first provocation, rid his hands of all. This is the reason why he did bear such a weight of provocations from vessels of wrath, prepared for ruin, that he might γῶπ[σ]αι τ[ὸν] δυνάτ[η]ν α[ὐ]το[ῦ], show what he was able to do, the lordship and royalty he had over himself. The power of God is more manifest in his patience to a multitude of sinners, than it would be in creating millions of worlds out of nothing; this was the δυνάτ[η]ν α[ὐ]το[ῦ], a power over himself.

5. This patience being a branch of mercy, the exercise of it is founded in the death of Christ. Without the consideration of this, we can give no account why Divine patience should extend itself to us, and not to the fallen angels. The threatening extends itself to us as well as to the fallen angels; the threatening must necessarily have sunk man, as well as those glorious creatures, had not Christ stepped in to our relief. Had not Christ interposed to satisfy the justice of God, man upon his sin had been actually bound over to punishment, as well as the fallen angels were upon theirs, and been fettered in chains as strong as those spirits feel. [Note: Testard, de Natur. et Grat. Thess. 119.] The reason why man was not hurled into the same deplorable condition upon his sin, as they were, is Christ's promise of taking our nature, and not theirs. Had God designed Christ's taking their nature, the same patience had been exercised towards them, and the same offers would have been made to them, as are made to us. In regard to these fruits of this patience, Christ is said to buy the wickedest apostates from him: "Denying the Lord that bought them" (1 Peter 2:1). Such were bought by him, as "bring upon themselves just destruction, and whose damnation slumbers not" (1 Peter 2:3); he purchased the continuance of their lives, and the stay of their execution, that offers of grace might be made to them. This patience must be either upon the account of the law, or the gospel; for there are no other rules, whereby God governs the world. A fruit of the law it was not; that spake nothing but curses after disobedience; not a letter of mercy was writ upon that, and therefore nothing of patience; death and wrath were denounced; no slowness to anger intimated. It must be therefore upon account of the gospel, and a fruit of the

covenant of grace, whereof Christ was Mediator. Besides this perfection being God's "waiting that he might be gracious" (Isaiah 30:18), that which made way for God's grace made way for his waiting to manifest it. God discovered not his grace, but in Christ; and therefore discovered not his patience but in Christ; it is in him he met with the satisfaction of his justice, that he might have a ground for the manifestation of his patience. And the sacrifices of the law, wherein the life of a beast was accepted for the sin of man, discovered the ground of his forbearance of them to be the expectation of the great Sacrifice, whereby sin was to be completely expiated (Genesis 8:21). The publication of his patience to the end of the world is presently after the sweet savor he found in Noah's sacrifice. The promised and designed coming of Christ, was the cause of that patience God exercised before in the world; and his gathering the elect together, is the reason of his patience since his death.

6. The naturalness of his veracity and holiness, and the strictness of his justice, are no bars to the exercise of his patience.

(1.) His veracity. In those threatenings where the punishment is expressed, but not the time of inflicting it prefixed and determined in the threatening, his veracity suffers no damage by the delaying execution; so it be once done, though a long time after, the credit of his truth stands unshaken: as when God promises a thing without fixing the time, he is at liberty to pitch upon what time he pleases for the performance of it, without staining his faithfulness to his word, by not giving the thing promised presently. Why should the deferring of justice upon an offender be any more against his veracity than his delaying an answer to the petitions of a suppliant? But the difference will lie in the threatening. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death" (Genesis 2:17). The time was there settled; "in that day thou shalt die;" some refer "day" to eating, not to dying; and render the sentence thus: I do not prohibit thee the eating this fruit for a day or two, but continually. In whatsoever day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die; but not understanding his dying that very day he should eat of it; referring "day" to the extensiveness of the prohibition, as to time. But to leave this as uncertain, it may be answered, that as in some threatenings a condition is implied, though not expressed, as in that positive denouncing of the destruction of Ninevah: "Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be destroyed" (Jonah 3:4), the condition is implied; unless they humble themselves, and repent; for upon their repentance, the sentence was deferred. So here, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death," or certainly die, unless there be a way found for the expiation of thy crime, and the righting my honor. This condition, in regard of the event, may as well be asserted to be implied in this threatening, as that of repentance was in the other; or rather, "thou shalt die," thou shalt die spiritually, thou shalt lose that image of mine in thy nature, that righteousness which is as much the life of thy soul as thy soul is the life of thy body; that righteousness whereby thou art enabled to live to me and thy own happiness. What the soul is to the body, a quickening soul, that the image of God is to the soul, a quickening image. Or "thou shalt die the death," or certainly die; thou shalt be liable to death. And so it is to be understood, not of an actual death of the body, but the merit of death, and the necessity of death; thou wilt be noxious to death, which will be avoided, if thou dost forbear to eat of the forbidden fruit; thou shalt be a guilty person, and so under a sentence of death, that I may, when I please, inflict it on thee. [Note: Perer, in loc.] Death did come upon Adam that day, because his nature was vitiated; he was then also under an expectation of death, he was obnoxious to it, though that day it was not poured out upon him in the full bitterness and gall of it: as when the apostle with, "The body is dead

because of sin" (Romans 8:10), he speaks to the living, and yet tells them the body was dead because of sin; he means no more than that it was under a sentence, and so a necessity of dying, though not actually dead; so thou shalt be under the sentence of death that day, as certainly as if that day thou shouldst sink into the dust: and as by his patience towards man, not sending forth death upon him in all the bitter ingredients of it, his justice afterwards was more eminent upon man's surety, than it would have been if it had been then employed in all its severe operations upon man. So was his veracity eminent also in making good this threatening, in inflicting the punishment included in it upon our nature assumed by a mighty Person, and upon that Person in our nature, who was infinitely higher than our nature.

(2.) His justice and righteousness are not prejudiced by his patience. There is a hatred of the sin in his holiness, and a sentence past against the sin in his justice, though the execution of that sentence be suspended, and the person reprieved by patience, which is implied (Ecclesiastes 8:11): "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;" sentence is past, but a speedy execution is stopped. Some of the heathens, who would not imagine God unjust, and yet, seeing the villanies and oppressions of men in the world remain unpunished, and frequently beholding prosperous wickedness, to free him from the charge of injustice, denied his providence and actual government of the world; for if he did take notice of human affairs, and concern himself in what was done upon the earth, they could not think an Infinite Goodness and Justice could be so slow to punish oppressors, and relieve the miserable, and leave the world in that disorder under the injustice of men: they judged such a patience as was exercised by him, if he did govern the world, was drawn out beyond the line of fit and just. Is it not a presumption in men to prescribe a rule of righteousness and conveniency to their Creator? It might be demanded of such, whether they never injured any in their lives; and when certainly they have one way or another, would they not think it a very unworthy, if not unjust, thing, that a person so injured by them should take a speedy and severe revenge on them?—and if every man should do the like, would there not be a speedy despatch made of mankind? Would not the world be a shambles, and men rush forwards to one another's destructions, for the wrongs they have mutually received? If it be accounted a virtue in man, and no unrighteousness, not presently to be all on fire against an offence; by what right should any question the inconsistency of God's patience with his justice? Do we praise the lenity of parents to children, and shall we disparage the long-suffering of God to men? We do not censure the righteousness of physicians and surgeons, because they cut not off a corrupt member this day as well as to-morrow? And is it just to asperse God, because he doth defer his vengeance which man assumes to himself a right to do? We never account him a bad governor that defers the trial, and consequently the condemnation and execution of a notorious offender for important reasons, and beneficial to the public, either to make the nature of his crime more evident, or to find out the rest of his complices by his discovery. A governor, indeed, were unjust, if he commanded that which were unrighteous, and forbade that which were worthy and commendable; but if he delays the execution of a convict offender for weighty reasons, either for the benefit of the state whereof he is the ruler, or for some advantage to the offender himself, to make him have a sense of, and a regret for his offence, we account him not unjust for this. God doth not by his patience dispense with the holiness of his law, nor cut off anything from its due authority. If men do strengthen themselves by his long-suffering against his law, it is their fault, not any unrighteousness in him; he will take a time to vindicate the righteousness of his own

commands, if men will wholly neglect the time of his patience, in forbearing to pay a dutiful observance to his precept. If justice be natural to him, and he cannot but punish sin, yet he is not necessitated to consume sinners, as the fire doth stubble put into it, which hath no command over its own qualities to restrain them from acting; but God is a free agent, and may choose his own time for the distribution of that punishment his nature leads him to. Though he be naturally just, yet it is not so natural to him, as to deprive him of a dominion over his own acts, and a freedom in the exerting them what time he judgeth most convenient in his wisdom. God is necessarily holy, and is necessarily angry with sin; his nature can never like it, and cannot but be displeased with it; yet he hath a liberty to restrain the effects of this anger for a time, without disgracing his holiness, or being interpreted to act unrighteously; as well as a prince or state may suspend the execution of a law, which they will never break, only for a time and for a public benefit. If God should presently execute his justice, this perfection of patience, which is a part of his goodness, would never have an opportunity of discovery; part of his glory, for which he created the world, would lie in obscurity from the knowledge of his creature; his justice would be signal in the destruction of sinners, but this stream of his goodness would be stopped up from any motion. One perfection must not cloud another; God hath his seasons to discover all, one after another: "The times and seasons are in his own power" (Acts 1:7): the seasons of manifesting his own perfections as well as other things; succession of them, in their distinct appearance, makes no invasion upon the rights of any. If justice should complain of an injury from patience, because it is delayed, patience hath more reason to complain of an injury from justice, that by such a plea it would be wholly obscured and inactive: for this perfection hath the shortest time to act its part of any, it hath no stage but this world to move in; mercy hath a heaven, and justice, a hell, to display itself to eternity, but long-suffering hath only a short-lived earth for the compass of its operation. Again, justice is so far from being wronged by patience, that it rather is made more illustrious, and hath the fuller scope to exercise itself; it is the more righted for being deferred, and will have stronger grounds than before for its activity; the equity of it will be more apparent to every reason, the objections more fully answered against it, when the way of dealing with sinners by patience hath been slighted. When this dam of long-suffering is removed, the floods of fiery justice will rush down with more force and violence; justice will be fully recompensed for the delay, when, after patience is abused, it can spread itself over the offender with a more unquestionable authority; it will have more arguments to hit the sinner in the teeth with, and silence him; there will be a sharper edge for every stroke; the sinner must not only pay for the score of his former sins, but the score of abused patience, so that justice hath no reason to commence a suit against God's slowness to anger: what it shall want by the fulness of mercy upon the truly penitent, it will gain by the contempt of patience on the impenitent abusers. When men, by such a carriage, are ripened for the stroke of justice, justice may strike without any regret in itself, or pull-back from mercy; the contempt of long-suffering will silence the pleas of the one, and spirit the severity of the other. To conclude: since God hath glorified his justice on Christ, as a surety for sinners, his patience is so far from interfering with the rights of his justice, that it promotes it; it is dispensed to this end, that God might pardon with honor, both upon the score of purchased mercy and contented justice; that by a penitent sinner's return his mercy might be acknowledged free, and the satisfaction of his justice by Christ be glorified in believing: for he is long-suffering from an unwillingness "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9); i. e. all to whom the promise is made, for to such the apostle speaks, and calls it "long-suffering to us-ward;" and repentance being an acknowledgment

of the demerit of sin, and a breaking off unrighteousness, gives a particular glory to the freeness of mercy, and the equity of justice.

II. The second thing, How this patience or slowness to anger is manifested.

1. To our first parents. His slowness to anger was evidenced in not directing his artillery against them, when they first attempted to rebel. He might have struck them dead when they began to bite at the temptation, and were inclinable to a surrender; for it was a degree of sinning, and a breach of loyalty as well, though not so much as the consummating act. God might have given way to the floods of his wrath at the first spring of man's aspiring thoughts, when the monstrous motion of being as God began to be curdled in his heart; but he took no notice of any of their embryo sins till they came to a ripeness, and started out of the womb of their minds into the open air: and after he had brought his sin to perfection, God did not presently send that death upon him, which he had merited, but continued his life to the space of 930 years (Genesis 5:5). The sun and stars were not arrested from doing their office for him. Creatures were continued for his use, the earth did not swallow him up, nor a thunderbolt from heaven raze out the memory of him. Though he had deserved to be treated with such a severity for his ungrateful demeanor to his Creator and Benefactor, and affecting an equality with him, yet God continued him with a sufficiency for his content, after he turned rebel, though not with such a liberality as when he remained a loyal subject; and though he foresaw that he would not make an end of sinning, but with an end of living, he used him not in the same manner as he had used the devils. He added days and years to him, after he had deserved death, and hath for this 5,000 years continued the propagation of mankind, and derived from his loins an innumerable posterity, and hath crowned multitudes of them with hoary heads. He might have extinguished human race at the first; but since he hath preserved it till this day, it must be interpreted nothing else but the effect of an admirable patience.

2. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Gentiles. What they were, we need no other witness than the apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes (Romans 1:29-32). He doth preface the catalogue with a comprehensive expression, "Being filled with all unrighteousness;" and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation, "They not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." They were so soaked and naturalized in wickedness, that they had no delight, and found no sweetness in anything else but what was in itself abominable; all of them were plunged in idolatry and superstition; none of them but either set up their great men, or creatures, beneficial to the world, and some the damned spirits in his stead, and paid an adoration to insensible creatures or devils, which was due to God. Some were so depraved in their lives and actions, that it seemed to be the interest of the rest of the world, that they should have been extinguished for the instruction of their contemporaries and posterity. The best of them had turned all religion into a fable, coined a world of rites, some unnatural in themselves, and most of them unbecoming a rational creature to offer, and a Deity to accept: yet he did not presently arm himself against them with fire and sword, nor stopped the course of their generations, nor tear out all those relics of natural light which were left in their minds. He did not do what he might have done, but he winked at the "times of that ignorance" (Acts 17:30), their ignorant idolatry; for that it refers to (Acts 17:29): "They thought the Godhead was like to gold or silver, or stone graven heart, and men's device;" ■περιδ■v, overlooking them. He demeaned himself so, as if he did not take notice of them. He winked as if he did not see them, and would not deal so severely with them: the eye of his justice seemed to wink, in not calling them to an account for their sin.

3. His slowness to anger is manifest to the Israelites. You know how often they are called a "stiff-necked people;" they are said to do evil "from their youth;" i. e. from the time wherein they were erected a nation and commonwealth; and that "the city had been a provocation of his anger, and of his fury, from the day that they built it, even to this day;" i. e. the day of Jeremiah's prophecy, "that he should remove it from before his face" (Jeremiah 32:31): from the days of Solomon, say some, which is too much a curtailing of the text, as though their provocations had taken date no higher than from the time of Solomon's rearing the temple, and beautifying the city, whereby it seemed to be a new building. They began more early; they scarce discontinued their revolting from God; they were a "grief to him forty years together in the wilderness" (Psalms 95:10), "yet he suffered their manners" (Acts 13:18). He bore with their ill-behaviour and sauciness towards him; and no sooner was Joshua's head laid, and the elders, that were their conductors, gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forsook God, and smutted themselves with the idolatry of the nations (Judges 2:7; Judges 2:10-11): and when he punished them by prospering the arms of their enemies against them, they were no sooner delivered upon their cry and humiliation, but they began a new scene of idolatry; and though he brought upon them the power of the Babylonian empire, and laid chains upon them to bring them to their right mind. And at seventy years' end he struck off their chains, by altering the whole posture of affairs in that part of the world for their sakes: overturning one empire, and settling another for their restoration to their ancient city. And though they did not after disown him for their God, and set up "Baal in his throne," yet they multiplied foolish traditions, whereby they impaired the authority of the law; yet he sustained them with a wonderful patience, and preferred them before all other people in the first offers of the gospel; and after they had outraged not only his servants, the prophets, but his Son, the Redeemer, yet he did not forsake them, but employed his apostles to solicit them, and publish among them the doctrine of salvation: so that his treating this people might well be called "much long-suffering," it being above 1500 years, wherein he bore with them, or mildly punished them, far less than their deserts; their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final destruction as a commonwealth, not till about forty years after the death of Christ; and all this while his patience did sometimes wholly restrain his justice, and sometimes let it fall upon them in some few drops, but made no total devastation of their country, nor wrote his revenge in extraordinary bloody characters, till the Roman conquest, wherein he put a period to them both as a church and state. In particular this patience is manifest,

1st. In his giving warnings of judgments, before he orders them to go forth. He doth not punish in a passion, and hastily; he speaks before he strikes, and speaks that he may not strike. Wrath is published before it is executed, and that a long time; an hundred and twenty years' advertisement was given to a debauched world before the heavens were opened, to spout down a deluge upon them. He will not be accused of coming unawares upon a people; he inflicts nothing but what he foretold either immediately to the people that provoke him, or anciently to them that have been their forerunners in the same provocation (Hosea 7:12), "I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard." Many of the leaves of the Old Testament are full of those presages and warnings of approaching judgment. These make up a great part of the volume of it in various editions, according to the state of the several provoking times. Warnings are given to those people that are most abominable in his sight (Zephaniah 2:1-2); "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired,"—it is a Meiosis, O nation abhorred,—"before the decree bring forth." He sends his heralds before he sends his armies; he summons them by the voice of his prophets,

before he confounds them by the voice of his thunders. When a parley is beaten, a white flag of peace is hung out, before a black flag of fury is set up. He seldom cuts down men by his judgments, before he hath "hewed them by his prophets" (Hosea 6:5). Not a remarkable judgment but was foretold: the flood to the old world by Noah; the famine to Egypt by Joseph; the earthquake by Amos (Amos 1:1); the storm from Chaldea by Jeremiah; the captivity of the ten tribes by Hosea; the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Christ himself. He hath chosen the best persons in the world to give those intimations; Noah, the most righteous person on the earth, for the old world; and his Son, the most beloved person in heaven, for the Jews in the later time: and in other parts of the world, and in the later times, where he hath not warned by prophets, he hath supplied it by prodigies in the air and earth; histories are full of such items from heaven. Lesser judgments are forewarners of greater, as lightnings before thunder are messengers to tell us of a succeeding clap.

(1). He doth often give warning of judgments. He comes not to extremity, till he hath often shaken the rod over men; he thunders often, before he crusheth them with his thunderbolt; he doth not till after the first and second admonition punish a rebel, as he would have us reject a heretic. "He speaks once, yea, twice" (Job 33:14), "and man perceives it not;" he sends one message after another, and waits the success of many messages before he strikes. Eight prophets were ordered to acquaint the whole world with approaching judgment (2 Peter 2:5): he saved "Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly," called "the eighth" in respect of his preaching, not in regard of his preservation; he was the eighth preacher in order, from the beginning of the world, that endeavored to restore the world to the way of righteousness. Most, indeed, consider him here as the eighth person saved, so do our translators; and, therefore, add person, which is not in the Greek. Some others consider him here as the eighth preacher of righteousness, reckoning Enoch, the son of Seth, the first, grounding it upon Genesis 4:26 : "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," heb. "Then it was began to call in the name of the Lord," τὸ νομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ. Sept. "He began to call in the name of the Lord," which others render, "He began to preach, or call upon men in the name of the Lord." The word νομα signifies to preach, or to call upon men by preaching (Proverbs 1:21): "Wisdom crieth," or "preaches;" and if this be so, as it is very probable, it is easy to reckon him the eighth preacher, by numbering the successive heads of the generations (Genesis 5:1-32.), beginning at Enoch, the first preacher of righteousness. So many there were before God choked the old world with water, and swept them away. It is clear he often did admonish, by his prophets, the Jews of their sin, and the wrath which should come upon them. [Note: Vid. Gell's Ἀγγελοκαταστασις] One prophet, Hosea, prophesied seventy years; for he prophesied in the days of four kings of Judah, and one of Israel, Jeroboam, the son of Joash (Hosea 1:1), or Jeroboam, the second of that name. Uzziah, king of Judah, in whose reign Hosea prophesied, lived thirty-eight years after the death of Jeroboam. The second Jotham, Uzziah's successor, reigned sixteen ears; Ahaz sixteen; Hezekiah twenty-nine years. Now, take noting of Hezekiah's time, and date the beginning of his prophecy from the last year of Jeroboam's reign, and the time of Hosea's prophecy will be seventy years complete; wherein God warned those people, and waited the return particularly of Israel; [Note: Sanetius. Prolegom. in Hosea, Prolog. III.] and not less than five of those we call the Lesser Prophets, were sent to foretell the destruction of the ten tribes, and to call them to repentance,—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah; and though we have nothing of Jonah's prophecy in this concern of Israel, yet that he lived in the time of the same Jeroboam, and prophesied things

which are not upon record in the book of Jonah, is clear (2 Kings 14:25). And besides those, Isaiah prophesied also in the reign of the same kings as Hosea did (Isaiah 1:1); and it is God's usual method to send forth his servants, and when their admonitions are slighted he commissions others, before he sends out his destroying armies (Matthew 22:3-4; Matthew 22:7).

(2). He doth often give warning of judgments, that he might not pour out his wrath. He summons them to a surrender of themselves, and a return from their rebellion, that they might not feel the force of his arms. He offers peace before he shakes off the dust of his feet, that his despised peace might not return in vain to him to solicit a revenge from his anger. He hath a right to punish upon the first commission of a crime, but he warns men of what they have deserved, of what his justice moves him to inflict, that by having recourse to his mercy he might not exercise the rights of his justice. God sought to kill Moses for not circumcising his son (Exodus 4:24). Could God, that sought it, miss a way to do it? Could a creature lurch, or fly from him? God put on the garb of an enemy, that Moses might be discouraged from being an instrument of his own ruin: God manifested an anger against Moses for his neglect, as if he would then have destroyed him, that Moses might prevent it by casting off his carelessness, and doing his duty. He sought to kill him by some evident sign, that Moses might escape the judgment by his obedience. He threatens Nineveh, by the prophet, with destruction, that Nineveh's repentance might make void the prophecy. He fights with men by the sword of his mouth, that he might not pierce them by the sword of his wrath. He threatens, that men might prevent the execution of his threatening; he terrifies, that he might not destroy, but that men by humiliation may lie prostrate before him, and move the bowels of his mercy to a louder sound than the voice of his anger. He takes time to whet his sword, that men may turn themselves from the edge of it. He roars like a lion, that men, by hearing his voice, may shelter themselves from being torn by his wrath. There is patience in the sharpest threatening, that we may avoid the scourge. Who can charge God with an eagerness to revenge, that sends so many heralds, and so often before he strikes, that he might be prevented from striking? His threatenings have not so much of a black flag as of an olive branch. He lifts up his hand before he strikes, that men might see and avert the stroke (Isaiah 26:11).

2d. His patience is manifest in long delaying his threatened judgments, though he finds no repentance in the rebels. He doth sometimes delay his lighter punishments, because he doth not delight in torturing his creatures; but he doth longer delay his destroying punishments, such as put an end to men's happiness, and remit them to their final and unchangeable state; because he "doth not delight in the death of a sinner." While he is preparing his arrows, he is waiting for an occasion to lay them aside, and dull their points, that he may with honor march back again, and disband his armies. He brings lighter smarts sooner, that men might not think him asleep, but he suspends the more terrible judgments that men might be led to repentance. He scatters not his consuming fires at the first, but brings on ruining vengeance with a "slow pace; sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The Jews therefore say, that Michael, the minister of justice, flies with one wing, but Gabriel, the minister of mercy, with two. An hundred and twenty years did God wait upon the old world, and delay their punishment all the time the "ark was preparing" (1 Peter 3:20); wherein that wicked generation did not enjoy only a bare patience, but a striving patience (Genesis 6:3): "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years," the days wherein I will strive with him; that his long-suffering might not lose all its fruit, and remit the objects of it into the hands of consuming justice. It was the

tenth generation of the world from Adam, when the deluge overflowed it, so long did God bear with them: and the tenth generation from Noah wherein Sodom was consumed. God did not come to keep his assizes in Sodom, till "the cry of their sins was very strong," that it had been a wrong to his justice to have restrained it any longer. The cry was so loud that he could not be at quiet, as it were, on his throne of glory for the disturbing noise (Genesis 17:20-21). Sin transgresseth the law; the law being violated, solicits justice; justice, being urged, pleads for punishment; the cry of their sins did, as it were, force him from heaven to come down, and examine what cause there was for that clamor. Sin cries loud and long before he takes his sword in hand. Four hundred years he kept off deserved destruction from the Amorites, and deferred making good his promise to Abraham, of giving Canaan to his posterity, out of his long-suffering to the Amorites (Genesis 15:16). In the fourth generation they shall come hither again, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Their measure was filling then, but not so full as to put a stop to any further patience till four hundred years after. The usual time in succeeding generations, from the denouncing of judgments to the execution, is forty years; this some ground upon Ezekiel 4:6, "Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days," taking each day for a year. Though Hosea lived seventy years, yet from the beginning of his prophesying judgments against Israel to the pouring them out upon that idolatrous people, it was forty years. Hosea, as was mentioned before, prophesied against them in the days of Jeroboam the Second, in whose time God did wonderfully deliver Israel (2 Kings 14:26-27). From that time, till the total destruction of the ten tribes, it was forty years, as may easily be computed from the story (2 Kings 1:1-18; 2 Kings 2:1-25; 2 Kings 3:1-27; 2 Kings 4:1-44; 2 Kings 5:1-27; 2 Kings 6:1-33; 2 Kings 7:1-20; 2 Kings 8:1-29; 2 Kings 9:1-37; 2 Kings 10:1-36; 2 Kings 11:1-21; 2 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Kings 13:1-25; 2 Kings 14:1-29; 2 Kings 15:1-38; 2 Kings 16:1-20), by the reign of the succeeding kings. So forty years after the most horrid villany that ever was committed in the face of the sun, viz., the crucifying the Son of God, was Jerusalem destroyed, and the inhabitants captived; so long did God delay a visible punishment for such an outrage. Sometimes he prolongs sending a threatened judgment upon a mere shadow of humiliation; so he did that denounced against Ahab. He turned it over to his posterity, and adjourned it to another season (1 Kings 21:29). He doth not issue out an arrest upon one transgression; you often find him not commencing a suit against men till "three and four transgressions." The first of Amos, all along that chapter and the second chapter, for "three and four," i. e. "seven;" a certain number for an uncertain. He gives not orders to his judgments to march till men be obstinate, and refuse any commerce with him; he stops them till "there be no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:16). It must be a great wickedness that gives vent to them (Hosea 10:15); Heb. "Your wickedness of wickedness." He is so "slow to anger," and stays the punishment his enemies deserve, that he may seem to have forgot his "kindness to his friends" (Psalms 44:24): "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and oppression?" He lets his people groan under the yoke of their enemies, as if he were made up of kindness to his enemies, and anger against his friends. This delaying of punishment to evil men is visible in his suspending the terrifying acts of conscience, and supporting it only in its checking, admonishing, and controlling acts. The patience of a governor is seen in the patient mildness of his deputy: David's conscience did not terrify him till nine months after his sin of murder. Should God set open the mouth of this power within us, not only the earth, but our own bodies and spirits, would be a burden to us: it is long before God puts scorpions into the hands of men's consciences to scourge them: he holds back the rod, waiting for the hour of our return, as if that would be a recompense

for our offences and his forbearance.

3d. His patience is manifest in his unwillingness to execute his judgments when he can delay no longer. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33): Heb. "He doth not afflict from his heart:" he takes no pleasure in it, as he is Creator. The height of men's provocations, and the necessity of the preserving his rights, and vindicating his laws, obligeth him to it, as he is the Governor of the world; as a judge may willingly condemn a malefactor to death out of affection to the laws, and desire to preserve the order of government, but unwillingly, out of compassion to the offender himself. When he resolved upon the destruction of the old world, he spake it as a God grieved with an occasion of punishment (Genesis 6:6-7, compared together). When he came to reckon with Adam, "he walked," he did not run with his sword in his hand upon him, as a mighty man with an eagerness to destroy him (Genesis 3:8), and that "in the cool of the day," a time when men, tired in the day, are unwilling to engage in a hard employment. His exercising judgment is a "coming out of his place" (Isaiah 26:21; Micah 1:3): he comes out of his station to exercise judgment; a throne is more his place than a tribunal. Every prophecy, loaded with threatenings, is called the "burden of the Lord;" a burden to him to execute it, as well as to men to suffer it. Though three angels came to Abraham about the punishment of Sodom, whereof one Abraham speaks to as to God, yet but two appeared at the destruction of Sodom, as if the Governor of the world were unwilling to be present at such dreadful work (Genesis 19:1): and when the man, that had the ink-horn by his side, that was appointed to mark those that were to be preserved in the common destruction, returned to give an account of the performing his commission (Ezekiel 9:10), we read not of the return of those that were to kill, as if God delighted only to hear again of his works of mercy, and had no mind to hear again of his severe proceedings. The Jews, to show God's unwillingness to punish, imagine that hell was created the second day, because that day's work is not pronounced good by God as all the other days' works are [Note: Mercer in Gen.] (Genesis 1:8).

(1.) When God doth punish he doth it with some regret. When he hurls down his thunders, he seems to do it with a backward hand, because with an unwilling heart. [Note: Cressol. Decad. II. p. 163.] He created, saith Chrysostom, the world in six days, but was seven days in destroying one city, Jericho, which he had before devoted to be razed to the ground. What is the reason, saith he, that God is so quick to build up, but slow to pull down? His goodness excites his power to the one, but is not earnest to persuade him to the other: when he comes to strike, he doth it with a sigh or groan (Isaiah 1:24): "Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me on my enemies," ■■■■, Ah! a note of grief. So Hosea 6:4, "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah I what shall I do unto thee?" It is an addubitatio, a figure in rhetoric, as if God were troubled that he must deal so sharply with them, and give them up to their enemies:—I have tried all means to reclaim you; I have used all ways of kindness, and nothing prevails; what shall I do? my mercy invites me to spare them, and their ingratitude provokes me to ruin them. God had borne with that people of Israel almost three hundred years, from the setting up of the calves at Dan and Bethel; sent many a prophet to warn them, and spent many a rod to reform them: and when he comes to execute his threatenings, he doth with a conflict in himself (Hosea 11:8): "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" as if there were a pull-back in his own bowels. He solemnizeth their approaching funeral with a hearty groan, and takes his farewell of the dying malefactor with a pang in himself. How often, in former times, when he had signed a warrant for their execution, did

he call it back? (Psalms 78:38): "Many a time turned he his anger away." Many a time he recalled or ordered his anger to return again, as the word signifies, as if he were irresolute what to do: he recalled it, as a man doth his servant, several times, when he is sending him upon an unwelcome message; or as a tender-hearted prince wavers and trembles when he is to sign a writ for the death of a rebel that hath been before his favorite, as if, when he had signed the writ, he blotted out his name again, and flung away the pen. And his method is remarkable when he came to punish Sodom; though the cry of their sin had been fierce in his ears, yet when he comes to make inquisition, he declares his intention to Abraham, as if he were desirous that Abraham should have helped him to some arguments to stop the outgoings of his judgment. He gave liberty to the best person in the world to stand in the gap, and enter into a treaty with him, to show, saith one, [Note: Pierce, Sinner Implead. p. 227.] how willingly his mercy would have compounded with his justice for their redemption; and Abraham interceded so long, till he was ashamed for pleading the cause of patience and mercy to the wrong of the rights of Divine justice. Perhaps, had Abraham had the courage to ask, God would have had the compassion to grant a reprieve just at the time of execution.

(2.) His patience is manifest in that when he begins to send out his judgments, he doth it by degrees. His judgments are "as the morning light," which goes forth by degrees in the hemisphere (Hosea 6:5). He doth not shoot all his thunders at once, and bring his sharpest judgments in array at one time, but gradually, that a people may have time to turn to him (Joel 1:4). First the palmer-worm, then the locust, then the canker-worm, then the caterpillar; what one left, the other was to eat, if there were not a timely return. A Jewish writer [Note: Kimchi.] saith, these judgments came not all in one year, but one year after another. The palmer-worm and locust might have eaten all, but Divine patience set bounds to the devouring creatures. God had been first as a moth to Israel (Hosea 5:12): "Therefore will I be to the house of Ephraim as a moth;" Rivet translates it, "I have been;" in the Hebrew it is "I," without adding "I have been," or "I will be," and more probably "I have been;" I was as a moth, which makes little holes in a garment, and consumes it not all at once; and as "rottenness to the house of Judah," or a worm that eats into wood by degrees. Indeed, this people had consumed insensibly, partly by civil combustions, change of governors, foreign invasions, yet they were as obstinate in their idolatry as ever; at last God would be no longer to them as a moth, but as a lion, tear and go away (Hosea 5:14): so Hosea 2:1-23, God had disowned Israel for his spouse (Hosea 2:2), "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband;" yet he had not taken away her ornaments, which by the right of divorce he might have done, but still expected her reformation, for that the threatening intimates (Hosea 2:3); let her put away her whoredom, "lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day when she was born." If she returned, she might recover what she had lost; if not, she might be stripped of what remained: thus God dealt with Judah (Ezekiel 9:3. The glory of God goes first from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and stays there, as if he had a mind to be invited back again; then it goes from the threshold of the house, and stands over the cherubims, as if upon a penitent call it would drop down again to its ancient station and seat, over which it hovered (Ezekiel 10:18); and when he was not solicited to return, he departs out of the city, and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east part of the city (Ezekiel 11:23), looking still towards, and hovering about the temple, which was on the east of Jerusalem, as if loth to depart, and abandon the place and people. He walks so leisurely, with his rod in his hand, as if he had a mind rather to fling it away than use it; his patience in not pouring out all his vials, is more remarkable than his wrath in pouring out one or two. Thus

hath God made his slowness to anger visible to us in the gradual punishment of us; first, the pestilence on this city, then firing our houses, consumption of trade; these have not been answered with such a carriage as God expects, therefore a greater is reserved. I dare prognosticate, upon reasons you may gather from what hath been spoke before, if I be not much mistaken, the forty years of his usual patience are very near expired; he hath inflicted some, that he might be met with in a way of repentance, and omit with honor the inflicting the remainder.

4th. His patience is manifest, in moderating his judgments, when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazines of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one, as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store, he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army; "He stirs not up all his wrath" (Psalms 78:38); he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us; if he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do. When he might sweep away a whole nation by deluges of water, corruption of the air, or convulsions of the earth, or by other ways that are not wanting at his order; he picks out only some persons, some families, some cities; sends a plague into one house, and not into another; here is patience to the stock of a nation, while he inflicts punishment upon some of the most notorious sinners in it. Herod is suddenly snatched away, being willingly flattered into the thoughts of his being a god; God singled out the chief in the herd for whose sake he had been affronted by the rabble (Acts 12:22-23). Some find him sparing them, while others feel him destroying them; he arrests some, when he might seize all, all being his debtors; and often in great desolations brought upon a people for their sin, he hath left a stump in the earth, as Daniel speaks (Daniel 4:15), for a nation to grow upon it again, and arise to a stronger constitution. He doth punish "less than our iniquities deserve" (Ezra 9:13), and rewards us "not according to our iniquities" (Psalms 103:10). The greatness of any punishment in this life, answers not the greatness of the crime. Though there be an equity in whatsoever he doth, yet there is not an equality to what we deserve; our iniquities would justify a severer treating of us; his justice goes not here to the end of its line, it is stopped in its progress, and the blows of it weakened by his patience; he did not curse the earth after Adam's fall, that it should bring forth no fruit, but that it should not bring forth fruit without the wearisome toil of man, and subjected him to distempers presently, but inflicted not death immediately; while he punished him, he supported him; and while he expelled him from paradise, he did not order him not to cast his eye towards it, and conceive some hopes of regaining that happy place.

5th. His patience is seen in giving great mercies after provocations. He is so slow to anger, that he heaps many kindnesses upon a rebel, instead of punishment. There is a prosperous wickedness, wherein the provoker's strength continues firm; the troubles, which like clouds drop upon others, are blown away from them, and they are "not plagued like other men," that have a more worthy demeanor towards God (Psalms 73:3-5). He doth not only continue their lives, but sends out fresh beams of his goodness upon them, and calls them by his blessings, that they may acknowledge their own fault and his bounty, which he is not obliged to by any gratitude he meets with from them,

but by the richness of his own patient nature: for he finds the unthankfulness of men as great as his benefits to them. He doth not only continue his outward mercies, while we continue our sins, but sometimes gives fresh benefits after new provocations, that if possible he might excite an ingenuity in men. When Israel at the Red Sea flung dirt in the face of God, by quarrelling with his servant Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and misjudging God in his design of deliverance, and were ready to submit themselves to their former oppressors (Exodus 14:11-12), which might justly have urged God to say to them, Take your own course; yet he is not only patient under their unjust charge, but “makes bare his arm in a deliverance at the Red Sea,” that was to be an amazing monument to the world in all ages; and afterwards, when they repiningly quarrelled with him in their wants in the wilderness, he did not only not revenge himself upon them, or cast off the conduct of them, but bore with them by a miraculous long-suffering, and supplied them with miraculous provision,—manna from heaven, and water from a rock. Food is given to support us, and clothes to cover us, and Divine patience makes the creature which we turn to another use than what they were at first intended for, serve us contrary to their own genius: for had they reason, no question but they would complain to be subjected to the service of man, who hath been so ungrateful to their Creator, and groan at the abuse of God’s patience, in the abuse they themselves suffer from the hands of man.

6th. All this is more manifest, if we consider the provocations he hath. Wherein his slowness to anger infinitely transcends the patience of any creature; nay, the spirits of all the angels and glorified saints in heaven, would be too narrow to bear the sins of the world for one day, nay, not so much as the sins of churches, which is a little spot in the whole world; it is because he is the Lord, one of an infinite power over himself, that not only the whole mass of the rebellious world, but of the sons of Jacob (either considered as a church and nation springing from the loins of Jacob, or considered as the regenerate part of the world, sometimes called the seed of Jacob), “are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6). A Jonah was angry with God, for recalling his anger from a sinful people; had God committed the government of the world to the glorified saints, who are perfect in love and holiness, the world would have had an end long ago; they would have acted that which they sue for at the hands of God, and is not granted them. “How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10). God hath designs of patience above the world, above the unsinning angels, and perfectly renewed spirits in glory. The greatest created long-suffering is infinitely disproportioned to the Divine: fire from heaven would have been showered down before the greatest part of a day were spent, if a created patience had the conduct of the world, though that creature were possessed with the spirit of patience, extracted from all the creatures which are in heaven, or are, or ever were upon the earth. Methinks Moses intimates this; for as soon as God had passed by, proclaiming his name gracious and long suffering, as soon as ever Moses had paid his adoration, he falls to praying that God would go with the Israelites; “For it is a stiff-necked people” (Exodus 34:8-9). What an argument is here for God to go along with them! he might rather, since he had heard him but just before say “he would by no means clear the guilty,” desire God to stand further off from them, for fear the fire of his wrath should burst out from him, to burn them as he did the Sodomites. But he considers, that as none but God had such anger to destroy them, so none but God had such a patience to bear with them; it is as much as if he should have said, Lord! if thou shouldest send the most tender-hearted angel in heaven to have the guidance of this people, they would be a lost people; a period will quickly be set to their lives, no created strength can restrain its power from crushing

such a stiff-necked people; flesh and blood cannot bear them, nor any created spirit of a greater might.

(1.) Consider the greatness of the provocations. No light matter, but actions of a great defiance: what is the practical language of most in the world, but that of Pharoah? "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" How many questions his being, and more his authority? What blasphemies of him, what reproaches of his Majesty! Men "drinking up iniquity like water," and with a haste and ardency "rushing into sin, as the horse into the battle." What is there in the reasonable creature, that hath the quickest capacity, and the deepest obligation to serve him, but opposition and enmity, a slight of him in everything, yea, the services most seriously performed, unsuited to the royalty and purity of so great a Being? such provocations as dare him to his face, that are a burden to so righteous a Judge, and so great a lover of the authority and majesty of his laws; that were there but a spark of anger in him, it is a wonder it doth not show itself. When he is invaded in all his attributes, it is astonishing that this single one of patience and meekness should withstand the assault of all the rest of his perfections; his being, which is attacked by sin, speaks for vengeance; his justice cannot be imagined to stand silent without charging the sinner. His holiness cannot but encourage his justice to urge its pleas, and be an advocate for it. His omniscience proves the truth of all the charge, and his abused mercy hath little encouragement to make opposition to the indictment; nothing but patience stands in the gap to keep off the arrest of judgment from the sinner.

(2.) His patience is manifest, if you consider the multitudes of these provocations. Every man hath sin enough in a day to make him stand amazed at Divine patience, and to call it, as well as the apostle did, "all long-suffering" (1 Timothy 1:16). How few duties of a perfectly right stamp are performed! What unworthy considerations mix themselves, like dross, with our purest and sincerest gold! How more numerous are the respects of the worshippers of him to themselves, than unto him! How many services are paid him, not out of love to him, but because he should do us no hurt, and some service; when we do not so much design to please him, as to please ourselves by expectations of a reward from him! What master would endure a servant that endeavored to please him, only because he should not kill him! Is that former charge of God upon the old world yet out of date, "That the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil, and that continually?" (Genesis 6:5.) Was not the new world as chargeable with it as the old? Certainly it was (Genesis 8:21); and is of as much force this very minute as it was then. How many are the sins against knowledge, as well as those of ignorance; presumptuous sins, as well as those of infirmity! How numerous those of omission and commission! It is above the reach of any man's understanding to conceive all the blasphemies, oaths, thefts, adulteries, murders, oppressions, contempt of religion, the open idolatries of Turks and heathens, the more spiritual and refined idolatries of others. [Note: Lessius, p. 152.] Add to those, the ingratitude of those that profess his name, their pride, earthliness, carelessness, sluggishness to Divine duties, and in every one of those a multitude of provocations; the whole man being engaged in every sin, the understanding contriving it, the will embracing it, the affections complying with it, and all the members of the body instruments in the acting the unrighteousness of it; every one of these faculties bestowed upon men by him, are armed against him in every act: and in every employment of them there is a distinct provocation, though centred in one sinful end and object. What are the offences all the men of the world receive from their fellow-creatures, to the injuries

God receives from men, but as a small dust of earth to the whole mass of earth and heaven too? What multitudes of sins is one profane wretch guilty of in the space of twenty, forty, fifty years? Who can compute the vast number of his transgressions, from the first use of reason to the time of the separation of his soul from his body, from his entrance into the world to his exit? What are those, to those of a whole village of the like inhabitants? What are those, to those of a great city? Who can number up all the foul-mouthed oaths, the beastly excess, the goatish uncleanness, committed in the space of a day, year, twenty years in this city, much less in the whole nation, least of all, in the whole world? Were it no more than the common idolatry of former ages, when the whole world turned their backs upon their Creator, and passed him by to sue to a creature, a stock or stone, or a degraded spirit? How provoking would it be to a prince to see a whole city under his dominion deny him a respect, and pay it to his scullion, or the common executioner he employs! Add to this the unjust invasion of kings, the oppressions exercised upon men, all the private and public sins that have been in the world ever since it began. The Gentiles were described by the apostle (Romans 1:29-31), in a black character, "They were haters of God;" yet how did the "riches of his patience" preserve multitudes of such disingenuous persons, and how "many millions of such haters of him" breathe every day in his air, and are maintained by his bounty, have their tables spread, and their cups filled to the brim, and that, too, in the midst of reiterated belchings of their enmity against him? All are under sufficient provocations of him to the highest indignation. The presiding angels over nations could not forbear, in love and honor to their governor, to arm themselves to the destruction of their several charges, if Divine patience did not set them a pattern, and their obedience incline them to expect his orders, before they act what their zeal would prompt them to. The devils would be glad of a commission to destroy the world, but that his patience puts a stop to their fury, as well as his own justice.

(3.) Consider the longtime of this patience. He spread out his hands "all the day" to a rebellious world (Isaiah 65:2). All men's day, all God's day, which is a "thousand years," he hath borne with the gross of mankind, with all the nations of the world in a long succession of ages, for five thousand years and upwards already, and will bear with them till the time comes for the world's dissolution. He hath suffered the monstrous acts of men, and endured the contradictions of a sinful world against himself, from the first sin of Adam, to the last committed this minute. The line of his patience hath run along with the duration of the world to this day; and there is not any one of Adam's posterity but hath been expensive to him, and partaken of the riches of it.

(4.) All these he bears when he hath a sense of them. He sees every day the roll and catalogue of sin increasing; he hath a distinct view of every one, from the sin of Adam to the last filled up in his omniscience; and yet gives no order for the arrest of the world. He knows men fitted for destruction; all the instants he exerciseth long-suffering towards them, which makes the apostle call it not simply long-suffering, without the addition of πολλή, "much long-suffering" (Romans 9:23). There is not a grain in the whole mass of sin, that he hath not a distinct knowledge of, and of the quality of it. He perfectly understands the greatness of his own majesty that is vilified, and the nature of the offence that doth disparage him. He is solicited by his justice, directed by his omniscience, and armed with judgments to vindicate himself, but his arm is restrained by patience. To conclude: no indignity is hid from him, no iniquity is beloved by him; the hatred of their sinfulness is infinite, and the knowledge of the malice is exact. The subsisting of the world under such weighty provocations, so numerous, so long time, and with his full sense of every one of

them, is an evidence of such a “forbearance and long-suffering,” that the addition of riches which the apostle puts to it (Romans 2:4), labors with an insufficiency clearly to display it.

III. Why God doth exercise so much patience.

1. To show himself appeasable. God did not declare by his patience to former ages, or any age, that he was appeased with them, or that they were in his favor; but that he was appeasable, that he was not an implacable enemy, but that they might find him favorable to them, if they did seek after him. The continuance of the world by patience, and the bestowing many mercies by goodness, were not a natural revelation of the manner how he would be appeased: that was made known only by the prophets, and after the coming of Christ by the apostles; and had indeed been intelligible in some sort to the whole world, had there been a faithfulness in Adam's posterity, to transmit the tradition of the first promise to succeeding generations. Had not the knowledge of that died by their carelessness and neglect, it had been easy to tell the reason of God's patience to be in order to the exhibition of the “Seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head.” They could not but naturally know themselves sinners, and worthy of death; they might, by easy reflections upon themselves, collect that they were not in that comely and harmonious posture now, as they were when God first wrought them with his own finger, and placed them as his lieutenants in the world; they knew they did grievously offend him; this they were taught by the sprinklings of his judgments among them sometimes. And since he did not utterly root up mankind, his sparing patience was a prologue of some further favors, or pardoning grace to be displayed to the world by some methods of God yet unknown to them. Though the earth was something impaired by the curse after the fall, yet the main pillars of it stood; the state of the natural motions of the creature was not changed; the heavens remained in the same posture wherein they were created; the sun, and moon, and other heavenly bodies, continued their usefulness and refreshing influences to man. The heavens did still “declare the glory of God, day unto day” did “utter speech; their line is gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalms 19:1-4): which declared God to be willing to do good to his creatures, and were as so many legible letters or rudiments, whereby they might read his patience, and that a further design of favor to the world lay hid in that patience. Paul applies this to the preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:18): “Have they not heard the word of God? yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.” Redeeming grace could not be spelled out by them in a clear notion, but yet they did declare that which is the foundation of gospel mercy. Were not God patient, there were no room for a gospel mercy, so that the heavens declare the gospel, not formally, but fundamentally, in declaring the long-suffering of God, without which no gospel had been framed, or could have been expected. They could not but read in those things favorable inclinations towards them: and though they could not be ignorant that they deserved a mark of justice, yet seeing themselves supported by God, and beholding the regular motions of the heavens from day to day, and the revolutions of the seasons of the year, the natural conclusions they might draw from thence was, that God was placable; since he behaved himself more as a tender friend, that had no mind to be at war with them, than an enraged enemy. The good things which he gave them, and the patience whereby he spared them, were no arguments of an implacable disposition; and, therefore, of a disposition willing to be appeased. This is clearly the design of the apostle's arguing with the Lystrians, when they would have offered sacrifices to Paul (Acts 14:17). When God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he did not leave himself without witness, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.”

What were those witnesses of? not only of the being of a God, by their readiness to sacrifice to those that were not gods, only supposed to be so in their false imaginations; but witnesses to the tenderness of God, that he had no mind to be severe with his creatures, but would allure them by ways of goodness. Had not God's patience tended to this end, to bring the world under another dispensation, the apostle's arguing from it had not been suitable to his design, which seems to be a hindering the sacrifices they intended for them, and a drawing them to embrace the gospel, and therefore preparing the way to it, by speaking of the patience and goodness of God to them, as an unquestionable testimony of the reconcilableness of good to them, by some sacrifice which was represented under the common notion of sacrifices. [Note: Amyrald, Dissert. pp. 191, 192.] These things were not witnesses of Christ, or syllables whereby they could spell out the redeeming person; but witnesses that God was placable in his own nature. When man abused those noble faculties God had given him, and diverted them from the use and service God intended them for, God might have stripped man of them the first time that he misemployed them; and it would have seemed most agreeable to his wisdom and justice, not to suffer himself to be abused, and the world to go contrary to its natural end. But since he did not level the world with its first nothing, but healed the world so favorably, it was evident that his patience pointed the world to a further design of mercy and goodness in him. To imagine that God had no other design in his long-suffering but that of vengeance, had been a notion unsuitable to the goodness and wisdom of God. He would never have pretended himself to be a friend, if he had harbored nothing but enmity in his heart against them. It had been far from his goodness to give them a cause to suspect such a design in him, as his patience certainly did, had he not intended it. Had he preserved men only for punishment, it is more like he would have treated men as princes do those they reserve for the axe or halter, give them only things necessary to uphold their lives till the day of execution, and not have bestowed upon them so many good things to make their lives delightful to them, nor have furnished them with so many excellent means to please their senses, and recreate their minds; it had been a mocking of them to treat them at that rate, if nothing but punishment had been intended towards them. If the end of it, to lead men to repentance, were easily intelligible by them, as the apostle intimates (Romans 2:4)—which is to be linked with the former chapter, a discourse of the Gentiles: "Not knowing," saith he, "that the riches of his forbearance and goodness leads thee to repentance"—it also gives them some ground to hope for pardon. For what other argument can more induce to repentance than an expectation of mercy upon a relenting, and acknowledging the crime? Without a design of pardoning grace, his patience would have been in a great measure exercised in vain: for by mere patience God is not reconciled to a sinner, no more than a prince to a rebel, by bearing with him. Nor can a sinner conclude himself in the favor of God, no more than a rebel can conclude himself in the favor of his prince; only, this he may conclude, that there is some hopes he may have the grant of a pardon, since he hath time to sue it out. And so much did the patience of God naturally signify that he was of a reconcilable temper, and was willing men should sue out their pardon upon repentance; otherwise, he might have magnified his justice, and condemned men by the law of works.

(2.) He therefore exercised so much patience to wait for men's repentance. All the notices and warnings that God gives men, of either public or personal calamities, is a continual invitation to repentance. This was the common interpretation the heathens made of extraordinary presages and prodigies, which showed as well the delays as the approaches of judgments. What other notion but this, that those warnings of judgments witness a slowness to anger, and a willingness to

turn his arrows another way, should move them to multiply sacrifices, go weeping to their temples, sound out prayers to their gods, and show all those other testimonies of a repentance which their blind understandings hit upon? If a prince should sometimes in a light and gentle manner punish a criminal, and then relax it, and show him much kindness, and afterwards inflict upon him another kind of punishment as light as the former, and less than was due to his crime, what could the malefactor suspect by such a way of proceeding, but that the prince, by those gently-repeated chastisements, had a mind to move him to a regret for his crime? [Note: Amyraldus, Moral. Tom. II. p. 186.] And what other thoughts could men naturally have of God's conduct, that he should warn them of great judgments, send light afflictions, which are testimonies rather of a patience than of a severe wrath, but that it was intended to move them to a relenting, and a breaking off their sins by working righteousness? Though Divine patience does not, in the event, induce men to repentance, yet the natural tendency of such a treatment is to mollify men's hearts, to overcome their obstinacy; and no man hath any reason to judge otherwise of such a proceeding. The "long-suffering of God is salvation," saith Peter (2 Peter 3:16), i. e. hath a tendency to salvation, in its being a solicitation of men to the means of it; for the apostle cites Paul for the confirmation of it,—“Even as our beloved brother, Paul, hath written unto you,” which must refer to Romans 2:4 : “it leads to repentance,” it conducts, which is more than barely to invite; it doth, as it were, take us by the hand, and point us to the way wherein we should go; and for this end it was exercised, not only towards the Jews, but towards the Gentiles, not only towards those that are within the pale of the church, and under the dews of the gospel, but to those that are in darkness, and in the shadow of death; for this discourse of the apostle was but an inference from what he had treated of in the first chapter concerning the idolatry and ingratitude of the Gentiles; since the Gentiles were to be punished for the abuse of it as well as the Jews, as he intimates, Romans 2:9. It is plain that his patience, which is exercised towards the idolatrous Gentiles, was to allure them to repentance as well as others; and it was a sufficient motive in itself to persuade them to a change of their vile and gross acts, to such as were morally good: and there was enough in God's dealing with them, and in that light they had to engage them to a better course than what they usually walked in; and though men do abuse God's long-suffering, to encourage their impenitence, and persisting in their crimes, yet that they cannot reasonably imagine that to be the end of God is evident; their own gripes of conscience would acquaint them that it is otherwise. They know that conscience is a principle that God hath given them, as well as understanding, and will, and other faculties; that God doth not approve of that which the voice of their own consciences, and of the consciences of all men under natural light, are utterly against: and if there were really, in this forbearance of God, an approbation of men's crimes, conscience could not, frequently and universally in all men, check them for them. What authority could conscience have to do it? But this it doth in all men: as the apostle (Romans 1:22), “They know the judgment of God, that those that do such things,” which he had mentioned before, “are worthy of death.” In this thing the consciences of all men cannot err: they could not, therefore, conclude from hence God's approbation of their iniquities, but his desire that their hearts should be touched with a repentance for them. The “sin of Ephraim is hid” (Hosea 13:12-13); i. e. God doth not presently take notice of it, to order punishment; he lays it in a secret place from the eye of his justice, that Ephraim might not be his unwise son, and “stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children;” i. e. that he should speedily reclaim himself, and not continue in the way of destruction. God hath no need to abuse any; he doth not lie to the sons of men; if he would have men perish, he could easily destroy them, and have done it long ago: he did

not leave the woman Jezebel in being, nor lengthened out her time, but as a space to repent (Revelation 2:21), that she might reflect upon her ways, and devote herself seriously to his service, and her own happiness. His patience stands between the offending creature and eternal misery a long time, that men might not foolishly throw away their souls, and be damned for their impenitency; by this he shows himself ready to receive men to mercy upon their return. To what purpose doth he invite men to repentance, if he intended to deceive them, and damn them after they repent?

3. He doth exercise patience for the propagation of mankind. If God punished every sin presently, there would not only be a period put to churches, but to the world; without patience, Adam had sunk into eternal anguish the first moment of his provocation, and the whole world of mankind, in his loins, had perished with him, and never seen the light. If this perfection had not interposed after the first sin, God had lost his end in the creation of the world, which he “created not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). It had been inconsistent with the wisdom of God to make a world to be inhabited, and destroy it upon sin, when it had but two principal inhabitants in it; the reason of his making this earth had been insignificant; he had not had any upon earth to glorify him, without erecting another world, which might have proved as sinful and as quickly wicked as this; God should have always been pulling down down and rearing up, creating and annihilating; one world would have come after another, as wave after wave in the sea. His patience stepped in to support the honor of God, and the continuance of men, without which one had been in part impaired, and the other totally lost.

4. He doth exercise patience for the continuance of the church. If he be not patient toward sinners, what stock would there be for believers to spring up from? He bears with the provoking carriage of men, evil men, because out of their loins he intends to extract others, which he will form for the glory of his grace. He hath some unborn that belong to the election of grace, which are to be the seed of the worst of men; Jeroboam, the chief incendiary of the Israelites to idolatry, had an Abijah, in whom was found “some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel” (1 Kings 14:13). Had Ahaz been snapped in the first act of his wickedness, the Israelites had wanted so good a prince and so good a man as Hezekiah, a branch of that wicked predecessor. What gardener cuts off the thorns from the rose-brush till he hath gathered the roses? and men do not use to burn all the crab-tree, but preserve a stock to engraft some sweet fruit upon. There could not have been a saint in the earth, nor, consequently, in heaven, had it not been for this perfection: he did not destroy the Israelites in the wilderness, that he might keep up a church among them, and not extinguish the whole seed that were heirs of the promises and covenant made with Abraham. Had God punished men for their sins as soon as they had been committed, none would have lived to have been better, none could have continued in the world to honor him by their virtues. Manasseh had never been a convert, and many brutish men had never been changed from beasts to angels, to praise and acknowledge their Creator. Had Peter received his due recompense upon the denial of his Master, he had never been a martyr for him; nor had Paul been a preacher of the gospel; nor any else: and so the gospel had not shined in any part of the world. No seed would have been brought into Christ; Christ is beholding immediately to this attribute for all the seed he hath in the world: it is for his name’s sake that he doth defer his anger; and for his praise that he doth refrain from “cutting us off” (Isaiah 48:9): and in the next chapter follows a prophecy of Christ. To overthrow mankind for sin, were to prevent the spreading a church in the world: a woman that is

guilty of a capital crime, and lies under a condemning sentence, is reprieved from execution for her being with child; it is for the child's sake the woman is respited, not for her own: it is for the elect's sake, in the loins of transgressors, that they are a long time spared, and not for their own (Isaiah 55:8): "As the new wine is found in a cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all;" as a husbandman spares a vine for some good clusters in it. He had spoke of vengeance before, yet he would reserve some from whom he would bring forth those that should be "inheritors of his mountains," that he might make up his church of Judea; Jerusalem being a mountainous place, and the type of the church in all ages. What is the reason he doth not level his thunder at the heads of those for whose destruction he receives so many petitions from the "souls under the altar?" (Revelation 6:9-10). Because God had others to write a testimony for him in their own blood, and perhaps out of the loins of those for whom vengeance was so earnestly supplicated; and God, as the master of a vessel, lies patiently at anchor, till the last passenger he expects be taken in. [Note: Smith on the Creed, p. 404.]

5. For the sake of his church he is patient to wicked men. The tares are patiently endured till the harvest, for fear in the plucking up the one, there might be some prejudice done to the other. Upon this account he spares some, who are worse than others whom he crusheth by signal judgments: the Jews had committed sins worse than Sodom, for the confirmation of which we have God's oath (Ezekiel 16:48); and more by half than Samaria, or the ten tribes had done (Ezekiel 16:51): yet God spared the Jews, though he destroyed the Sodomites. What was the reason, but a larger remnant of righteous persons, more clusters of good grapes, were found among them than grew in Sodom? (Isaiah 1:9). A few more righteous in Sodom had damped the fire and brimstone designed for that place, and a "remnant of such in Judea" was a bar to that fierceness of anger, which otherwise would have quickly consumed them. Had there been but "ten righteous in Sodom," Divine patience had still bound the arms of Justice, that it should not have prepared its brimstone, notwithstanding the clamor of the sins of the multitude. Judea was ripe for the sickle, but God would put a lock upon the torrent of his judgments, that they should not flow down upon that wicked place, to make them a desolation and a curse, as long as tender-hearted Josiah lived, "who had humbled himself" at the threatening, and wept before the Lord (1 Kings 22:19-20). Sometimes he bears with wicked men, that they might exercise the patience of the saints (Revelation 14:12): the whole time of the "forbearance of antichrist" in all his intrusions into the temple of God, invasions of the rights of God, usurpations of the office of Christ, and besmearing himself with the blood of the saints, was to give them an opportunity of patience. God is patient towards the wicked, that by their means he might try the righteous. He burns not the wisp till he hath scoured his vessels; nor lays by the hammer, till he hath formed some of his matter into an excellent fashion. He useth the worst men as rods to correct his people, before he sweeps the twigs out of his house. God sometimes uses the thorns of the world, as a hedge to secure his church, sometimes as instruments to try and exercise it. Howsoever he useth them, whether for security or trial, he is patient to them for his church's advantage.

6. When men are not brought to repentance by his patience, he doth longer exercise it, to manifest the equity of his future justice upon them. As wisdom is justified by her obedient children, so is justice justified by the rebels against patience; the contempt of the latter is the justification of the former. The "apostles were unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that perish," as well as in them that were saved by the acceptance of their message (2 Corinthians 2:15). Both are fragrant

to God; his mercy is glorified by the one's acceptance of it, and his justice freed from any charge against it by the other's refusal. The cause of men's ruin cannot be laid upon God, who provided means for their salvation, and solicited her compliance with him. What reason can they have to charge the Judge with any wrong to them, who reject the tenders he makes, and who hath forborne them with so much patience, when he might have censured them by his righteous justice, upon the first crime they committed, or the first refusal of his gracious offers? "Quanto Dei magis judicium tardum est tanto magis justum." [Note: Minuc. Felix, p. 41.] After the despising of patience, there can be no suspicion of an irregularity in the acts of justice. Man hath no reason to fall foul in his charge upon God, if he were punished for his own sin, considering the dignity of the injured person, and the meanness of himself, the offender; but his wrath is more justified when it is poured out upon those whom he hath endured with much long-suffering. There is no plea against the shooting of his arrows into those, for whom this voice hath been loud, and his arms open for their return. As patience, while it is exercised, is the silence of his justice, so when it is abused, it silenceth men's complaints against his justice. The "riches of his forbearance" made way for the manifesting the "treasures of his wrath." If God did but a little bear with the insolencies of men, and cut them off after two or three sins, he would not have opportunity to show either the power of his patience, or that of his wrath; but when he hath a right to punish for one sin, and yet bears with them for many, and they will not be reclaimed, the sinner is more inexcusable, Divine justice less chargeable, and his wrath more powerful. (Romans 9:22), "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" The proper and immediate end of his long-suffering is to lead men to repentance; but after they have by their obstinacy fitted themselves for destruction, he bears longer with them, to "magnify his wrath" more upon them; and if it is not the *finis operantis*, it is at least the *finis operis*, where patience is abused. Men are apt to complain of God, that he deals hardly with them; the Israelites seem to charge God with too much severity, to cast them off, when so many promises were made to the fathers for their perpetuity and preservation, which is intimated, Hosea 2:2. "Plead with your mother, plead:" by the double repetition of the word "plead;" do not accuse me of being false or too rigorous, but accuse your mother, your church, your magistracy, your ministry, for their spiritual fornications which have provoked me; for their ■■■■■■■■, intimating the greatness of their sins by the reduplication of the word, "lest I strip her naked." I have borne with her under many provocations, and I have not yet taken away all her ornaments, or said to her, according to the rule of divorce, *Res tuas tibi habeto*. God answers their impudent charge: "She is not my wife, nor am I her husband;" he doth not say first, I am not her husband, but she is not my wife; she first withdrew from her duty by breaking the marriage covenant, and then I ceased to be her husband. No man shall be condemned, but he shall be convinced of the due desert of his sin, and the justice of God's proceeding. God will lay open men's guilt, and repeat the measures of his patience to justify the severity of his wrath (Hosea 7:10), "Sins will testify to their face." What is in its own nature a preparation for glory, men by their obstinacy make a preparation for a more indisputable punishment. We see many evidences of God's forbearance here, in sparing men under those blasphemies which are audible, and those profane carriages which are visible, which would sufficiently justify an act of severity; yet when men's secret sins, both in heart and action, and the vast multitude of them, far surmounting what can arrive to our knowledge here, shall be discovered, how great a lustre will it add to God's bearing with them, and make his justice triumph without any reasonable demur from the sinner himself! He is long-suffering here, that his justice

may be more public hereafter.

Use IV. For instruction. How is this patience of God abused! The Gentiles abused those testimonies of it, which were written in showers and fruitful seasons. No nation was ever stripped of it, under the most provoking idolatries, till after multiplied spurns at it not a person among us but hath been guilty of the abuse of it. How have we contemned that which demands a reverence from us! How have we requited God's waitings with rebellions, while he hath continued urging and expecting our return! Saul relented at David's forbearing to revenge himself, when he had his prosecuting and industrious enemy in his power. (1 Samuel 24:17), "Thou art more righteous than I; thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil:" and shall we not relent at God's wonderful long-suffering, and silencing his anger so much? He could puff away, our lives, but he will not, and yet we endeavor to strip him of his being, though we cannot.

1. Let us consider the ways, how slowness to anger is abused.

(1.) It is abused by misinterpretations of it, when men slander his patience to be only a carelessness and neglect of his providence; as Averroes argued from his slowness to anger, a total neglect of the government of the lower world: or when men from his long-suffering charge him with impurity, as if his patience were a consent to their crimes; and because he suffered them, without calling them to account, he were one of their partisans, and as wicked as themselves (Psalms 50:21): "Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself." His silence makes them conclude him to be an abettor of, and a consort in their sins; and think him more pleased with their iniquity than their obedience. Or when they will infer from his forbearance a want of his omniscience; because he suffers their sins, they imagine he forgets them (Psalms 10:11): "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:" thinking his patience proceeds not from the sweetness of his nature, but a weakness of his mind. How base is it, instead of admitting him, to disparage him for it; and because he stands in so advantageous a posture towards us, not to own the choicest prerogatives of his Deity! This is to make a perfection, so useful to us, to shadow and extinguish those others, which are the prime flowers of his crown.

(2.) His patience is abused by continuing in a course of sin under the influences of it. How much is it the practical language of men, Come, let us commit this or that iniquity; since Divine patience hath suffered worse than this at our hands! Nothing is remitted to their sensual pleasures, and eagerness in them. How often did the Israelites repeat their murmurings against him, as if they would put his patience to the utmost proof, and see how far the line of it could extend! They were no sooner satisfied in one thing, but they quarrelled with him about another, as if he had no other attribute to put in motion against them. They tempted him as often as he relieved them, as though the declaration of his name to Moses (Exodus 34:1-35.), "to be a God gracious, and long-suffering," had been intended for no other purpose but a protection of them in their rebellions. Such a sort of men the prophet speaks of, that were "settled in their lees," or dregs (Zephaniah 1:12): they were congealed, and frozen in their successful wickedness. Such an abuse of Divine patience is the very dregs of sin; God chargeth it highly upon the Jews (Isaiah 57:11): "I have held my peace, even of old, and thou fearest me not;" my silence made thee confident, yea, impudent in thy sin.

(3.) His patience is abused by repeating sin, after God hath, by an act of his patience, taken off some affliction from men. As metals melted in the fire remain fluid under the operations of the

flames, yet when removed from the fire, they quickly return to their former hardness, and sometimes grow harder than they were before; so men who, in their afflictions, seem to be melted, like Ahab confess their sins, he prostrate before God, and seek him early; yet, if they be brought from under the power of their afflictions, they return to their old nature, and are as stiff against God, and resist the blows of the Spirit as much as they did before. They think they have a new stock of patience to sin upon. Pharaoh was somewhat thawed under judgments, and frozen again under forbearance (Exodus 9:27; Exodus 9:34). Many will howl when God strikes them, and laugh at him when he forbears them. Thus that patience which should melt us, doth often harden us, which is not an effect natural to his patience, but natural to our abusing corruption.

(4.) His patience is abused, by taking encouragement from it to mount to greater degrees of sin. Because God is slow to anger, men are more fierce in sin, and not only continue in their old rebellions, but heap new upon them. If he spare them for three transgressions, they will commit four, as is intimated in the first and second of Amos; "Men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Their hearts are more desperately bent; before they had some waverings, and pull-backs, but after a fair sunshine of Divine patience, they entertain more unbridled resolutions, and pass forward with more liberty and licentiousness. They make his long-suffering subservient to turn out all those little relentings and regrets they had before, and banish all thoughts of barring out a temptation. No encouragement is given to men by God's patience, but they force it by their presumption. They invert God's order, and bind themselves stronger to iniquity by that which should bind them faster to their duty. A happy escape at sea makes men go more confidently into the deeps afterward. Thus we deal with God as debtors do with good-natured creditors: because they do not dun them for what they owe, they take encouragement to run more upon the score, till the sum amounts above their ability of payment. But let it be considered, 1st. That this abuse of patience is a high sin. As every act of forbearance obligeth us to duty, so every act of it abused, increaseth our guilt. The more frequent its solicitations of us have been, the deeper aggravations our sin receives by it. Every sin, after an act of Divine patience, contracts a blacker guilt. The sparing us after the last sin we committed, was a superadded act of long-suffering, and a laying out more of his riches upon us: and, therefore, every new act committed is a despite against greater riches expended, and greater cost upon us, and against his preserving us from the hand of justice for the last transgression. It is disingenuous not to have a due resentment of so much goodness, and base to injure him the more, because he doth not right himself. Shall he receive the more wrongs from us, by how much the sweeter he is to us? No man's conscience but will tell him it is vile to prefer the satisfaction of a sordid lust, before the counsel of a God of so gracious a disposition. The sweeter the nature, the fouler is the injury that is done unto it. 2d. It is dangerous to abuse his patience. Contempt of kindness is most irksome to an ingenuous spirit; and he is worthy to have the arrows of God's indignation lodged in his heart, who despiseth the riches of his long-suffering. For,

[1.] The time of patience will have an end. Though his Spirit strives with man, yet it shall "not always strive" (Genesis 6:3). Though there be a time wherein Jerusalem might "know the things that concerned her peace," yet there is another period wherein they should be "hid from her eyes" (Luke 19:43): "O that thou hadst known in this thy day!" Nations have their day, and persons have their day; and the day of most persons is shorter than the day of nations. Jerusalem had her day of forty years; but how many particular persons were taken off before the last or middle hours of that

day were arrived! "Forty years was God grieved" with the generation of the Israelites (Hebrews 3:11). One carcass dropped after another in that limited time, and at the end not a man but fell under the judicial stroke, except Caleb and Joshua. One hundred and twenty years was the term set to the mass of the old world, but not to every man in the old world; some fell while the ark was preparing, as well as the whole stock when the ark was completed. Though he be patient with most, yet he is not in the same degree with all; every sinner hath his time of sinning, beyond which he shall proceed no further, be his lusts never so impetuous, and his affections never so imperious. The time of his patience is, in Scripture, set forth sometimes by years; three years he came to find fruit on the fig-tree: sometimes by days; some men's sins are sooner ripe, and fall. There is a measure of sin (Jeremiah 2:13), which is set forth by the ephah (Zechariah 5:8), which, when it is filled, is sealed up, and a weight of lead cast upon the mouth of it. When judgments are preparing, once and twice the Lord is prevailed with by the intercession of the prophet: the prepared grass-hoppers are not sent to devour, and the kindled fire is not blown up to consume (Amos 7:1-8). But at last God takes the plumb-line, to suit and measure punishment to their sin, and would not pass by them any more; and when their sin was ripe, represented by a "basket of summer-fruit," God would withhold his hand no longer, but brought such a day upon them, wherein "the songs of the Temple should be howlings, and dead bodies be in every place" (Amos 8:2-3). He lays by any further thoughts of patience to speed their ruin. God had borne long with the Israelites, and long it was before he gave them up. He would first brake the "bow in Jezreel" (Hosea 1:5); take away the strength of the nation by the death of Zechariah, the last of Jehu's race, which introduced civil dissensions and ambitious murders, for the throne, whereby in weakening one part they weakened the whole; or, as some think, alluding to Tiglah Pilezar, who carried captive two tribes and a half. If this would not reclaim them, then follows "Lo-ruhamah, I will not have mercy," I will sweep them out of the land (Hosea 1:6). If they did not repent, they should be "Lo-ammi" (Hosea 1:9), "You are not my people," and "I will not be your God." They should be discovenanted, and stripped of all federal relation. Here patience forever withdrew from them, and wrathful anger took its place. And, for particular persons, the time of life, whether shorter or longer, is the only time of long-suffering. It hath no other stage than the present state of things to act upon; there is none else to be expected after but giving account of what hath been done in the body, not of anything done after the soul is fled from the body: the time of patience ends with the first moment of the soul's departure from the body. This time only is the "day of salvation;" i. e. the day wherein God offers it, and the day wherein God waits for our acceptance of it: it is at his pleasure to shorten or lengthen our day, not at ours; it is not our long-suffering, but his; he hath the command of it.

[2.] God hath wrath to punish, as well as patience to bear. He hath a fury to revenge the outrages done to his meekness: when his messages of peace, sent to reclaim men, are slighted, his sword shall be whetted, and his instruments of war prepared (Hosea 5:3): "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah." As he deals gently, like a father, so he can punish capitally as a judge: though he holds his peace for a long time, yet at last he will go forth like a mighty man, and stir up jealousy, as a man of war, to cut in pieces his enemies. It is not said he hath no anger, but that he is "slow to anger," but sharp in it: he hath a sword to cut, and a bow to shoot, and arrows to pierce (Psalm 12:13): though he be long drawing the one out of its scabbard, and long fitting the other to his bow, yet, when they are ready, he strikes home, and hits the mark: though he hath a time of patience, yet he hath also a "day of rebuke" (Hosea 5:9); though patience overrules justice, by

suspending it, yet justice will at last overrule patience, by an utter silencing it. God is Judge of the whole earth to right men, yet he is no less Judge of the injuries he receives to right himself. Though God awhile was pressed with the murmurings of the Israelites, after their coming out of Egypt, and seemed desirous to give them all satisfaction upon their unworthy complaints, yet, when they came to open hostility, in setting a golden calf in his throne, he commissions the "Levites to kill every man his brother and companion in the camp" (Exodus 32:27): and how desirous soever he was to content them before, they never murmured afterwards but they severely smarted for it. When once he hath begun to use his sword, he sticks it up naked, that it might be ready for use upon every occasion. Though he hath feet of lead, yet he hath hands of iron. It was long that he supported the peevishness of the Jews, but at last he captivated them by the arms of the Babylonians, and laid them waste by the power of the Romans. He planted, by the apostles, churches in the east; and when his goodness and long-suffering prevailed not with them, he tore them up by the roots. What Christians are to be found in those once famous parts of Asia but what are overgrown with much error and ignorance?

[3.] The more his patience is abused, the sharper will be the wrath he inflicts. As his wrath restrained makes his patience long, so his compassions restrained will make his wrath severe; as he doth transcend all creatures in the measures of the one, so he doth transcend all creatures in the sharpness of the other. Christ is described with "feet of brass," as if they burned in a furnace (Revelation 1:15), slow to move, but heavy to crush, and hot to burn. His wrath loseth nothing by delay; it grows the fresher by sleeping, and strikes with greater strength when it awakes: all the time men are abusing his patience, God is whetting his sword, and the longer it is whetting the sharper will be the edge; the longer he is fetching his blow, the smarter it will be. The heavier the cannons are, the more difficultly are they drawn to the besieged town; but, when arrived, they recompense the slowness of their march by the fierceness of their battery. "Because I have purged thee," i. e. used means for thy reformation, and waited for it, "and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee: I will not go back, neither will I spare; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee" (Ezekiel 24:13-14). God will spare as little then as he spared much before; his wrath shall be as raging upon them as the sea of their wickedness was within them. When there is a bank to forbid the irruption of the streams, the waters swell; but when the bank is broke, or the lock taken away, they rush with the greater violence, and ravage more than they would have done had they not met with a stop: the longer a stone is in falling, the more it bruises and grinds to powder. There is a greater treasure of wrath laid up by the abuses of patience: every sin must have a just recompense of reward; and therefore every sin, in regard of its aggravations, must be more punished than a sin in the singleness and simplicity of its own nature. As treasures of mercy are kept by God for us, "he keeps mercy for thousands;" so are treasures of wrath kept by him to be expended, and a time of expense there must be: patience will account to justice all the good offices it hath done the sinner, and demand to be righted by justice; justice will take the account from the hands of patience, and exact a recompense for every disingenuous injury offered to it. When justice comes to arrest men for their debts, patience, mercy, and goodness, will step in as creditors, and clap their actions upon them, which will make the condition so much more deplorable.

[4.] When he puts an end to his abused patience, his wrath will make quick and sure work. He that is "slow to anger" will be swift in the execution of it. The departure of God from Jerusalem is described with "wings and wheels" (Ezekiel 11:23). One stroke of his hand is irresistible; he that hath spent so much time in waiting needs but one minute to ruin; though it be long ere he draws his sword out of his scabbard, yet, when once he doth it, he despatcheth men at a blow. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had a long time of patience and prosperity, but now shall a "month devour him with his portion" (Hosea 5:7). One fatal month puts a period to the many years' peace and security of a sinful nation; his arrows wound suddenly (Psalms 64:7); and while men are about to fill their bellies, he casts the fruits of his wrath upon them (Job 20:23), like thunder out of a cloud, or a bullet out of a cannon, that strikes dead before it is heard. God deals with sinners as enemies do with a town, batter it not by planted guns, but secretly undermines and blows up the walls, whereby they involve the garrison in a sudden ruin, and carry the town. God spared the Amalekites a long time after the injury committed against the Israelites, in their passage out of Egypt to Canaan; but when he came to reckon with them, he would waste them in a trice, and make an utter consumption of them (1 Samuel 15:2-3). He describes himself by a "travailing woman" (Isaiah 24:14), that hath borne long in her womb, and at last sends forth her birth with strong cries. Though he hath held his peace, been still, and refrained himself, yet, at last, he will destroy and devour at once: the Ninevites, spared in the time of Jonah for their repentance, are, in nature, threatened with a certain and total ruin, when God should come to bring them to an account for his length and patience, so much abused by them. Though God endured the murmuring Israelites so long in the wilderness, yet he paid them off at last, and took away the rebels in his wrath: he uttered their sentence with an irreversible oath, that "none of them should enter into his rest;" and he did as surely execute it as he had solemnly sworn it.

[5.] Though he doth defer his visible wrath, yet that very delay may be more dreadful than a quick punishment. He may forbear striking, and give the reins to the hardness and corruption of men's hearts; he may suffer them to walk in their own counsels, without any more striving with them, whereby they make themselves fitter fuel for his vengeance. This was the fate of Israel when they would not hearken to his voice; he "gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:12). Though his sparing them had the outward aspect of patience, it was a wrathful one, and attended with spiritual judgments; thus many abusers of patience may still have their line lengthened, and the candle of prosperity to shine upon their beads, that they may increase their sins, and be the fitter mark at last for his arrows; they swim down the stream of their own sensuality with a deplorable security, till they fall into an unavoidable gulf, where, at last, it will be a great part of their hell to reflect on the length of Divine patience on earth, and their inexcusable abuse of it.

2. It informs us of the reason why he lets the enemies of his church oppress it, and defers his promise of the deliverance of it. If he did punish them presently, his holiness and justice would be glorified, but his power over himself in his patience would be obscured. Well may the church be content to have a perfection of God glorified, that is not like to receive any honor in another world by any exercise of itself. If it were not for this patience, he were incapable to be the Governor of a sinful world; he might, without it, be the Governor of an innocent world, but not of a criminal one; he would be the destroyer of the world, but not the orderer and disposer of the extravagancies and sinfulness of the world. The interest of his wisdom, in drawing good out of evil, would not be

served, if he were not clothed with this perfection as well as with others. If he did presently destroy the enemies of his church upon the first oppression, his wisdom in contriving, and his power in accomplishing deliverance against the united powers of hell and earth, would not be visible, no, nor that power in preserving his people unconsumed in the furnace of affliction. He had not got so great a name in the rescue of his Israel from Pharaoh, had he thundered the tyrant into destruction upon his first edicts against the innocent. If he were not patient to the most violent of men, he might seem to be cruel. But when he offers peace to them under their rebellions, waits that they may be members of his church, rather than enemies to it, he frees himself from any such imputation, even in the judgment of those that shall feel most of his wrath; it is this renders the equity of his justice unquestionable, and the deliverance of his people righteous in the judgment of those from whose fetters they are delivered. Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies, to show his power over himself, as well as over the heads of his enemies, to show his power over his rebels. And though he retards his promise, and suffers a great interval of time between the publication and performance, sometimes years, sometimes ages to pass away, and little appearance of any preparation, to show himself a God of truth; it is not that he hath forgotten his word, or repents that ever he passed it, or sleeps in a supine neglect of it: but that men might not perish, but bethink themselves, and come as friends into his bosom, rather than be crushed as enemies under his feet (2 Peter 3:9): "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Hereby he shows, that he would be rather pleased with the conversion, than the destruction, of men.

3. We see the reason why sin is suffered to remain in the regenerate; to show his patience towards his own; for since this attribute hath no other place of appearance but in this world, God takes opportunity to manifest it; because, at the close of the world, it will remain closed up in the Deity, without any further operation. As God suffers a multitude of sins in the world, to evidence his patience to the wicked, so he suffers great remainders of sin in his people, to show his patience to the godly. His sparing mercy is admirable, before their conversion, but more admirable in bearing with them after so high an obligation as the conferring upon them special converting grace.

Use 2. Of comfort. It is a vast comfort to any when God is pacified towards them; but it is some comfort to all, that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory sinner. His continued patience to all, speaks a possibility of the care of all, would they not stand against the way of their recovery. It is a terror that God hath anger, but it is a mitigation of that terror that God is slow to it; while his sword is in his sheath there is some hopes to prevent the drawing of it: alas! if he were all fire and sword upon sin, what would become of us? We should find nothing else but overflowing deluges, or sweeping pestilences, or perpetual flashes of Sodom's fire and brimstone from heaven. He dooms us not presently to execution, but gives us a long breathing time after the crime, that by retiring from our iniquities, and having recourse to his mercy, he may be withheld forever from signing a warrant against us, and change his legal sentence into an evangelical pardon. It is a special comfort to his people, that he is a "sanctuary to them" (Ezekiel 22:16); a place of refuge, a place of spiritual communications; but it is some refreshment to all in this life, that he is a defence to them: for so is his patience called (Numbers 14:9): "Their defence is departed from them;" speaking to the Israelites, that they should not be afraid of the Canaanites, for their defence is departed from them. God is no longer patient to them, since their sins be full and ripe. Patience, as long as it lasts, is a temporary defence to those that are under the wing of it;

but to the believer it is a singular comfort; and God is called the “God of patience and consolation” in one breath (Romans 15:5): “The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded;” all interpreters understand it effectively. The God that inspires you with patience, and cheers you with comfort, grant this to you. Why may it not be understood formally, of the patience belonging to the nature of God? and though it be expressed in the way of petition, yet it might also be proposed as a pattern for imitation, and so suits very well to the exhortation laid down (Romans 5:1), which was to “bear with the infirmities of the weak,” which he presseth them to (Romans 5:3) by the example of Christ; and (Romans 5:5) by the patience of God to them, and so they are very well linked together. “God of patience and consolation” may well be joined, since patience is the first step of comfort to the poor creature. If it did not administer some comfortable hopes to Adam, in the interval between his fall and God’s coming to examine him, I am sure it was the first discovery of any comfort to the creature, after the sweeping the destroying deluge out of the world (Genesis 9:21); after the “savor of Noah’s sacrifice,” representing the great Sacrifice which was to be in the world, had ascended up to God, the return from him is a publication of his forbearing to punish any more in such a manner: and though he found man no better than he was before, and the imaginations of men’s hearts as evil as before the deluge, that he would not again smite every living thing, as he had done. This was the first expression of comfort to Noah, after his exit from the ark; and declares nothing else but the continuance of patience to the new world above what he had shown to the old.

1. It is a comfort, in that it is an argument of his grace to his people. If he hath so rich a patience to exercise towards his enemies, he hath a greater treasure to bestow upon his friends. Patience is the first attribute which steps in for our salvation, and therefore called “salvation” (2 Peter 3:15). Something else is therefore built upon it, and intended by it, to those that believe. Those two letters of his name, “a God keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sin,” follow the other letter of his long-suffering in the proclamation (Exodus 34:6-7). He is “slow to anger,” that he may be merciful, that men may seek, and receive their pardon. If he be long-suffering, in order to be a pardoning God, he will not be wanting in pardoning those who answer the design of his forbearance of them. You would not have had sparing mercy to improve, if God would have denied you saving mercy upon the improvement of his sparing goodness. If he hath so much respect to his enemies that provoke him, as to endure them with much long-suffering, he will surely be very kind to those that obey him, and conform to his will. If he hath much long-suffering to those that are “fitted for destruction” (Romans 9:22), he will have a muchness of mercy for those that are prepared for glory by faith and repentance. It is but a natural conclusion a gracious soul may make,—If God had not a mind to be appeased towards me, he would not have had a mind to forbear me; but since he hath forborne me, and given me a heart to see, and answer the true end of that forbearance, I need not question, but that sparing mercy will end in saving, since it finds that repentance springing up in me, which that patience conducted me to.

2. His patience is a ground to trust in his promise. If his slowness to anger be so great when his precept is slighted, his readiness to give what he hath promised will be as great when his promise is believed. If the provocations of them meet with such an unwillingness to punish them, faith in him will meet with the choicest embraces from him. He was more ready to make the promise of redemption after man’s apostasy, than to execute the threatening of the law. He doth still witness a

greater willingness to give forth the fruits of the promise, than to pour out the vials of his curses. His slowness to anger is an evidence still, that he hath the same disposition, which is no slight cordial to faith in his word.

3. It is a comfort in infirmities. If he were not patient, he could not bear with so many peevishnesses and weaknesses in the hearts of his own. If he be patient to the grosser sins of his enemies, he will be no less to the lighter infirmities of his people. When the soul is a bruised reed, that can emit no sound at all, or one very harsh and ungrateful, he doth not break it in pieces, and fling it away in disdain, but waits to see whether it will fully answer his pains, and be brought to a better frame and sweeter note. He brings them not to account for every slip, but, "as a father, spares his son that serves him" (Malachi 3:17). It is a comfort to us in our distracted services; for were it not for this slowness to anger, he would stifle us in the midst of our prayers, wherein there are as many foolish thoughts to disgust him, as there are petitions to implore him. The patientest angels would hardly be able to bear with the follies of good men in acts of worship.

Use 3. For exhortation.

1. Meditate often on the patience of God. The devil labors for nothing more than to deface in us the consideration and memory of this perfection. He is an envious creature; and since it hath reached out itself to us and not to him, he envies God the glory of it, and man the advantage of it: but God loves to have the volumes of it studied, and daily turned over by us. We cannot without an inexcusable wilfulness miss the thoughts of it, since it is visible in every bit of bread, and breath of air in ourselves, and all about us.

(1.) The frequent consideration of his patience would render God highly amiable to us. It is a more endearing argument than his mere goodness; his goodness to us as creatures, endowing us with such excellent faculties, furnishing us with such a commodious world, and bestowing upon us so many attendants for our pleasure and service, and giving us a lordship over his other works, deserves our affection but his patience to us as sinners, after we have merited the greatest wrath, shows him to be of a sweeter disposition than creating goodness to unoffending creatures; and, consequently, speaks a greater love in him, and bespeaks a greater affection from us. His creating goodness discovered the majesty of his Being, and the greatness of his mind, but this the sweetness and tenderness of his nature. In this patience he exceeds the mildness of all creatures to us; and therefore should be enthroned in our affections above all other creatures. The consideration of this would make us affect him for his nature as well as for his benefits.

(2.) The consideration of his patience would make us frequent and serious in the exercise of repentance. In its nature it leads to it, and the consideration of it would engage us to it, and melt us in the exercise of it. Could we deeply think of it without being touched with a sense of the kindness of our forbearing Creditor and Governor? Could we gaze upon it, nay, could we glance upon it, without relenting at our offending one of so mild a nature, without being sensibly affected, that he hath preserved us so long from being loaded with those chains of darkness, under which the devils groan? This forbearance hath good reason to make sin and sinners ashamed. That you are in being, is not for want of advantages enough in his hand against you; many a forfeiture you have made, and many an engagement you have broke; he hath scarce met with any other dealing from us, than what had treachery in it. Whatsoever our sincerity is, we have no reason to boast of it, when we consider what mixtures there are in it, and what swarms of base motions taint it. Hath he

not lain pressed and groaning under our sins, as a “cart is pressed with sheaves” (Amos 2:13), when one shake of himself, as Sampson, might have rid him of the burden, and dismissed us in his fury into hell? If we should often ask our consciences why have we done thus and thus against so mild a God, would not the reflection on it put us to the blush? If men would consider, that such a time they provoked God to his face, and yet not have felt his sword; such a time they blasphemed him, and made a reproach of his name, and his thunder did not stop their motion; such a time they fell into an abominable brutishness, yet he kept the punishment of devils, the unclean spirits, from reaching them; such a time he bore an open affront from them, when they scoffed at his word, and he did not send a destruction, and laugh at it: would not such a meditation work some strange kind of relentings in men? What if we should consider, that we cannot do a sinful act without the support of his concurring Providence? We cannot see, hear, move, without his concurrence. All creatures we use for our necessity or pleasure, are supported by him in the very act of assisting to pleasure us; and when we abuse those creatures against him, which he supports for our use, how great is his patience to bear with us, that he doth not annihilate those creatures, or at least embitter their use! What issue could reasonably be expected from this consideration, but, “O wretched man that I am, to serve myself of God’s power to affront him, and of his long-suffering to abuse him?” O infinite patience to employ that power to preserve me, that might have been used to punish me! He is my Creator, I could not have a being without him, and yet I offend him! He is my Preserver, I cannot maintain my being without him, and yet I affront him! Is this a worthy requital of God (Deuteronomy 32:6), “Do you thus requite the Lord?” would be the heart-breaking reflection. How would it give men a fuller prospect of the depravation of their nature than anything else; that their corruption should be so deep and strong, that so much patience could not overcome it! It would certainly make a man ashamed of his nature as well as his actions.

(3.) The consideration of his patience would make us resent more the injuries done by others to God. A patient sufferer, though a deserving sufferer, attracts the pity of men, that have a value for any virtue, though clouded with a heap of vice. How much more should we have a concern of God, who suffers so many abuses from others! and be grieved, that so admirable a patience should be slighted by men, who solely live by and under the daily influence of it! The impression of this would make us take God’s part, as it is usual with men to take the part of good dispositions that lie under oppression.

(4.) It would make us patient under God’s hand. His slowness to anger and his forbearance is visible, in the very strokes we feel in this life. We have no reason to murmur against him, who gives us so little cause, and in the greatest afflictions gives us more occasion of thankfulness than of repining. Did not slowness to the extremest anger moderate every affliction, it had been a scorpion instead of a rod. We have reason to bless Him, who, from his long-suffering, sends temporal sufferings, where eternal are justly due. (Ezra 9:13), “Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities do deserve.” His indulgences towards us have been more than our corrections, and the length of his patience hath exceeded the sharpness of his rod. Upon the account of his long-suffering, our mutinies against God have as little to excuse them, as our sins against him have to deserve his forbearance. The consideration of this would show us more reason to repine at our own repinings, than at any of his smarter dealings; and the consideration of this would make us submissive under the judgments we expect. His undeserved patience hath been more than our merited judgments can possibly be thought to be. If we fear the removal of the gospel for a

season, as we have reason to do, we should rather bless him, that by his waiting patience, he hath continued it so long, than murmur, that he threatens to take it away so late. He hath borne with us many a year, since the light of it was rekindled, when our ancestors had but six years' of patience between the rise of Edward the Sixth, and the ascent of Queen Mary, to the crown.

2. Exhortation is to admire and stand astonished at his patience, "and bless him for it." If you should have defiled your neighbor's bed, or sullied his reputation, or rifled his goods, would he have withheld his vengeance, unless he had been too weak to execute it? We have done worse to God than we can do to man, and yet he draws not that sword of wrath out of the scabbard of his patience, to sheath it in our hearts. It is not so much a wonder that any judgments are sent, as that there are no more, and sharper. That the world shall be fired at last, is not a thing so strange, as that fire doth not come down every day upon some part of it. Had the disciples, that saw such excellent patterns of mildness from their Master, and were so often urged to learn of him that was lowly and meek, the government of the world, it had been long since turned into ashes, since they were too forward to desire him to open his magazine of judgments, and kindle a fire to consume a Samaritan village, for a slight affront in comparison of what he received from others, and afterwards from themselves in their forsaking of him (Luke 9:52-54). We should admire and praise that here which shall be praised in heaven; though patience shall cease as to its exercise after the consummation of the world, it shall not cease from receiving the acknowledgments of what it did, when it traversed the stage of this earth. If the name of God be glorified, and acknowledged in heaven, no question but this will also; since long-suffering is one of his Divine titles, a letter in his name, as well as "merciful, and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth." And there is good reason to think that the patience exercised towards some, before converting grace was ordered to seize upon them, will bear a great part in the anthems of heaven. The greater his long-suffering hath been to men, that lay covered with their own dung, a long time before they were freed by grace from their filth; the more admiringly and loudly they will cry up his mercy to them, after they have passed the gulf, and see a deserved hell at a distance from them, and many in that place of torment who never had the tastes of so much forbearance. If mercy will be praised there, that which began the alphabet of it, cannot be forgot. If Paul speak so highly of it in a damping world, and under the pull-backs of a "body of death," as he doth (1 Timothy 1:16-17 : "For this cause I obtained mercy; that Christ might show forth all long-suffering. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." No doubt, but he will have a higher note for it, when he is surrounded with a heavenly flame, and freed from all remains of dulness. Shall it be praised above, and have we no notes for it here below? Admire Christ, too, who sued out your reprieve upon the account of his merit. As mercy acts not upon any but in Christ, so neither had patience borne with any but in Christ. The pronouncing the arrest of judgment (Genesis 8:21) was when "God smelled a sweet savor from Noah's sacrifice," not from the beasts offered, but the antitypical sacrifice represented. That we may be raised to bless God for it, let us consider,

(1.) The multitude of our provocations. Though some have blacker guilt than others, and deeper stains, yet let none wipe his mouth, but rather imagine himself to have but little reason to bless it. Are not all our offences as many as there have been minutes in our lives? All the moments of our continuance in the world have been moments of his patience and our ingratitude. Adam was punished for one sin, Moses excluded Canaan for a passionate unbelieving word. Ananias and

Sapphira lost their lives for one sin against the Holy Ghost. One sin sullied the beauty of the world, defaced the works of God, and cracked heaven and earth in pieces, had not infinite satisfaction been proposed to the provoked Justice by the Redeemer; and not one sin committed, but is of the same venomous nature. How many of those contradictions against himself hath he borne with! Had we been only unprofitable to him, his forbearance of us had been miraculous; but how much doth it exceed a miracle, and lift itself above the meanness of a conjunction with such an epithet, since we have been provoking! Had there been no more than our impudent or careless rushings into his presence in worship; had they been only sins of omission, and sins of ignorance, it had been enough to have put a stand to any further operations of this perfection towards us. But add to those, sins of commission, sins against knowledge, sins against spiritual motions, sins against repeated resolutions, and pressing admonitions, the neglects of all the opportunities of repentance; put them all together, and we can as little recount them, as the sands on the sea-shore. But what, do I only speak of particular men? View the whole world, and if our own iniquities render it an amazing patience, what a mighty supply will be made to it in all the numerous and weighty provocations, under which he hath continued the world for so many revolutions of years and ages! Have not all those pressed into his presence with a loud cry, and demanded a sentence from justice? yet hath not the Judge been overcome by the importunity of our sins? Were the devils punished for one sin, a proud thought, and that not committed against the blood of Christ, as we have done numberless times; yet hath not God made us partakers in their punishment, though we have exceeded them in the quality of their sin. O admirable patience! that would bear with me under so many, while he would not bear with the sinning angels for one. [Note: Pont. Part I. p. 42.]

(2.) Consider how mean things we are, who have provoked him. What is man but a vile thing, that a God, abounding with all riches, should take care of so abject a thing, much more to bear so many affronts from such a drop of matter, such a nothing creature! That he that hath anger at his command, as well as pity should endure such a detestable, deformed creature by sin, to fly in his face! "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:1-9.) ■■■■■, miserable, incurable man, derived from a word, that signifies to be incurably sick. Man is "Adam," earth from his earthly original, and "Enoch," incurable from his corruption. Is it not worthy to be admired, that a God of infinite glory should wait on such Adams, worms of earth, and be, as it were, a servant, and attendant to such Enochs, sickly and peevish creatures?

(3.) Consider who it is that is thus patient. He it is that, with one breath, could turn heaven and earth, and all the inhabitants of both, into nothing; that could, by one thunderbolt, have razed up the foundations of a cursed world. He that wants not instruments without to ruin us, that can arm our own consciences against us, and can drown us in our own phlegm; and, by taking out one pin from our bodies, cause the whole frame to fall asunder. Besides, it is a God that, while he suffers the sinner, hates the sin more than all the holy men upon earth, or angels in heaven, can do; so that his patience for a minute transcends the patience of all creatures, from the creation to the dissolution of the world: because it is the patience of a God, infinitely more sensible to the cursed quality of sin, and infinitely more detesting it.

(4.) Consider how long he hath forborne his anger. A reprieve for a week or a month is accounted a great favor in civil states; the civil law enacts, "That if the emperor commanded a man to be condemned, the execution was to be deferred thirty days: because in that time the prince's anger

might be appeased.” [Note: Cod. lib. ix. Titul. 476, p. 20.] But how great a favor is it to be reprieved thirty years for many offences, every one of which deserves death more at the hands of God than any offence can at the hands of man! Paul was, according to the common account, but about thirty years old at his conversion; and how much doth he elevate Divine long-suffering! Certainly there are many who have more reason, as having larger quantities of patience cut out to them, who have lived to see their own gray hairs in a rebellious posture against God, before grace brought them to a surrender. We were all condemned in the womb; our lives were forfeited the first moment of our breath, but patience hath stopped the arrest; the merciful Creditor deserves to have acknowledgment from us, who hath laid by his bond so many years without putting it in suit against us. Many of your companions in sin have perhaps been surprised long ago, and haled to an eternal prison; nothing is remaining of them but their dust, and the time is not yet come for your funeral. Let it be considered, that that God that would not wait upon the fallen angels one instant after their sin, nor give them a moments space of repentance, hath prolonged the life of many a sinner in the world to innumerable moments, to 420,000 minutes in the space of a year, to 8,400,000 minutes in the space of twenty years. The damned in hell would think it a great kindness to have but a year’s, month’s, nay, day’s respite, as a space to repent in.

(5.) Consider also, how many have been taken away under shorter measures of patience: some have been struck into a hell of misery, while thou remainest upon an earth of forbearance. In a plague, the destroying angel hath hewed down others, and passed by us; the arrows have flew about our heads, passed over us, and stuck in the heart of a neighbor. How many rich men, how many of our friends and familiars, have been seized by death since the beginning of the year, when they least thought of it, and imagined it far from them! Have you not known some of your acquaintance snatched away in the height of a crime? Was not the same wrath due to you as well as to them! And had it not been as dreadful for you to be so surprised by Him as it was for them? Why should he take a less sturdy sinner out of thy company, and let thee remain still upon the earth? If God had dealt so with you, how had you been cut off, not only from the enjoyment of this life, but the hopes of a better! And if God had made such a providence beneficial for reclaiming you, how much reason have you to acknowledge him! He that hath had least patience, hath cause to admire; but those that have more, ought to exceed others in blessing him for it. If God had put an end to your natural life before you had made provision for eternal, how deplorable would your condition have been! Consider also, whoever have been sinners formerly of a deeper note; might not God have struck a man in the embraces of his harlots, and choked him in the moment of his excessive and intemperate healths, or on the sudden have spurted fire and brimstone into a blasphemer’s mouth? What if God had snatched you away, when you had been sleeping in some great iniquity, or sent you while burning in lust to the fire it merited? Might he not have cracked the string that linked your souls to your bodies, in the last sickness you had? And what then had become of you? What could have been expected to succeed your impenitent state in this world, but howlings in another? but he reprieved you upon your petitions, or the solicitations of your friends; and have you not broke your word with him? Have your hearts been steadfast; hath he not yet waited, expecting when you would put your vows and resolutions into execution? What need had he to cry out to any so loud and so long, O you fools, “how long will you love foolishness?” (Proverbs 1:22), when he might have ceased his crying to you, and have by your death prevented your many neglects of him? Did he do all this that any of us might add new sins to our old; or rather, that we should bless him for his forbearance, comply with the end of it in reforming our

lives, and having recourse to his mercy?

3. Exhortation; therefore presume not upon his patience. The exercise of it is not eternal; you are at present under his patience; yet, while you are unconverted, you are also under his anger (Psalms 7:11), "God is angry with the wicked every day." You know not how soon his anger may turn his patience aside, and step before it. It may be his sword is drawn out of his scabbard, his arrows may be settled in his bow; and perhaps there is but a little time before you may feel the edge of the one or the point of the other: and then there will be no more time for patience in God to us, or petition from us to him. If we repent here he will pardon us. If we defer repentance, and die without it, he will have no longer mercy to pardon, nor patience to bear. What is there in our power but the present? the future time we cannot command, the past time we cannot recall; squander not then the present away. The time will come when "time shall be no more," and then long-suffering shall be no more. Will you neglect the time, wherein patience acts, and vainly hope for a time beyond the resolves of patience? Will you spend that in vain, which goodness hath allotted you for other purposes? What an estimate will you make of a little forbearance to respite death, when you are gasping under the stroke of its arrows? How much would you value some few days of those many years you now trifle away? Can any think God will be always at an expense with them in vain, that he will have such riches trampled under their feet, and so many editions of his patience be made waste paper? Do you know how few sands are yet to run in your glass? Are you sure that He that waits to-day, will wait as well to-morrow? How can you tell, but that God that is slow to anger to-day, may be swift to it the next? Jerusalem had but a day of peace, and the most careless sinner hath no more. When their day was done, they were destroyed by famine, pestilence, or sword, or led into a doleful captivity. Did God make our lives so uncertain, and the duration of his forbearance unknown to us, that we should live in a lazy neglect of his glory, and our own happiness? If you should have more patience in regard of your lives, do you know whether you shall have the effectual offers of grace? As your lives depend upon his will, so your conversion depends solely upon his grace. There have been many examples of those miserable wretches, that have been left to a reprobate sense, after they have a long time abused Divine forbearance. Though he waits, yet he "binds up sin." (Hosea 13:12), "The sin of Ephraim is bound up," as bonds are bound up by a creditor till a fit opportunity: when God comes to put the bond in suit, it will be too late to wish for that patience we have so scornfully despised. Consider therefore the end of patience. The patience of God considered in itself, without that which it tends to, affords very little comfort; it is but a step to pardoning mercy, and it may be without it, and often is. Many have been reprieved that were never forgiven; hell is full of those that had patience as well as we, but not one that accepted pardoning grace went within the gates of it. Patience leaves men, when their sins have ripened them for hell; but pardoning grace never leaves men till it hath conducted them to heaven. His patience speaks him placable, but doth not assure us that he is actually appeased. Men may hope that a long-suffering tends to a pardon, but cannot be assured of a pardon, but by something else above mere long-suffering. Rest not then upon bare patience, but consider the end of it; it is not that any should sin more freely, but repent more meltingly; it is not to spirit rebellion, but give a merciful stop to it. Why should any be so ambitious of their ruin, as to constrain God to ruin them against the inclinations of his sweet disposition?

4. The fourth exhortation is, Let us imitate God's patience in our own to others. He is unlike God that is hurried, with an unruly impetus, to punish others for wronging him. The consideration of

Divine patience should make us square ourselves according to that pattern. God hath exercised a long-suffering from the fall of Adam to this minute on innumerable subjects, and shall we be transported with desire of revenge upon a single injury? If God were not "slow to wrath," a sinful world had been long ago torn up from the foundation. And if revenge should be exercised by all men against their enemies, what man should have been alive, since there is not a man without an enemy? If every man were like Saul, breathing out threatenings, the world would not only be an aceldema, but a desert. How distant are they from the nature of God, who are in a flame upon every slight provocation from a sense of some feeble and imaginary honor, that must bloody their sword for a trifle, and write their revenge in wounds and death! When God hath his glory every day bespattered, yet he keeps his sword in his sheath; what a woe would it be to the world, if he drew it upon every affront! This is to be like brutes, dogs, or tigers, that snarl, bite, and devour, upon every slight occasion: but to be patient is to be divine, and to show ourselves acquainted with the disposition of God. "Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48): i. e. Be you perfect and good; for he had been exhorting them to bless them that cursed them, and to do good to them that hated them, and that from the example God had set them, in causing his sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good. "Be you therefore perfect." To conclude: as patience is God's perfection, so it is the accomplishment of the soul: and as his "slowness to anger" argues the greatness of his power over himself, so an unwillingness to revenge is a sign of a power over ourselves which is more noble than to be a monarch over others.

On Practical Atheism

ON PRACTICAL ATHEISM

Psalms 14:1.—The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Practical atheism is natural to man in his depraved state, and very frequent in the hearts and lives of men. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. He regards him as little as if he had no being. He said in his heart, not with his tongue, nor in his head: he never firmly thought it, nor openly asserted it. Shame put a bar to the first, and natural reason to the second; yet, perhaps, he had sometimes some doubts whether there were a God or no. He wished there were not any, and sometimes hoped there were none at all. He could not raze out the notion of a Deity in his mind, but he neglected the fixing the sense of God in his heart, and made it too much his business to deface and blot out those characters of God in his soul, which had been left under the ruins of original nature. Men may have atheistical hearts without atheistical heads. Their reasons may defend the notion of a Deity, while their hearts are empty of affection to the Deity. Job's children may curse God in their hearts, though not with their lips. [Note: Job 1:5]

There is no God. Most understand it of a denial of the providence of God, as I have said in opening the former doctrine. He denies some essential attribute of God, or the exercise of that attribute in the world. [Note: So the Chaldee reads ■■■■■■■■ Non potestas, denying the authority of God in the world.] He that denies any essential attribute, may be said to deny the being of God. Whosoever denies angels or men to have reason and will, denies the human and angelical nature, because understanding and will are essential to both those natures; there could neither be angel nor man without them. No nature can subsist without the perfections essential to that nature, nor God be conceived of without his. The apostle tells us (Ephesians 2:12), that the Gentiles were "without God in the world." So, in some sense, all unbelievers may be termed atheists; for rejecting the Mediator appointed by God, they reject that God who appointed him. But this is beyond the intended scope, natural atheism being the only subject; yet this is deducible from it. That the title of ■θεοι doth not only belong to those who deny the existence of God, or to those who condemn all sense of a Deity, and would root the conscience and reverence of God out of their souls; but it belongs also to those who give not that worship to God which is due to him, who worship many gods, or who worship one God in a false and superstitious manner, when they have not right conceptions of God, nor intend an adoration of him according to the excellency of his nature. All those that are unconcerned for any particular religion fall under this character: though they own a God in general, yet are willing to acknowledge any God that shall be coined by the powers under whom they live. The Gentiles were without God in the world; without the true notion of God, not without a God of their own framing. This general or practical atheism is natural to men.

1. Not natural by created, but by corrupted nature. It is against nature, as nature came out of the hand of God; but universally natural, as nature hath been sophisticated and infected by the serpent's breath. Inconsideration of God, or misrepresentation of his nature, are as agreeable to

corrupt nature, as the disowning the being of a God is contrary to common reason. God is not denied, naturâ, sed vitiis. [Note: Augustin de Civit. Dei.]

2. It is universally natural: "The wicked are estranged from the womb (Psalms 58:3). They go astray as soon as they be born: their poison is like the poison of a serpent." The wicked, (and who by his birth hath a better title?) they go astray from the dictates of God and the rule of their creation as soon as ever they be born. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent, which is radically the same in all of the same species. It is seminally and fundamentally in all men, though there may be a stronger restraint by a divine hand upon some men than upon others. This principle runs through the whole stream of nature. The natural bent of every man's heart is distant from God. When we attempt anything pleasing to God, it is like the climbing up a hill, against nature; when anything is displeasing to him, it is like a current running down the channel in its natural course; when we attempt anything that is an acknowledgment of the holiness of God, we are fain to rush, with arms in our hands, through a multitude of natural passions, and fight the way through the oppositions of our own sensitive appetite. How softly do we naturally sink down into that which sets us at a greater distance from God! There is no active, potent, efficacious sense of a God by nature. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The heart, in the singular number, as if there were but one common heart beat in all mankind, and bent, as with one pulse, with a joint consent and force to wickedness, without a sense of the authority of God in the earth, as if one heart acted every man in the world. The great apostle cites the text to verify the charge he brought against all mankind. [Note: Romans 3:9-12.] In his interpretation, the Jews, who owned one God, and were dignified with special privileges, as well as the Gentiles that maintained many gods, are within the compass of this character. The apostle leaves out the first part of the text, "The fool hath said in his heart," but takes in the latter part, and the verses following. He charges all, because all, every man of them, was under sin—"There is none that seeks God;" and, Romans 3:19, he adds, "What the law saith, it speaks to those that are under the law," that none should imagine he included only the Gentiles, and exempted the Jews from this description. The leprosy of atheism had infected the whole mass of human nature. No man, among Jews or Gentiles, did naturally seek God; and, therefore, all were void of any spark of the practical sense of the Deity. The effects of this atheism are not in all externally of an equal size; yet, in the fundamentals and radicals of it, there is not a hair's difference between the best and the worst men that ever traversed the world. The distinction is laid either in common grace, bounding and suppressing it; or in special grace, killing and crucifying it. It is in every one either triumphant or militant, reigning or deposed. No man is any more born with sensible acknowledgments of God, than he is born with a clear knowledge of the nature of all the stars in the heavens, or plants upon the earth. None seeks after God. [Note: Coccei.] None seek God as his rule, as his end, as his happiness, which is a debt the creature naturally owes to God. He desires no communion with God; he places his happiness in anything inferior to God; he prefers everything before him, glorifies everything above him; he hath no delight to know him; he regards not those paths which lead to him; he loves his own filth better than God's holiness; his actions are tinctured and dyed with self, and are void of that respect which is due from him to God. The noblest faculty of man, his understanding, wherein the remaining lineaments of the image of God are visible; the highest operation of that faculty, which is wisdom, is, in the judgment of the Spirit of God, devilish, whilst it is earthly and sensual; [Note: James 3:16.] and the wisdom of the best man is no better by nature; a legion of impure spirits possess it; devilish, as the devil, who, though he believe there is a God,

yet acts as if there were none, and wishes he had no superior to prescribe him a law, and inflict that punishment upon him which his crimes have merited. Hence the poison of man by nature is said to be like the poison of a serpent, [Note: Psalms 58:4.] alluding to that serpentine temptation which first infected mankind, and changed the nature of man into the likeness of that of the devil; so that, notwithstanding the harmony of the world, that presents men not only with the notice of the being of a God, but darts into their minds some remarks of his power and eternity; yet the thoughts and reasonings of man are so corrupt, as may well be called diabolical, and as contrary to the perfection of God, and the original law of their nature, as the actings of the devil are; for since every natural man is a child of the devil, and is acted by the diabolical spirit, he must needs have that nature which his father hath, and the infusion of that venom which the spirit that acts him is possessed with, though the full discovery of it may be restrained by various circumstances (Ephesians 2:2). To conclude: though no man, or at least very few, arrive to a round and positive conclusion in their hearts that there is no God, yet there is no man that naturally hath in his heart any reverence of God. In general, before I come to a particular proof, take some propositions.

Prop. I. Actions are a greater discovery of a principle than words. The testimony of works is louder and clearer than that of words; and the frame of men's hearts must be measured rather by what they do than by what they say. There may be a mighty distance between the tongue and the heart, but a course of actions is as little guilty of lying as interest is, according to our common saying. All outward impieties are the branches of an atheism at the root of our nature, as all pestilential sores are expressions of the contagion in the blood; sin is therefore frequently called ungodliness in our English dialect. Men's practices are the best indexes of their principles: the current of a man's life is the counterpart of the frame of his heart. Who can deny an error in the spring or wheels, when he perceives an error in the hand of the dial? Who can deny an atheism in the heart, when so much is visible in the life? The taste of the water discovers what mineral it is strained through. A practical denial of God is worse than a verbal, because deeds have usually more of deliberation than words; words may be the fruit of a passion, but a set of evil actions are the fruit and evidence of a predominant evil principle in the heart. All slighting words of a prince do not argue an habitual treason; but a succession of overt treasonable attempts signify a settled treasonable disposition in the mind. Those, therefore, are more deservedly termed atheists, who acknowledge a God, and walk as if there were none, than those (if there can be any such) that deny a God, and walk as if there were one. A sense of God in the heart would burst out in the life; where there is no reverence of God in the life, it is easily concluded there is less in the heart. What doth not influence a man when it hath the addition of the eyes, and censures of outward spectators, and the care of a reputation (so much the god of the world) to strengthen it and restrain the action, must certainly have less power over the heart when it is single, without any other concurrence. The flames breaking out of a house discover the fire to be much stronger and fiercer within. The apostle judgeth those of the circumcision, who gave heed to Jewish fables, to be deniers of God, though he doth not tax them with any notorious profaneness: (Titus 1:16), "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." He gives them epithets contrary to what they arrogated to themselves. [Note: Illyric.] They boasted themselves to be holy; the apostle calls them abominable: they bragged that they fulfilled the law, and observed the traditions of their fathers; the apostle calls them disobedient, or unpersuadable: they boasted that they only had the rule of righteousness, and a sound judgment concerning it; the apostle said they had a reprobate sense, and unfit for any good work; and judges against all their vain-glorious brags, that they had not a

reverence of God in their hearts; there was more of the denial of God in their works than there was acknowledgment of God in their words. Those that have neither God in their thoughts, nor in their tongues, nor in their works, cannot properly be said to acknowledge him. Where the honor of God is not practically owned in the lives of men, the being of God is not sensibly acknowledged in the hearts of men. The principle must be of the same kind with the actions; if the actions be atheistical, the principle of them can be no better.

Prop. II. All sin is founded in a secret atheism. Atheism is the spirit of every sin;—all the floods of impieties in the world break in at the gate of a secret atheism, and though several sins may disagree with one another, yet, like Herod and Pilate against Christ, they join hand in hand against the interest of God. Though lusts and pleasures be diverse, yet they are all united in disobedience to him. [Note: Titus 3:3.] All the wicked inclinations in the heart, and struggling motions, secret repinings, self-applauding confidences in our own wisdom, strength, &c., envy, ambition, revenge, are sparks from this latent fire; the language of every one of these is, I would be a Lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me. The variety of sins against the first and second table, the neglects of God, and violences against man, are derived from this in the text; first, “The fool hath said in his heart,” and then follows a legion of devils. As all virtuous actions spring from an acknowledgment of God, so all vicious actions rise from a lurking denial of him: all licentiousness goes glib down where there is no sense of God. Abraham judged himself not secure from murder, nor his wife from defilement in Gerar, if there were no fear of God there. [Note: Genesis 20:11.] He that makes no conscience of sin has no regard to the honor, and, consequently, none to the being of God. “By the fear of God men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6); by the non-regarding of God men rush into evil. Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he “knew not the Lord.” If he did not deny the being of a Deity, yet he had such an unworthy notion of God as was inconsistent with the nature of a Deity; he, a poor creature, thought himself a mate for the Creator. In sins of omission we own not God, in neglecting to perform what he enjoins; in sins of commission we set up some lust in the place of God, and pay to that the homage which is due to our Maker. In both we disown him; in the one by not doing what he commands, in the other by doing what he forbids. We deny his sovereignty when we violate his laws; we disgrace his holiness when we cast our filth before his face; we disparage his wisdom when we set up another rule as the guide of our actions than that law he hath fixed; we slight his sufficiency when we prefer a satisfaction in sin before a happiness in him alone; and his goodness, when we judge it not strong enough to attract us to him. Every sin invades the rights of God, and strips him of one or other of his perfections. It is such a vilifying of God as if he were not God; as if he were not the supreme Creator and Benefactor of the world; as if we had not our being from him; as if the air we breathed in, the food we lived by, were our own by right of supremacy, not of donation. For a subject to slight his sovereign, is to slight his royalty; or a servant his master, is to deny his superiority.

Prop. III. Sin implies that God is unworthy of a being. Every sin is a kind of cursing God in the heart; [Note: Job 1:5] an aim at the destruction of the being of God; not actually, but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break His law, would excite him to annihilate his being if it were in his power. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed. God cannot outlive his will and his glory; God cannot have another rule but his own will, nor another end but his own

honor. Sin is called a turning the back upon God, [Note: Jeremiah 32:33.] a kicking against him, [Note: Deuteronomy 32:15.] as if he were a slighter person than the meanest beggar. What greater contempt can be shown to the meanest, vilest person, than to turn the back, lift up the heel, and thrust away with indignation? all which actions, though they signify that such a one hath a being, yet they testify also that he is unworthy of a being, that he is an unuseful being in the world, and that it were well the world were rid of him. All sin against knowledge is called a reproach of God. [Note: Numbers 15:30, Ezekiel 20:27.] Reproach is a vilifying a man as unworthy to be admitted into company. We naturally judge God unfit to be conversed with. God is the term turned from by a sinner; sin is the term turned to, which implies a greater excellency in the nature of sin than in the nature of God; and as we naturally judge it more worthy to have a being in our affections, so consequently more worthy to have a being in the world, than that infinite nature from whom we derive our beings and our all, and upon whom, with a kind of disdain, we turn our backs. Whosoever thinks the notion of a Deity unfit to be cherished in his mind by warm meditation, implies that he cares not whether he hath a being in the world or no. Now though the light of a Deity shines so clearly in man, and the stings of conscience are so smart, that he cannot absolutely deny the being of a God, yet most men endeavor to smother this knowledge, and make the notion of a God a sapless and useless thing (Romans 1:28): "They like not to retain God in their knowledge." It is said, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord" (Genesis 4:16); that is, from the worship of God. Our refusing or abhorring the presence of a man implies a carelessness whether he continue in the world or no; it is a using him as if he had no being, or as if we were not concerned in it. Hence all men in Adam, under the emblem of the prodigal, are said to go into a far country; not in respect of place, because of God's omnipresence, but in respect of acknowledgment and affection: they mind and love anything but God. And the descriptions of the nations of the world, lying in the ruins of Adam's fall, and the dregs of that revolt, is that they know not God. They forget God, as if there were no such being above them; and, indeed, he that doth the works of the devil, owns the devil to be more worthy of observance, and, consequently, of a being, than God, whose nature he forgets, and whose presence he abhors.

Prop. IV. Every sin in its own nature would render God a foolish and impure being. Many transgressors esteem their acts, which are contrary to the law of God, both wise and good: if so, the law against which they are committed, must be both foolish and impure. What a reflection is there, then, upon the Lawgiver! The moral law is not properly a mere act of God's will considered in itself, or a tyrannical edict, like those of whom it may well be said, *stat pro ratione voluntas*: but it commands those things which are good in their own nature, and prohibits those things which are in their own nature evil; and therefore is an act of his wisdom and righteousness; the result of his wise counsel, and an extract of his pure nature; as all the laws of just lawgivers, are not only the acts of their will, but of a will governed by reason and justice, and for the good of the public, whereof they are conservators. If the moral commands of God were only acts of his will, and had not an intrinsic necessity, reason and goodness, God might have commanded the quite contrary, and made a contrary law, whereby that which we now call vice, might have been canonized for virtue: He might then have forbid any worship of him, love to him, fear of his name: He might then have commanded murders, thefts, adulteries. In the first he would have untied the link of duty from the creature, and dissolved the obligations of creatures to him, which is impossible to be conceived; for from the relation of a creature to God, obligations to God, and duties upon those obligations, do necessarily result. It had been against the rule of goodness and justice to have

commanded the creature not to, love him, and fear and obey him: this had been a command against righteousness, goodness, and intrinsic obligations to gratitude. And should murder, adulteries, rapines have been commanded instead of the contrary, God would have destroyed his own creation; he would have acted against the rule of goodness and order; he had been an unjust tyrannical governor of the world: public society would have been cracked in pieces, and the world become a shambles, a brothel-house, a place below the common sentiments of a mere man. All sin, therefore, being against the law of God, the wisdom and holy rectitude of God's nature is denied in every act of disobedience. And what is the consequence of this, but that God is both foolish and unrighteous in commanding that, which was neither an act of wisdom, as a governor, nor an act of goodness, as a benefactor to his creature? As was said before, presumptuous sins are called reproaches of God (Numbers 15:30): "The soul that doth aught presumptuously reproacheth the Lord." Reproaches of men are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply a charge, either of unrighteousness or ignorance: if of unrighteousness, it is a denial of his holiness; if of ignorance, it is a blemishing his wisdom. If God's laws were not wise and holy, God would not enjoin them: and if they are so, we deny infinite wisdom and holiness in God by not complying with them. As when a man believes not God when he promises, he makes him a liar (1 John 5:10); so he that obeys not a wise and holy God commanding, makes him guilty either of folly or unrighteousness. Now, suppose you knew an absolute atheist who denied the being of a God, yet had a life free from any notorious spot or defilement; would you in reason count him so bad as the other that owns a God in being, yet lays, by his course of action, such a black imputation of folly and impurity upon the God he professeth to own—an imputation which renders any man a most despicable creature?

Prop. V. Sin in its own nature endeavors to render God the most miserable being. It is nothing but an opposition to the will of God the will of no creature is so much contradicted as the will of God is by devils and men; and there is nothing under the heavens that the affections of human nature stand more point blank against, than against God. There is a slight of him in all the faculties of man; our souls are as unwilling to know him, as our wills are averse to follow him (Romans 8:7): "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, nor can be subject." It is true, God's will cannot be hindered of its effect, for then God would not be supremely blessed, but unhappy and miserable: all misery ariseth from a want of that which a nature would have, and ought to have besides, if anything could frustrate God's will, it would be superior to him: God would not be omnipotent, and so would lose the perfection of the Deity, and consequently the Deity itself; for that which did wholly defeat God's will, would be more powerful than he. But sin is a contradiction to the will of God's revelation, to the will of his precept: and therein doth naturally tend to a superiority over God, and would usurp his omnipotence, and deprive him of his blessedness. For if God had not an infinite power to turn the designs of it to his own glory, but the will of sin could prevail, God would be totally deprived of his blessedness. Doth not sin endeavor to subject God to the extravagant and contrary wills of men, and make him more a slave than any creature can be? For the will of no creature, not the meanest and most despicable creature, is so much crossed, as the will of God is by sin (Isaiah 43:24): "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins:" thou hast endeavored to make a mere slave of me by sin. Sin endeavors to subject the blessed God to the humor and lust of every person in the world.

Prop. VI. Men sometimes in some circumstances do wish the not being of God. This some think to be the meaning of the text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," that is, he wishes there were no God. Many tamper with their own hearts to bring them to a persuasion that there is no God: and when they cannot do that, they conjure up wishes that there were none. Men naturally have some conscience of sin, and some notices of justice (Romans 1:32): "They know the judgment of God," and they know the demerit of sin; "they know the judgment of God, and that they which do such things are worthy of death." What is the consequent of this but fear of punishment; and what is the issue of that fear, but a wishing the Judge either unwilling or unable to vindicate the honor of his violated law? When God is the object of such a wish, it is a virtual undeifying of him: not to be able to punish, is to be impotent; not to be willing to punish, is to be unjust: imperfections inconsistent with the Deity. God cannot be supposed without an infinite power to act, and an infinite righteousness as the rule of acting. Fear of God is natural to all men; not a fear of offending him, but a fear of being punished by him: the wishing the extinction of God has its degree in men, according to the degree of their fears of his just vengeance: and though such a wish be not in its meridian but in the damned in hell, yet it hath its starts and motions in affrighted and awakened consciences on the earth: under this rank of wishers, that there were no God, or that God were destroyed, do fall.

1. Terrified consciences, that are Magor-missabib, see nothing but matter of fear round about. As they have lived without the bounds of the law, they are afraid to fall under the stroke of his justice: fear wishes the destruction of that which it apprehends hurtful: it considers him as a God to whom vengeance belongs, as the Judge of all the earth. [Note: Psalms 94:12.] The less hopes such an one hath of his pardon, the more joy he would have to hear that his judge should be stripped of his life: he would entertain with delight any reasons that might support him in the conceit that there were no God: in his present state such a doctrine would be his security from an account: he would as much rejoice if there were no God to inflame an hell for him, as any guilty malefactor would if there were no judge to order a gibbet for him. Shame may bridle men's words, but the heart will be casting about for some arguments this way, to secure itself: such as are at any time in Spira's case, would be willing to cease to be creatures, that God might cease to be Judge. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no Elohim, no Judge;" fancying God without any exercise of his judicial authority. And there is not any wicked man under anguish of spirit, but, were it within the reach of his power, would take away the life of God, and rid himself of his fears by destroying his Avenger.

2. Debauched persons are not without such wishes sometimes: an obstinate servant wishes his master's death, from whom he expects correction for his debaucheries. As man stands in his corrupt nature, it is impossible but one time or other most debauched persons at least have some kind of velleities, or imperfect wishes. It is as natural to men to abhor those things which are unsuitable and troublesome, as it is to please themselves in things agreeable to their minds and humors; and since man is so deeply in love with sin, as to count it the most estimable good, he cannot but wish the abolition of that law which checks it, and, consequently, the change of the Lawgiver which enacted it; and in wishing a change in the holy nature of God, he wishes a destruction of God, who could not be God if he ceased to be immutably holy. They do as certainly wish that God had not a holy will to command them, as despairing souls wish that God had not a righteous will to punish them, and to wish conscience extinct for the molestations they receive from it, is to wish the power conscience represents out of the world also. Since the state of sinners is a

state of distance from God, and the language of sinners to God is, "Depart from us;" [Note: Job 21:14.] they desire as little the continuance of his being, as they desire the knowledge of his ways; the same reason which moves them to desire God's distance from them, would move them to desire God's not being: since the greatest distance would be most agreeable to them, the destruction of God must be so too; because there is no greater distance from us, than in not being. Men would rather have God not to be, than themselves under control, that sensuality might range at pleasure; he is like a "heifer sliding from the yoke" (Hosea 4:16). The cursing of God in the heart, feared by Job of his children, intimates a wishing God despoiled of his authority, that their pleasure might not be damped by his law. Besides, is there any natural man that sins against actuated knowledge, but either this or wishes that God might not see him, that God might not know his actions? And is not this to wish the destruction of God, who could not be God unless he were immense and omniscient?

3. Under this rank fall those who perform external duties only out of a principle of slavish fear. Many men perform those duties that the law enjoins, with the same sentiments that slaves perform their drudgery; and are constrained in their duties by no other considerations but those of the whip and the cudgel. Since, therefore, they do it with reluctance, and secretly murmur while they seem to obey, they would be willing that both the command were recalled, and the master that commands them were in another world. The spirit of adoption makes men act towards God as a father, a spirit of bondage only eyes him as a judge. Those that look upon their superiors as tyrannical, will not be much concerned in their welfare; and would be more glad to have their nails pared, than be under perpetual fear of them. Many men regard not the Infinite Goodness in the service of him, but consider him as cruel, tyrannical, injurious to their liberty. Adam's posterity are not free from the sentiments of their common father, till they are regenerate. You know what conceit was the hammer whereby the hellish Jael struck the nail into our first parents, which conveyed death, together with the same imagination to all their posterity (Genesis 3:5): "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Alas, poor souls! God knew what he did when he forbade you that fruit; he was jealous you should be too happy; it was cruelty in him to deprive you of a food so pleasant and delicious. The apprehension of the severity of God's commands riseth up no less in desires that there were no God over us, than Adam's apprehension of envy in God for the restraint of one tree, moved him to attempt to be equal with God: fear is as powerful to produce the one in his posterity, as pride was to produce the other in the common root. When we apprehend a thing hurtful to us, we desire so much evil to it, as may render it incapable of doing us the hurt we fear. As we wish the preservation of what we love or hope for, so we are naturally apt to wish the not being of that whence we fear some hurt or trouble. We must not understand this as if any man did formally wish the destruction of God, as God. God in himself is an infinite mirror of goodness and ravishing loveliness; he is infinitely good, and so universally good, and nothing but good; and is therefore so agreeable to a creature, as a creature, that it is impossible that the creature, while it bears itself to God as a creature, should be guilty of this, but thirst after him and cherish every motion to him. As no man wishes the destruction of any creature, as a creature, but as it may conduce to something which he counts may be beneficial to himself; so no man doth, nor perhaps can wish the cessation of the being of God, as God; for then he must wish his own being to cease also; but as he considers him clothed with some perfections, which he apprehends as injurious to him, as his holiness in forbidding sin, his justice in punishing sin; and God being judged in those

perfections, contrary to what the revolted creature thinks convenient and good for himself, he may wish God stripped of those perfections, that thereby he may be free from all fear of trouble and grief from him in his fallen state. In wishing God deprived of those, he wishes God deprived of his being; because God cannot retain his deity without a love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity; and he could not testify his love to the one, or his loathing of the other, without encouraging goodness, and witnessing his anger against iniquity. Let us now appeal to ourselves, and examine our own consciences. Did we never please ourselves sometimes in the thoughts, how happy we should be, how free in our vain pleasures, if there were no God? Have we not desired to be our own lords, without control, subject to no law but our own, and be guided by no will but that of the flesh? Did we never rage against God under his afflicting hand? Did we never wish God stripped of his holy will to command, and his righteous will to punish? &c.

Thus much for the general. For the proof of this, many considerations will bring in evidence; most may be reduced to these two generals: Man would set himself up, first, as his own rule; secondly, as his own end and happiness.

I. Man would set himself up as his own rule instead of God. This will be evidenced in this method.

1. Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him. 2. He owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing. 3. These he doth in order to the setting himself up as his own rule. 4. He makes himself not only his own rule, but he would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator.

First, Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him. It is all one to deny his royalty, and to deny his being. When we disown his authority, we disown his Godhead. It is the right of God to be the sovereign of his creatures, and it must be a very loose and trivial assent that such men have to God's superiority over them, (and consequently to the excellency of his being, upon which that authority is founded) who are scarce at ease in themselves, but when they are invading his rights, breaking his bands, casting away his cords, and contradicting his will: Every man naturally is a son of Belial, would be without a yoke, and leap over God's enclosures; and in breaking out against his sovereignty, we disown his being, as God, for to be God and sovereign are inseparable; he could not be God, if he were not supreme; nor could he be a Creator without being a Lawgiver. To be God and yet inferior to another, is a contradiction. To make rational creatures without prescribing them a law, is to make them without holiness, wisdom and goodness.

1. There is in man naturally an unwillingness to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him (Psalms 14:2): "None that did understand and seek God." The refusing instruction and casting his Word behind the back is a part of atheism. [Note: Psalms 50:17.] We are heavy in hearing the instructions either of law or gospel, [Note: Hebrews 5:11-12.] and slow in the apprehension of what we hear. The people that God had hedged in from the wilderness of the world for his own garden, were foolish and did not know God; were sottish and had no understanding of him. [Note: Jeremiah 4:22.] The law of God is accounted a strange thing; [Note: Hosea 8:12.] a thing of a different climate, and a far country from the heart of man; wherewith the mind of man had no natural acquaintance, and had no desire to have any; or they regarded it as a sordid thing: what God accounts great and valuable, they account mean and despicable. Men may show a civility to a stranger, but scarce contract an intimacy: there can be no amicable agreement between the holy will of God and the heart of a depraved creature: one is holy, the other unholy; one is universally

good, the other stark naught. The purity of the Divine rule renders it nauseous to the impurity of a carnal heart. Water and fire may as well friendly kiss each other and live together without quarrelling and hissing, as the holy will of God and the unregenerate heart of a fallen creature. The nauseating a holy rule is an evidence of atheism in the heart, as the nauseating wholesome food is of putrefied phlegm in the stomach. It is found more or less in every Christian, in the remainders, though not in a full empire. As there is a law in his mind whereby he delights in the law of God, so there is a law in his members whereby he wars against the law of God (Romans 7:22-23; Romans 7:25). How predominant is this loathing of the law of God, when corrupt nature is in its full strength, without any principle to control it! There is in the mind of such a one a darkness, whereby it is ignorant of it, and in the will a depravedness, whereby it is repugnant to it. If man were naturally willing and able to have an intimate acquaintance with, and delight in the law of God, it had not been such a signal favor for God to promise to "write the law in the heart." A man may sooner engrave the chronicle of a whole nation, or all the records of God in the Scripture upon the hardest marble with his bare finger, than write one syllable of the law of God in a spiritual manner upon his heart. For,

(1.) Men are negligent in using the means for the knowledge of God's will. All natural men are fools, who know not how to use the price God puts into their hands; [Note: Proverbs 17:16.] they put not a due estimate upon opportunities and means of grace, and account that law folly which is the birth of an infinite and holy wisdom. The knowledge of God which they may glean from creatures, and is more pleasant to the natural gust of men, is not improved to the glory of God, if we will believe the indictment the apostle brings against the Gentiles. [Note: Romans 1:21.] And most of those that have dived into the depths of nature, have been more studious of the qualities of the creatures, than of the excellency of the nature, or the discovery of the mind of God in them; who regard only the rising and motions of the star, but follow not with the wise men, its conduct to the King of the Jews. How often do we see men filled with an eager thirst for all other kind of knowledge, that cannot acquiesce in a twilight discovery, but are inquisitive into the causes and reasons of effects, yet are contented with a weak and languishing knowledge of God and his law, and are easily tired with the proposals of them! He now that nauseates the means whereby he may come to know and obey God, has no intention to make the law of God his rule. There is no man that intends seriously an end, but he intends means in order to that end: as when a man intends the preservation or recovery of his health, he will intend means in order to those ends, otherwise he cannot be said to intend his health; so he that is not diligent in using means to know the mind of God, has no sound intention to make the will and law of God his rule. Is not the inquiry after the will of God made a work by the bye, and fain to lacquey after other concerns of an inferior nature, if it hath any place at all in the soul? which is a despising the being of God. The notion of the sovereignty of God bears the same date with the notion of his Godhead; and by the same way that he reveals himself, he reveals his authority over us: whether it be by creatures without, or conscience within. All authority over rational creatures consists in commanding and directing: the duty of rational creatures in compliance with that authority consists in obeying. Where there is therefore a careless neglect of those means which convey the knowledge of God's will and our duty, there is an utter disowning of God as our Sovereign and our rule.

(2.) When any part of the mind and will of God breaks in upon men, they endeavor to shake it off: as a man would a sergeant that comes to arrest him, "they like not to retain God in their

knowledge" (Romans 1:28). "A natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God;" that is, into his affection; he pusheth them back as men do troublesome and importunate beggars: they have no kindness to bestow upon it: they thrust with both shoulders against the truth of God, when it presseth in upon them; and dash as much contempt upon it as the Pharisees did upon the doctrine our Saviour directed against their covetousness. As men naturally delight to be without God in the world, so they delight to be without any offspring of God in their thoughts. Since the spiritual palate of man is depraved, divine truth is unsavory and ungrateful to us, till our taste and relish is restored by grace: hence men damp and quench the motions of the Spirit to obedience and compliance with the dictates of God; strip them of their life and vigor, and kill them in the womb. How unable are our memories to retain the substance of spiritual truth; but like sand in a glass, put in at one part and runs out at the other! Have not many a secret wish, that the Scripture had never mentioned some truths, or that they were blotted out of the Bible, because they face their consciences, and discourage those boiling lusts they would with eagerness and delight pursue? Methinks that interruption John gives our Saviour when he was upon the reproof of their pride, looks little better than a design to divert him from a discourse so much against the grain, by telling him a story of their prohibiting one to cast out devils, because he followed not them. [Note: Mark 9:33; Mark 9:38.] How glad are men when they can raise a battery against a command of God, and raise some smart objection whereby they may shelter themselves from the strictness of it!

(3.) When men cannot shake off the notices of the will and mind of God, they have no pleasure in the consideration of them; which could not possibly be, if there were a real and fixed design to own the mind and law of God as our rule. Subjects or servants that love to obey their prince and master, will delight to read and execute their orders. The devils understand the law of God in their minds, but they loathe the impressions of it upon their wills: those miserable spirits are bound in chains of darkness, evil habits in their wills, that they have not a thought of obeying that law they know. It was an unclean beast under the law that did not chew the cud: it is a corrupt heart that doth not chew truth by meditation. A natural man is said not to know God, or the things of God; he may know them rationally, but he knows them not affectionately. A sensual soul can have no delight in a spiritual law. To be sensual and not to have the Spirit are inseparable (Jude 1:19). Natural men may indeed meditate upon the law and truth of God, but without delight in it; if they take any pleasure in it, it is only as it is knowledge, not as it is a rule; for we delight in nothing that we desire, but upon the same account that we desire it. Natural men desire to know God and some part of his will and law, not out of a sense of their practical excellency, but a natural thirst after knowledge: and if they have a delight, it is in the act of knowing, not in the object known, not in the duties that stream from that knowledge; they design the furnishing their understandings, not the quickening their affections,—like idle boys that strike fire, not to warm themselves by the heat, but sport themselves with the sparks; whereas a gracious soul accounts not only his meditation, or the operations of his soul about God and his will to be sweet, but he hath a joy in the object of that meditation. [Note: Psalms 104:34.] Many have the knowledge of God, who have no delight in him or his will. Owls have eyes to perceive that there is a sun, but by reason of the weakness of their sight have no pleasure to look upon a beam of it: so neither can a man by nature love, or delight in the will of God, because of his natural corruption. That law that riseth up in men for conviction and instruction, they keep down under the power of corruption; making their souls not the sanctuary, but prison of truth (Romans 1:18). They will keep it down in their hearts, if they cannot keep it out

of their heads, and will not endeavor to know and taste the spirit of it.

(4.) There is, further, a rising and swelling of the heart against the will of God. 1st. Internal. God's law cast against a hard heart, is like a ball thrown against a stone wall, by reason of the resistance rebounding the further from it; the meeting of a divine truth and the heart of man, is like the meeting of two tides, the weaker swells and foams. We have a natural antipathy against a divine rule, and therefore when it is clapped close to our consciences, there is a snuffing at it, high reasonings against it, corruption breaks out more strongly: as water poured on lime sets it on fire by an antiperistasis, and the more water is cast upon it, the more furiously it burns; or as the sunbeams shining upon a dunghill make the steams the thicker, and the stench the noisomer, neither being the positive cause of the smoke in the lime, or the stench in the dunghill, but by accident the causes of the eruption: (Romans 7:8), "But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, for without the law sin was dead." Sin was in a languishing posture, as if it were dead, like a lazy garrison in a city, till, upon an alarm from the adversary, it takes arms, and revives its courage; all the sin in the heart gathers together its force to maintain its standing, like the vapors of the night, which unite themselves more closely to resist the beams of the rising sun. Deep conviction often provokes fierce opposition; sometimes disputes against a divine rule end in blasphemies: (Acts 13:45), "contradicting and blaspheming" are coupled together. Men naturally desire things that are forbidden, and reject things commanded, from the corruption of nature, which affects an unbounded liberty, and is impatient of returning under that yoke it hath shaken off, and therefore rageth against the bars of the law, as the waves roar against the restraint of a bank. When the understanding is dark, and the mind ignorant, sin lies as dead; "A man scarce knows he hath such motions of concupiscence in him, he finds not the least breath of wind, but a full calm in his soul; but when he is awakened by the law, then the viciousness of nature being sensible of an invasion of its empire, arms itself against the divine law, and the more the command is urged, the more vigorously it bends its strength, and more insolently lifts up itself against it;" [Note: Thes. Salmur. De Spiritu. Servitutis Thes. 19.] he perceives more and more atheistical lusts than before; "all manner of concupiscence," more leprous and contagious than before. When there are any motions to turn to God, a reluctancy is presently perceived; atheistical thoughts bluster in the mind like the wind, they know not whence they come, nor whither they go; so unapt is the heart to any acknowledgment of God as his ruler, and any re-union with him. Hence men are said to resist the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51), to fall against it, as the word signifies, as a stone, or any ponderous body falls against that which lies in its way: they would dash to pieces, or grind to powder that very motion which is made for their instruction, and the Spirit too which makes it, and that not from a fit of passion, but an habitual repugnance; "Ye always resist," &c. 2d. External. It is a fruit of atheism in the fourth verse of this psalm, "Who eat up my people as they eat bread." How do the revelations of the mind of God meet with opposition! and the carnal world like dogs bark against the shining of the moon; so much men hate the light, that they spurn at the lanthorns that bear it; and because they cannot endure the treasure, often fling the earthen vessels against the ground wherein it is held. If the entrance of truth render the market worse for Diana's shrines, the whole city will be in an uproar. [Note: Acts 19:24; Acts 19:28-29.] When Socrates upon natural principles confuted the heathen idolatry, and asserted the unity of God, the whole cry of Athens, a learned university, is against him; and because he opposed the public received religion, though with an undoubted truth, he must end his life by violence. How hath every corner of the world steamed with the blood of those that would maintain

the authority of God in the world! The devil's children will follow the steps of their father, and endeavor to bruise the heel of divine truth, that would endeavor to break the head of corrupt lust.

(5.) Men often seem desirous to be acquainted with the will of God, not out of any respect to his will, and to make it their rule, but upon some other consideration. Truth is scarce received as truth. There is more of hypocrisy than sincerity in the pale of the church, and attendance on the mind of God. The outward dowry of a religious profession, makes it often more desirable than the beauty. Judas was a follower of Christ for the bag, not out of any affection to the divine revelation. Men sometime pretend a desire to be acquainted with the will of God, to satisfy their own passions, rather than to conform to God's will; the religion of such is not the judgment of the man, but the passion of the brute. Many entertain a doctrine for the person's sake, rather than a person for the doctrine's sake, and believe a thing because it comes from a man they esteem, as if his lips were more canonical than Scripture. The Apostle implies in the commendation he gives the Thessalonians, [Note: 1 Thessalonians 2:13.] that some receive the word for human interest, not as it is in truth the word and will of God to command and govern their consciences by its sovereign authority; or else they have the "truth of God" (as St. James speaks of the faith of Christ) "with respect of persons;" [Note: James 2:2.] and receive it not for the sake of the fountain, but of the channel; so that many times the same truth delivered by another, is disregarded, which, when dropping from the fancy and mouth of a man's own idol, is cried up as an oracle. This is to make not God, but man the rule; for though we entertain that which materially is the truth of God, yet not formally as his truth, but as conveyed by one we affect; and that we receive a truth and not an error, we owe the obligation to the honesty of the instrument, and not to the strength and clearness of our own judgment. Wrong considerations may give admittance to an unclean, as well as a clean beast into the ark of the soul. That which is contrary to the mind of God, may be entertained, as well as that which is agreeable. It is all one to such that have no respect to God, what they have, as it is all one to a sponge to suck up the foulest water or the sweetest wine, when either is applied to it.

(6.) Many that entertain the notions of the will and mind of God, admit them with unsettled and wavering affections. There is a great levity in the heart of man. The Jews that one day applaud our Saviour with hosannahs as their king, vote his crucifixion the next, and use him as a murderer. We begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Our hearts, like lute-strings, are changed with every change of weather, with every appearance of a temptation; scarce one motion of God in a thousand prevails with us for a settled abode. It is a hard task to make a signature of those truths upon our affections, which will with ease pass current with our understandings; our affections will as soon lose them, as our understandings embrace them. The heart of man is "unstable as water." [Note: Genesis 49:4, James 1:8.] Some were willing to rejoice in John's light, which reflected a lustre on their minds; but not in his heat, which would have conveyed a warmth to their hearts; and the light was pleasing to them but for a season, [Note: John 5:35.] while their corruptions lay as if they were dead, not when they were awakened. Truth may be admitted one day, and the next day rejected; as Austin saith of a wicked man, he loves the truth shining, but he hates the truth reproving. This is not to make God, but our own humor, our rule and measure.

(7.) Many desire an acquaintance with the law and truth of God, with a design to improve some lust by it; to turn the word of God to be a pander to the breach of his law. This is so far from making God's will our rule, that we make our own vile affections the rule of his law. How many forced

interpretations of Scripture have been coined to give content to the lusts of men, and the vine rule forced to bend, and be squared to men's loose and carnal apprehensions! It is a part of the instability or falseness of the heart, to "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction;" [Note: 2 Peter 3:16.] which they could not do, if they did not first wring them to countenance some detestable error or filthy crime. In Paradise the first interpretation made of the first law of God, was point blank against the mind of the Lawgiver, and venomous to the whole race of mankind. Paul himself feared that some might put his doctrine of grace to so ill a use, as to be an altar and sanctuary to shelter their presumption (Romans 6:1; Romans 6:15): "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Poisonous consequences are often drawn from the sweetest truths; as when God's patience is made a topic whence to argue against his providence, [Note: Psalms 94:1.] or an encouragement to commit evil more greedily; as though because he had not presently a revenging hand, he had not an all-seeing eye or when the doctrine of justification by faith is made use of to depress a holy life; or God's readiness to receive returning sinners, an encouragement to defer repentance till a death-bed. A liar will hunt for shelter in the reward God gave the midwives that lied to Pharaoh for the preservation of the males of Israel, and Rahab's saving the spies by false intelligence. God knows how to distinguish between grace and corruption, that may lie close together; or between some thing of moral goodness and moral evil, which may be mixed; we find their fidelity rewarded, which was a moral good; but not their lie approved, which was a moral evil. Nor will Christ's conversing with sinners, be a plea for any to thrust themselves into evil company. Christ conversed with sinners, as a physician with diseased persons, to cure them, not approve them; others with profligate persons, to receive infection from them, not to communicate holiness to them. Satan's children have studied their father's art, who wanted not perverted Scripture to second his temptations against our Saviour. [Note: Matthew 4:4-6.] How often do carnal hearts turn divine revelation to carnal ends, as the sea fresh water into salt! As men subject the precepts of God to carnal interests, so they subject the truths of God to carnal fancies. When men will allegorize the word, and make a humorous and crazy fancy the interpreter of divine oracles, and not the Spirit speaking in the word; this is to enthrone our own imaginations as the rule of God's law, and depose his law from being the rule of our reason; this is to rifle truth of its true mind and intent. 'Tis more to rob a man of his reason, the essential constitutive part of man, than of his estate; this is to refuse an intimate acquaintance with his will. We shall never tell what is the matter of a precept, or the matter of a promise, if we impose a sense upon it contrary to the plain meaning of it; thereby we shall make the law of God to have a distinct sense according to the variety of men's imaginations, and so make every man's fancy a law to himself. Now that this unwillingness to have a spiritual acquaintance with divine truth is a disowning God as our rule, and a setting up self in his stead, is evident; because this unwillingness respects truth.

1st. As it is most spiritual and holy. A fleshly mind is most contrary to a spiritual law, and particularly as it is a searching and discovering law, that would dethrone all other rules in the soul. As men love to be without a holy God in the world, so they love to be without a holy law, the transcript and image of God's holiness in their hearts; and without holy men, the lights kindled by the Father of lights. As the holiness of God, so the holiness of the law most offends a carnal heart (Isaiah 30:11): "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us, prophesy to us right things." They could not endure God as a holy one. Herein God places their rebellion, rejecting him as their rule (Isaiah 30:9), "Rebellious children, that will not hear the law of the Lord." The more pure and precious any discovery of God is, the more it is disrelished by the world: as spiritual sins are

sweetest to a carnal heart, so spiritual truths are most distasteful. The more of the brightness of the sun any beam conveys, the more offensive it is to a distempered eye.

2d. As it doth most relate to, or lead to God. The devil directs his fiercest batteries against those doctrines in the word, and those graces in the heart, which most exalt God, debase man, and bring men to the lowest subjection to their Creator; such is the doctrine and grace of justifying faith. That men hate not knowledge as knowledge, but as it directs them to choose the fear of the Lord, was the determination of the Holy Ghost long ago (Proverbs 1:29): "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Whatsoever respects God, clears up guilt, witnesses man's revolt to him, rouseth up conscience, and moves to a return to God, a man naturally runs from, as Adam did from God, and seeks a shelter in some weak bushes of error, rather than appear before it. Not that men are unwilling to inquire into and contemplate some divine truths which lie furthest from the heart, and concern not themselves immediately with the rectifying the soul: they may view them with such a pleasure as some might take in beholding the miracles of our Saviour, who could not endure his searching doctrine. The light of speculation may be pleasant, but the light of conviction is grievous; that which galls their consciences, and would affect them with a sense of their duty to God. Is it not easy to perceive, that when a man begins to be serious in the concerns of the honor of God and the duty of his soul, he feels a reluctancy within him, even against the pleas of conscience; which evidenceth that some unworthy principle has got footing in the hearts of men, which fights against the declarations of God without, and the impressions of the law of God within, at the same time when a man's own conscience takes part with it, which is the substance of the apostle's discourse, Romans 7:15-16, &c. Close discourses of the honor of God, and our duty to him, are irksome when men are upon a merry pin: they are like a damp in a mine, that takes away their breath; they shuffle them out as soon as they can, and are as unwilling to retain the speech of them in their mouths, as the knowledge of them in their hearts. Gracious speeches, instead of bettering many men, distemper them, as sometimes sweet perfumes affect a weak head with aches.

3d. As it is most contrary to self. Men are unwilling to acquaint themselves with any truth that leads to God, because it leads from self. Every part of the will of God is more or less displeasing, as it sounds harsh against some carnal interest men would set above God, or as a mate with him. Man cannot desire any intimacy with that law which he regards as a bird of prey, to pick out his right eye or gnaw off his right hand, his lust dearer than himself. The reason we have such hard thoughts of God's will is, because we have such high thoughts of ourselves. It is a hard matter to believe or will that which hath no affinity with some principle in the understanding, and no interest in our will and passions: our unwillingness to be acquainted with the will of God ariseth from the disproportion between that and our corrupt hearts; "We are alienated from the life of God in our minds" (Ephesians 4:18-19). As we live not like God, so we neither think or will as God; there is an antipathy in the heart of man against that doctrine which teaches us to deny ourselves and be under the rule of another; but whatsoever favors the ambition, lusts, and profits of men, is easy entertainable. Many are fond of those sciences which may enrich their understandings, and grate not upon their sensual delights. Many have an admirable dexterity in finding out philosophical reasons, mathematical demonstrations, or raising observations upon the records of history; and spend much time and many serious and affectionate thoughts in the study of them. In those they have not immediately to do with God, their beloved pleasures are not impaired; it is a satisfaction

to self without the exercise of any hostility against it. But had those sciences been against self, as much as the law and will of God, they had long since been rooted out of the world. Why did the young man turn his back upon the law of Christ? because of his worldly self. Why did the Pharisees mock at the doctrine of our Saviour, and not at their own traditions? because of covetous self. Why did the Jews slight the person of our Saviour and put him to death, after the reading so many credentials of his being sent from heaven? because of ambitious self, that the Romans might not come and take away their kingdom. If the law of God were fitted to the humors of self, it would be readily and cordially observed by all men: self is the measure of a world of seeming religious actions; while God seems to be the object, and his law the motive, self is the rule and end (Zechariah 7:5): "Did you fast unto me," &c.

2. As men discover their disowning the will of God as a rule by unwillingness to be acquainted with it, so they discover it, by the contempt of it after they cannot avoid the notions and some impressions of it. The rule of God is burthensome to a sinner; he flies from it as from a frightful bugbear, and unpleasant yoke: sin against the knowledge of the law is therefore called a going back from the commandment of God's lips (Job 23:12): "A casting God's word behind them," [Note: Psalms 50:17.] as a contemptible thing, fitter to be trodden in the dirt than lodged in the heart; nay it is a casting it off as an abominable thing, for so the word **שָׁמַד** signifies, Hosea 8:3. "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good;" an utter refusal of God (Jeremiah 44:16): "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken." In the slight of his precepts his essential perfections are slighted. In disowning his will as a rule, we disown all those attributes which flow from his will, as goodness, righteousness, and truth. As an act of the divine understanding is supposed to precede the act of the divine will, so we slight the infinite reason of God. Every law, though it proceeds from the will of the lawgiver, and doth formally consist in an act of the will, yet it doth pre-suppose an act of the understanding. If the commandment be holy, just, and good, as it is (Romans 7:12); if it be the image of God's holiness, a transcript of his righteousness, and the efflux of his goodness; then in every reach of it, dirt is cast upon those attributes which shine in it; and a slight of all the regards he hath to his own honor, and all the provisions he makes for his creature. This atheism, or contempt of God, is more taken notice of by God than the matter of the sin itself; as a respect to God in a weak and imperfect obedience is more than the matter of the obedience itself, because it is an acknowledgment of God; so a contempt of God in an act of disobedience, is more than the matter of the disobedience. The creature stands in such an act not only in a posture of distance from God, but defiance of him; it was not the bare act of murder and adultery which Nathan charged upon David, but the atheistical principle which spirited those evil acts. The despising the commandment of the Lord was the venom of them. [Note: 2 Samuel 12:9-10.] It is possible to break a law without contempt; but when men pretend to believe there is a God, and that this is the law of God, it shows a contempt of his majesty: [Note: Claud.] men naturally account God's laws too strict, his yoke too heavy, and his limits too strait; and he that liveth in a contempt of this law, curseth God in his life. How can they believe there is a God, who despise him as a ruler? How can they believe him to be a guide, that disdain to follow him? To think we firmly believe a God without living conformable to his law, is an idle and vain imagination. The true and sensible notion of a God cannot subsist with disorder and an affected unrighteousness. This contempt is seen,

1. In any presumptuous breach of any part of his law. Such sins are frequently called in Scripture, rebellions, which are a denial of the allegiance we owe to him. By a wilful refusal of his right in one part, we root up the foundation of that rule he doth justly challenge over us; his right is as extensive to command us in one thing, as in another; and if it be disowned in one thing, it is virtually disowned in all, and the whole statute book of God is contemned (James 2:10-11): "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." A willing breaking one part, though there be a willing observance of all the other points of it, is a breach of the whole; because the authority of God, which gives sanction to the whole, is slighted: the obedience to the rest is dissembled: for the love, which is the root of all obedience, is wanting; for "love is the fulfilling the whole law." [Note: Romans 13:10.] The rest are obeyed because they cross not carnal desire so much as the other, and so it is an observance of himself, not of God. Besides, the authority of God, which is not prevalent to restrain us from the breach of one point, would be of as little force with us to restrain us from the breach of all the rest, did the allurements of the flesh give us as strong a diversion from the one as from the other; and though the command that is transgressed be the least in the whole law, yet the authority which enjoins it is the same with that which enacts the greatest: and it is not so much the matter of the command, as the authority commanding which lays the obligation.

2. In the natural averseness to the declarations of God's will and mind, which way soever they tend. Since man affected to be as God, he desires to be boundless; he would not have fetters, though they be golden ones, and conduce to his happiness. Thought the law of God be a strength to them, yet they will not (Isaiah 30:15): "In returning shall be your strength, and you would not." They would not have a bridle to restrain them from running into the pit, nor be hedged in by the law, though for their security; as if they thought it too slavish and low-spirited a thing to be guided by the will of another. Hence man is compared to a wild ass, that loves to "snuff up the wind in the wilderness at her pleasure," rather than come under the "guidance of God;" [Note: Jeremiah 2:24.] from whatsoever quarter of the heavens you pursue her she will run to the other. The Israelites "could not endure what was commanded," [Note: Hebrews 12:20.] though in regard of the moral part, agreeable to what they found written in their own nature, and to the observance whereof they had the highest obligations of any people under heaven, since God had, by many prodigies, delivered them from a cruel slavery, the memory of which prefaced the Decalogue (Exodus 20:2), "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." They could not think of the rule of their duty, but they must reflect upon the grand incentive of it in their redemption from Egyptian thralldom; yet this people were cross to God, which way soever he moved. When they were in the brick kilns, they cried for deliverance; when they had heavenly manna, they longed for their onions and garlic. In Numbers 14:3, they repent of their deliverance from Egypt, and talk of returning again to seek the remedy of their evils in the hands of their cruellest enemies, and would rather put themselves into the irons, whence God had delivered them, than believe one word of the promise of God for giving them a fruitful land; but when Moses tells them God's order, that they should turn back by the way of the Red Sea, [Note: Numbers 14:25.] and that God had confirmed it by an oath, that they should not see the land of Canaan, [Note: Numbers 14:28.] they then run cross to this command of God, and, instead of marching towards the Red Sea, which they had wished for before, they will go up to Canaan, as in spite of God and his threatening: "We will go to the place which the Lord hath promised" (Numbers 14:40), which Moses calls a transgressing the commandment of the Lord (Numbers 14:41). They would

presume to go up, notwithstanding Moses' prohibition, and are smitten by the Amalekites. When God gives them a precept, with a promise to go up to Canaan, they long for Egypt; when God commands them to return to the Red Sea, which was nearer to the place they longed for, they will shift sides, and go up to Canaan; [Note: Numbers 21:4-5, and Daillé, Sermon 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. Ser. 9, pp. 234, 235, 40.] and when they found they were to traverse the solitudes of the desert, they took pet against God, and, instead of thanking him for the late victory against the Canaanites, they reproach him for his conduct from Egypt, and the manna wherewith he nourished them in the wilderness. They would not go to Canaan, the way God had chosen, nor preserve themselves by the means God had ordained. They would not be at God's disposal, but complain of the badness of the way, and the lightness of manna, empty of any necessary juice to sustain their nature. They murmuringly solicit the will and power of God to change all that order which he had resolved in his counsel, and take another, conformable to their vain foolish desires; and they signified thereby that they would invade his conduct, and that he should act according to their fancy, which the psalmist calls a "tempting of God, and limiting the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41). To what point soever the declarations of God stand, the will of man turns the quite contrary way. Is not the carriage of this nation the best then in the world? a discovery of the depth of our natural corruption, how cross man is to God? And that charge God brings against them, may be brought against all men by nature, that they despise his judgments, and have a rooted abhorrency of his statutes in their soul (Leviticus 26:43). No sooner had they recovered from one rebellion, but they revolted to another; so difficult a thing it is for man's nature to be rendered capable of conforming to the will of God. The carriage of this people is but a copy of the nature of mankind, and is "written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). From this temper men are said to make "void the law of God;" [Note: Psalms 119:126.] to make it of no obligation, an antiquated and moth-eaten record. And the Pharisees, by setting up their traditions against the will of God, are said to make his law of "none effect;" to strip it of all its authority, as the word signifies, (Matthew 15:6,) κύρησαν.

3. We have the greatest slight of that will of God which is most for his honor and his greatest pleasure. It is the nature of man, ever since Adam, to do so (Hosea 6:6-7). God desired mercy and not a sacrifice; the knowledge of himself more than burnt offering; but they, like men as Adam, have transgressed the covenant, invade God's rights, and not let him be Lord of one tree. We are more curious observers of the fringes of the law than of the greater concerns of it. The Jews were diligent in sacrifices and offerings, which God did not urge upon them as principals, but as types of other things; but negligent of the faith which was to be established by him. Holiness, mercy, pity, which concerned the honor of God, as governor of the world, and were imitations of the holiness and goodness of God, they were strangers to. This is God's complaint (Isaiah 1:11-12; Isaiah 1:16-17). We shall find our hearts most averse to the observation of those laws which are eternal, and essential to righteousness; such that he could not but command, as he is a righteous Governor; in the observation of which we come nearest to him, and express his image more clearly; as those laws for an inward and spiritual worship, a supreme affection to him. God, in regard of his righteousness and holiness of his nature, and the excellency of his being, could not command the contrary to these. But this part of his will our hearts most swell against, our corruption doth most snarl at; whereas those laws which are only positive, and have no intrinsic righteousness in them, but depend purely upon the will of the Lawgiver, and may be changed at his pleasure (which the other, that have an intrinsic righteousness in them, cannot), we better comply with, than that part of his will that doth express more the righteousness of his nature;

[Note: 50:6, 17, 19.] such as the ceremonial part of worship, and the ceremonial law among the Jews. We are more willing to observe order in some outward attendances and glavering devotions, than discard secret affections to evil, crucify inward lusts and delightful thoughts. A “hanging down the head like a bullrush” is not difficult; but the “breaking the heart,” like a potter’s vessel, to shreds and dust (a sacrifice God delights in, whereby the excellency of God and the vileness of the creature is owned), goes against the grain; to cut off an outward branch is not so hard as to hack at the root. What God most loathes, as most contrary to his will, we most love: no sin did God so severely hate, and no sin were the Jews more inclined unto, than that of idolatry. The heathen had not changed their God, as the Jews had changed their glory (Jeremiah 2:11); and all men are naturally tainted with this sin, which is so contrary to the holy and excellent nature of God. By how much the more defect there is of purity in our respects to God, by so much the more respect there is to some idol within or without us, to humor, custom, and interest, &c. Never did any law of God meet with so much opposition as Christianity, which was the design of God from the first promise to the exhibiting the Redeemer, and from thence to the end of the world. All people drew swords at first against it. The Romans prepared yokes for their neighbors, but provided temples for the idols those people worshipped; but Christianity, the choicest design and most delightful part of the will of God, never met with a kind entertainment at first in any place; Rome, that entertained all others, persecuted this with fire and sword, though sealed by greater testimonies from heaven than their own records could report in favor of their idols.

4. In running the greatest hazards, and exposing ourselves to more trouble to cross the will of God, than is necessary to the observance of it. It is a vain charge men bring against the divine precepts, that they are rigorous, severe, difficult; when, besides the contradiction to our Saviour, who tells us his “yoke is easy,” and his “burthen light,” they thwart their own calm reason and judgment. Is there not more difficulty to be vicious, covetous, violent, cruel, than to be virtuous, charitable, kind? Doth the will of God enjoin that that is not conformable to right reason, and secretly delightful in the exercise and issue? And on the contrary, what doth Satan and the world engage us in, that is not full of molestation and hazard? Is it a sweet and comely thing to combat continually against our own consciences, and resist our own light, and commence a perpetual quarrel against ourselves, as we ordinarily do when we sin? They in the Prophet (Micah 6:6-8) would be at the expense of “thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil,” if they could compass them; yea, would strip themselves of their natural affection to their first-born to expiate the “sin of their soul,” rather than to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;” things more conducive to the honor of God, the welfare of the world, the security of their souls, and of a more easy practice than the offerings they wished for. Do not men then disown God when they will walk in ways hedged with thorns, wherein they meet with the arrows of conscience, at every turn, in their sides; and slide down to an everlasting punishment, sink under an intolerable slavery, to contradict the will of God? when they will prefer a sensual satisfaction, with a combustion in their consciences, violation of their reasons, gnawing cares and weary travels before the honor of God, the dignity of their natures, the happiness of peace and health, which might be preserved at a cheaper rate, than they are at to destroy them?

5. In the unwillingness and awkwardness of the heart, when it is to pay God a service. Men “do evil with both hands earnestly,” [Note: Micah 7:3.] but do good with one hand faintly; no life in the heart, nor any diligence in the hand. What slight and loose thoughts of God doth this unwillingness

imply? It is a wrong to his providence, as though we were not under his government, and had no need of his assistance; a wrong to his excellency, as though there were no amiableness in him to make his service desirable; an injury to his goodness and power, as if he were not able or willing to reward the creatures' obedience, or careless not to take notice of it; it is a sign we receive little satisfaction in him, and that there is a great unsuitableness between him and us.

(1.) There is a kind of constraint in the first engagement. We are rather pressed to it than enter ourselves volunteers. What we call service to God is done naturally much against our wills; it is not a delightful food, but a bitter potion; we are rather haled, than run to it. There is a contradiction of sin within us against our service, as there was a contradiction of sinners without our Saviour against his doing the will of God. Our hearts are unwieldy to any spiritual service of God; we are fain to use a violence with them sometimes: Hezekiah, it is said, "walked before the Lord, with a perfect heart" (2 Kings 20:9); he walked, he made himself to walk: man naturally cares not for a walk with God; if he hath any communion with him, it is with such a dulness and heaviness of spirit as if he wished himself out of his company. Man's nature, being contrary to holiness, hath an aversion to any act of homage to God, because holiness must at least be pretended. In every duty wherein we have a communion with God, holiness is requisite: now as men are against the truth of holiness, because it is unsuitable to them, so they are not friends to those duties which require it, and for some space divert them from the thoughts of their beloved lusts. The word of the Lord is a yoke, prayer a drudgery, obedience a strange element. We are like fish, that "drink up iniquity like water," [Note: 1 Samuel 15:3; 1 Samuel 15:9; 1 Samuel 15:15; 1 Samuel 15:21.] and come not to the bank without the force of an angle; no more willing to do service for God, than a fish is of itself to do service for man. It is a constrained act to satisfy conscience, and such are servile, not son-like performances, and spring from bondage more than affection; if conscience, like a task-master, did not scourge them to duty, they would never perform it. Let us appeal to ourselves, whether we are not more unwilling to secrete, closet, hearty duty to God, than to join with others in some external service; as if those inward services were a going to the rack, and rather our penance than privilege. How much service hath God in the world from the same principle that vagrants perform their task in Bridewell! How glad are many of evasions to back them in the neglect of the commands of God, of corrupt reasonings from the flesh to waylay an act of obedience, and a multitude of excuses to blunt the edge of the precept! The very service of God shall be a pretence to deprive him of the obedience due to him. Saul will not be ruled by God's will in the destroying the cattle of the Amalekites, but by his own; and will impose upon the will and wisdom of God, judging God mistaken in his command, and that the cattle God thought fittest to be meat to the fowls, were fitter to be sacrifices on the altar. [Note: 1 Samuel 15:3; 1 Samuel 15:9; 1 Samuel 15:15; 1 Samuel 15:21.] If we do perform any part of his will, is it not for our own ends, to have some deliverance from trouble? (Isaiah 26:16): "In trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." In affliction, he shall find them kneeling in homage and devotion; in prosperity, he shall feel them kicking with contempt; they can pour out a prayer in distress, and scarce drop one when they are delivered.

(2.) There is a slowness in our service of God. We are loth to come into his presence; and when we do come, we are loth to continue with him. We pay not an homage to him heartily, as to our Lord and Governor; we regard him not as our Master, whose work we ought to do, and whose honor we ought to aim at. 1. In regard of the matter of service. When the torn, the lame, and the

sick is offered to Gods; [Note: Malachi 1:13-14.] so thin and lean a sacrifice, that you may have thrown it to the ground with a puff; so some understand the meaning of “you have snuffed at it.” Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for him, and conformable to his law. The dullest and dearest time we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes, and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our hearts to God. How few morning sacrifices hath God from many persons and families! Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments, without any thought of their Creator and Preserver, or any reflection upon his will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many reserve the dregs of their lives, their old age, to offer up their souls to God, so they reserve the dregs of the day, their sleeping time, for the offering up their service to him. How many grudge to spend their best time in the serving the will of God, and reserve for him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives; the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon! Would not any prince or governor judge a present half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? A corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a King as God is, whose name is dreadful. [Note: Malachi 1:14.] When by age men are weary of their own bodies, they would present them to God; yet grudgingly, as if a tired body were too good for him, snuffing at the command for service. God calls for our best, and we give him the worst.

2. In respect of frame. We think any frame will serve God’s turn, which speaks our slight of God as a Ruler. Man naturally performs duty with an unholy heart, whereby it becomes an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9): “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be an abomination to God.” The services which he commands, he hates for their evil frames or corrupt ends (Amos 5:21): “I hate, I despise your feast-days, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.” God requires gracious services, and we give him corrupt ones. We do not rouse up our hearts, as David called upon his lute and harp to awake (Psalms 57:8). Our hearts are not given to him; we put him off with bodily exercise. The heart is but ice to what it doth not affect, [1.] There is not that natural vigor in the observance of God, which we have in worldly business. When we see a liveliness in men in other things, change the scene into a motion towards God, how suddenly doth their vigor shrink and their hearts freeze into sluggishness! Many times we serve God as languishingly as if we were afraid he should accept us, and pray as coldly as if we were unwilling he should hear us, and take away that lust by which we are governed, and which conscience forces us to pray against; as if we were afraid God should set up his own throne and government in our hearts. How fleeting are we in divine meditation, how sleepy in spiritual exercises! but in other exercises active. The soul Both not awaken itself, and excite those animal and vital spirits, which it will in bodily recreations and sports; much less the powers of the soul: whereby it is evident we prefer the latter before any service to God. Since there is a fulness of animal spirits, why might they not be excited in holy duties as well as in other operations, but that there is a reluctancy in the soul to exercise its supremacy in this case, and perform anything becoming a creature in subjection to God as a Ruler? [2.] It is evident also in the distractions we have in his service. How loth are we to serve God fixedly one hour, nay a part of an hour, notwithstanding all the thoughts of his majesty, and the eternity of glory set before our eye! What man is there, since the fall of Adam, that served God one hour without many wanderings and unsuitable thoughts unfit for that service? How ready are our hearts to start out and unite themselves with any worldly objects that please us! [3.] Weariness in it evidenceth it. To be weary of our dulness signifies a desire, to be weary of service signifies a discontent, to be ruled by God.

How tired are we in the performance of spiritual duties, when in the vain triflings of time we have a perpetual motion! How will many willingly revel whole nights, when their hearts will flag at the threshold of a religious service! like Dagon, [Note: 1 Samuel 5:4.] lose both our heads to think, and hands to act, when the ark of God is present. Some in the Prophet wished the new moon and the Sabhath over, that they might sell their corn, and be busied again in their worldly affairs. [Note: Amos 8:5.] A slight and weariness of the Sabhath, was a slight of the Lord of the Sabhath, and of that freedom from the yoke and rule of sin, which was signified by it. The design of the sacrifices in the new moon was to signify a rest from the tyranny of sin, and a consecration to the spiritual service of God. Servants that are quickly weary of their work, are weary of the authority of their master that enjoins it. If our hearts had a value for God, it would be with us as with the needle to the loadstone; there would be upon his beck a speedy motion to him, and a fixed union with him. When the judgments and affections of the saints shall be fully refined in glory, they shall be willing to behold the face of God, and be under his government to eternity, without any weariness: as the holy angels have owned God as their sovereign near these six thousand years, without being weary of running on his errands. But, alas, while the flesh clogs us, there will be some relics of unwillingness to hear his injunctions, and weariness in performing them; though men may excuse those things by extrinsic causes, yet God's unerring judgment calls it a weariness of himself (Isaiah 43:22): "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Of this he taxeth his own people, when he tells them he would have the beasts of the field, the dragons and the owls—the Gentiles, that the Jews counted no better than such—to honor him and acknowledge him their rule in a way of duty (Isaiah 43:20-21)

6. This contempt is seen in a deserting the rule of God, when our expectations are not answered upon our service. When services are performed from carnal principles, they are soon cast off when carnal ends meet not with desired satisfaction. But when we own ourselves God's servants and God our Master, "our eyes will wait upon him till he have mercy on us." [Note: Psalms 123:2.] It is one part of the duty we owe to God as our Master in heaven to continue in prayer (Colossians 4:1-2); and by the same reason in all other service, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving: to watch for occasions of praise, to watch with cheerfulness for further manifestations of his will, strength to perform it, success in the performance, that we may from all draw matter of praise. As we are in a posture of obedience to his precepts, so we should be in a posture of waiting for the blessing of it. But naturally we reject the duty we owe to God, if he do not speed the blessing we expect from him. How many do secretly mutter the same as they in Job 21:15 : "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray to him?" They serve not God out of conscience to his commands, but for some carnal profit; and if God make them to wait for it, they will not stay his leisure, but cease soliciting him any longer. Two things are expressed;—that God was not worthy of any homage from them,—“What is the Almighty that we should serve him?” and that the service of him would not bring them in a good revenue or an advantage of that kind they expected. Interest drives many men on to some kind of service, and when they do not find an advance of that, they will acknowledge God no more; but like some beggars, if you give them not upon their asking, and calling you good master, from blessing they will turn to cursing. How often do men do that secretly, practically, if not plainly, which Job's wife advised him to, curse God, and cast off that disguise of integrity they had assumed! (Job 2:9): "Dost thou still retain thy integrity? curse God." What a stir, and pulling, and crying is here! Cast off all thoughts of religious service, and be at daggers drawing with that God, who for all thy service of

him has made thee so wretched a spectacle to men, and a banquet for worms. The like temper is deciphered in the Jews (Malachi 3:14), "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, that we have walked mournfully before the Lord?" What profit is it that we have regarded his statutes, and carried ourselves in a way of subjection to God, as our Sovereign, when we inherit nothing but sorrow, and the idolatrous neighbors swim in all kind of pleasures? as if it were the most miserable thing to acknowledge God? If men have not the benefits they expect, they think God unrighteous in himself, and injurious to them, in not conferring the favor they imagine they have merited; and if they have not that recompense, they will deny God that subjection they owe to him as creatures. Grace moves to God upon a sense of duty; corrupt nature upon a sense of interest. Sincerity is encouraged by gracious returns, but is not melted away by God's delay or refusal. Corrupt nature would have God at its back, and steers a course of duty by hope of some carnal profit, not by a sense of the sovereignty of God.

7. This contempt is seen in breaking promises with God. "One while the conscience of a man makes vows of new obedience, and perhaps binds himself with many an oath; but they prove like Jonah's purd, withering the next day after their birth. This was Pharaoh's temper: under a storm he would submit to God, and let Israel go; but when the storm is ended, he will not be under God's control, and Israel's slavery shall be increased. The fear of Divine wrath makes many a sinner turn his back upon his sin, and the love of his ruling lust makes him turn his back upon his true Lord. This is from the prevalency of sin, that disputes with God for the sovereignty." [Note: Reyn.] When God hath sent a sharp disease, as a messenger to bind men to their beds, and make an interruption of their sinful pleasures, their mouths are full of promises of a new life, in hope to escape the just vengeance of God: the sense of hell, which strikes strongly upon them, makes them full of such pretended resolutions when they howl upon their beds. But if God be pleased in his patience to give them a respite, to take off the chains wherewith he seemed to be binding them for destruction, and recruit their strength, they are more earnest in their sins than they were in their promises of a reformation, as if they had got the mastery of God, and had outwitted him. How often doth God charge them of not returning to him after a succession of judgments! [Note: Amos 4:6-11.] So hard it is, not only to allure, but to scourge men, to an acknowledgment of God as their Ruler!

Consider then, are we not naturally inclined to disobey the known will of God? Can we say, Lord, for thy sake we refrain the thing to which our hearts incline? Do we not allow ourselves to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, revengeful, though we know it will offend him? Have we not been peevishly cross to his declared will? run counter to him and those laws which express most of the glory of his holiness? Is not this to disown him as our rule? Did we never wish there were no law to bind us, no precept to check our idols? What is this, but to wish that God would depose himself from being our governor, and leave us to our own conduct? or else to wish that he were as unholy as ourselves, as careless of his own laws as we are; that is, that he were no more a God than we, a God as sinful and unrighteous as ourselves? He whose heart riseth against the law of God to unlay it, riseth against the Author of that law to undeify him. He that casts contempt upon the dearest thing God hath in the world, that which is the image of his holiness, the delight of his soul; that which he hath given a special charge to maintain, and that because it is holy, just, and good, would not stick to rejoice at the destruction of God himself. If God's holiness and righteousness in the beam be despised, much more will an immense goodness and holiness in the fountain be

rejected: he that wisheth a beam far from his eyes, because it offends and scorcheth him, can be no friend to the sun, from whence that beam doth issue. How unworthy a creature is man, since he only, a rational creature, is the sole being that withdraws itself from the rule of God in this earth! And how miserable a creature is he also, since, departing from the order of God's goodness, he falls into the order of his justice; and while he refuseth God to be the rule of his life, he cannot avoid him being the Judge of his punishment! It is this is the original of all sin, and the fountain of all our misery. This is the first thing man disowns, the rule which God sets him.

Secondly, Man naturally owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing. The law of God orders one thing, the heart of man desires another. There is not the basest thing in the world, but man would sooner submit to be guided by it, rather than by the holiness of God; and when anything that God commands crosses our own wills, we value it no more than we would the advice of a poor despicable beggar. How many are "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God!" [Note: 2 Timothy 3:4.] To make something which contributes to the perfection of nature, as learning, wisdom, moral virtues, our rule, would be more tolerable; but to pay that homage to a swinish pleasure, which is the right of God, is an inexcusable contempt of him. The greatest excellency in the world is infinitely below God; much more a bestial delight, which is both disgraceful and below the nature of man. If we made the vilest creature on earth our idol, it is more excusable than to be the slave of a brutish pleasure. The viler the thing is that doth possess the throne in our heart, the greater contempt it is of him who can only claim a right to it, and is worthy of it. Sin is the first object of man's election, as soon as the faculty whereby he chooses comes to exercise its power; and it is so dear to man, that it is, in the estimate of our Saviour, counted as the right hand, and the right eye, dear, precious, and useful members.

1. The rule of Satan is owned before the rule of God. The natural man would rather be under the guidance of Satan than the yoke of his Creator. Adam chose him to be his governor in Paradise. No sooner had Satan spoke of God in a way of derision (Genesis 3:1; Genesis 3:5), "Yea, hath God said," but man follows his counsel and approves of the scoff; and the greatest part of his posterity have not been wiser by his fall, but would rather ramble in the devil's wilderness, than to stay in God's fold. It is by the sin of man that the devil is become the god of the world, as if men were the electors of him to the government; sin is an election of him for a lord, and a putting the soul under his government. Those that live according to the course of the world, and are loth to displease it, are under the government of the prince of it. The greatest part of the works done in the world is to enlarge the kingdom of Satan. For how many ages were the laws whereby the greatest part of the world was governed in the affairs of religion, the fruits of his usurpation and policy? When temples were erected to him, priests consecrated to his service; the rites used in most of the worship of the world were either of his own coining, or the misapplying the rites God had ordained to himself, under the notion of a God: whence the apostle calls all idolatrous feasts the table of devils, the cup of devils, sacrifice to devils, fellowship with devils; [Note: 1 Corinthians 10:20-21.] devils being the real object of the pagan worship, though not formally intended by the worshipper; though in some parts of the Indies, the direct and peculiar worship is to the devil, that he might not hurt them. And though the intention of others was to offer to God, and not the devil, yet since the action was contrary to the will of God, he regards it as a sacrifice to devils. It was not the intention of Jeroboam to establish priests to the devil, when he consecrated them to the service of his calves, for Jehu afterwards calls them "the servants of the Lord" (2 Kings 10:23),

“See if there be here none of the servants of the Lord,” to distinguish them from the servants of Baal; signifying that the true God was worshipped under those images, and not Baal, nor any of the gods of the heathens; yet the Scripture couples the calves and devils together, and ascribes the worship given to one to be given to the other: “He ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made;” [Note: 2 Chronicles 11:15.] so that they were sacrifices to devils, notwithstanding the intention of Jeroboam and his subjects that had set them up and worshipped them, because they were contrary to the mind of God, and agreeable to the doctrine and mind of Satan, though the object of their worship in their own intention were not the devil, but some deified man or some canonized saint. The intention makes not a good action; if so, when men kill the best servants of God with a design to do God service, as our Saviour foretells, [Note: John 16:2.] the action would not be murder; yet who can call it otherwise, since God is wronged in the persons of his servants? Since most of the worship of the world, which men’s corrupt natures incline them to, is false and different from the revealed will of God, it is a practical acknowledgment of the devil, as the governor, by acknowledging and practising those doctrines, which have not the stamp of divine revelation upon them, but were minted by Satan to depress the honor of God in the world. It doth concern men, then, to take good heed, that in their acts of worship they have a divine rule; otherwise it is an owning the devil as the rule: for there is no medium; whatsoever is not from God, is from Satan. But to bring this closer to us, and consider that which is more common among us: men that are in a natural condition, and wedded to their lusts, are under the paternal government of Satan (John 8:44): “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” If we divide sin into spiritual and carnal, which division comprehends all, the devil’s authority is owned in both; in spiritual, we conform to his example, because those he commits; in carnal, we obey his will, because those he directs: he acts the one, and sets us a copy; he tempts to the other, and gives us a kind of a precept. Thus man by nature being a willing servant of sin, is more desirous to be bound in the devil’s iron chain, than in God’s silken cords. What greater atheism can there be, than to use God as if he were inferior to the devil? to take the part of his greatest enemy, who drew all others into the faction against him? to pleasure Satan by offending God, and gratify our adversary with the injury of our Creator? For a subject to take arms against his prince with the deadliest enemy both himself and prince hath in the whole world, adds a greater blackness to the rebellion.

2. The more visible rule preferred before God in the world, is man. The opinion of the world is more our rule than the precept of God; and many men’s abstinence from sin is not from a sense of the Divine will, no, nor from a principle of reason, but from an affection to some man on whom they depend, or fear of punishment from a superior; the same principle with that in a ravenous beast, who abstains from what he desires, for fear only of a stick or club. Men will walk with the herds, go in fashion with the most, speak and act as the most do. While we conform to the world, we cannot perform a reasonable service to God, nor prove, nor approve practically what the good and acceptable will of God is; the apostle puts them in opposition to one another. [Note: Romans 12:1-2.] This appears,

1. In complying more with the dictates of men, than the will of God. Men draw encouragement from God’s forbearance to sin more freely against him; but the fear of punishment for breaking the will of man lays a restraint upon them. The fear of man is a more powerful curb, to restrain men in their duty, than the fear of God; so we may please a friend, a master, a governor, we are regardless

whether we please God or no; men-pleasers are more than God-pleasers; man is more advanced as a rule, than God, when we submit to human orders, and stagger and dispute against divine. Would not a prince think himself slighted in his authority, if any of his servants should decline his commands, by the order of one of his subjects? And will not God make the same account of us, when we deny or delay our obedience, for fear of one of his creatures? In the fear of man, we as little acknowledge God for our sovereign, as we do for our comforter (Isaiah 51:12-13): "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die," &c. "and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" &c. We put a slight upon God, as if he were not able to bear us out in our duty to him, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh.

2. In observing that which is materially the will of God, not because it is his will, but the injunctions of men. As the word of God may be received, yet not as his word, so the will of God may be performed, yet not as his will; it is materially done, but not formally obeyed. An action, and obedience in that action, are two things; as when man commands the ceasing from all works of the ordinary calling on the Sabhath, it is the same that God enjoins: the cessation, or attendance of his servants on the hearing of the word, are conformable in the matter of it to the will of God; but it is only conformable in the obediencial part of the acts to the will of man, when it is done only with respect to a human precept. As God hath a right to enact his laws without consulting his creature in the way of his government, so man is bound to obey those laws, without consulting whether they be agreeable to men's laws or no. If we act the will of God because the will of our superiors concurs with it, we obey not God in that, but man, a human will being the rule of our obedience, and not the divine; this is to vilify God, and make him inferior to man in our esteem, and a valuing the rule of man above that of our Creator. Since God is the highest perfection and infinitely good, whatsoever rule he gives the creature must be good, else it cannot proceed from God. A base thing cannot be the product of an infinite excellency, and an unreasonable thing cannot be the product of an infinite wisdom and goodness; therefore, as the respecting God's will before the will of man is excellent and worthy of a creature, and is an acknowledging the excellency, goodness, and wisdom of God, so the eying the will of man before and above the will of God, is on the contrary, a denial of all those in a lump, and a preferring the wisdom, goodness, and power of man in his law, above all those perfections of God in his. Whatsoever men do that looks like moral virtue or abstinence from vices, not out of obedience to the rule God hath set, but because of custom, necessity, example, or imitation, they may, in the doing of it, be rather said to be apes than Christians.

3. In obeying the will of man when it is contrary to the will of God; as the Israelites willingly "walked after the commandment," [Note: Hosea 5:11.] not of God, but of Jeroboam in the case of the calves, and "made the king's heart glad with their lies." [Note: Hosea 7:3.] They cheered him with their ready obedience to his command for idolatry (which was a lie in itself, and a lie in them) against the commandment of God, and the warnings of the prophets, rather than cheer the heart of God with their obedience to his worship instituted by him; nay, and when God offered them to cure them their wound, their iniquity breaks out afresh; they would neither have him as a lord to rule them, nor a physician to cure them (Hosea 7:1): "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered." The whole Persian nation shrunk at once from a duty due by the light of nature to the Deity, upon a decree that "neither God or man should be petitioned to for thirty days, but only their king;" [Note: Daniel 6:1-28.] one only, Daniel, excepted against it, who

preferred his homage to God, above obedience to his prince. An adulterous generation is many times made the rule of men's professions, as is implied in those words of our Saviour (Mark 8:38): "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation:" own him among his disciples, and be ashamed of him among his enemies. Thus men are said to deny God (Titus 1:16), when they "attend to Jewish fables and the precepts of men rather than the word of God;" when the decrees or canons of fallible men are valued at a higher rate, and preferred before the writings of the Holy Ghost by his apostles. As man naturally disowns the rule God sets him, and owns any other rule than that of God's prescribing, so,

Thirdly, He doth this in order to the setting himself up as his own rule; as though our own wills, and not God's, were the true square and measure of goodness. We make an idol of our own wills, and as much as self is exalted, God is deposed; the more we esteem our own wills, the more we endeavor to annihilate the will of God; account nothing of him, the more we account of ourselves, and endeavor to render ourselves his superiors, by exalting our own wills. No prince but would look upon his authority as invaded, his royalty derided, if a subject should resolve to be a law to himself, in opposition to his known will; true piety is to hate ourselves, deny ourselves, and cleave solely to the service of God. To make ourselves our own rule, and the object of our chiefest love, is atheism. If self-denial be the greatest part of godliness, the great letter in the alphabet of religion; self-love is the great letter in the alphabet of practical atheism. Self is the great antichrist and anti-God in the world, that sets up itself above all that is called God; self-love is the captain of that black band (2 Timothy 3:2): it sits in the temple of God, and would be adored as God. Self-love begins; but denying the power of godliness, which is the same with denying the ruling power of God, ends the list. It is so far from bending to the righteous will of the Creator, that it would have the eternal will of God stoop to the humor and unrighteous will of a creature; and this is the ground of the contention between the flesh and spirit in the heart of a renewed man; flesh wars for the godhead of self, and spirit fights for the godhead of God; the one would settle the throne of the Creator, and the other maintain a law of covetousness, ambition, envy, lust, in the stead of God. The evidence of this will appear in these propositions:

1. This is natural to man as he is corrupted. What was the venom of the sin of Adam, is naturally derived with his nature to all his posterity. It was not the eating a forbidden apple, or the pleasing his palate that Adam aimed at, or was the chief object of his desire, but to live independently on his Creator, and be a God to himself (Genesis 3:5): "You shall be as gods." That which was the matter of the devil's temptation, was the incentive of man's rebellion; a likeness to God he aspired to in the judgment of God himself, an infallible interpreter of man's thoughts; "Behold, man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," in regard of self-sufficiency and being a rule to himself. The Jews understand the ambition of man to reach no further than an equality with the angelical nature; but Jehovah here understands it in another sense; God had ordered man by this prohibition not to eat of the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil;" not to attempt the knowledge of good and evil of himself, but to wait upon the dictates of God; not to trust to his own counsels, but to depend wholly upon him for direction and guidance. Certainly he that would not hold off his hand from so small a thing as an apple, when he had his choice of the fruit of the garden, would not have denied himself anything his appetite had desired, when that principle had prevailed upon him; he would not have stuck at a greater matter to pleasure himself with the displeasing of God, when for so small a thing he would incur the anger of his Creator. Thus would

he deify his own understanding against the wisdom of God, and his own appetite against the will of God. This desire of equality with God, a learned man [Note: Dr. Jackson.] thinks the apostle intimates (Php 2:6): "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" the Son's being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, implies that the robbery of sacrilege committed by our first parents, for which the Son of God humbled himself to the death of the cross, was an attempt to be equal with God, and depend no more upon God's directions, but his own conduct; which could be no less than an invasion of the throne of God, and endeavor to put himself into a posture to be his mate. Other sins, adultery, theft, &c. could not be committed by him at that time, but he immediately puts forth his hand to usurp the power of his Maker; this treason is the old Adam in every man. The first Adam contradicted the will of God to set up himself; the second Adam humbled himself, and did nothing but by the command and will of his Father. This principle wherein the venom of the old Adam lies, must be crucified to make way for the throne of the humble and obedient principle of the new Adam, or quickening Spirit; indeed sin in its own nature is nothing else but "a willing according to self, and contrary to the will of God;" lusts are therefore called the wills of the flesh and of the mind. [Note: Ephesians 2:3.] As the precepts of God are God's will, so the violation of these precepts is man's will; and thus man usurps a godhead to himself, by giving that honor to his own will which belongs to God, appropriating the right of rule to himself, and denying it to his Creator. That servant that acts according to his own will, with a neglect of his master's, refuseth the duty of a servant, and invades the right of his master. This self-love and desire of independency on God has been the root of all sin in the world. The great controversy between God and man hath been, whether he or they shall be God; whether his reason or theirs, his will or theirs, shall be the guiding principle. As grace is the union of the will of God and the will of the creature, so sin is the opposition of the will of self to the will of God; "Leaning to our own understanding," is opposed as a natural evil to "trusting in the Lord," [Note: Proverbs 3:5.] a supernatural grace. Men commonly love what is their own, their own inventions, their own fancies; therefore the ways of a wicked man are called the "ways of his own heart," [Note: Ecclesiastes 11:9.] and the ways of a superstitious man his own devices (Jeremiah 18:11): "We will walk after our own devices;" we will be a law to ourselves; and what the Psalmist saith of the tongue, Our tongues are our own, who shall control us? is as truly the language of men's hearts, Our wills are our own, who shall check us?

2. This is evident in the dissatisfaction of men with their own consciences when they contradict the desires of self. Conscience is nothing but an actuated or reflex knowledge of a superior power and an equitable law; a law impressed, and a power above it impressing it. Conscience is not the lawgiver, but the remembrancer to mind us of that law of nature imprinted upon our souls, and actuate the considerations of the duty and penalty, to apply the rule to our acts, and pass judgment upon matter of fact: it is to give the charge, urge the rule, enjoin the practice of those notions of right, as part of our duty and obedience. But man is as much displeased with the directions of conscience, as he is out of love with the accusations and condemning sentence of this officer of God: we cannot naturally endure any quick and lively practical thoughts of God and his will, and distaste our own consciences for putting us in mind of it: they therefore "like not to retain God in their knowledge," [Note: Romans 1:28.] that is, God in their own consciences; they would blow it out, as it is the candle of the Lord in them to direct them, and their acknowledgments of God, to secure themselves against the practice of its principles: they would stop all the avenues to any beam of light, and would not suffer a sparkle of divine knowledge to flutter in their minds, in

order to set up another directing rule suited to the fleshly appetite: and when they cannot atop the light of it from glaring in their faces, they rebel against it, and cannot endure to abide in its paths. [Note: Job 24:13.] He speaks not of those which had the written word, or special revelations; but only a natural light or traditional, handed from Adam: hence are all the endeavors to still it when it begins to speak, by some carnal pleasures, as Saul's evil spirit with a fit of music; or bribe it with some fits of a glavering devotion, when it holds the law of God in its commanding authority before the mind: they would we out all the impressions of it when it presses the advancement of God above self, and entertain it with no better compliment than Ahab did Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" If we are like to God in anything of our natural fabric, it is in the auperior and more spiritual part of our souls. The resistance of that which is most like to God, and instead of God in us, is a disowning of the Sovereign represented by that officer. He that would be without conscience, would be without God, whose vicegerent it is, and make the sensitive part, which conscience opposes, his lawgiver. Thus a man, out of respect to sinful self, quarrels with his natural self, and cannot comport himself in a friendly behavior to his internal implanted principles: he hates to come under the rebukes of them, as much as Adam hated to come into the presence of God, after he turned traitor against him: the bad entertainment God's deputy hath in us, reflects upon that God whose cause it pleads: it is upon no other account that men loathe the upright language of their own reasons in those matters, and wish the eternal silence of their own consciences, but as they maintain the rights of God, and would hinder the idol of self from usurping his godhead and prerogative. Though this power be part of a man's self, rooted in his nature, as essential to him and inseparable from him as the best part of his being; yet he quarrels with it, as it is God's deputy, and stickling for the honor of God in his soul, and quarrelling with that sinful self he would cherish above God. We are not displeased with this faculty barely as it exerciseth a self-reflection; but as it is God's vicegerent, and bears the mark of his authority in it. In some cases this self-reflecting act meets with good entertainment, when it acts not in contradiction to self, but suitable to natural affections. As suppose a man hath in his passion struck his child, and caused thereby some great mischief to him, the reflection of conscience will not be unwelcome to him; will work some tenderness in him, because it takes the part of self and of natural affection; but in the more spiritual concerns of God it will be rated as a busy-body.

3. Many, if not most actions, materially good in the world, are done more because they are agreeable to self, than as they are honorable to God. As the word of God may be heard not as his word, [Note: 1 Thessalonians 2:13.] but as there may be pleasing notions in it, or discourses against an opinion or party we disaffect; so the will of God may be performed, not as his will, but as it may gratify some selfish consideration, when we will please God so far as it may not displease ourselves, and serve him as our Master, so far as his command may be a servant to our humor; when we consider not who it is that commands, but how short it comes of displeasing that sin which rules in our heart, pick and choose what is least burdensome to the flesh, and distasteful to our lusts. He that doth the will of God, not out of conscience of that will, but because it is agreeable to himself, casts down the will of God, and sets his own will in the place of it; takes the crown from the head of God, and places it upon the head of self. If things are done, not because they are commanded by God, but desirable to us, it is a disobedient obedience; a conformity to God's will in regard of the matter, a conformity to our own will in regard of the motive; either as the things done are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self.

(1). As they are agreeable to natural or moral self. When men will practise some points of religion, and walk in the track of some divine precepts; not because they are divine, but because they are agreeable to their humor or constitution of nature; from the sway of a natural bravery, the bias of a secular interest, not from an ingenuous sense of God's authority, or a voluntary submission to his will; as when a man will avoid excess in drinking, not because it is dishonorable to God, but as it is a blemish to his own reputation, or an impair of the health of his body: doth this deserve the name of an observance of the divine injunction, or rather an obedience to ourselves? Or when a man will be liberal in the distribution of his charity, not with an eye to God's precept, but in compliance with his own natural compassion, or to pleasure the generosity of his nature: the one is obedience to a man's own preservation; the other an obedience to the interest or impulse of a moral virtue. It is not respect to the rule of God, but the authority of self, and, at the best, is but the performance of the material part of the divine rule, without any concurrence of a spiritual motive or a spiritual manner. That only is a maintaining the rights of God, when we pay an observance to his rule, without examining the agreeableness of it to our secular interest, or consulting with the humor of flesh and blood; when we will not decline his service, though we find it cross, and hath no affinity with the pleasure of our own nature: such an obedience as Abraham manifested in his readiness to sacrifice his son; such an obedience as our Saviour demands in cutting off the right hand. When we observe anything of divine order upon the account of its suitableness to our natural sentiments, we shall readily divide from him, when the interest of nature turns its point against the interest of God's honor; we shall fall off from him according to the change we find in our own humors. And can that be valued as a setting up the rule of God, which must be deposed upon the mutable interest of an inconstant mind? Esau had no regard to God in delaying the execution of his resolution to shorten his brother's days, though he was awed by the reverence of his father to delay it; he considered, perhaps, how justly he might lie under the imputation of hastening crazy Isaac's death, by depriving him of a beloved son. But had the old man's head been laid, neither the contrary command of God, nor the nearness of a fraternal relation, could have bound his hands from the act, no more than they did his heart from the resolution (Genesis 27:41): "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother." So many children, that expect at the death of their parents great inheritances of portions, may be observant of them, not in regard of the rule fixed by God, but to their own hopes, which they would not frustrate by a disobligement. Whence is it that many men abstain from gross sins, but in love to their reputation? Wickedness may be acted privately, which a man's own credit puts a bar to the open commission of. The preserving his own esteem may divert him from entering into a brothel house, to which he hath set his mind before, against a known precept of his Creator. As Pharaoh parted with the Israelites, so do some men with their blemishing sins; not out of a sense of God's rule, but the smart of present judgments, or fear of a future wrath. Our security then, and reputation, is set up in the place of God. This also may be, and is in renewed men, who have the law written in their hearts, that is, an habitual disposition to an agreement with the law of God; when what is done is with a respect to this habitual inclination, without eying the divine precept, which is appointed to be their rule. This also is to set up a creature, as renewed self is, instead of the Creator, and that law of his in his word, which ought to be the rule of our actions. Thus it is when men choose a moral life, not so much out of respect to the law of nature, as it is the law of God, but as it is a law become one with their souls and constitutions. There is more of self in this than consideration of

God; for if it were the latter, the revealed law of God would, upon the same reason, be received as well as his natural law. From this principle of self, morality comes by some to be advanced above evangelical dictates.

(2.) As they are agreeable to sinful self. Not that the commands of God are suited to bolster up the corruptions of men, no more than the law can be said to excite or revive sin: [Note: Romans 7:8-9.] but it is like a scandal taken, not given; an occasion taken by the tumultuousness of our depraved nature. The Pharisees were devout in long prayers, not from a sense of duty, or a care of God's honor; but to satisfy their ambition, and rake together fuel for their covetousness, [Note: Matthew 23:14; "You devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers:"] that they might have the greater esteem and richer offerings, to free by their prayers the souls of deceased persons from purgatory; an opinion that some think the Jewish synagogue had then entertained, [Note: Gerrard in loc.] since some of their doctors have defended such a notion. Men may observe some precepts of God to have a better conveniency to break others. Jehu was ordered to cut off the house of Ahab. The service he undertook was in itself acceptable, but corrupt nature misacted that which holiness and righteousness commanded. God appointed it to magnify his justice, and check the idolatry that had been supported by that family; Jehu acted it to satisfy his revenge and ambition: he did it to fulfil his lust, not the will of God who enjoined him: Jehu applauds it as zeal; and God abhors it as murder, and therefore would avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu (Hosea 1:4). Such kind of services are not paid to God for his own sake, but to ourselves for our lusts' sake.

4. This is evident in neglecting to take God's direction upon emergent occasions. This follows the text, "None did seek God." When we consult not with him, but trust more to our own will and counsel, we make ourselves our own governors and lords independent upon him; as though we could be our own counsellors, and manage our concerns without his leave and assistance; as though our works were in our own hands, and not in the "hands of God." [Note: Ecclesiastes 9:1.] that we can by our own strength and sagacity direct them to a successful end without him. If we must "acquaint ourselves with God" before we decree a thing, [Note: Job 22:28.] then to decree a thing without acquainting God with it, is to prefer our purblind wisdom before the infinite wisdom of God: to resolve without consulting God, is to depose God and deify self, our own wit and strength. We would rather, like Lot, follow our own humor and stay in Sodom, than observe the angel's order to go out of it.

6. As we account the actions of others to be good or evil, as they suit with, or spurn against our fancies and humors. Virtue is a crime, and vice a virtue, as it is contrary or concurrent with our humors. Little reason have many men to blame the actions of others, but because they are not agreeable to what they affect and desire; we would have all men take directions from us, and move according to our beck, hence that common speech in the world, Such an one is an honest friend. Why? because he is of their humor, and lackeys according to their wills. Thus we make self the measure and square of good and evil in the rest of mankind, and judge of it by our own fancies, and not by the will of God, the proper rule of judgment. Well then, let us consider: Is not this very common? are we not naturally more willing to displease God than displease ourselves, when it comes to a point that we must do one or other? Is not our own counsel of more value with us, than conformity to the will of the Creator? Do not our judgments often run counter to the judgment of God? Have his laws a greater respect from us, than our own humors? Do we scruple

the staining his honor when it comes in competition with our own? Are not the lives of most men a pleasing themselves, without a repentance that ever they displeased God? Is not this to undeify God, to deify ourselves, and disown the propriety he hath in us by the right of creation and beneficence? We order our own ways by our own humors, as though we were the authors of our own being, and had given ourselves life and understanding. This is to destroy the order that God hath placed between our wills and his own, and a lifting up of the foot above the head; it is the deformity of the creature. The honor of every rational creature consists in the service of the First Cause of his being; as the welfare of every creature consists in the orders and proportionable motion of its members, according to the law of its creation. He that moves and acts according to a law of his own, offers a manifest wrong to God, the highest wisdom and chiefest good; disturbs the order of the world; nulls the design of the righteousness and holiness of God. The law of God is the rule of that order he would have observed in the world; he that makes another law his rule, thrusts out the order of the Creator, and establishes the disorder of the creature. But this will yet be more evident, in the fourth thing.

Fourthly, Man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator. We are willing God should be our benefactor, but not our ruler; we are content to admire his excellency and pay him a worship, provided he will walk by our rule. "This commits a riot upon his nature, To think him to be what we ourselves "would have him, and wish him to be" (Psalms 50:21), we would amplify his mercy and contract his justice; we would have his power enlarged to supply our wants, and straitened when it goes about to revenge our crimes; we would have him wise to defeat our enemies, but not to disappoint our unworthy projects; we would have him all eye to regard our indigence, and blind not to discern our guilt; we would have him true to his promises, regardless of his precepts, and false to his threatenings; we would new mint the nature of God according to our models, and shape a God according to our own fancies, as he made us at first according to his own image;" instead of obeying him, we would have him obey us; instead of owning and admiring his perfections, we would have him strip himself of his infinite excellency, and clothe himself with a nature agreeable to our own. This is not only to set up self as the law of God, but to make our own imaginations the model of the nature of God. [Note: Decay of Christian Piety, p. 169, somewhat changed.] Corrupted man takes a pleasure to accuse or suspect the actions of God: we would not have him act conveniently to his nature; but act what doth gratify us, and abstain from what distastes us. Man is never well but when he is impeaching one or other perfection of God's nature, and undermining his glory, as if all his attributes must stand indicted at the bar of our purblind reason: this weed shoots up in the exercise of grace. Peter intended the refusal of our Saviour's washing his feet, as an act of humility, but Christ understands it to be a prescribing a law to himself, a correcting his love (John 13:8-9). This is evidenced,

1. In the strivings against his law. How many men imply by their lives, that they would have God deposed from his government, and some unrighteous being step into his throne; as if God had or should change his laws of holiness into laws of licentiousness: as if he should abrogate his old eternal precepts, and enact contrary ones in their stead? What is the language of such practices, but that they would be God's lawgivers and not his subjects? that he should deal with them according to their own wills, and not according to his righteousness? that they could make a more holy, wise, and righteous law than the law of God? that their imaginations, and not God's righteousness, should be the rule of his doing good to them? (Jeremiah 9:18): "They have

forsaken my law, and walked after the imaginations of their own heart.” When an act is known to be a sin, and the law that forbids it acknowledged to be the law of God, and after this we persist in that which is contrary to it, we tax his wisdom as if he did not understand what was convenient for us; “we would teach God knowledge;” [Note: Job 21:22.] it is an implicit wish that God had laid aside the holiness of his nature, and framed a law to pleasure our lusts. When God calls for weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth upon approaching judgments, then the corrupt heart is for joy and gladness, eating of flesh and drinking of wine, because to-morrow they should die; [Note: Isaiah 22:12-13.] as if God had mistaken himself when he ordered them so much sorrow, when their lives were so near an end; and had lost his understanding when he ordered such a precept: disobedience is therefore called contention (Romans 2:8): “Contentious, and obey not the truth:” contention against God, whose truth it is that they disobey; a dispute with him, which hath more of wisdom in itself, and conveniency for them, his truth of their imaginations. The more the love, goodness, and holiness of God appears in any command, the more are we naturally averse from it, and cast an imputation on him, as if he were foolish, unjust, cruel, and that we could have advised and directed him better. The goodness of God is eminent to us in appointing a day for his own worship, wherein we might converse with him, and he with us, and our souls be refreshed with spiritual communications from him; and we rather use it for the ease of our bodies, than the advancement of our souls, as if God were mistaken and injured his creature, when he urged the spiritual part of duty. Every disobedience to the law is an implicit giving law to him, and a charge against him that he might have provided better for his creature.

2. In disapproving the methods of God’s government of the world. If the counsels of Heaven roll not about according to their schemes, instead of adoring the unsearchable depths of his judgments, they call him to the bar, and accuse him, because they are not fitted to their narrow vessels, as if a nut-shell could contain an ocean. As corrupt reason esteems the highest truths foolishness, so it counts the most righteous ways unequal. Thus we commence a suit against God., as though he had not acted righteously and wisely, but must give an account of his proceedings at our tribunal. This is to make ourselves God’s superiors, and resume to instruct him better in the government of the world; as though God hindered himself and the world, in not making us of his privy council, and not ordering his affairs according to the contrivances of our dim understandings. Is not this manifest in our immoderate complaints of God’s dealings with his church, as though there were a coldness in God’s affections to his church, and a glowing heat towards it only in us? Hence are those importunate desires for things which are not established by any promise, as though we would overrule and over persuade God to comply with our humor. We have an ambition to be God’s tutors and direct him in his counsels: “Who hath been his counsellor?” saith the apostle. [Note: Romans 11:34.] Who ought not to be his counsellor? saith corrupt nature. Men will find fault with God in what he suffers to be done according to their own minds, when they feel the bitter fruit of it. When Cain had killed his brother, and his conscience racked him, how saucily and discontentedly doth he answer God! (Genesis 4:9), “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Since thou dost own thyself the rector of the world, thou shouldst have preserved his person from my fury; since thou dost accept his sacrifice before my offering, preservation was due as well as acceptance. If this temper be found on earth, no wonder it is lodged in hell. That deplorable person under the sensible stroke of God’s sovereign justice, would oppose his nay to God’s will (Luke 16:30): “And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead they will repent.” He would presume to prescribe more effectual means than

Moses and the prophets, to inform men of the danger they incurred by their sensuality. David was displeased, it is said (2 Samuel 6:8), when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, not with Uzzah, who was the object of his pity, but with God, who was the inflicter of that punishment. When any of our friends have been struck with a rod, against our sentiments and wishes, have not our hearts been apt to swell in complaints against God, as though he disregarded the goodness of such a person, did not see with our eyes, and measure him by our esteem of him? as if he should have asked our counsel, before he had resolved, and managed himself according, to our will, rather than his own. If he be patient to the wicked, we are apt to tax his holiness, and accuse him as an enemy to his own law. If he inflict severity upon the righteous, we are ready to suspect his goodness, and charge him to be an enemy to his affectionate creature. If he spare the Nimrods of the world, we are ready to ask, "Where is the God of judgment?" [Note: Malachi 2:17.] If he afflict the pillars of the earth, we are ready to question, where is the God of mercy? It is impossible, since the depraved nature of man, and the various interests and passions in the world, that infinite power and wisdom can act righteously for the good of the universe, but he will shake some corrupt interest or other upon the earth; so various are the inclinations of men, and such a weather-cock judgment hath every man in himself, that the divine method he applauds this day, upon a change of his interest, he will cavil at the next. It is impossible for the just orders of God to please the same person many weeks, scarce many minutes together. God must cease to be God, or to be holy, if he should manage the concerns of the world according to the fancies of men. How unreasonable is it thus to impose laws upon God! Must God revoke his own orders? govern according to the dictates of his creature? Must God, who hath only power and wisdom to sway the sceptre, become the obedient subject of every man's humor, and manage everything to serve the design of a simple creature? This is not to be God, but to set the creature in his throne: though this be not formally done, yet that it is interpretatively and practically done, is every hour's experience.

3. In impatience in our particular concerns. It is ordinary with man to charge God in his complaints in the time of affliction. Therefore it is the commendation the Holy Ghost gives to Job (Job 1:22), that in all this, that is, in those many waves that rolled over him, he did not charge God foolishly, he never spake nor thought anything unworthy of the majesty and righteousness of God; yet afterwards we find him warping; he nicknames the affliction to be God's oppression of him, and no act of his goodness (Job 10:3): "Is it good for thee, that thou shouldst oppress?" He seems to charge God with injustice, for punishing him when he was not wicked, for which he appeals to God: "Thou knowest that I am not wicked" (Job 10:7), and that God acted not like a Creator (Job 10:8). If our projects are disappointed, what fretfulness against God's management are our hearts racked with! How do uncomely passions bubble upon us, interpretatively at least wishing that the arms of his power had been bound, and the eye of his omniscience been hoodwinked, that we might have been left to our own liberty and designs? and this oftentimes when we have more reason to bless him than repine at him. The Israelites murmured more against God in the wilderness, with manna in their mouths, than they did at Pharaoh in the brick-kilns, with their garlic and onions between their teeth. Though we repine at instruments in our afflictions, yet God counts it a reflection upon himself. The Israelites speaking against Moses, was, in God's interpretation, a rebellion against himself: [Note: Numbers 16:41, compared with Numbers 17:10.] and rebellion is always a desire of imposing laws and conditions upon those against whom the rebellion is raised. The sottish dealings of the vine-dressers in Franconia with the statue of St. Urban, the protector of the vines, upon his own day, is an emblem of our dealing with God: if it be a clear day and portend

a prosperous vintage, they honor the statue and drink healths to it; if it be a rainy day, and presage a scantiness, they daub it with dirt in indignation. We cast out our mire and dirt against God when he acts cross to our wishes, and flatter him when the wind of his providence joins itself to the tide of our interest. Men set a high price upon themselves, and are angry God values them not at the same rate, as if their judgment concerning themselves were more piercing than his. This is to disannul God's judgment, and condemn him and count ourselves righteous, as 'tis Job 40:8. This is the epidemical disease of human nature; they think they deserve caresses instead of rods, and upon crosses are more ready to tear out the heart of God, than reflect humbly upon their own hearts. When we accuse God, we applaud ourselves, and make ourselves his superiors, intimating that we have acted more righteously to him than he to us, which is the highest manner of imposing laws upon him; as that emperor accused the justice of God for snatching him out of the world too soon. [Note: Cœlum suspiciens vitam, &c. Vita Titi. c. 10.] What a high piece of practical atheism is this, to desire that infinite wisdom should be guided by our folly, and asperse the righteousness of God rather than blemish our own! Instead of silently submitting to his will and adoring his wisdom, we declaim against him, as an unwise and unjust governor: we would invert his order, make him the steward and ourselves the proprietors of what we are and have: we deny ourselves to be sinners, and our mercies to be forfeited.

4. It is evidenced in envying the gifts and prosperities of others. Envy hath a deep tincture of practical atheism, and is a cause of atheism. [Note: Because wicked men flourish in the world. Solicitor nullos esse putare Deos.] We are unwilling to leave God to be the proprietor and do what he will with his own, and as a Creator to do what he pleases with his creatures. We assume a liberty to direct God what portions, when and how, he should bestow upon his creatures. We would not let him choose his own favorites, and pitch upon his own instruments for his glory; as if God should have asked counsel of us how he should dispose of his benefits. We are unwilling to leave to his wisdom the management of his own judgments to the wicked, and the dispensation of his own love to ourselves. This temper is natural: it is as ancient as the first age of the world. Adam envied God a felicity by himself, and would not spare a tree that he had reserved as a mark of his sovereignty. The passion that God had given Cain to employ against his sin, he turns against his Creator. He was wroth with God and with Abel; [Note: Genesis 4:5.] but envy was at the root, because his brother's sacrifice was accepted and his refused. How could he envy his accepted person, without reflecting upon the Acceptor of his offering? Good men have not been free from it. Job questions the goodness of God, that he should shine upon the counsel of the wicked (Job 10:3). Jonah had too much of self, in fearing to be counted a false prophet, when he came with absolute denunciations of wrath; [Note: Jonah 4:2.] and when he could not bring a volley of destroying judgments upon the Ninevites, he would shoot his fury against his Master, envying those poor people the benefit, and God the honor of his mercy; and this after he had been sent into the whale's belly to learn humiliation, which, though he exercised there, yet those two great branches of self-pride and envy were not lopped off from him in the belly of hell; and God was fain to take pains with him, and by a gourd scarce makes him ashamed of his peevishness. Envy is not like to cease till all atheism be cashiered, and that is in heaven. This sin is an imitation of the devil, whose first sin upon earth was envy, as his first sin in heaven was pride. It is a wishing that to ourselves, which the devil asserted as his right, to give the kingdoms of the world to whom he pleased: [Note: Luke 4:6.] it is an anger with God, because he hath not given us a patent for government. It utters the same language in disparagement of God, as Absalom did in reflection on

his father: If I were king in Israel, justice should be better managed; if I were Lord of the world, there should be more wisdom to discern the merits of men, and more righteousness in distributing to them their several portions. Thus we impose laws upon God, and would have the righteousness of his will submit to the corruptions of ours, and have him lower himself to gratify our minds, rather than fulfil his own. We charge the Author of those gifts with injustice, that he hath not dealt equally; or with ignorance, that he hath mistook his mark. In the same breath that we censure him by our peevishness, we would guide him by our wills. This is an unreasonable part of atheism. If all were in the same state and condition, the order of the world would be impaired. Is God bound to have a care of thee, and neglect all the world besides? "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?" [Note: Job 18:4.] Joseph had reason to be displeased with his brothers, if they had muttered because he gave Benjamin a double portion, and the rest a single. It was unfit that they, who had deserved no gift at all, should prescribe him rules how to dispense his own doles; much more unworthy it is to deal so with God; yet this is too rife.

5. It is evidenced in corrupt matter or ends of prayer and praise. When we are importunate for those things that we know not whether the righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of God can grant, because he hath not discovered his will in any promise to bestow them, we would then impose such conditions on God, which he never obliged himself to grant; when we pray for things not so much to glorify God, which ought to be the end of prayer, as to gratify ourselves. We acknowledge, indeed, by the act of petitioning, that there is a God; but we would have him ungod himself to be at our beck, and debase himself to serve our turns. When we desire those things which are repugnant to those attributes whereby he doth manage the government of the world; when, by some superficial services, we think we have gained indulgence to sins, which seems to be the thought of the strumpet, in her paying her vows, to wallow more freely in the mire of her sensual pleasures—"I have peace-offerings with me; this day I have paid my vows, I have made my peace with God, and have entertainment for thee;" [Note: Proverbs 7:14.] or when men desire God to bless them in the commission of some sin, as when Balak and Balaam offered sacrifices, that they might prosper in the cursing of the Israelites (Numbers 25:1, &c.) So for a man to pray to God to save him, while he neglects the means of salvation appointed by God, or to renew him when he slights the word, the only instrument to that purpose; this is to impose laws upon God, contrary to the declared will and wisdom of God, and to desire him to slight his own institutions. When we come into the presence of God with lusts reeking in our hearts, and leap from sin to duty. we would impose the law of our corruption on the holiness of God. While we pray "the will of God may be done," self-love wishes its own will may be performed, as though God should serve our humors, when we will not obey his precepts. And when we make vows under any affliction, what is it often but a secret contrivance to bend and flatter him to our conditions? We will serve him if he will restore us; we think thereby to compound the business with him, and bring him down to our terms.

6. It is evidenced in positive and bold interpretations of the judgments of God in the world. To interpret the judgments of God to the disadvantage of the sufferer, unless it be an unusual judgment, and have a remarkable hand of God in it, and the sin be rendered plainly legible in the affliction, is a. presumption of this nature. When men will judge the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices, greater sinners than others, and themselves righteous, because no drops of it were dashed upon them; or when Shimei, being of the house of Saul, shall judge according to his own interest, and desires David's flight upon Absalom's rebellion to be a

punishment for invading the rights of Saul's family, and depriving him of the succession in the kingdom, [Note: 2 Samuel 16:5.] as if he had been of God's privy council, when he decreed such acts of justice in the world. Thus we would fasten our own wills as a law or motive upon God, and interpret his acts according to the motions of self. Is it not too ordinary, when God sends an affliction upon those that bear ill-will to us, to judge it to be a righting of our cause, to be a fruit of God's concern for us in revenging our wrongs, as if we "had heard the secrets of God," or, as Eliphaz saith, "had turned over the records of heaven?" (Job 15:8.) This is a judgment according to self-love, not a divine rule; and imposeth laws upon heaven, implying a secret wish that God would take care only of them, make our concerns his own, not in ways of kindness and justice, but according to our fancies; and this is common in the profane world, in those curses they so readily spit out upon any affront, as if God were bound to draw his arrows and shoot them into the heart of all their offenders at their beck and pleasure.

7. It is evidenced, in mixing rules for the worship of God with those which have been ordered by him. Since men are most prone to live by sense, it is no wonder that a sensible worship, which affects their outward sense with some kind of amazement, is dear to them, and spiritual worship most loathsome. Pompous rites have been the great engine wherewith the devil hath deceived the souls of men, and wrought them to a nauseating the simplicity of divine worship, as unworthy the majesty and excellency of God. [Note: 2 Corinthians 11:3.] Thus the Jews would not understand the glory of the second temple in the presence of the Messiah, because it had not the pompous grandeur of that of Solomon's erecting. Hence in all ages men have been forward to disfigure God's models, and dress up a brat of their own; as though God had been defective in providing for his own honor in his institutions, without the assistance of his creature. This hath always been in the world; the old world had their imaginations, and the new world hath continued them. The Israelites in the midst of miracles, and under the memory of a famous deliverance, would erect a calf. The Pharisees, that sate in Moses' chair, would coin new traditions, and enjoin them to be as current as the law of God. [Note: Matthew 13:6.] Papists will be blending the christian appointments with pagan ceremonies, to please the carnal fancies of the common people. "Altars have been multiplied" under the knowledge of the law of God. [Note: Hosea 8:12.] Interest is made the balance of the conveniency of God's injunctions. Jeroboam fitted a worship to politic ends, and posted up calves to prevent his subjects revolting from his sceptre, which might be occasioned by their resort to Jerusalem, and converse with the body of the people from whom they were separated. [Note: 1 Kings 12:27.] Men will be putting in their own dictates with God's laws, and are unwilling he should be the sole Governor of the world without their counsel; they will not suffer him to be Lord of that which is purely and solely his concern. How often hath the practice of the primitive church, the custom wherein we are bred, the sentiments of our ancestors, been owned as a more authentic rule in matters of worship, than the mind of God delivered in his Word! It is natural by creation to worship God; and it is as natural by corruption for man to worship him in a human way, and not in a divine; is not this to impose laws upon God, to esteem ourselves wiser than he? to think him negligent of his own service, and that our feeble brains can find out ways to accommodate his honor, better than himself hath done? Thus do men for the most part equal their own imaginations to God's oracles: as Solomon built a high place to Moloch and Chemoch, upon the Mount of Olives, to face on the east part Jerusalem and the temple; [Note: 1 Kings 11:7.] this is not only to impose laws on God, but also to make self the standard of them.

8. It is evidenced, in suiting interpretations of Scripture to their own minds and humors. Like the Lacedæmonians, that dressed the images of their gods according to the fashion of their own country, we would wring Scripture to serve our own designs, and judge the law of God by the law of sin, and make the serpentine seed in us to be the interpreter of divine oracles: this is like Belshazzar to drink healths out of the sacred vessels. As God is the author of his law and word, so he is the best interpreter of it; the Scripture having an impress of divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness, must be regarded according to that impress, with a submission and meekness of spirit and reverence of God in it; but when, in our inquiries into the word, we inquire not of God, but consult flesh and blood, the temper of the times wherein we live, or the satisfaction of a party we side withal, and impose glosses upon it according to our own fancies, it is to put laws upon God, and make self the rule of him. He that interprets the law to bolster up some eager appetite against the will of the lawgiver, ascribes to himself as great an authority as he that enacted it.

9. In falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will grateth upon us, and crosseth ours. They will walk with him as far as he pleaseth them, and leave him upon the first distaste, as though God must observe their humors more than they his will. Amos must be suspended from prophesying, because the "land could not bear his words," and his discourses condemned their unworthy practices against God. [Note: Amos 7:10.] The young man came not to receive directions from our Saviour, but expected a confirmation of his own rules, rather than an imposition of new. [Note: Mark 10:17; Mark 10:22.] He rather cares for commendations than instructions, and upon the disappointment turns his back; "he was sad," that Christ would not suffer him to be rich, and a Christian together; and leaves him because his command was not suitable to the law of his covetousness. Some truths that are at a further distance from us, we can hear gladly; but when the conscience begins to smart under others, if God will not observe our wills, we will, with Herod, be a law to ourselves. [Note: Mark 6:20; Mark 6:27.] More instances might be observed.—Ingratitude is a setting up self, and an imposing laws on God. It is as much as to say, God did no more than he was obliged to do; as if the mercies we have were an act of duty in God, and not of bounty.—Insatiable desires after wealth: hence are those speeches (James 4:13), "We will go into such a city, and buy and sell, &c. to get gain;" as though they had the command of God, and God must lacquey after their wills. When our hearts are not contented with any supply of our wants, but are craving an overplus for our lust; when we are unsatisfied in the midst of plenty, and still like the grave, cry, Give, give.—Incorrigibleness under affliction, &c.

II. The second main thing: As man would be a law to himself, so he would be his own end and happiness in opposition to God. Here four things shall be discoursed on. 1. Man would make himself his own end and happiness. 2. He would make anything his end and happiness rather than God. 3. He would make himself the end of all creatures. 4. He would make himself the end of God.

First, Man would make himself his own end and happiness. As God ought to be esteemed the first cause, in point of our dependence on him, so he ought to be our last end, in point of our enjoyment of him. When we therefore trust in ourselves, we refuse him as the first cause; and when we act for ourselves, and expect a blessedness from ourselves, we refuse him as the chiefest good, and last end, which is an undeniable piece of atheism; for man is a creature of a higher rank than others in the world, and was not made as animals, plants, and other works of the divine power, materially to glorify God, but a rational creature, intentionally to honor God by obedience to his rule, dependence on his goodness, and zeal for his glory. It is, therefore, as much a slighting of God, for

man, a creature, to set himself up as his own end, as to regard himself as his own law. For the discovery of this, observe that there is a three-fold self-love.

1. Natural, which is common to us by the law of nature with other creatures, inanimate as well as animate, and so closely twisted with the nature of every creature, that it cannot be dissolved but with the dissolution of nature itself. It consisted not with the wisdom and goodness of God to create an unnatural nature, or to command anything unnatural, nor doth he; for when he commands us to sacrifice ourselves, and dearest lives for himself, it is not without a promise of a more noble state of being in exchange for what we lose. This self-love is not only commendable, but necessary, as a rule to measure that duty we owe to our neighbor, whom we cannot love as ourselves, if we do not first love ourselves. God having planted this self-love in our nature, makes this natural principle the measure of our affection to all mankind of the same blood with ourselves.

2. Carnal self-love: when a man loves himself above God, in opposition to God, with a contempt of God; when our thoughts, affections, designs, centre only in our own fleshly interest, and rifle God of his honor, to make a present of it to ourselves: thus the natural self-love, in itself good, becomes criminal by the excess, when it would be superior and not subordinate to God.

3. A gracious self-love: when we love ourselves for higher ends than the nature of a creature, as a creature dictates, viz. in subserviency to the glory of God. This is a reduction of the revolted creature to his true and happy order; a Christian is therefore said to be "created in Christ to good works." [Note: Ephesians 1:10.] As all creatures were created, not only for themselves, but for the honor of God; so the grace of the new creation carries a man to answer this end, and to order all his operations to the honor of God, and his well-pleasing. The first is from nature, the second from sin, the third from grace; the first is implanted by creation, the second the fruit of corruption, and the third is by the powerful operation of grace. This carnal self love is set up in the stead of God as our last end; like the sea, which all the little and great streams of our actions run to and rest in. And this Isaiah 1:1-31. Natural. It sticks as close to us as our souls; it is as natural as sin, the foundation of all the evil in the world. As self-aborrancy is the first stone that is laid in conversion, so an inordinate self-love was the first inlet to all iniquity. As grace is a rising from self to centre in God, so is sin a shrinking from God into the mire of a carnal selfishness; since every creature is nearest to itself and next to God, it cannot fall from God, but must immediately sink into self; [Note: More, Dial. 2. § 17. p. 274.] and, therefore, all sins are well said to be branches or modifications of this fundamental passion. What is wrath, but a defence and strengthening self against the attempts of some real or imaginary evil? Whence springs envy, but from a self-love, grieved at its own wants in the midst of another's enjoyment, able to supply it? What is impatience, but a regret that self is not provided for at the rate of our wish, and that it hath met with a shock against supposed merit? What is pride, but a sense of self-worth, a desire to have self of a higher elevation than others? What is drunkenness, but a seeking a satisfaction for sensual self in the spoils of reason? No sin is committed as sin, but as it pretends a self-satisfaction. Sin, indeed, may well be termed a man's self, because it is, since the loss of original righteousness, the form that overspreads every part of our souls. The understanding assents to nothing false but under the notion of true, and the will embraceth nothing evil but under the notion of good; but the rule whereby we measure the truth and goodness of proposed objects, is not the unerring Word, but the inclinations of self, the gratifying of which is the aim of our whole lives. Sin and self are all one: what is called a living to sin in one place, [Note: Romans 6:1-23.] is called a living to self in

another: "That they that live should not live unto themselves." [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15.] And upon this account it is that both the Hebrew word, חָטָא, and the Greek word, ἡμαρτανεῖν, used in Scripture to express sin, properly signify to miss the mark, and swerve from that white to which all our actions should be directed, viz. the glory of God. When we fell to loving ourselves, we fell from loving God; and, therefore, when the Psalmist saith (Psalms 14:2), there were none that sought God, viz. as the last end; he presently adds, "They are all gone aside," viz. from their true mark, and therefore become filthy. 2. Since it is natural, it is also universal. [Note: Psalms 14:1.] The not seeking God is as universal as our ignorance of him. No man in a state of nature but hath it predominant; no renewed man on this side heaven but hath it partially. The one hath it flourishing, the other hath it struggling. If to aim at the glory of God as the chief end, and not to live to ourselves, be the greatest mark of the restoration of the divine image, [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15] and a conformity to Christ, who glorified not himself, [Note: Hebrews 1:5.] but the Father; [Note: John 17:4.] then every man, wallowing in the mire of corrupt nature, pays a homage to self, as a renewed man is biassed by the honor of God. The Holy Ghost excepts none from this crime (Php 2:21): "All seek their own." It is rare for them to look above or beyond themselves. Whatsoever may be the immediate subject of their thoughts and inquiries, yet the utmost end and stage is their profit, honor, or pleasure. Whatever it be that immediately possesses the mind and will, self sits like a queen, and sways the sceptre, and orders things at that rate, that God is excluded, and can find no room in all his thoughts (Psalms 10:4): "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts." The whole little world of man is so overflowed with a deluge of self, that the dove, the glory of the Creator, can find no place where to set its foot; and if ever it gain the favor of admittance, it is to disguise and be a vassal to some carnal project, as the glory of God was a mask for the murdering his servants. It is from the power of this principle that the difficulty of conversion ariseth: as there is no greater pleasure to a believing soul than the giving itself up to God, and no stronger desire in him, than to have a fixed and unchangeable will to serve the designs of his honor; so there is no greater torment to a wicked man, than to part with his carnal ends, and lay down the Dagon of self at the feet of the ark. Self love and self-opinion in the Pharisees waylaid all the entertainment of truth (John 5:44): "They sought honor one of another, and not the honor which comes from God." It is of so large an extent, and so insinuating nature, that it winds itself into the exercise of moral virtues, mixeth with our charity (Matthew 6:2), and finds nourishment in the ashes of martyrdom (1 Corinthians 13:3). This making ourselves our end will appear in a few things.

1. In frequent self-applauses, and inward overweening reflections. Nothing more ordinary in the natures of men, than a dotage on their own perfections, acquisitions, or actions in the world: "Most think of themselves above what they ought to think" (Romans 12:3-4.) Few think of themselves so meanly as they ought to think: this sticks as close to us as our skin; and as humility is the beauty of grace, this is the filthiest soil of nature. Our thoughts run more delightfully upon the track of our own perfections, than the excellency of God; and when we find anything of a seeming worth, that may make us glitter in the eyes of the world, how cheerfully do we grasp and embrace ourselves! When the grosser profanenesses of men have been discarded, and the floods of them dammed up, the head of corruption, whence they sprang, will swell the higher within, in self-applauding speculations of their own reformation, without acknowledgment of their own weaknesses, and desires of divine assistance to make a further progress. "I thank God I am not like this publican;" [Note: Luke 18:11.] a self-reflection, with a contempt rather than compassion to his neighbor, is

frequent in every Pharisee. The vapors of self-affections, in our clouded understandings, like those in the air in misty mornings, alter the appearance of things, and make them look bigger than they are. This is thought by some to be the sin of the fallen angels, who, reflecting upon their own natural excellency superior to other creatures, would find a blessedness in their own nature, as God did in his, and make themselves the last end of their actions. It is from this principle we are naturally so ready to compare ourselves rather with those that are below us, than with those that are above us; and often think those that are above us inferior to us, and secretly glory that we are become none of the meanest and lowest in natural or moral excellencies. How far were the gracious penmen of the Scripture from this, who, when possessed and directed by the Spirit of God, and filled with a sense of him, instead of applauding themselves, publish upon record their own faults to all the eyes of the world! And if Peter, as some think, dictated the Gospel which Mark wrote as his amanuensis, it is observable that his crime in denying his Master is aggravated in that Gospel in some circumstances, and less spoken of his repentance than in the other evangelists: "When he thought thereon, he wept;" [Note: Mark 14:72.] but in the other, "He went out and wept bitterly." [Note: Matthew 26:75, Luke 22:2.] This is one part of atheism and self-idolatry, to magnify ourselves with the forgetfulness, and to the injury of our Creator.

2. In ascribing the glory of what we do or have to ourselves, to our own wisdom, power, virtue, &c. How flaunting is Nebuchadnezzar at the prospect of Babylon, which he had exalted to be the head of so great an empire! (Daniel 4:30): "Is not this great Babylon that I have built? For," &c. He struts upon the battlements of his palace, as if there were no God but himself in the world, while his eye could not but see the heavens above him to be none of his own framing, attributing his acquisitions to his own arm, and referring them to his own honor, for his own delight; not for the honor of God, as a creature ought, nor for the advantage of his subjects, as the duty of a prince. He regards Babylon as his heaven, and himself as his idol, as if he were all, and God nothing. An example of this we have in the present age. But it is often observed, that God vindicates his own honor, brings the most heroical men to contempt and unfortunate ends, as a punishment of their pride, as he did here (Daniel 4:31): "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven," &c. This was Herod's crime, to suffer others to do it: [Note: Sanderson's Sermons.] he had discovered his eloquence actively, and made himself his own end passively, in approving the flatteries of the people, and offered not with one hand to God the glory he received from his people with the other. [Note: Acts 12:22-23.] Samosatenus is reported to put down the hymns which were sung for the glory of God and Christ, and caused songs to be sung in the temple for his own honor. When anything succeeds well, we are ready to attribute it to our own prudence and industry: if we meet with a cross, we fret against the stars and fortune, and second causes, and sometimes against God: as they curse God as well as their king (Isaiah 8:21), not acknowledging any defect in themselves. The Psalmist, by his repetition of, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory" (Psalms 115:1), implies the naturality of this temper, and the difficulty to cleanse our hearts from those self-reflections. If it be angelical to refuse an undue glory stolen from God's throne (Revelation 22:8-9), it is diabolical to accept and cherish it. To seek our own glory is not glory (Proverbs 25:27). It is vile, and the dishonor of a creature, who by the law of his creation is referred to another end. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract from God.

3. In desires to have self-pleasing doctrines. When we cannot endure to hear anything that crosses the flesh; though the wise man tells us, it is better to hear the “rebuke of the wise, than the song of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:5). If Hanani the seer reprove king Asa for not relying on the Lord, his passion shall be armed for self against the prophet, and arrest him a prisoner (2 Chronicles 16:10). If Micaiah declare to Ahab the evil that shall befall him, Amon the governor shall receive orders to clap him up in a dungeon. Fire doth not sooner seize upon combustible matter than fury will be kindled, if self be but pinched. This interest of lustful self barred the heart of Herodias against the entertainment of the truth, and caused her savagely to dip her hands in the blood of the Baptist, to make him a sacrifice to that inward idol. [Note: Mark 6:18-19; Mark 6:28.]

4. In being highly concerned for injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God. How will the blood rise in us, when our honor and reputation is invaded, and scarce reflect upon the dishonor God suffers in our sight and hearing! Violent passions will transform us into Boanerges in the one case, and our unconcernedness render us Gallios in the other. We shall extenuate that which concerns God, and aggravate that which concerns ourselves. Nothing but the death of Jonathan, a first-born and a generous son, will satisfy his father Saul, when the authority of his edict was broken by his tasting of honey, though he had recompensed his crime committed in ignorance by the purchase of a gallant victory. But when the authority of God was violated in saving the Amalekites’ cattle, against the command of a greater sovereign than himself, he can daub the business, and excuse it with a design of sacrificing. He was not so earnest in hindering the people from the breach of God’s command, as he was in vindicating the honor of his own: [Note: 1 Samuel 15:21.] he could hardly admit of an excuse to save his own honor; but in the concerns of God’s honor, pretend piety, to cloak his avarice. And it is often seen, when the violation of God’s authority, and the stain of our own reputation are coupled together, we are more troubled for what disgraces us than for what dishonors God. When Saul had thus transgressed, he is desirous that Samuel would turn again to preserve his own honor before the elders, rather than grieved that he had broken the command of God (1 Samuel 15:30).

5. In trusting in ourselves. When we consult with our own wit and wisdom, more than inquire of God, and ask leave of him: as the Assyrian (Isaiah 10:13), “By the strength of my hands I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent.” When we attempt things in the strength of our own heads, and parts, and trust in our own industry, without application to God for direction, blessing, and success, we affect the privilege of the Deity, and make gods of ourselves. The same language in reality with Ajax in Sophocles: “Others think to overcome with the assistance of the gods, but I hope to gain honor without them.” Dependence and trust is an act due from the creature only to God. Hence God aggravates the crime of the Jews in trusting in Egypt (Isaiah 31:3), “the Egyptians are men and not gods.” Confidence in ourselves is a defection from God (Jeremiah 17:5). And when we depart from and cast off God to depend upon ourselves, which is but an arm of flesh, we choose the arm of flesh for our God; we rob God of that confidence we ought to place in him, and that adoration which is due to him, and build it upon another foundation; not that we are to neglect the reason and parts God hath given us, or spend more time in prayer than in consulting about our own affairs, but to mix our own intentions in business, with ejaculations to heaven, and take God along with us in every motion: but certainly it is an idolizing of self, when we are more diligent in our attendance on our own wit, than fervent in our recourses to God.

6. The power of sinful self, above the efficacy of the notion of God, is evident in our workings for carnal self against the light of our own consciences. When men of sublime reason, and clear natural wisdom, are voluntary slaves to their own lusts, row against the stream of their own consciences, serve carnal self with a disgraceful and disturbing drudgery, making it their God, sacrificing natural self, all sentiments of virtue, and the quiet of their lives, to the pleasure, honor, and satisfaction of carnal self: this is a prostituting God in his deputy, conscience, to carnal affections, when their eyes are shut against the enlightenings of it, and their ears deaf to its voice, but open to the least breath and whisper of self; a debt that the creature owes supremely to God. Much more might be said, but let us see what atheism lurks in this, and how it entrencheth upon God.

1. It is usurping God's prerogative. It is God's prerogative to be his own end, and act for his own glory; because there is nothing superior to him in excellency and goodness to act for: he had not his being from anything without himself, whereby he should be obliged to act for anything but himself. To make ourselves then our last end, is to corrival God in his being the supreme good, and blessedness to himself: as if we were our own principle, the author of our own being, and were not obliged to a higher power than ourselves, for what we are and have. To direct the lines of all our motions to ourselves, is to imply that they first issued only from ourselves. When we are rivals to God in his chief end, we own or desire to be rivals to him in the principle of his being: this is to set ourselves in the place of God. All things have something without them, and above them as their end; all inferior creatures act for some superior order in the rank of creation; the lesser animals are designed for the greater, and all for man: man, therefore, for something nobler than himself. To make ourselves therefore our own end, is to deny any, superior, to whom we are to direct our actions. God alone being the supreme Being, can be his own ultimate end: for if there were anything higher and better than God, the purity and righteousness of his own nature would cause him to act for and toward that as his chiefest mark: this is the highest sacrilege, to alienate the proper good and rights of God, and employ them for our own use; to steal from him his own honor, and put it into our own cabinets; like those birds that ravished the sacrifice from the altar and carried it to their own nests. [Note: Sabunde, Tit. 140.] When we love only ourselves, and act for no other end but ourselves, we invest ourselves with the dominion which is the right of God, and take the crown from his head. For as the crown belongs to the king, so to love his own will, to will by his own will and for himself, is the property of God; because he hath no other will, no other end above him to be the rule and scope of his actions. When therefore we are by self-love transformed wholly into ourselves, we make ourselves our own foundation, without God and against God; when we mind our own glory and praise, we would have a royal state equal with God, who created all things for himself. [Note: Proverbs 16:4.] What can man do more for God than he naturally doth for himself, since he doth all those things for himself which he should do for God? We own ourselves to be our own creators and benefactors, and fling off all sentiments of gratitude to him.

2. It is a vilifying of God. When we make ourselves our end, it is plain language that God is not our happiness; we postpone God to ourselves, as if he were not an object so excellent and fit for our love as ourselves are (for it is irrational to make that our end, which is not God, and not the chiefest good); it is to deny him to be better than we, to make him not to be so good as ourselves, and so fit to be our chiefest good as ourselves are; that he hath not deserved any such

acknowledgment at our hands by all that he hath done for us: we assert ourselves his superiors by such kind of acting, though we are infinitely more inferior to God than any creature can be to us. Man cannot dishonor God more than by referring that to his own glory, which God made for his own praise, upon account whereof he only hath a right to glory and praise, and none else. He thus “changeth the glory of the incorruptible God into a corruptible image;” [Note: Romans 1:23.] a perishing fame and reputation, which extends but little beyond the limits of his own habitation; or if it doth, survives but a few years, and perishes at last with the age wherein he lived.

3. It is as much as in us lies a destroying of God. By this temper we destroy that God that made us, because we destroy his intention and his honor. God cannot outlive his will and his glory: because he cannot have any other rule but his own will, or any other end but his own honor. The setting up self as our end puts a nullity upon the true Deity; by paying to ourselves that respect and honor which is due to God, we make the true God as no God. Whosoever makes himself a king of his prince's rights and territories, manifests an intent to throw him out of his government. To choose ourselves as our end is to undeify God, since to be the last end of a rational creature is a right inseparable from the nature of the Deity; and therefore not to set God, but self always before us, is to acknowledge no being but ourselves to be God.

Secondly. The second thing, Man would make anything his end and happiness rather than God. An end is so necessary in all our actions, that he deserves not the name of a rational creature that proposeth not one to himself. This is the distinction between rational creatures and others; they act with a formal intention, whereas other creatures are directed to their end by a natural instinct, and moved by nature to what the others should be moved by reason: when a man, therefore, acts for that end which was not intended him by the law of his creation, nor is suited to the noble faculties of his soul, he acts contrary to God, overturns his order, and merits no better a title than that of an atheist. A man may be said two ways to make a thing his last end and chief good.

1. Formally. When he actually judges this or that thing to be his chiefest good, and orders all things to it. So man doth not formally judge sin to be good, or any object which is the incentive of sin to be his last end: this cannot be while he hath the exercise of his rational faculties.

2. Virtually and implicitly. When he loves anything against the command of God, and prefers in the stream of his actions the enjoyment of that, before the fruition of God, and lays out more strength and expends more time in the gaining that, than answering the true end of his creation. when he acts so as if something below God could make him happy without God, or that God could not make him happy without the addition of something else. Thus the glutton makes a god of his dainties; the ambitious man of his honor; the incontinent man of his lust; and the covetous man of his wealth; and consequently esteems them as his chiefest good, and the most noble end, to which he directs his thoughts: thus he vilifies and lessens the true God, which can make him happy, in a multitude of false gods, that can only render him miserable. He that loves pleasure more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his pleasure. He that loves his belly more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his belly: their happiness is not accounted to lie in that God that made the world, but in the pleasure or profit they make their god. In this, though a created object be the immediate and subordinate term to which we turn, yet principally and ultimately, the affection to it terminates in self. Nothing is naturally entertained by us, but as it affects our sense or mingles with some promise of advantage to us. This is seen,

1. In the fewer thoughts we have of God than of anything else. Did we apprehend God to be our chiefest good and highest end, should we grudge him the pains of a few days' thoughts upon him? Men in their travels are frequently thinking upon their intended stage: but our thoughts run upon new acquisitions to increase our wealth, rear up our families, revenge our injuries, and support our reputation: trifles possess us; but "God is not in all our thoughts;" [Note: Psalms 10:4.] seldom the sole object of them. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engageth the whole heart to God, and bars anything else from engrossing it: but what strangers are God and the souls of most men! Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relations wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in: hence it is, as one observes, that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with an admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems, than of any other kind. [Note: Jackson, Book I. c. 14, p. 48.] The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God; but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal. [Note: Hosea 2:8.] Like Venus in the Poet, we forsake heaven to follow some Adonis.

2. In the greedy pursuit of the world. [Note: Quod quisque præ cæteris petit, summum judicat bonum. Boet. lib. iii. p. 24.] When we pursue worldly wealth or worldly reputation with more vehemency than the riches of grace, or the favor of God;—when we have a foolish imagination, that our happiness consists in them, we prefer earth before heaven, broken cisterns which can hold no water, before an ever-springing fountain of glory and bliss; and, as though there were a defect in God, cannot be content with him as our portion, without an addition of something inferior to him;—when we make it our hopes, and say to the wedge, "Thou art my confidence;" and rejoice more because it is great, and because "our hand hath gotten much, than in the privilege of communion with God and the promise of an everlasting fruition of him;" [Note: Job 31:24-25.] this is so gross, that Job joins it with the idolatry of the sun and moon, which he purgeth himself of (31:26). And the apostle, when he mentions covetousness or covetous men, passes it not over without the title of idolatry to the vice, and idolater to the person; [Note: Colossians 3:5.] in that it is a preferring clay and dirt as an end more desirable than the original of all goodness, in regard of affection and dependence.

3. In a strong addictedness to sensual pleasures (Php 3:19). Who make their "belly their god;" subjecting the truths of God to the maintenance of their luxury. In debasing the higher faculties to project for the satisfaction of the sensitive appetite as their chief happiness, whereby many render themselves no better than a rout of aublimated brutes among men, and gross atheists to God. When men's thoughts run also upon inventing new methods to satisfy their bestial appetite, forsaking the pleasures which are to be had in God, which are the delights of angels, for the satisfaction of brutes. This is an open and unquestionable refusal of God for our end, when our rest is in them, as if they were the chief good, and not God.

4. In paying a service, upon any success in the world, to instruments more than to God, their sovereign Author. When "they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag." [Note: Habakkuk 1:16.] Not that the Assyrian did offer a sacrifice to his arms, but ascribed to them what was due only to God, and appropriated the victory to his forces and arms. The prophet alludes to those that worshipped their warlike instruments, whereby they had attained great victories; and

those artificers who worshipped the tools by which they had purchased great wealth, in the stead of God; preferring them as the causes of their happiness, before God who governs the world. And are not our affections, upon the receiving of good things, more closely fixed to the instruments of conveyance, than to the chief Benefactor, from whose coffers they are taken? Do we not more delight in them, and hug them with a greater endearedness, as if all our happiness depended on them, and God were no more than a bare spectator? Just as if when a man were warmed by a beam, he should adore that and not admire the sun that darts it out upon him.

5. In paying a respect to man more than God. When in a public attendance on his service, we will not laugh, or be garish, because men see us; but our hearts shall be in a ridiculous posture, playing with feathers and trifling fancies, though God see us; as though our happiness consisted in the pleasing of men, and our misery in a respect to God. There is no fool that saith in his heart, There is no God, but he sets up something in his heart as a god. This is,

1. A debasing of God, (1.) In setting up a creature. It speaks God less amiable than the creature, short of those perfections which some silly, sordid thing, which hath engrossed their affections, is possessed with; as if the cause of all being could be transcended by his creature, and a vile lust could equal, yea, surmount the loveliness of God. It is to say to God, as the rich to the poor (James 2:3), "Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool;" it is to sink him below the mire of the world, to order him to come down from his glorious throne, and take his place below a contemptible creature, which, in regard of its infinite distance, is not to be compared with him. It strips God of the love that is due to him by the right of his nature and the greatness of his dignity; and of the trust that is due to him, as the First Cause and the chiefest good, as though he were too feeble and mean to be our blessedness. This is intolerable, to make that which is God's footstool, the earth, to climb up into his throne; to set that in our heart which God hath made even below ourselves and put under our feet; to make that which we trample upon to dispose of the right God hath to our hearts. [Note: Neremberg de Adorat. p. 30.] It is worse than if a queen should fall in love with the little image of the prince in the palace, and slight the beauty of his person; and as if people should adore the footsteps of a king in the dirt, and turn their backs upon his presence. (2.) It doth more debase him to set up a sin, a lust, a carnal affection as our chief end. To steal away the honor due to God, and appropriate it to that which is no work of his hands, to that which is loathsome in his sight, hath disturbed his rest, and wrung out his just breath to kindle a hell for its eternal lodging, a God-dishonoring and a soul-murdering lust, is worse than to prefer Barabbas before Christ. The baser the thing, the worse is the injury to him with whom we would associate it. If it were some generous principle, a thing useful to the world, that we place in an equality with, or a superiority above him, though it were a vile usage, yet it were not altogether so criminal; but to gratify some unworthy appetite with the displeasure of the Creator, something below the rational nature of man, much more infinitely below the excellent majesty of God, is a more unworthy usage of him. To advance one of the most virtuous nobles in a kingdom as a mark of our service and subjection, is not so dishonorable to a despised prince as to take a scabby beggar or a rotten carcase to place in his throne. Creeping things, abominable beasts, the Egyptian idols, cats and crocodiles, were greater abominations, and a greater despite done to God, than the image of jealousy at the gate of the altar. [Note: Ezekiel 8:5-6; Ezekiel 8:10.] And let not any excuse themselves, that it is but one lust or one creature which is preferred as the end: is not he an idolater that worships the sun or moon, one idol, as well as he that worships the whole host of

heaven? The inordinacy of the heart to one lust may imply a stronger contempt of him, than if a legion of lusts did possess the heart. It argues a greater disesteem, when he shall be slighted for a single vanity. The depth of Esau's profaneness in contemning his birth-right, and God in it, is aggravated by his selling it for one morsel of meat, [Note: Hebrews 12:16.] and that none of the daintiest, none of the costliest—a mess of pottage; implying, had he parted with it at a greater rate, it had been more tolerable, and his profaneness more excusable. And it is reckoned as a high aggravation of the corruption of the Israelite judges (Amos 2:6), that they sold the poor for a pair of shoes; that is, that they would betray the cause of the poor for a bribe of no greater value than might purchase them a pair of shoes. To place any one thing as our chief end, though never so light, doth not excuse. He that will not stick to break with God for a trifle, a small pleasure, will leap the hedge upon a greater temptation. Nay, and if wealth, riches, friends, and the best thing in the world, our own lives, be preferred before God, as our chief happiness and end but one moment, it is an infinite wrong, because the infinite goodness and excellency of God is denied; as though the creature or lust we love, or our own life, which we prefer in that short moment before him, had a goodness in itself, superior to, and more desirable than the blessedness in God. And though it should be but one minute, and a man in all the period of his days, both before and after that failure, should actually and intentionally prefer God before all other things; yet he doth him an infinite wrong, because God in every moment is infinitely good, and absolutely desirable, and can never cease to be good, and cannot have the least shadow or change in him and his perfections.

2. It is a denying of God (Job 31:26-28): "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in its brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the Lord above." This denial of God is not only the act of an open idolater, but the consequent of a secret confidence, and immoderate joy in worldly goods. This denial of God is to be referred to Job 31:24-25. When a man saith to gold, "Thou art my confidence," and rejoices because his wealth is great; he denies that God which is superior to all those, and the proper object of trust. Both idolatries are coupled here together; that which hath wealth and that which hath those glorious creatures in heaven for its object. And though some may think it a light sin, yet the crime being of deeper guilt, a denial of God, deserves a severer punishment, and falls under the sentence of the just Judge of all the earth, under that notion which Job intimates in those words, "This also were an iniquity to be punished by the Judge." The kissing the hand to the sun, moon, or any idol, was an external sign of religious worship among those and other nations. This is far less than an inward hearty confidence, and an affectionate trust. If the motion of the hand be, much more the affection of the heart to an excrementitious creature, or a brutish pleasure, is a denial of God, and a kind of an abjuring of him, since the supreme affection of the soul is undoubtedly and solely the right of the Sovereign Creator, and not to be given in common to others, as the outward gesture may in a way of civil respect. Nothing that is an honor peculiar to God can be given to a creature, without a plain exclusion of God to be God; it being a disowning the rectitude and excellency of his nature. If God should command a creature such a love, and such a confidence in anything inferior to him, he would deny himself his own glory, he would deny himself to be the most excellent being. Can the Romanists be free from this, when they call the cross *spem unicam*, and say to the Virgin, *In te Domina speravi*, as Bonaventure? &c. Good reason, therefore, have worldlings and sensualists, persons of immoderate fondness to anything in the world, to reflect upon themselves; since though they own the being of God, they are guilty of so great disrespect to him, that cannot be excused

from the title of an unworthy atheism; and those that are renewed by the spirit of God, may here see ground of a daily humiliation for the frequent and too common excursions of their souls in creature confidences and affections, whereby they fall under the charge of an act of practical atheism, though they may be free from a habit of it.

Thirdly, Man would make himself the end of all creatures. Man would sit in the seat of God, and set his heart as the heart of God, as the Lord saith of Tyrus (Ezekiel 28:2). What is the consequence of this, but to be esteemed the chief good and end of other creatures? a thing that the heart of God cannot but be set upon, it being an inseparable right of the Deity, who must deny himself if he deny this affection of the heart. Since it is the nature of man, derived from his root, to desire to be equal with God, it follows that he desires no creature should be equal with him, but subservient to his ends and his glory. He that would make himself God, would have the honor proper to God. He that thinks himself worthy of his own supreme affection, thinks himself worthy to be the object of the supreme affection of others. Whosoever counts himself the chiefest good and last end, would have the same place in the thoughts of others. Nothing is more natural to man than a desire to have his own judgment the rule and measure of the judgments and opinions of the rest of mankind. He that sets himself in the place of the prince, doth, by that act, challenge all the prerogatives and dues belonging to the prince; and apprehending himself fit to be a king, apprehends himself also worthy of the homage and fealty of the subjects. He that loves himself chiefly, and all other things and persons for himself, would make himself the end of all creatures. It hath not been once or twice only in the world that some vain princes have assumed to themselves the title of gods, and caused divine adorations to be given to them, and altars to smoke with sacrifices for their honor. What hath been practised by one, is by nature seminally in all; we would have all pay an obedience to us, and give to us the esteem that is due to God. This is evident,

1. In pride. When we entertain a high opinion of ourselves, and act for our own reputes, we dispossess God from our own hearts; and while we would have our fame to be in every man's mouth, and be admired in the hearts of men, we would chase God out of the hearts of others, and deny his glory a residence anywhere else, that our glory should reside more in their minds than the glory of God; that their thoughts should be filled with our achievements, more than the works and excellency of God, with our image, and not with the divine. Pride would paramount God in the affections of others, and juggle God out of their souls; and by the same reason that man doth thus in the place where he lives, he would do so in the whole world, and press the whole creation from the service of their true Lord, to his own service. Every proud man would be counted by others as he counts himself, the highest, chiefest piece of goodness, and be adored by others, as much as he adores and admires himself. No proud man, in his self-love, and self admiration, thinks himself in an error; and if he be worthy of his own admiration, he thinks himself worthy of the highest esteem of others, that they should value him above themselves, and value themselves only for him. What did Nebuchadnezzar intend by setting up a golden image, and commanding all his subjects to worship it, upon the highest penalty he could inflict, but that all should aim only at the pleasing his humor?

2. In using the creatures contrary to the end God has appointed. God created the world and all things in it, as steps whereby men might ascend to a prospect of him, and the acknowledgment of his glory; and we would use them to dishonor God, and gratify ourselves: he appointed them to supply our necessities, and support our rational delights, and we use them to cherish our sinful

lusts. We wring groans from the creature in diverting them from their true scope to one of our own fixing, when we use them not in his service, but purely for our own, and turn those things he created for himself, to be instruments of rebellion against him to serve our turns, and hereby endeavor to defeat the ends of God in them, to establish our own ends by them: this is a high dishonor to God, a sacrilegious undermining of his glory, [Note: Sabunde, Tit. 200. p. 352.] to reduce what God hath made to serve our own glory and our own pleasure; it perverts the whole order of the world, and directs it to another end than what God hath constituted, to another intention contrary to the intention of God; and thus man makes himself a God by his own authority. As all things were made by God, so they are for God; but while we aspire to the end of the creation, we deny and envy God the honor of being Creator; we cannot make ourselves the chief end of the creatures against God's order, but we imply thereby that we were their first principle; for if we lived under a sense of the Creator of them while we enjoy there for our use, we should return the glory to the right owner. This is diabolical; though the devil, for his first affecting an authority in heaven, has been hurled down from the state of an angel of light into that of darkness, vileness, and misery, to be the most accursed creature living, yet he still aspires to mate God, contrary to the knowledge of the impossibility of success in it. Neither the terrors he feels, nor the future torments he doth expect, do a jot abate his ambition to be competitor with his Creator; how often hath he, since his first sin, arrogated to himself the honor of a God from the blind world, and attempted to make the Son of God, by a particular worship, count him as the "chiefest good and benefactor of the world!" [Note: Matthew 4:9.] Since all men by nature are the devil's children, the serpent's seed, they have something of this venom in their natures, as well as others of his qualities. We see that there may be, and is a prodigious atheism, lurking under the belief of a God; the devil knows there is a God, but acts like an atheist; and so do his children.

Fourthly, Man would make himself the end of God. This necessarily follows upon the former; whosoever makes himself his own law and his own end in the place of God, would make God the subject in making himself the sovereign; he that steps into the throne of a prince, sets the prince at his footstool; and while he assumes the prince's prerogative, demands a subjection from him. The order of the creation has been inverted by the entrance of sin. [Note: Pascal, Pens. § 30, p. 294.] God implanted an affection in man with a double aspect, the one to pitch upon God, the other to respect ourselves; but with this proviso, that our affection to God should be infinite, in regard of the object, and centre in him as the chiefest happiness and highest end. Our affections to ourselves should be finite, and refer ultimately to God as the original of our being; but sin hath turned man's affections wholly to himself, whereas he should love God first, and himself in order to God; he now loves himself first, and God in order to himself; love to God is lost, and love to self hath usurped the throne. As God by "creation put all things under the feet of man," [Note: Psalms 8:6.] reserving the heart for himself, man by corruption hath dispossessed God of his heart, and put him under his own feet. We often intend ourselves when we pretend the honor of God, and make God and religion a stale to some designs we have in hand; our Creator a tool for our own ends. This is evident,

1. In our loving God, because of some self-pleasing benefits distributed by him. There is in men a kind of natural love to God, but it is but a secondary one, because God gives them the good things of this world, spreads their table, fills their cup, stuffs their coffers, and doth them some good turns by unexpected providences; this is not an affection to God for the unbounded excellency of his

own nature, but for his beneficence, as he opens his hand for them; an affection to themselves, and those creatures, their gold, their honor, which their hearts are most fixed upon, without a strong spiritual inclination that God should be glorified by them in the use of those mercies. It is rather a disowning of God, than any love to him, because it postpones God to those things they love him for; this would appear to be no love, if God should cease to be their benefactor, and deal with them as a judge; if he should change his outward smiles into afflicting frowns, and not only shut his hand, but strip them of what he sent them. The motive of their love being expired, the affection raised by it must cease for want of fuel to feed it; so that God is beholden to sordid creatures of no value (but as they are his creatures) for most of the love the sons of men pretend to him. The devil spake truth of most men, though not of Job, when he said (Job 1:9): "They love not God for naught;" but while he makes a hedge about them and their families, whilst he blesseth the works of their hands, and increaseth their honor in the land. It is like Peter's sharp reproof of his Master, when he spake of the ill-usage, even to death, he was to meet with at Jerusalem: "This shall not be unto thee." It was as much out of love to himself, as zeal for his Master's interest, knowing his Master could not be in such a storm without some drops lighting upon himself. All the apostasies of men in the world are witnesses to this; they fawn whilst they may have a prosperous profession, but will not bear one chip of the cross for the interest of God; they would partake of his blessings, but not endure the prick of a lance for him, as those, that admired the miracles of our Saviour, and shrunk at his sufferings. A time of trial discovers these mercenary souls to be more lovers of themselves than their Maker. This is a pretended love of friendship to God, but a real love to a lust, only to gain by God. A good man's temper is contrary: "Quench hell, burn heaven," said a holy man, "I will love and fear my God."

2. It is evident, in abstinence from some sins, not because they offend God, but because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption, or a bar to something men hunt after in the world. When temperance is cherished not to honor God, but preserve a crazy carcass; prodigality forsaken, out of a humor of avarice; uncleanness forsaken, not out of a hatred of lust, but love to their money; declining a denial of the interest and truth of God, not out of affection to them, but an ambitious zeal for their own reputation. There is a kind of conversion from sin, when God is not made the term of it (Jeremiah 4:1): "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, saith the Lord." [Note: Trap, on Gen. p. 148.] When we forbear sin as dogs do the meat they love: they forbear not out of a hatred of the carrion, but fear of the cudgel; these are as wicked in their abstaining from sin, as others are in their furious committing it. Nothing of the honor of God and the end of his appointments is indeed in all this, but the conveniences self gathers from them. Again, many of the motives the generality of the world uses to their friends and relations to draw them from vices, are drawn from self, and used to prop up natural or sinful self in them. Come, reform yourself, take other courses, you will smut your reputation and be despicable; you will destroy your estate, and commence a beggar; your family will be undone, and you may rot in a prison: not laying close to them the duty they owe to God, the dishonor which accrues to him by their unworthy courses, and the ingratitude to the God of their mercies; not that the other motives are to be laid aside and slighted. Mint and cummin may be tithed, but the weightier concerns are not to be omitted; but this shows that self is the bias, not only of men in their own course, but in their dealings with others; what should be subordinate to the honor of God, and the duty we owe to him, is made superior.

3. It is evident, in performing duties merely for a selfish interest: making ourselves the end of religious actions, paying a homage to that, while we pretend to render it to God (Zechariah 7:5): "Did you at all fast unto me, even unto me?" Things ordained by God may fall in with carnal ends affected by ourselves; and then religion is not kept up by any interest of God in the conscience, but the interest of self in the heart: we then sanctify not the name of God in the duty, but gratify ourselves: God may be the object, self is the end; and a heavenly object is made subservient to a carnal design. Hypocrisy passes a compliment on God, and is called flattery (Psalms 78:36): "They did flatter him with their lips," &c. They gave him a parcel of good words for their own preservation. Flattery, in the old notion among the heathens, is a vice more peculiar to serve our own turn and purvey for the belly: they knew they could not subsist without God, and therefore gave him a parcel of good words, that he might spare them, and make provision for them. Israel is an empty vine, [Note: Hosea 10:1.] a vine, say some, with large branches and few clusters, but bring forth fruit to himself: while they professed love to God with their lips, it was that God should promote their covetous designs, and preserve their wealth and grandeur; [Note: Ezekiel 33:31.] in which respect a hypocrite may be well termed a religious atheist, an atheist masked with religion. The chief arguments which prevail with many men to perform some duties and appear religious, are the same that Hamor and Shechem used to the people of their city to submit to circumcision, viz. the engrossing of more wealth (Genesis 34:21-22): "If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours?" This is seen,

(1.) In unwieldiness to religious duties where self is not concerned. With what lively thoughts will many approach to God, when a revenue may be brought in to support their own ends! But when the concerns of God only are in it, the duty is not the delight, but the clog; such feeble devotions, that warm not the soul, unless there be something of self to give strength and heat to them. Jonah was sick of his work, and run from God, because he thought he should get no honor by his message: God's mercy would discredit his prophecy. [Note: Jonah 4:2.] Thoughts of disadvantage cut the very sinews of service. You may as well persuade a merchant to venture all his estate upon the inconstant waves without hopes of gain, as prevail with a natural man to be serious in duty, without expectation of some warm advantage. "What profit should we have if we pray to him?" is the natural question (Job 21:15). "What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?" (Job 35:3). I shall have more good by my sin than by my service. It is for God that I dance before the ark, saith David, therefore I will be more vile (2 Samuel 6:22). It is for self that I pray, saith a natural man, therefore I will be more warm and quick. Ordinances of God are observed only as a point of interest, and prayer is often most fervent, when it is least godly, and most selfish; carnal ends and affections will pour out lively expressions. If there be no delight in the means that lead to God, there is no delight in God himself; because love is appetitus unionis, a desire of union; and where the object is desirable, the means that brings us to it would be delightful too.

(2.) In calling upon God only in a time of necessity. How officious will men be in affliction, to that God whom they neglect in their prosperity! "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired after God, and they remembered that God was their rock" (Psalms 78:34). They remembered him under the scourge, and forgot him under his smiles: they visit the throne of grace, knock loud at heaven's gates, and give God no rest for their early and importunate devotions when under distress: but when their desires are answered, and the rod removed, they

stand aloof from him, and rest upon their own bottom, as Jeremiah 2:31 : “We are lords; we will come no more unto thee.” When we have need of him, he shall find us clients at his gate; and when we have served our turn, he hears no more of us: like Noah’s dove sent out of the ark, that returned to him when she found no rest on the earth, but came not back when she found a footing elsewhere. How often do men apply themselves to God, when they have some business for him to do for them! And then too, they are loth to put it solely into his hand to manage it for his own honor; but they presume to be his directors, that he may manage it for their glory. Self spurs men onto the throne of grace; they desire to be furnished with some mercy they want, or to have the clouds of some judgments which they fear blown over: this is not affection to God, but to ourselves: as the Romans worshipped a quartan ague as a goddess, and Timorem and Pallorem, fear and paleness, as gods; not out of any affection they had to the disease or the passion, but for fear to receive any hurt by them. Again, when we have gained the mercy we need, how little do we warm our souls with the consideration of that God that gave it, or lay out the mercy in his service! We are importunate to have him our friend in our necessities, and are ungratefully careless of him, and his injuries he suffers by us or others. When he hath discharged us from the rock where we stuck, we leave him, as having no more need of him, and able to do well enough without him; as if we were petty gods ourselves, and only wanted a lift from him at first. This is not to glorify God as God, but as our servant; not an honoring of God, but a self-seeking: he would hardly beg at God’s door, if he could pleasure himself without him.

(3.) In begging his assistance to our own projects. When we lay the plot of our own affairs, and then come to God, not for counsel but blessing, self only shall give us counsel how to act; but because we believe there is a God that governs the world, we will desire him to contribute success. God is not consulted with till the counsel of self be fixed; then God must be the executor of our will. Self must be the principal, and God the instrument to hatch what we have contrived. It is worse when we beg of God to favor some sinful aim; the Psalmist implies this (Psalms 66:18): “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Iniquity regarded as the aim in prayer, renders the prayer successless, and the suppliant an atheist, in debasing God to back his lust by his holy providence. The disciples had determined revenge; and because they could not act it without their Master, they would have him be their second in their vindictive passion (Luke 9:55): “Call for fire from heaven.” We scarce seek God till we have modelled the whole contrivance in our own brains, and resolved upon the methods of performance; as though there were not a fulness of wisdom in God to guide us in our resolves, as well as power to breathe success upon them.

(4.) In impatience upon the refusal of our desires. How often do men’s spirits rise against God, when he steps not in with the assistance they want! If the glory of God swayed more with them than their private interest, they would let God be judge of his own glory, and rather magnify his wisdom than complain of his want of goodness. Selfish hearts will charge God with neglect of them, if he be not as quick in their supplies as they are in their desires; like those in Isaiah 58:3, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?” When we aim at God’s glory in our importunities, we shall fall down in humble submissions when he denies us; whereas self riseth up in bold expostulations, as if God were our servant, and had neglected the service he owed us, not to come at our call. We over-value the satisfactions of self above the honor of God. Besides, if what we desire be a sin, our impatience at a refusal is more intolerable: it is an anger, that God will not lay aside his

holiness to serve our corruption.

(5.) In the actual aims men have in their duties. In prayer for temporal things, when we desire health for our own ease, wealth for our own sensuality, strength for our revenge, children for the increase of our family, gifts for our applause; as Simon Magus did the Holy Ghost: or, when some of those ends are aimed at, this is to desire God not to serve himself of us, but to be a servant to our worldly interest, our vain glory, the greatening of our names, &c. In spiritual mercies begged for; when pardon of sin is desired only for our own security from eternal vengeance; sanctification desired only to make us fit for everlasting blessedness; peace of conscience, only that we may lead our lives more comfortably in the world; when we have not actual intentions for the glory of God, or when our thoughts of God's honor are overtopped by the aims of self-advantage: not but that as God hath pressed us to those things by motives drawn from the blessedness derived to ourselves by them, so we may desire them with a respect to ourselves; but this respect must be contained within the due banks, in subordination to the glory of God, not above it, nor in an equal balance with it. [Note: Gurnall, Part III. p. 337.] That which is nourishing or medicinal in the first or second degree, is in the fourth or fifth degree mere destructive poison. Let us consider it seriously; though a duty be heavenly, doth not some base end smut us in it? [1.] How is it with our confessions of sin? Are they not more to procure our pardon, than to shame ourselves before God, or to be freed from the chains that hinder us from bringing him the glory for which we were created; or more to partake of his benefits, than to honor him in acknowledging the rights of his justice? Do we not bewail sin as it hath ruined us, not as it opposed the holiness of God? Do we not shuffle with God, and confess one sin, while we reserve another; as if we would allure God by declaring our dislike of one, to give us liberty to commit wantonness with another; not to abhor ourselves, but to daub with God. [2.] Is it any better in our private and family worship? Are not such assemblies frequented by some, where some upon whom they have a dependence may eye them, and have a better opinion of them, and affection to them? If God were the sole end of our hearts, would they not be as glowing under the sole eye of God, as our tongues or carriages are seemingly serious under the eye of man? Are not family duties performed by some that their voices may be heard, and their reputation supported among godly neighbors? [3.] Is not the charity of many men tainted with this end—self, [Note: Matthew 6:1.] as the Pharisees were, while they set the miserable object before them, but not the Lord; bestowing alms not so much upon the necessities of the people, as the friendship we owe them for some particular respects; or casting our bread upon those waters which stream down in the sight of the world, that our doles may be visible to them, and commended by them; or when we think to oblige God to pardon our transgressions, as if we merited it and heaven too at his hands, by bestowing a few pence upon indigent persons? And [4.] Is it not the same with the reproofs of men? Is not heat and anger carried out with full sail when our worldly interest is prejudiced and becalmed in the concerns of God? Do not many masters reprove their servants with more vehemency for the neglect of their trade and business, than the neglect of divine duties; and that upon religious arguments, pretending the honor of God that they may mind their own interest? But when they are negligent in what they owe to God, no noise is made, they pass without rebuke; is not this to make God and religion a stale to their own ends? It is a part of atheism not to regard the injuries done to God, as Tiberius, [Note: *Dei injuriæ. Deo curæ.*] “Let God's wrongs be looked to or cared for by himself.” [5.] Is it not thus in our seeming zeal for religion? as Demetrius and the craftsmen at Ephesus cried up aloud the greatness of Diana of the Ephesians, not out of any true zeal they had for her,

but their gain, which was increased by the confluence of her worshippers, and the sale of her own shrines (Acts 19:24; Acts 19:28).

4. In making use of the name of God to countenance our sin. When we set up an opinion that is a friend to our lusts, and then dig deep into the Scripture to find crutches to support it, and authorize our practices; when men will thank God for what they have got by unlawful means, fathering the fruit of their cheating craft, and the simplicity of their chapmen upon God; crediting their cozenage by his name, as men do brass money, with a thin plate of silver, and the stamp and image of the prince. The Jews urge the law of God for the crucifying his Son (John 19:7): "We have a law, and by that law he is to die," and would make him a party in their private revenge. Thus often when we have faltered in some actions, we wipe our mouths, as if we sought God more than our own interest, prostituting the sacred name and honor of God, either to hatch or defend some unworthy lust against his word. [Note: Sanderson's Sermons. Part II. p. 158.] Is not all this a high degree of atheism?

1. It is a vilifying God, an abuse of the highest good. Other sins subject the creature and outward things to them, but acting in religious services for self, subjects not only the highest concerns of men's souls, but the Creator himself to the creature, nay, to make God contribute to that which is the pleasure of the devil, a greater slight than to cast the gifts of a prince to a herd of nasty swine. It were more excusable to serve ourselves of God upon the higher accounts, such that materially conduce to his glory; but it is an intolerable wrong to make him and his ordinances caterers for our own bellies, as they did: [Note: Hosea 8:13. Vid. Coec. in locum.] they sacrificed the ■■■■■ of which the offerer might eat, not out of any reference to God, but love to their gluttony; not to please him, but feast themselves. The belly was truly made the god, when God was served only in order to the belly; as though the blessed God had his being, and his ordinances were enjoined to pleasure their foolish and wanton appetites; as though the work of God were only to patronize unrighteous ends, and be as bad as themselves, and become a pander to their corrupt affections.

2. Because it is a vilifying of God, it is an undeifying or dethroning God. It is an acting as if we were the lords, and God our vassal; a setting up those secular ends in the place of God, who ought to be our ultimate end in every action; to whom a glory is as due, as his mercy to us is utterly unmerited by us. He that thinks to cheat and put the fool upon God by his pretences, doth not heartily believe there is such a being. He could not have the notion of a God, without that of omniscience and justice; an eye to see the cheat, and an arm to punish it. The notion of the one would direct him in the manner of his services, and the sense of the other would scare him from the cherishing his unworthy ends. He that serves God with a sole respect to himself, is prepared for any idolatry; his religion shall warp with the times and his interest; he shall deny the true God for an idol, when his worldly interest shall advise him to it, and pay the same reverence to the basest image, which he pretends now to pay to God; as the Israelites were as real for idolatry under their basest princes, as they were pretenders to the true religion under those that were pious. Before I come to the use of this, give me leave to evince this practical atheism by two other considerations.

1. Unworthy imaginations of God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God:" that is, he is not such a God as you report him to be; this is meant by their being "corrupt," in the second verse,

corrupt being taken for playing the idolaters (Exodus 32:7). We cannot comprehend God; if we could, we should cease to be finite; and because we cannot comprehend him, we erect strange images of him in our fancies and affections. And since guilt came upon us, because we cannot root out the notions of God, we would debase the majesty and nature of God, that we may have some ease in our consciences, and lie down with some comfort in the sparks of our own kindling. This is universal in men by nature. "God is not in all his thoughts;" [Note: Psalms 10:4.] not in any of his thoughts, according the excellency of his nature and greatness of his majesty. As the heathen did not glorify God as God, so neither do they conceive of God as God; they are all infected with some one or other ill opinion of him, thinking him not so holy, powerful, just, good, as he is, and as the natural force of the human understanding might arrive to. We join a new notion of God in our vain fancies, and represent him not as he is, but as we would have him to be, fit for our own use, and suited to our own pleasure. We set that active power of imagination on work, and there comes out a god (a calf) whom we own for a notion of God. Adam cast him into so narrow a mould, as to think that himself, who had newly sprouted up by his almighty power, was fit to be his cor rival in knowledge, and had vain hopes to grasp as much as infiniteness; if he, in his first declining, begun to have such a conceit, it is no doubt but we have as bad under a mass of corruption. When holy Agur speaks of God, he cries out that he had not "the understanding of a man, nor the knowledge of the holy;" [Note: Proverbs 30:2-3.] he did not think rationally of God, as man might by his strength at his first creation. There are as many carved images of God as there are minds of men, and as monstrous shapes as those corruptions into which they would transform him. Hence sprang,

1. Idolatry. Vain imaginations first set afloat and kept up this in the world. Vain imaginations of the God "whose glory they changed into the image of corruptible man." [Note: Romans 1:21-23.] They had set up vain images of him in their fancy, before they set up idolatrous representations of him in their temples; the likening him to those idols of wood and stone, and various metals, were the fruit of an idea erected in their own minds. This is a mighty debasing the Divine nature, and rendering him no better than that base and stupid matter they make the visible object of their adoration; equalling him with those base creatures they think worthy to be the representations of him. Yet how far did this crime spread itself in all corners of the world, not only among the more barbarous and ignorant, but the more polished and civilized nations! Judea only, where God had placed the ark of his presence, being free from it, in some intervals of time only after some sweeping judgment. And though they vomited up their idols under some sharp scourge, they licked them up again after the heavens were cleared over their heads: the whole book of Judges makes mention of it. And though an evangelical light hath chased that idolatry away from a great part of the world, yet the principle remaining coins more spiritual idols in the heart, which are brought before God in acts of worship.

2. Hence all superstition received its rise and growth. When we mint a god according to our own complexion, like to us in mutable and various passions, soon angry and soon appeased, it is no wonder that we invent ways of pleasing him after we have offended him, and think to expiate the sin of our souls by some melancholy devotions and self-chastisements. Superstition is nothing else but an unscriptural and unrevealed dread of God. [Note: Δεισιδαιμονία] When they imagined him a rigorous and severe master, they cast about for ways to mitigate him whom they thought so hard to be pleased: a very mean thought of him, as if a slight and pompous devotion could as

easily bribe and flatter him out of his rigors, as a few good words or baubling rattles could please and quiet little children; and whatsoever pleased us, could please a God infinitel above us. Such narrow conceits had the Philistines, when they thought to still the anger of the God of Israel, whom they thought they possessed in the ark, with the present of a few golden mice. [Note: 1 Samuel 6:3-4.] All the superstition this day living in the world is built upon this foundation: so natural it is to man to pull God down to his own imaginations, rather than raise his imaginations up to God. Hence doth arise also the diffidence of his mercy, though they repent; measuring God by the contracted models of their own spirits; as though his nature were as difficult to pardon their offences against him, as they are to remit wrongs done to themselves.

3. Hence springs all presumption, the common disease of the world. All the wickedness in the world, which is nothing else but presuming upon God, rises from the ill interpretations of the goodness of God, breaking out upon them in the works of creation and providence. The corruption of man's nature engendered by those notions of goodness a monstrous birth of vain imaginations; not of themselves primarily, but of God; whence arose all that folly and darkness in their minds and conversations (Romans 1:20-21). They glorified him not as God, but, according to themselves, imagined him good that themselves might be bad; fancied him so indulgent, as to neglect his own honor for their sensuality. How doth the unclean person represent him to his own thoughts, but as a goat; the murderer as a tiger; the sensual person as a swine; while they fancy a God indulgent to their crimes without their repentance! As the image on the seal is stamped upon the wax, so the thoughts of the heart are printed upon the actions. God's patience is apprehended to be an approbation of their vices, and from the consideration of his forbearance, they fashion a god that they believe will smile upon their crimes. They imagine a god that plays with them; and though he threatens doth it only to scare, but means not as he speaks. A god they fancy like themselves, that would do as they would do, not be angry for what they count a light offence (Psalms 50:21): "Thou thoughtest I was such a one as thyself;" that God and they were exactly alike as two tallies. "Our wilful misapprehensions of God are the cause of our misbehavior in all his worship. Our slovenly and lazy services tell him to his face what slight thoughts and apprehensions we have of him." [Note: Gurnal. Part II. pp. 245, 246.] Compare these two together. Superstition ariseth from terrifying misapprehensions of God: presumption from self pleasing thoughts. One represents him only rigorous, and the other careless. One makes us over-officious in serving him by our own rules; and the other over-bold in offending him according to our humors. The want of a true notion of God's justice makes some men slight him; and the want of a true apprehension of his goodness makes others too servile in their approaches to him. One makes us careless of duties, and the other makes us look on them rather as physic than food; an unsupportable penance, than a desirable privilege. In this case hell is the principle of duty performed to heaven. The superstitious man believes God hath scarce mercy to pardon; the presumptuous man believes he hath no such perfection as justice to punish. The one makes him insignificant to what he desires, kindness and goodness; the other renders him insignificant to what he fears, his vindictive justice. What between the idolater, the superstitious, the presumptuous person, God should look like no God in the world. These unworthy imaginations of God are likewise,

2. A vilifying of him. Debasing the Creator to be a creature of their own fancies; putting their own stamp upon him; and fashioning him not according to that beautiful image he impressed upon them by creation; but the defaced image they inherit by their fall, and which is worse, the image of

the devil which spread itself over them at their revolt and apostasy. Were it possible to see a picture of God, according to the fancies of men, it would be the most monstrous being, such a God that never was, nor ever can be. We honor God when we have worthy opinions of him suitable to his nature; when we conceive of him as a being of unbounded loveliness and perfection. We detract from him when we ascribe to him such qualities as would be a horrible disgrace to a wise and good man as injustice and impurity. Thus men debase God when they invert his order, and would create him according to their image, as he first created them according to his own; and think him not worthy to be a God, unless he fully answer the mould they would cast him into, and be what is unworthy of his nature. Men do not conceive of God as he would have them; but he must be what they would have him, one of their own shaping.

1. This is worse than idolatry. The grossest idolater commits not a crime so heinous, by changing his glory into the image of creeping things and senseless creatures, as the imagining God to be as one of our sinful selves, and likening him to those filthy images we erect in our fancies. One makes him an earthly God, like an earthly creature; the other fancies him an unjust and impure God, like a wicked creature. One sets up an image of him in the earth, which is his footstool; the other sets up an image of him in the heart, which ought to be his throne.

2. It is worse than absolute atheism, or a denial of God. "Dignius credimus non esse, quodcunque non ita fuerit, ut esse deberet," [Note: Tertul, cont. Maxim. Lib. I. Cap. 2.] was the opinion of Tertullian. It is more commendable to think him not to be, than to think him such a one as is inconsistent with his nature. Better to deny his existence, than deny his perfection. No wise man but would rather have his memory rot, than be accounted infamous, and would be more obliged to him that should deny that ever he had a being in the world, than to say he did indeed live, but he was a sot, a debauched person, and a man not to be trusted. When we apprehend God deceitful in his promises, unrighteous in his threatenings, unwilling to pardon upon repentance, or resolved to pardon notwithstanding impenitency: these are things either unworthy of the nature of God, or contrary to that revelation he hath given of himself. Better for a man never to have been born than be forever miserable; so better to be thought no God, than represented impotent or negligent, unjust or deceitful; which are more contrary to the nature of God than hell can be to the greatest criminal. In this sense perhaps the apostle affirms the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:12) to be such as are "without God in the world;" as being more atheists in adoring God under such notions as they commonly did, than if they had acknowledged no God at all.

3. This is evident by our natural desire to be distant from him, and unwillingness to have any acquaintance with him. Sin set us first at a distance from God; and every new act of gross sin estrangeth us more from him, and indisposeth us more for him: it makes us both afraid and ashamed to be near him. Sensual men were of this frame that Job discourseth of (Job 21:7-9, Job 21:14-15). Where grace reigns, the nearer to God the more vigorous the motion; the nearer anything approaches to us, that is the object of our desires, the more eagerly do we press forward to it: but our blood riseth at the approaches of anything to which we have an aversion. We have naturally a loathing of God's coming to us or our return to him: we seek not after him as our happiness; and when he offers himself, we like it not, but put a disgrace upon him in choosing other things before him. God and we are naturally at as great a distance, as light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell. The stronger impression of God anything hath, the more we fly from it. The glory of God in reflection upon Moses' face scared the Israelites; they, who had desired God

to speak to them by Moses, when they saw a signal impression of God upon his countenance, were afraid to come near him, as they were before unwilling to come near to God. [Note: Exodus 34:30.] Not that the blessed God is in his own nature a frightful object; but our own guilt renders him so to us, and ourselves indisposed to converse with him; as the light of the sun is as irksome to a distempered eye, as it is in its own nature desirable to a sound one. The saints themselves have had so much frailty, that they have cried out, that they were undone, if they had any more than ordinary discoveries of God made unto them; as if they wished him more remote from them. Vileness cannot endure the splendor of majesty, nor guilt the glory of a judge.

We have naturally, 1. No desire of remembrance of him, 2. Or converse with him, 3. Or thorough return to him, 4. Or close imitation of him: as if there were not any such being as God in the world; or as if we wished there were none at all; so feeble and spiritless are our thoughts of the being of a God.

1. No desire for the remembrance of him. How delightful are other things in our minds! How burdensome the memorials of God, from whom we have our being! With what pleasure do we contemplate the nature of creatures, even of flies and toads, while our minds tire in the search of Him, who hath bestowed upon us our knowing and meditating faculties! Though God shows himself to us in every creature, in the meanest weed as well as the highest heavens, and is more apparent in them to our reasons than themselves can be to our sense; yet though we see them, we will not behold God in them: we will view them to please our sense, to improve our reason in their natural perfections; but pass by the consideration of God's perfections so visibly beaming from them. Thus we play the beasts and atheists in the very exercise of reason, and neglect our Creator to gratify our sense, as though the pleasure of that were more desirable than the knowledge of God. The desire of our souls is not towards his name and the remembrance of him, [Note: Isaiah 26:8.] when we set not ourselves in a posture to feast our souls with deep and serious meditations of him; have a thought of him, only by the bye and away, as if we were afraid of too intimate acquaintance with him. Are not the thoughts of God rather our invaders than our guests; seldom invited to reside and take up their home in our hearts? Have we not, when they have broke in upon us, bid them depart from us, [Note: Job 22:17.] and warned them to come no more upon our ground; sent them packing as soon as we could, and were glad when they were gone? And when they have departed, have we not often been afraid they, should return again upon us, and therefore looked about for other inmates, things not good, or if good, infinitely below God, to possess the room of our hearts before any thoughts of him should appear again? Have we not often been glad of excuses to shake off resent thoughts of him, and when we have wanted real ones, found out pretences to keep God and our hearts at a distance? Is not this a part of atheism, to be so unwilling to employ our faculties about the giver of them, to refuse to exercise them in a way of a grateful remembrance of him; as though they were none of his gift, but our own acquisition; as though the God that truly gave them had no right to them, and he that thinks on us every day in a way of providence, were not worthy, to be thought on by us in a way of special remembrance? Do not the best, that love the remembrance of him, and abhor this natural averseness, find, that when they would think of God, many things tempt them and turn them to think elsewhere? Do they not find their apprehensions too feeble, their motions too dull, and the impressions too slight? This natural atheism is spread over human nature.

2. No desire of converse with him. The word “remember” in the command for keeping holy the Sabhath-day, including all the duties of the day, and the choicest of our lives, implies our natural unwillingness to them, and forgetfulness of them. God’s pressing this command with more reasons than the rest, manifests that man hath no heart for spiritual duties. No spiritual duty, which sets us immediately face to face with God, but in the attempts of it we find naturally a resistance from some powerful principle; so that every one may subscribe to the speech of the apostle, that “when we would do good, evil is present with them.” No reason of this can be rendered, but the natural temper of our souls, and an affecting a distance from God under any consideration: for though our guilt first made the breach, yet this aversion to a converse with him steps up without any actual reflections upon our guilt, which may render God terrible to us as an offended judge. Are we not often also, in our attendance upon him, more pleased with the modes of worship which gratify our fancy, than to have our souls inwardly delighted with the object of worship himself? This is a part of our natural atheism. To cast such duties off by total neglect, or in part, by affecting a coldness in them, is to cast off the fear of the Lord. [Note: Job 15:4.] Not to call upon God, and not to know him, are one and the same thing (Jeremiah 10:25). Either we think there is no such Being in the world, or that he is so slight a one, that he deserves not the respect he calls for; or so impotent and poor, that he cannot supply what our necessities require.

3. No desire of a thorough return to him. The first man fled from him after his defection, though he had no refuge to fly to but the grace of his Creator. Cain went from his presence, would be a fugitive from God rather than a suppliant to him; when by faith in, and application of the promised Redeemer, he might have escaped the wrath to come for his brother’s blood, and mitigated the sorrows he was justly sentenced to bear in the world. Nothing will separate prodigal man from communing with swine; and make him return to his father, but an empty trough: have we but husks to feed on, we shall never think of a father’s presence. It were well if our sores and indigence would drive us to him; but when our strength is devoured, we will not “return to the Lord our God, nor seek him for all this.” [Note: Hosea 7:10.] Not his drawn sword, as a God of judgment, nor his mighty power, as a Lord, nor his open arms, as the Lord their God, could move them to turn their eyes and their hearts towards him. The more he invites us to partake of his grace, the further we run from him to provoke his wrath: the louder God called them by his prophets, the closer they stuck to their Baal. [Note: Hosea 11:2.] We turn our backs when he stretches out his hand, stop our ears when he lifts up his voice. We fly from him when he courts us, and shelter ourselves in any bush from his merciful hand that would lay hold upon us; nor will we set our faces towards him, till our way be hedged up with thorns, and not a gap left to creep out any by-way. [Note: Hosea 2:6-7.] Whosoever is brought to a return, puts the Holy Ghost to the pain of striving; he is not easily brought to a spiritual subjection to God, nor persuaded to a surrender at a summons, but sweetly overpowered by storm, and victoriously drawn into the arms of God. God stands ready, but the heart stands off; grace is full of entreaties, and the soul full of excuses; Divine love offers, and carnal selflove rejects. Nothing so pleases us as when we are farthest from him; as if anything were more amiable, anything more desirable, than himself.

4. No desire of any close imitation of him. When our Saviour was to come as a refiner’s fire, to purify the sons of Levi, the cry, is, “Who shall abide the day of his coming?” (Malachi 3:2-3.) Since we are alienated from the life of God, we desire no more naturally to live the life of God, than a toad, or any other animal, desires to live the life of a man. No heart that knows God but hath a holy

ambition to imitate him. No soul that refuseth him for a copy, but is ignorant of his excellency. Of this temper is all mankind naturally, Man in corruption is as loth to be like God in holiness, as Adam, after his creation, was desirous to be like God in knowledge; his posterity are like their father, who soon turned his back upon his original copy. What can be worse than this? Can the denial of his being be a greater injury than this contempt of him; as if he had not goodness to deserve our remembrance, nor amiableness fit for our converse; as if he were not a Lord fit for our subjection, nor had a holiness that deserved our imitation? For the use of this:—

Use I. It serves for information.

1: It gives us occasion to admire the wonderful patience and mercy of God. How many millions of practical atheists breathe every day in his air, and live upon his bounty who deserve to be inhabitants in hell, rather than possessors of the earth! An infinite holiness is offended, an infinite justice is provoked; yet an infinite patience forbears the punishment, and an infinite goodness relieves our wants: the more we had merited his justice and forfeited his favor, the more is his affection enhanced, which makes his hand so liberal to us. At the first invasion of his rights, he mitigates the terror of the threatening which was set to defend his law, with the grace of a promise to relieve and recover his rebellious creature. [Note: Genesis 3:15.] Who would have looked for anything but tearing thunders, sweeping judgments, to raze up the foundations of the apostate world? But oh, how great are his bowels to his aspiring competitors! Have we not experimented his contrivances for our good, though we have refused him for our happiness? Has he not opened his arms, when we spurned with our feet; held out his alluring mercy, when we have brandished against him a rebellious sword? Has he not entreated us while we have invaded him, as if he were unwilling to lose us, who are ambitious to destroy ourselves? Has he yet denied us the care of his providence, while we have denied him the rights of his honor, and would appropriate them to ourselves? Has the sun forborne shining upon us, though we have shot our arrows against him? Have not our beings been supported by his goodness, while we have endeavored to climb up to his throne; and his mercies continued to charm us, while we have used them as weapons to injure him? Our own necessities might excite us to own him as our happiness, but he adds his invitations to the voice of our wants. Has he not promised a kingdom to those that would strip him of his crown, and proclaimed pardon upon repentance to those that would take away his glory? and hath so twisted together his own end, which is his honor, and man's true end, which is his salvation, that a man cannot truly mind himself and his own salvation, but he must mind God's glory; and cannot be intent upon God's honor, but by the same act he promotes himself and his own happiness? so loth is God to give any just occasion of dissatisfaction to his creature, as well as dishonor to himself. All those wonders of his mercy are enhanced by the heinousness of our atheism; a multitude of gracious thoughts from him above the multitude of contempts from us. [Note: Psalms 106:7.] What rebels in actual arms against their prince, aiming at his life, ever found that favor from him; to have all their necessities richly afforded them, without which they would starve, and without which they would be unable to manage their attempts, as we have received from God? Had not God had riches of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, and infinite riches too, the despite the world had done him, in refusing him as their rule, happiness, and end, would have emptied him long ago. [Note: Romans 2:4.]

2. It brings in a justification of the exercise of his justice. If it gives us occasion loudly to praise his patience, it also stops our mouths from accusing any acts of his vengeance. What can be too

sharp a recompense for the despising and disgracing so great a Being? The highest contempt merits the greatest anger; and when we will not own him for our happiness, it is equal we should feel the misery of separation from him. If he that is guilty of treason deserves to lose his life, what punishment can be thought great enough for him that is so disingenuous as to prefer himself before a God so infinitely good, and so foolish as to invade the rights of one infinitely powerful? It is no injustice for a creature to be forever left to himself, to see what advantage he can make of that self he was so busily employed to set up in the place of his Creator. The soul of man deserves an infinite punishment for despising an infinite good; and it is not unequitable, that that self which man makes his rule and happiness above God, should become his torment and misery by the righteousness of that God whom he despised.

3. Hence ariseth a necessity of a new state and frame of soul, to alter an atheistical nature. We forget God; think of him with reluctancy; have no respect to God in our course and acts: this cannot be our original state. God, being infinitely good, never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; he never intended to dethrone himself for the work of his hands, or that the creature should have any other end than that of his Creator: as the apostle saith, in the case of the Galatians' error (Galatians 5:8), "This persuasion came not of Him that called you;" so this frame comes not from him that created you: how much, therefore, do we need a restoring principle in us! Instead of ordering ourselves according to the will of God, we are desirous to "fulfil the wills of the flesh:" [Note: Ephesians 2:3.] there is a necessity of some other principle in us to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh. We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God, while our serpentine nature and devilish habits remain in us, than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall abides powerfully in him. Our nature and will must be changed, that our actions may regard God as our end, that we may delightfully meditate on him, and draw the motives of our obedience from him. Since this atheism is seated in nature, the change must be in our nature; since our first aspirings to the rights of God were the fruits of the serpent's breath which tainted our nature, there must be a removal of this taint, whereby our natures may be on the side of God against Satan, as they were before on the side of Satan against God. There must be a supernatural principle before we can live a supernatural life, i. e. live to God, since we are naturally alienated from the life of God: the aversion of our natures from God, is as strong as our inclination to evil; we are disgusted with one, and pressed with the other; we have no will, no heart, to come to God in any service. This nature must be broken in pieces and new moulded, before we can make God our rule and our end: while men's "deeds are evil" they cannot comply with God; O much less while their natures are evil till this be done, all the service a man performs riseth from some "evil imagination of the heart, which is evil, only evil, and that continually;" [Note: Genesis 6:5.] from wrong notions of God, wrong notions of duty, or corrupt motives. All the pretences of devotion to God are but the adoration of some golden image. Prayers to God for the ends of self are like those of the devil to our Saviour, when he asked leave to go into the herd of swine: the object was right, Christ; the end was the destruction of the swine, and the satisfaction of their malice to the owners; there is a necessity then that depraved ends should be removed, that that which was God's end in our framing, may be our end in our acting, viz. his glory, which cannot be without a change of nature. We can never honor him supremely whom we do not supremely love; till this be, we cannot glorify God as God, though we do things by his command and order; no more, than when God employed the devil in afflicting Job. [Note: Job 1:1-22.] His performance

cannot be said to be good, because his end was not the same with God's; he acted out of malice, what God commanded out of sovereignty, and for gracious designs; had God employed an holy angel in his design upon Job, the action had been good in the affliction, because his nature was holy, and therefore his ends holy; but bad in the devil, because his ends were base and unworthy.

4. We may gather from hence, the difficulty of conversion, and mortification to follow thereupon. What is the reason men receive no more impression from the voice of God and the light of his truth, than a dead man in the grave doth from the roaring thunder, or a blind mole from the light of the sun? It is because our atheism is as great as the deadness of the one, or the blindness of the other. The principle in the heart is strong to shut the door both of the thoughts and affections against God. If a friend oblige us, we shall act for him as for ourselves; we are won by entreaties; soft words overcome us; but our hearts are as deaf as the hardest rock at the call of God; neither the joys of heaven proposed by him can allure us, nor the flashed terrors of hell affright us to him, as if we conceived God unable to bestow the one or execute the other: the true reason is, God and self contest for the deity. The law of sin is, God must be at the footstool; the law of God is, sin must be utterly deposed. Now it is difficult to leave a law beloved for a law long ago discarded. The mind of man will hunt after anything; the will of man embrace anything: upon the proposal of mean objects the spirit of man spreads its wings, flies to catch them, becomes one with them but attempt to bring it under the power of God, the wings flag, the creature looks lifeless, as though there were no spring of motion in it; it is as much crucified to God, as the holy apostle was to the world. The sin of the heart discovers its strength the more God discovers the "holiness of his will." [Note: Romans 7:9-12.] The love of sin hath been predominant in our nature, has quashed a love to God, if not extinguished it. Hence also is the difficulty of mortification. This is a work tending to the honor of God, the abasing of that inordinately aspiring humor in ourselves. If the nature of man be inclined to sin, as it is, it must needs be bent against anything that opposes it. It is impossible to strike any true blow at any lust till the true sense of God be re-entertained in the soil where it ought to grow. Who can be naturally willing to crucify what is incorporated with him—his flesh? what is dearest to him—himself? Is it an easy thing for man, the competitor with God, to turn his arms against himself, that self should overthrow its own empire, lay aside all its pretensions to, and designs for, a godhead; to hew off its own members, and subdue its own affections? It is the nature of man to "cover his sin," to hide it in his bosom, [Note: Job 31:33. "If I cover my transgressions, as Adam."] not to destroy it; and as unwillingly part with his carnal affections, as the legion of devils were with the man that had been long possessed; and when he is forced and fired from one, he will endeavor to espouse some other lust, as those devils desired to possess swine, when they were chased from their possession of that man.

5. Here we see the reason of unbelief. That which hath most of God in it, meets with most aversion from us; that which hath least of God, finds better and stronger inclinations in us. What is the reason that the heart of man is more unwilling to embrace the gospel, than acknowledge the equity of the law? because there is more of God's nature and perfection evident in the gospel than in the law; besides, there is more reliance on God, and distance from self, commanded in the gospel. The law puts a man upon his own strength, the gospel takes him off from his own bottom; the law acknowledges him to have a power in himself, and to act for his own reward; the gospel strips him of all his proud and towering thoughts, [Note: 2 Corinthians 10:5.] brings him to his due place, the foot of God; orders him to deny himself as his own rule, righteousness, and end, "and henceforth

not to live to himself.” [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15.] This is the true reason why men are more against the gospel than against the law; because it doth more deify God, and debase man. Hence it is easier to reduce men to some moral virtue than to faith; to make men blush at their outward vices, but not at the inward impurity of their natures. Hence it is observed, that those that asserted that all happiness did arise from something in a man’s self, as the Stoics and Epicureans did, and that a wise man was equal with God, were greater enemies to the truths of the gospel than others (Acts 17:18), because it lays the axe to the root of their principal opinion, takes the one from their self-sufficiency, and the other from their self-gratification; it opposeth the brutish principle of the one, which placed happiness in the pleasures of the body, and the more noble principle of the other, which placed happiness in the virtue of the mind; the one was for a sensual, the other for a moral self; both disowned by the doctrine of the gospel.

6. It informs us, consequently, who can be the Author of grace and conversion, and every other good work. No practical atheist ever yet turned to God, but was turned by God; and not to acknowledge it to God is a part of this atheism, since it is a robbing God of the honor of one of his most glorious works. If this practical atheism be natural to man ever since the first taint of nature in Paradise, what can be expected from it, but a resisting of the work of God, and setting up all the forces of nature against the operations of grace, till a day of power dawn and clear up upon the soul? [Note: Psalms 110:3.] Not all the angels in heaven, or men upon earth, can be imagined to be able to persuade a man to fall out with himself; nothing can turn the tide of nature, but a power above nature. God took away the sanctifying Spirit from man, as a penalty for the first sin; who can regain it but by his will and pleasure? who can restore it, but he that removed it? Since every man hath the same fundamental atheism in him by nature, and would be a rule to himself and his own end, he is so far from dethroning himself, that all the strength of his corrupted nature is alarmed up to stand to their arms upon any attempt God makes to regain the fort. The will is so strong against God, that it is like many wills twisted together (Ephesians 2:3), “Wills of the flesh;” we translate it the “desires of the flesh;” like many threads twisted in a cable, never to be snapped asunder by a human arm; a power and will above ours, can only untwist so many wills in a knot. Man cannot rise to an acknowledgment of God without God; hell may as well become heaven, the devil be changed into an angel of light. The devil cannot but desire happiness; he knows the misery into which he is fallen, he cannot be desirous of that punishment he knows is reserved for him. Why doth he not sanctify God, and glorify his Creator, wherein there is abundantly more pleasure than in his malicious course? Why doth he not petition to recover his ancient standing? he will not; there are chains of darkness upon his faculties; he will not be otherwise than he is; his desire to be god of the world sways him against his own interest, and out of love to his malice, he will not sin at a less rate to make a diminution of his punishment. Man, if God utterly refuseth to work upon him, is no better; and to maintain his atheism would venture a hell. How is it possible for a man to turn himself to that God against whom he hath a quarrel in his nature; the most rooted and settled habit in him being to set himself in the place of God? An atheist by nature can no more alter his own temper, and engrave in himself the divine nature, than a rock can carve itself into the statue of a man, or a serpent that is an enemy to man could or would raise itself to the nobility of the human nature. That soul that by nature would strip God of his rights, cannot, without a divine power, be made conformable to him, and acknowledge sincerely and cordially the rights and glory of God.

7. We may here see the reason why there can be no justification by the best and strongest works of nature. Can that which hath atheism at the root justify either the action or person? What strength can those works have which have neither God's law for their rule, nor his glory for their end? that are not wrought by any spiritual strength from him, nor tend with any spiritual affection to him? Can these be a foundation for the most holy God to pronounce a creature righteous? They will justify his justice in condemning, but cannot sway his justice to an absolution. Every natural man in his works picks and chooses; he owns the will of God no further than he can wring it to suit the law of his members, and minds not the honor of God, but as it jostles not with his own glory and secular ends. Can he be righteous that prefers his own will and his own honor before the will and honor of the Creator? However men's actions may be beneficial to others, what reason hath God to esteem them, wherein there is no respect to him, but themselves; whereby they dethrone him in their thoughts, while they seem to own him in their religious works? Every day reproves us with something different from the rule; thousands of wanderings offer themselves to our eyes: can justification be expected from that which in itself is matter of despair?

8. See here the cause of all the apostasy in the world. Practical atheism was never conquered in such; they are still "alienated from the life of God," and will not live to God, as he lives to himself and his own honor. [Note: Ephesians 4:17-18.] They loathe his rule, and distaste his glory; are loth to step out of themselves to promote the ends of another; find not the satisfaction in him as they do in themselves; they will be judges of what is good for them and righteous in itself, rather than admit of God to judge for them. When men draw back from truth to error, it is to such opinions which may serve more to foment and cherish their ambition, covetousness, or some beloved lust that disputes with God for precedency, and is designed to be served before him (John 12:42-43): "They love the praise of men more than the praise of God." A preferring man before God was the reason they would not confess Christ, and God in him.

9. This shows us the excellency of the gospel and christian religion. It sets man in his due place, and gives to God what the excellency of his nature requires. It lays man in the dust from whence he was taken, and sets God upon that throne where he ought to sit. Man by nature would annihilate God and deify himself; the gospel glorifies God and annihilates man. In our first revolt we would be like him in knowledge; in the means he hath provided for our recovery, he designs to make us like him in grace; the gospel shows ourselves to be an object of humiliation, and God to be a glorious object for our imitation. The light of nature tells us there is a God; the gospel gives us a more magnificent report of him; the light of nature condemns gross atheism, and that of the gospel condemns and conquers spiritual atheism in the hearts of men.

Use II. Of exhortation.

First, Let us labor to be sensible of this atheism in our nature, and be humbled for it. How should we lie in the dust, and go bowing under the humbling thoughts of it all our days! Shall we not be sensible of that whereby we spill the blood of our souls, and give a stab to the heart of our own salvation? Shall we be worse than any creature, not to bewail that which tends to our destruction? He that doth not lament it, cannot challenge the character of a Christian, hath nothing of the divine life and love planted in his soul. Not a man but shall one day be sensible, when the eternal God shall call him out to examination, and charge his conscience to discover every crime, which will then own the authority whereby it acted; when the heart shall be torn open, and the secrets of it

brought to public view; and the world and man himself shall see what a viperous brood of corrupt principles and ends nested in his heart. Let us, therefore, be truly sensible of it, till the consideration draw tears from our eyes and sorrow from our souls; let us urge the thoughts of it upon our hearts till the core of that pride be eaten out, and our stubbornness changed into humility; till our heads become waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, and be a spring of prayer to God to change the heart, and mortify the atheism in it; and consider what a sad thing it is to be a practical atheist: and who is not so by nature?

1. Let us be sensible of it in ourselves. Have any of our hearts been a soil wherein the fear and reverence of God hath naturally grown? Have we a desire to know him, or a will to embrace him? Do we delight in his will, and love the remembrance of his name? Are our respects to him, as God, equal to the speculative knowledge we have of his nature? Is the heart, wherein he hath stamped his image, reserved for his residence? Is not the world more affected than the Creator of the world; as though that could contribute to us a greater happiness than the Author of it? Have not creatures as much of our love, fear, trust, nay, more, than God that framed both them and us? Have we not too often relied upon our own strength, and made a calf of our own wisdom, and said of God, as the Israelites of Moses, "As for this Moses we wot not what is become of him?" (Exodus 32:1) and given oftener the glory of our good success to our drag and our net, to our craft and our industry, than to the wisdom and blessing of God? Are we, then, free from this sort of atheism? [Note: Lawson's Body of Divinity, pp. 153, 154.] It is as impossible to have two Gods at one time in one heart, as to have two kings at one time in full power in one kingdom. Have there not been frequent neglects of God? Have we not been deaf whilst he hath knocked at our doors? slept when he hath sounded in our ears, as if there had been no such being as a God in the world? How many strugglings have been against our approaches to him! Hath not folly often been committed, with vain imaginations starting up in the time of religious service, which we would scarce vouchsafe a look to at another time, and in another business, but would have thrust them away with indignation? Had they stepped in to interrupt our worldly affairs, they would have been troublesome intruders; but while we are with God they are acceptable guests. How unwilling have our hearts been to fortify themselves with strong and influencing considerations of God, before we addressed to him! Is it not too often that our lifelessness in prayer proceeds from this atheism; a neglect of seeing what arguments and pleas may be drawn from the divine perfections, to second our suit in hand, and quicken our hearts in the service? Whence are those indispositions to any spiritual duty, but because we have not due thoughts of the majesty, holiness, goodness, and excellency of God? Is there any duty which leads to a more particular inquiry after him, or a more clear vision of him, but our hearts have been ready to rise up and call it cursed rather than blessed? Are not our minds bemisted with an ignorance of him, our wills drawn by aversion from him, our affections rising in distaste of him? more willing to know anything than his nature, and more industrious to do anything than his will? Do we not all fall under some one or other of these considerations? Is it not fit, then, that we should have a sense of them? It is to be bewailed by us, that so little of God is in our hearts, when so many evidences of the love of God are in the creatures; thikt God should be so little our end, who hath been so much our benefactor; that he should be so little in our thoughts, who sparkles in everything which presents itself to our eyes.

2. Let us be sensible of it in others. We ought to have a just execration of the too open iniquity in the midst of us; and imitate holy David, whose tears plentifully gushed out, "because men kept not

God's law." [Note: Psalms 119:136.] And is it not a time to exercise this pious lamentation? Hath the wicked atheism of any age been greater, or can you find worse in hell, than we may hear of and behold on earth? How is the excellent Majesty of God adored by the angels in heaven, despised and reproached by men on earth, as if his name were published to be matter of their sport! What a gasping thing is a natural sense of God among men in the world! Is not the law of God, accompanied with such dreadful threatenings and curses, made light of, as if men would place their honor in being above or beyond any sense of that glorious Majesty? How many wallow in pleasures, as if they had been made men only to turn brutes, and their souls given them only for salt, to keep their bodies from putrefying? It is as well a part of atheism not to be sensible of the abuses of God's name and laws by others, as to violate them ourselves: what is the language of a stupid senselessness of them, but that there is no God in the world whose glory is worth a vindication, and deserves our regards? That we may be sensible of the unworthiness of neglecting God as our rule and end, consider, 1. The unreasonableness of it as it concerns God.

1st. It is a high contempt of God. It is an inverting the order of things; a making God the highest to become the lowest; and self the lowest to become the highest: to be guided by every base companion, some idle vanity, some carnal interest, is to acknowledge an excellency abounding in them which is wanting in God; an equity in their orders, and none in God's precepts; a goodness in their promises, and a falsity in God's; as if infinite excellency were a mere vanity, and to act for God were the debasement of our reason; to act for self or some pitiful creature, or sordid lust, were the glory and advancement of it. To prefer any one sin before the honor of God, is as if that sin had been our creator and benefactor, as if it were the original cause of our being and support. Do not men pay as great a homage to that as they do to God? Do not their minds eagerly pursue it? Are not the revolvings of it, in their fancies, as delightful to them as the remembrance of God to a holy soul? Do any obey the commands of God with more readiness than they do the orders of their base affections? Did Peter leap more readily into the sea to meet his Master, than many into the jaws of hell to meet their Dalilahs? How cheerfully did the Israelites part with their ornaments for the sake of an idol, who would not have spared a moiety for the honor of their Deliverer! [Note: Exodus 32:3,—“All the people brake off the golden earrings.”] If to make God our end is the principal duty in nature, then to make ourselves, or anything else, our end, is the greatest vice in the rank of evils.

2d. It is a contempt of God as the most amiable object. God is infinitely excellent and desirable (Zechariah 9:17): “How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” There is nothing in him but what may ravish our affections; none that knows him but finds attractiveness to keep them with him; He hath nothing in him which can be a proper object of contempt, no defects or shadow of evil; there is infinite excellency to charm us, and infinite goodness to allure us,—the Author of our being, the Benefactor of our lives. Why then should man, which is his image, be so base as to slight the beautiful Original which stamped it on him? He is the most lovely object; therefore to be studied, therefore to be honored, therefore to be followed. In regard of his perfection he hath the highest right to our thoughts. All other beings were eminently contained in his essence, and were produced by his infinite power. The creature hath nothing but what it hath from God. And is it not unworthy to prefer the copy before the original—to fall in love with a picture, instead of the beauty it represents? The creature which we advance to be our rule and end, can no more report to us the true amiableness of God, than a few colors mixed and suited together upon a piece of cloth, can

the moral and intellectual loveliness of the soul of man. To condemn God one moment is more base than if all creatures were condemned by us forever; because the excellency of creatures is, to God, like that of a drop to the sea, or a spark to the glory of unconceivable millions of suns. As much as the excellency of God is above our conceptions, so much doth the debasing of him admit of unexpressible aggravations.

2. Consider the ingratitude in it. That we should resist that God with our hearts who made us the work of his hands, and count him as nothing, from whom we derive all the good that we are or have. There is no contempt of man but steps in here to aggravate our slighting of God; because there is no relation one man can stand in to another, wherein God doth not more highly appear to man. If we abhor the unworthy carriage of a child to a tender father, a servant to an indulgent master, a man to his obliging friend, why do men daily act that toward God which they cannot speak of without abhorrency, if acted by another against man? Is God a being less to be regarded than man, and more worthy of contempt than a creature?—"It would be strange if a benefactor should live in the same town, in the same house with us, and we never exchange a word with him; yet this is our case, who have the works of God in our eyes, the goodness of God in our being, the mercy of God in our daily food" [Note: Reynolds.] —yet think so little of him, converse so little with him, serve everything before him, and prefer everything above him? Whence have we our mercies but from his hand? Who, besides him, maintains our breath this moment? Would he call for our spirits this moment, they must depart from us to attend his command. There is not a moment wherein our unworthy carriage is not aggravated, because there is not a moment wherein he is not our Guardian, and gives us not tastes of a fresh bounty. And it is no light aggravation of our crime, that we injure him without whose bounty, in giving us our being, we had not been capable of casting contempt upon him: that he that hath the greatest stamp of his image, man, should deserve the character of the worst of his rebels: that he who hath only reason by the gift of God to judge of the equity of the laws of God, should swell against them as grievous, and the government of the Lawgiver as burdensome. Can it lessen the crime to use the principle wherein we excel the beasts to the disadvantage of God, who endowed us with that principle above the beasts?

1. It is a debasing of God beyond what the devil doth at present. He is more excusable in his present state of acting, than man is in his present refusing God for his rule and end. He strives against a God that exerciseth upon him a vindictive justice; we debase a God that loads us with his daily mercies. The despairing devils are excluded from any mercy or divine patience; but we are not only under the long-suffering of his patience, but the large expressions of his bounty. He would not be governed by him when he was only his bountiful Creator: we refuse to be guided by him after he hath given us the blessing of creation from his own hand, and the more obliging blessings of redemption by the hand and blood of his Son. It cannot be imagined that the devils and the damned should ever make God their end, since he hath assured them he will not be their happiness; and shut up all his perfections from their experimental notice, but those of his power to preserve them, and his justice to punish them. They have no grant from God of ever having a heart to comply with his will, or ever having the honor to be actively employed for his glory. They have some plea for their present contempt of God, not in regard of his nature, for he is infinitely amiable, excellent and lovely, but in regard of his administration toward them. But what plea can man have for his practical atheism, who lives by his power, is sustained by his bounty, and solicited by his Spirit? What an ungrateful thing is it to put off the nature of man for that of devils,

and dishonor God under mercy, as the devils do under his wrathful anger!

2. It is an ungrateful contempt of God, who cannot be injurious to us. He cannot do us wrong, because he cannot be unjust (Genesis 18:25): "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" His nature doth as much abhor unrighteousness, as love a communicative goodness: he never commanded anything but what was highly conducive to the happiness of man. Infinite goodness can no more injure man than it can dishonor itself: it lays out itself in additions of kindness, and while we debase him, he continues to benefit us; and is it not an unparalleled ingratitude to turn our backs upon an object so lovely, an object so loving, in the midst of varieties of allurements from him? God did create intellectual creatures, angels and men, that he might communicate more of himself and his own goodness and holiness to man, than creatures of a lower rank were capable of. What do we do, by rejecting him as our rule and end, but cross, as much as in us lies, God's end in our creation, and shut our souls against the communications of those perfections he was so willing to bestow? We use him as if he intended us the greatest wrong, when it is impossible for him to do any to any of his creatures.

3. Consider the misery which will attend such a temper if it continue predominant. Those that thrust God away as their happiness and end, can expect no other but to be thrust away by him, as to any relief and compassion. A distance from God here can look for nothing, but a remoteness from God hereafter. When the devil, a creature of vast endowments, would advance himself above God, and instruct man to commit the same sin, he is "cursed above all creatures." [Note: Genesis 3:14.] When we will not acknowledge him a God of all glory, we shall be separated from him as a God of all comfort: "All they that are afar off shall perish" (Psalms 73:27). This is the spring of all woe. What the Prodigal suffered, was because he would leave his father, and live of himself. Whosoever is ambitious to be his own heaven, will at last find his soul to become its own hell. As it loved all things for itself, so it shall be grieved with all things for itself. As it would be its own god against the right of God, it shall then be its own tormentor by the justice of God.

Secondly, Watch against this atheism, and be daily employed in the mortification of it. In every action we should make the inquiry, What is the rule I observe? Is it God's will or my own? Whether do my intentions tend to set up God or self? As much as we destroy this, we abate the power of sin: these two things are the head of the serpent in us, which we must be bruising by the power of the cross. Sin is nothing else but a turning from God, and centering in self, and most in the inferior part of self: if we bend our force against those two, self-will and self-ends, we shall intercept atheism at the spring head, take away that which doth constitute and animate all sin: the sparks must vanish if the fire be quenched which affords them fuel. They are but two short things to ask in every undertaking: Is God my le in regard of his will? Is God my end in regard of his glory? All sin lies in the neglect of these, all grace lies in the practice of them. Without some degree of the mortification of these; we cannot make profitable and comfortable approaches to God. When we come with idols in our hearts, we shall be answered according to the multitude and the baseness of them too. [Note: Ezekiel 14:4.] What expectation of a good look from him can we have, when we come before him with undeifying thoughts of him, a petition in our mouths, and a sword in our hearts, to stab his honor To this purpose,

1. Be often in the views of the excellencies of God. When we have no intercourse with God by delightful meditations, we begin to be estranged from him, and prepare ourselves to live without

God in the world. Strangeness is the mother and nurse of disaffection: we slight men sometimes because we know them not. The very beasts delight in the company of men; when being tamed and familiar, they become acquainted with their disposition. A daily converse with God would discover so much of loveliness in his nature, so much of sweetness in his ways, that our injurious thoughts of God would wear off, and we should count it our honor to condemn ourselves and magnify him. By this means a slavish fear, which is both a dishonor to God and a torment to the soul, [Note: 1 John 4:18.] and the root of atheism, will be cast out, and an in Tenuous fear of him wrought in the heart. Exercised thoughts on him would issue out in affections to him, which would engage our hearts to make him both our rule and our end. This course would stifle any temptations to gross atheism, wherewith good souls are sometimes haunted, by confirming us more in the belief of a God, and discourage any attempts to a deliberate practical atheism. We are not like to espouse any principle which is confuted by the delightful converse we daily have with him. The more we thus enter into the presence chamber of God, the more we cling about him with our affections, the more vigorous and lively will the true notion of God grow up in us, and be able to prevent anything which may dishonor him and debase our souls. Let us therefore consider him as the only happiness; set up the true God in our understandings; possess our hearts with a deep sense of his desirable excellency above all other things. This is the main thing we are to do in order to our great business: all the directions in the world, with the neglect of this, will be insignificant ciphers. The neglect of this is common, and is the basis of all the mischiefs which happen to the souls of men.

2. Prize and study the Scripture. We can have no delight in meditation on him, unless we know him; and we cannot know him but by the means of his own revelation; when the revelation is despised, the revealer will be of little esteem. Men do not throw off God from being their rule, till they throw off Scripture from being their guide; and God must needs be cast off from being an end, when the Scripture is rejected from being a rule. Those that do not care to know his will, that love to be ignorant of his nature; can never be affected to his honor. Let therefore the subtleties of reason veil to the doctrine of faith, and the humor of the will to the command of the word.

3. Take heed of sensual pleasures, and be very watchful and cautious in the use of those comforts God allows us. Job was afraid, when his “sons feasted, that they should curse God in their hearts.” [Note: Job 4:4.] It was not without cause that the apostle Peter joined sobriety with watchfulness and prayer (1 Peter 4:7): “The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”—A moderate use of worldly comforts.—Prayer is the great acknowledgment of God, and too much sensuality is a hindrance of this, and a step to atheism. Belshazzar’s lifting himself up against the Lord, and not glorifying of God, is charged upon his sensuality (Daniel 5:23). Nothing is more apt to quench the notions of God, and root out the conscience of him, than an addictedness to sensual pleasures. Therefore take heed of that snare.

4. Take heed of sins against knowledge. The more sins against knowledge are committed, the more careless we are, and the more careless we shall be of God and his honor; we shall more fear his judicial power; and the more we fear that, the more we shall disaffect that God in whose hand vengeance is, and to whom it doth belong. Atheism in conversation proceeds to atheism in affection, and that will endeavor to sink into ageism in opinion and judgment. The sum of the whole.—And now consider in the whole what has been spoken.

1. Man would set himself up as his own rule. He disowns the rule of God, is unwilling to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him, negligent in using the means for the knowledge of his will, and endeavors to shake it off when any notices of it break in upon him; when he cannot expel it, he hath no pleasure in the consideration of it, and the heart swells against it. When the notions of the will of God are entertained, it is on some other consideration, or with wavering and unsettled affections. Many times men design to improve some lust by his truth. This unwillingness respects truth as it is most spiritual and holy; as it most relates and leads to God; as it is most contrary to self. He is guilty of contempt of the will of God, which is seen in every presumptuous breach of his law; in the natural aversions to the declaration of his will and mind, which way soever he turns; in slighting that part of his will which is most for his honor; in the awkwardness of the heart when it is to pay God a service. A constraint in the first engagement, slowness in the service, in regard of the matter, in regard of the frame, without a natural vigor. Many distractions, much weariness, in deserting the rule of God, when our expectations are not answered upon our service, in breaking promises with God. Man naturally owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing: the rule of Satan; the will of man; in complying more with the dictates of men than the will of God; in observing that which is materially so, not because it is his will, but the injunctions of men; in obeying the will of man when it is contrary to the will of God. This man doth in order to the setting up himself. This is natural to man as he is corrupted. Men are dissatisfied with their own consciences when they contradict the desires of self. Most actions in the world are done, more because they are agreeable to self, than as they are honorable to God; as they are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self. It is evident in neglects of taking God's directions upon emergent occasions; in counting the actions of others to be good or bad, as they suit with, or spurn against our fancies and humors. Man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator, in striving against his law; disapproving of his methods of government in the world; in impatience in our particular concerns; envying the gifts and prosperity of others; corrupt matter or ends of prayer or praise; bold interpretations of the judgments of God in the world; mixing rules in the worship of God with those which have been ordained by him; suiting interpretations of Scripture with our own minds and humors; falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will grates upon us, and crosseth ours.

2. Man would be his own end. This is natural and universal. This is seen in frequent self-applauses and inward overweening reflections; in ascribing the glory of what we do or have to ourselves; in desire of self-pleasing doctrines; in being highly concerned in injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God; in trusting in ourselves; in workings for carnal self against the light of our own consciences: this is a usurping God's prerogative, vilifying God, destroying God. Man would make anything his end or happiness rather than God. This appears in the fewer thoughts we have of him than of anything else; in the greedy pursuit of the world; in the strong addictedness to sensual pleasures; in paying a service, upon any success in the world, to instruments more than to God: this is a debasing God in setting up a creature, but more in setting up a base lust; it is a denying of God. Man would make himself the end of all creatures. In pride; using the creatures contrary to the end God hath appointed: this is to dishonor God, and it is diabolical. Man would make himself the end of God; in loving God, because of some self-pleasing benefits distributed by him; in abstinence from some sins, because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption; in performing duties merely for a selfish interest, which is evident in unwieldiness in religious duties, where self is not concerned; in calling upon God only in a time

of necessity; in begging his assistance to our own projects after we have by our own craft, laid the plot; in impatience upon a refusal of our desires; in selfish aims we have in our duties: this is a vilifying God, a dethroning him; in unworthy imaginations of God, universal in man by nature. Hence spring idolatry, superstition, presumption, the common disease of the world. This is a vilifying God; worse than idolatry, worse than absolute atheism. Natural desires to be distant from him; no desires for the remembrance of him; no desires of converse with him; no desires of a thorough return to him; no desire of any close imitation of him.

On Spiritual Worship

ON SPIRITUAL WORSHIP John 4:24.—God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Having thus despatched the first proposition, “God is a Spirit,” it will not be amiss to handle the inference our Saviour makes from that proposition, which is the second observation propounded.

Doct. That the worship due from us to God ought to be spiritual, and spiritually performed. Spirit and truth are understood variously. We are to worship God,

1. Not by legal ceremonies. The evangelical administration being called spirit, in opposition to the legal ordinances as carnal; and truth in opposition to them as typical. As the whole Judaical service is called flesh, so the whole evangelical service is called spirit; or spirit may be opposed to the worship at Jerusalem, as it was carnal; truth, to the worship on the Mount Gerizim, because it was false. They had not the true object of worship, nor the true medium of worship as those at Jerusalem had. Their worship should cease, because it was false; and the Jewish worship should cease, because it was carnal. There is no need of a candle when the sun spreads his beams in the air; no need of those ceremonies when the Sun of righteousness appeared; they only served for candles to instruct and direct men till the time of his coming. The shadows are chased away by displaying the substance, so that they can be of no more use in the worship of God, since the end for which they were instituted is expired; and that discovered to us in the gospel, which the Jews sought for in vain among the baggage and stuff of their ceremonies.

2. With a spiritual and sincere frame. In spirit, i. e. with spirit; with the inward operations of all the faculties of our souls, and the cream and flower of them; and the reason is, because there ought to be a worship suitable to the nature of God; and as the worship was to be spiritual, so the exercise of that worship ought to be in a spiritual manner. [Note: Lingend. Tom. II. p. 777.] It shall be a worship “in truth,” because the true God shall be adored without those vain imaginations and fantastic resemblances of him, [Note: Taylor’s Exemplar, Preface, § 30.] which were common among the blind Gentiles, and contrary to the glorious nature of God, and unworthy ingredients in religious services. It shall be a worship “in spirit,” without those carnal rites the degenerate Jews rested on; such a posture of soul which is the life and ornament of every service God looks for at your hands. There must be some proportion between the object adored, and the manner in which we adore it; it must not be a mere corporeal worship, because God is not a body; but it must rise from the centre of our soul, because God is a Spirit. If he were a body, a bodily worship might suit him, images might be fit to represent him; but being a Spirit, our bodily services enter us not into communion with him. Being a spirit, we must banish from our minds all carnal imaginations of him, and separate from our wills all cold and dissembled affections to him. We must not only have a loud voice, but an elevated soul; not only a bended knee, but a broken heart; not only a supplicating tone, but a groaning spirit; not only a ready ear for the word, but a receiving heart; and this shall be of greater value with him, than the most costly outward services offered at Gerizim or Jerusalem. Our Saviour certainly meant not by worshipping in spirit, only the matter of the

evangelical service, as oppose to the legal administration, without the manner wherein it was to be performed. It is true, God always sought a worship in spirit; he expected the heart of the worshipper should join with his instituted rights of adoration in every exercise of them; but he expects such a carriage more under the gospel administration, because of the clearer discoveries of his nature made in it, and the greater assistances conveyed by it.

I shall, therefore, 1. Lay down some general propositions. 2. Show what this spiritual worship Isaiah 3:1-26. Why we must offer to God a spiritual service. 4. The use.

1. Some general propositions.

Prop. I. The right exercise of worship is founded upon, and riseth from, the spirituality of God. [Note: Ames Medul. lib. ii, c. 4. § 20.] The first ground of the worship we render to God, is the infinite excellency of his nature, which is not only one attribute, but results from all; for God, as God, is the object of worship; and the notion of God consists not in thinking him wise, good, just, but all those infinitely beyond any conception; and hence it follows that God is an object infinitely to be loved and honored. His goodness is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as a motive of our homage (Psalms 130:4): "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." Fear, in the Scripture dialect, signifies the "whole worship of God" (Acts 10:35): but in every nation, "he that fears him" is accepted of him. [Note: So 2 Kings 17:32-33.] If God should act towards men according to the rigors of his justice due to them for the least of their crimes, there could be no exercise of any affection but that of despair, which could not engender a worship of God, which ought to be joined with love, not with hatred. The beneficence and patience of God, and his readiness to pardon men, is the reason of the honor they return to him; and this is so evident a motive, that generally the idolatrous world ranked those creatures in the number of their gods, which they perceived useful and beneficial to mankind, as the sun and moon, the Egyptians the ox, &c. And the more beneficial anything appeared to mankind, the higher station men gave it in the rank of their deities, and bestowed a more peculiar and solemn worship upon it. Men worshipped God to procure and continue his favor, which would not have been acted by them, had they not conceived it a pleasing thing to him to be merciful and gracious. Sometimes his justice is proposed to us as a motive of worship (Hebrews 12:28-29): "Serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire;" which includes his holiness, whereby he doth hate sin, as well as his wrath, whereby he doth punish it. Who but a mad and totally brutish person, or one that was resolved to make war against heaven, could behold the effects of God's anger in the world, consider him in his justice as a "consuming fire," and despise him, and rather be drawn out by that consideration to blasphemy and despair, than to seek all ways to appease him? Now though the infinite power of God, his unspeakable wisdom, his incomprehensible goodness, the holiness of his nature, the vigilance of his evidence, the bounty of his hand, signify to man that he should love and honor him, and are the motives of worship; yet the apirituality of his nature is the rule of worship, and directs us to render our duty to him with all the powers of our soul. As his goodness beams out upon us, worship is due in justice to him; and as he is the most excellent nature, veneration is due to him in the highest manner with the choicest affections. So that indeed the spirituality of God comes chiefly into consideration in matter of worship: all his perfections are grounded upon this: he could not be infinite, immutable, omniscient, if he were a corporeal being; [Note: Amirald, Dissert. 6, disp. i, b. 11.] we cannot give him a worship unless we judge him worth, excellent, and deserving a worship at our hands; and we cannot judge him worthy of a worship,

unless we have some apprehensions and admirations of his infinite virtues; and we cannot apprehend and admire those perfections, but as we see them as causes shining in their effects. When we see, therefore, the frame of the world to be the work of his power, the order of the world to be the fruit of his wisdom, and the usefulness of the world to be the product of his goodness, we find the motives and reasons of worship; and weighing that this power wisdom, goodness, infinitely transcend any corporeal nature, we find a rule of worship, that it ought to be offered by us in a manner suitable to such a nature as is infinitely above any bodily being. His being a Spirit declares what he is; his other perfections declare what kind of Spirit he is. All God's perfections suppose him a Spirit; all centre in this; his wisdom doth not suppose him merciful, or his mercy suppose him omniscient; there may be distinct notions of those, but all suppose him to be of a spiritual nature. How cold and frozen will our devotions be, if we consider not his omniscience, whereby he discerns our hearts! How carnal will our services be, if we consider him not as a pure Spirit! [Note: Amyraut, de Relig.] In our offers to, and transactions with men, we deal not with them as mere animals, but as rational creatures; and we debase their natures if we treat them otherwise; and if we have not raised apprehensions of God's spiritual nature in our treating with him, but allow him only such frames as we think fit enough for men, we debase his spirituality to the littleness of our own being. We must, therefore, possess our souls with this; we shall else render him no better than a fleshly service. We do not much concern ourselves in those things of which we are either utterly ignorant, or have but slight apprehensions of. That is the first proposition;—The right exercise of worship is grounded upon the spirituality of God.

Prop. II. This spiritual worship of God is manifest by the light of nature, to be due to him. In reference to this, consider,

1. The outward means or matter of that worship which would be acceptable to God, was not known by the light of nature. The law for a worship, and for a spiritual worship by the faculties of our souls was natural, and part of the law of creation; though the determination of the particular acts, whereby God would have this homage testified, was of positive institution, and depended not upon the law of creation. Though Adam in innocence knew God was to be worshipped, yet by nature he did not know by what outward acts he was to pay this respect, or at what time he was more solemnly to be exercised in it than at another: this depended upon the directions God, as the sovereign Governor and Lawgiver, should prescribe. You therefore find the positive institutions of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and the determination of the time of worship (Genesis 2:3; Genesis 2:17). Had there been any such notion in Adam naturally, as strong as that other, that a worship was due to God, there would have been found some relics of these modes universally consented to by mankind, as well as of the other. But though all nations have by an universal consent concurred in the acknowledgment of the being of God, and his right to adoration, and the obligation of the creature to it; and that there ought to be some public rule and polity in matters of religion (for no nation hath been in the world without a worship, and without external acts and certain ceremonies to signify that worship); yet their modes and rites have been as various as their climates, unless in that common notion of sacrifices, not descending to them by nature, but tradition from Adam; and the various ways of worship have been more provoking. than pleasing. Every nation suited the kind of worship to their particular ends and polities they designed to rule by. How God was to be worshipped is more difficult to be discerned by nature with its eyes out than with its eyes clear. [Note: King, on Jonah, p. 63.] The pillars upon which the worship of God

stands cannot be discerned without revelation, no more than blind Samson could tell where the pillars of the Philistines' theatre stood, without one to conduct him. What Adam could not see with his sound eyes, we cannot with our dim eyes; he must be told from heaven what worship was fit for the God of heaven. It is not by nature that we can have such a full prospect of God as may content and quiet us; this is the noble effect of Divine revelation; He only knows himself, and can only make himself known to us. It could not be supposed that an infinite God should have no perfections but what were visible in the works of his hands; and that these perfections should not be infinitely greater, than as they were sensible in their present effects: this had been to apprehend God a limited Being; meaner than he is. Now it is impossible to honor God as we ought, unless we know him as he is; and we could not know him as he is, without divine revelation from himself; for none but God can acquaint us with his own nature: and therefore the nations void of this conduct, heaped up modes of worship from their own imaginations, unworthy of the majesty of God, and below the nature of man. A rational man would scarce have owned such for signs of honor, as the Scripture mentions in the services of Baal and Dagon; much less an infinitely wise and glorious God. And when God had signified his mind to his own people, how unwilling were they to rest satisfied with God's determination, but would be warping to their own inventions, and make gods, and ways of worship to themselves! [Note: Amos 5:26.] as in the matter of the golden calf, as was lately spoken of.

2. Though the outward manner of worship acceptable to God could not be known without revelation, and those revelations might be various; yet the inward manner of worship with our spirits was manifest by nature: and not only manifest by nature to Adam in innocence, but after his fall, and the scales he had brought upon his understanding by that fall. When God gave him his positive institutions before the fall, or whatsoever additions God should have made, had he persisted in that state; or, when he appointed him, after his fall, to testify his acknowledgment of him by sacrifices, there needed no command to him to make those acknowledgments by those outward ways prescribed to him, with the intention and prime affection of his spirit: this nature would instruct him in without revelation; for he could not possibly have any semblance of reason to think that the offering of beasts, or the presenting the first fruits of the increase of the ground, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over him and his bounty to him, was sufficient, without devoting to him that part wherein the image of his Creator did consist: he could not but discern, by a reflection upon his own being, that he was made for God as well as by God: for it is a natural principle of which the apostle speaks (Romans 11:36), "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things," &c.: that the whole whereof he did consist was due to God; and that his body, the dreggy and dusty part of his nature, was not fit to be brought alone before God, without that nobler principle, which he had, by creation, linked with it. Nothing in the whole law of nature, as it is informed of religion, was clearer, next to the being of a God, than this manner of worshipping God with the mind and spirit. And as the Gentiles never sunk so low into the mud of idolatry, as to think the images they worshiped were really their gods, but the representations, or habitations of their gods; so they never deserted this principle in the notion of it, that God was to be honored with the best they were, and the best they had: as they never denied the being of a God in the notion, though they did in the practice, so they never rejected this principle in notion, though they did, and now most men do, in the inward observation of it: it was a maxim among them that God was mens animus, mind and spirit, and therefore was to be honored with the mind and spirit: that religion did not consist in the ceremonies of the body, but the work of the soul; whence the speech of one of

them: "Sacrifice to the gods, not so much clothed with purple garments as a pure heart:" [Note: Menander. Grot. de Veritat Relig. Lib. iv. § 12.] and of another: "God regards not the multitude of the sacrifices, but the disposition of the sacrificer." [Note: Iamblic.] It is not fit we should deny God the cream and the flower, and give him the flotten part and the stalks. And with what reverence and intention of mind they thought their worship was to be performed, is evident by the priests crying out often, Hoc age, Mind this, let your spirits be intent upon it. This could not but result,

(1.) From the knowledge of ourselves. It is a natural principle, "God hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalms 100:1-2). Man knows himself to be a rational creature; as a creature he was to serve his Creator, and as a rational creature with the best part of that rational nature he derived from him. By the same act of reason that he knows himself to be a creature, he knows himself to have a Creator; that this Creator is more excellent than himself, and that an honor is due from him to the Creator for framing of him; and, therefore, this honor was to be offered to him by the most excellent part which was framed by him. Man cannot consider himself as a thinking, understanding, being, but he must know that he must give God the honor of his thoughts, and worship him with those faculties whereby he thinks, wills, and acts. [Note: Amyraut. Mor. Tom. I. pp. 309, 310.] He must know his faculties were given him to act, and to act for the glory of that God who gave him his soul, and the faculties of it; and he could not in reason think they must be only active in his own service, and the service of the creature, and idle and unprofitable in the service of his Creator. With the same powers of our soul, whereby we contemplate God, we must also worship God; we cannot think of him but with our minds, nor love him but with our will; and we cannot worship him without the acts of thinking and loving, and therefore cannot worship him without the exercise of our inward faculties: how is it possible then for any man that knows his own nature, to think that extended hands, bended knees, and lifted up eyes, were sufficient acts of worship, without a quickened and active spirit?

(2.) From the knowledge of God. As there was a knowledge of God by nature, so the same nature did dictate to man, that God was to be glorified as God; the apostle implies the inference in the charge he brings against them for neglecting it. [Note: Romans 1:21.] "We should speak of God as he is," said one; [Note: Bias.] and the same reason would inform them that they were to act towards God as he is. The excellency of the object required a worship according to the dignity of his nature, which could not be answered but by the most serious inward affection, as well as outward decency; and a want of this cannot but be judged to be unbecoming the majesty of the Creator of the world, and the excellency of religion. No nation, no person, did ever assert, that the vilest part of man was enough for the most excellent Being, as God is; that a bodily service could be a sufficient acknowledgment for the greatness of God, or a sufficient return for the bounty of God. Man could not but know that he was to act in religion conformably to the object of religion, and to the excellency of his own soul: [Note: Amyraut, ib.] the notion of a God was sufficient to fill the mind of man with admiration and reverence, and the first conclusion from it would be to honor God, and that he have all the affection placed on him that so infinite and spiritual a Being did deserve: the progress then would be, that this excellent Being was to be honored with the motions of the understanding and will, with the purest and most spiritual powers in the nature of man, because he was a spiritual being, and had nothing of matter mingled with him. Such a brutish imagination, to suppose that blood and fumes, beasts and incense, could please a Deity, without a spiritual frame, cannot be supposed to befall any but those that had lost their reason in the rubbish

of sense. Mere rational nature could never conclude that so excellent a Spirit would be put off with a mere animal service; an attendance of matter and body without spirit, when they themselves, of an inferior nature, would be loth to sit down contented with an outside service from those that belong to them; so that this instruction of our Saviour, that God is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, is conformable to the sentiments of nature, and drawn from the most undeniable principles of it. The excellency of God's nature, and the excellent constitution of human faculties, concur naturally to support this persuasion; this was as natural to be known by men, as the necessity of justice and temperance for the support of human societies and bodies. It is to be feared, that if there be not among us such brutish apprehensions, there are such brutish dealings with God, in our services, against the light of nature; when we place all our worship of God in outward attendances and drooping countenances, with unbelieving frames and formal devotions; when prayer is muttered over in private, slightly, as a parrot learns lessons by rote, not understanding what it speaks, or to what end it speaks it; not glorifying God in thought and spirit, with understanding and will.

Prop. III. Spiritual worship therefore was always required by God, and always offered to him by one or other. Man had a perpetual obligation upon him to such a worship from the nature of God; and what is founded upon the nature of God is invariable. This and that particular mode of worship may wax old as a garment, and as a vesture may be folded up and changed, as the expression is of the heavens; [Note: Hebrews 1:11-12.] but God endures forever; his spirituality fails not, therefore a worship of him in spirit must run through all ways and rites of worship. God must cease to be Spirit, before any service but that which is spiritual can be accepted by him. The light of nature is the light of God; the light of nature being unchangeable, what was dictated by that, was always, and will always be, required by God. The worship of God being perpetually due from the creature, the worshipping him as God is as perpetually his right. Though the outward expressions of his honor were different, one way in Paradise (for a worship was then due, since a solemn time for that worship was appointed), another under the law, another under the gospel; the angels also worship God in heaven, and fall down before his throne; yet, though they differ in rites, they agree in this necessary ingredient, all rites, though of a different shape, must be offered to him, not as carcasses, but animated with the affections of the soul. Abel's sacrifice had not been so excellent in God's esteem, without those gracious habits and affections working in his soul. [Note: Hebrews 11:4.] Faith works by love; his heart was on fire as well as his sacrifice. Cain rested upon his present; perhaps thought he had obliged God; he depended upon the outward ceremony, but sought not for the inward purity: it was an offering brought to the Lord; [Note: Genesis 4:5.] he had the right object, but not the right manner (Genesis 4:7.): "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" And in the command afterwards to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," was the direction in all our religious acts and walkings with God. A sincere act of the mind and will, looking above and beyond all symbols, extending the soul to a pitch far above the body, and seeing the day of Christ through the veil of the ceremonies, was required by God: and though Moses, by God's order, had instituted a multitude of carnal ordinances, sacrifices, washings, oblations of sensible things, and recommended to the people the diligent observation of those statutes, by the allurements of promises and denouncing of threatenings; as if there were nothing else to be regarded, and the true workings of grace were to be buried under a heap of ceremonies; yet sometimes he doth point them to the inward worship, and, by the command of God, requires of them the "circumcision of the heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16), the turning to God with "all their heart

and all their soul" (Deuteronomy 30:10): whereby they might recollect, that it was the engagement of the heart and the worship of the Spirit that was most agreeable to God; and that he took not any pleasure in their observance of ceremonies, without true piety within, and the true purity of their thoughts.

Prop. IV. It is, therefore, as much every man's duty to worship God in spirit, as it is their duty to worship him. Worship is so due to him as God, as that he that denies it disowns his deity; and spiritual worship is so due, that he that waives it denies his spirituality. It is a debt of justice we owe to God, to worship him; and it is as much a debt of justice to worship him according to his nature. Worship is nothing else but a rendering to God the honor that is due to him; and, therefore, the right posture of our spirits in it is as much, or more, due, than the material worship in the modes of his own prescribing: that is, grounded both upon his nature and upon his command; this only upon his command, that is perpetually due; whereas, the channel wherein outward worship runs may be dried up, and the river diverted another way; such a worship wherein the mind thinks of God, feels a sense of God, has a spirit consecrated to God, the heart glow in with affections to God; it is else a mocking God with a feather. A rational nature must worship God with that wherein the glory of God doth most sparkle in him. God is most visible in the frame of the soul, it is there his image glitters; he hath given us a jewel as well as a case, and the jewel as well as the case we must return to him; the spirit is God's gift, and must "return to him;" [Note: Ecclesiastes 12:7.] it must return to him in every service morally, as well as it must return to him at last physically. It is not fit we should serve our Maker only with that which is the brute in us, and withhold from him that which doth constitute us reasonable creatures; we must give him our bodies, but a "living sacrifice." [Note: Romans 12:1.] If the spirit be absent from God when the body is before him, we present a dead sacrifice; it is morally dead in the duty, though it be naturally alive in the posture and action. It is not an indifferent thing whether we shall worship God or no; nor is it an indifferent thing whether we shall worship him with our spirits or no; as the excellency of man's knowledge consists in knowing things as they are in truth, so the excellency of the will in willing things as they are in goodness. As it is the excellency of man, to know God as God; so it is no less his excellency, as well as his duty to honor God as God. As the obligation we have to the power of God for our being, binds us to a worship of him; so the obligation we have to his bounty for fashioning us according to his own image, binds us to an exercise of that part wherein his image doth consist. God hath "made all things for himself" (Proverbs 16:4), that is, for the evidence of his own goodness and wisdom; we are therefore to render him a glory according to the excellency of his nature, discovered in the frame of our own. It is as much our sin not to glorify God as God, as not to attempt the glorifying of him at all; it is our sin not to worship God as God, as well as to omit the testifying any respect at all to him. As the Divine nature is the object of worship, so the Divine perfections are to be honored in worship; we do not honor God if we honor him not as he is; we honor him not as a Spirit, if we think him not worthy of the ardors and ravishing admirations of our spirits. If we think the devotions of the body are sufficient for him, we contract him into the condition of our own being; and not only deny him to be a spiritual nature, but dash out all those perfections which he could not be possessed of were he not a Spirit.

Prop. V. The ceremonial law was abolished to promote the spirituality of divine worship. That service was gross, carnal, calculated for an infant and sensitive church. It consisted in rudiments, the circumcision of the flesh, the blood and smoke of sacrifices, the steams of incense,

observation of days, distinction of meats, corporal purifications; every leaf of the law is clogged with some rite to be particularly observed by them. The spirituality of worship lay veiled under a thick cloud, that the people could not behold the glory of the gospel, which lay covered under those shadows (2 Corinthians 3:13): "They could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:" They understood not the glory and spiritual intent of the law, and therefore came short of that spiritual frame in the worship of God, which was their duty. And therefore in opposition to this administration, the worship of God under the gospel is called by our Saviour in the text, a worship in spirit; more spiritual for the matter, more spiritual for the motives, and more spiritual for the manner and frames of worship.

1. This legal service is called flesh in Scripture, in opposition to the gospel, which is called spirit. The ordinances of the law, though of divine institution, are dignified by the apostle with no better a title than carnal ordinances, [Note: Hebrews 9:10.] and a carnal command: [Note: Hebrews 7:16.] but the gospel is called the ministration of the Spirit, as being attended with a special and spiritual efficacy on the minds of men. [Note: 2 Corinthians 3:8.] And when the generate Galatians, after having tasted of the pure streams of the gospel, turned about to drink of the thicker streams of the law, the apostle tells them, that they begun in the spirit and would now be made perfect in the flesh; [Note: Galatians 3:8.] they would leave the righteousness of faith for a justification by works. The moral law, which is in its own nature spiritual, [Note: Romans 7:14.] in regard of the abuse of it, in expectation of justification by the outward works of it, is called flesh: much more may the ceremonial administration, which was never intended to run parallel with the moral, nor had any foundation in nature as the other had. That whole economy consisted in sensible and material things, which only touched the flesh: it is called the letter and the oldness of the letter; [Note: Romans 7:6.] as letters, which are but empty sounds of themselves, but put together and formed into words, signify something to the mind of the hearer or reader: an old letter, a thing of no efficacy upon the spirit, but as a law written upon paper. The gospel hath an efficacious spirit attending it, strongly working upon the mind and will, and moulding the soul into a spiritual frame for God, according to the doctrine of the gospel; the one is old and decays, the other is new and increaseth daily. And as the law itself is called flesh, so the observers of it and resters in it are called Israel after the flesh; [Note: 1 Corinthians 10:18.] and the evangelical worshipper is called a Jew after the spirit (Romans 2:29). They were Israel after the flesh as born of Jacob; not Israel after the spirit as born of God; and therefore the apostle calls them Israel and not Israel; [Note: Romans 9:6.] Israel after a carnal birth, not Israel after a spiritual; Israel in the circumcision of the flesh, not Israel by a regeneration of the heart.

2. The legal ceremonies were not a fit means to bring the heart into a spiritual frame. They had a spiritual intent; the rock and manna prefigured the salvation and spiritual nourishment by the Redeemer. [Note: 1 Corinthians 10:3-4.] The sacrifices were to point them to the justice of God in the punishment of sin, and the mercy of God in substituting them in their steads, as types of the Redeemer and the ransom by his blood. The circumcision of the flesh was to instruct them in the circumcision of the heart: they were flesh in regard of their matter, weakness and cloudiness, spiritual in regard of their intent and signification; they did instruct, but not efficaciously work strong spiritual affections in the soul of the worshipper. They were weak and beggarly elements; [Note: Galatians 4:9.] had neither wealth to enrich nor strength to nourish the soul: they could not perfect the comers to them, or put them into a frame agreeable to the nature of God, [Note: Hebrews 9:9;

Hebrews 10:1.] nor purge the conscience from those dead and dull dispositions which were by nature in them: [Note: Hebrews 9:14.] being carnal they could not have an efficacy to purify the conscience of the offerer and work spiritual effects: had they continued without the exhibition of Christ, they could never have wrought any change in us or purchased any favor for us. [Note: Burges' Vind. p. 256.] At the best they were but shadows, and came inexpressibly short of the efficacy of that person and state whose shadows they were. The shadow of a man is too weak to perform what the man himself can do, because it wants the life, spirit, and activity of the substance: the whole pomp and scene was suited more to the sensitive than the intellectual nature; and, like pictures, pleased the fancy of children rather than improved their reason. The Jewish state was a state of childhood, [Note: Galatians 5:2.] and that administration a pedagogy. [Note: Galatians 4:24.] The law was a schoolmaster fitted for their weak and childish capacity, and could no more spiritualize the heart, than the teachings in a primer-school can enable the mind, and make it fit for affairs of state; and because they could not better the spirit, they were instituted only for a time, as elements delivered to an infant age, which naturally lives a life of sense rather than a life of reason. It was also a servile state, which doth rather debase than elevate the mind; rather carnalize than spiritualize the heart: besides, it is a sense of mercy that both melts and elevates the heart into a spiritual frame: "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" [Note: Psalms 130:4.] and they had, in that state, but some glimmerings of mercy in the daily bloody intimations of justice. There was no sacrifice for some sins, but a cutting off without the least hints of pardon; and in the yearly remembrance of sin there was as much to shiver them with fear, as to possess them with hopes; and such a state which always held them under the conscience of sin, could not produce a free spirit, which was necessary for a worship of God according to his nature.

3. In their use they rather hindered than furthered a spiritual worship. In their own nature they did not tend to the obstructing a spiritual worship, for then they had been contrary to the nature of religion, and the end of God who appointed them; nor did God cover the evangelical doctrine under the clouds of the legal administration, to hinder the people of Israel from perceiving it, but because they were not yet capable to bear the splendor of it, had it been clearly set before them. The shining of the face of Moses was too dazzling for their weak eyes, and therefore there was a necessity of a veil, not for the things themselves, but the "weakness of their eyes." [Note: 2 Corinthians 3:13-14.] The carnal affections of that people sunk down into the things themselves; stuck in the outward pomp, and pierced not through the veil to the spiritual intent of them; and by the use of them without rational conceptions, they besotted their minds and became senseless of those spiritual motions required of them. Hence came all their expectations of a carnal Messiah; the veil of ceremonies was so thick, and the film upon their eyes so condensed, that they could not look through the veil to the Spirit of Christ; they beheld not the heavenly Canaan for the beauty of the earthly; nor minded the regeneration of the spirit, while they rested upon the purifications of the flesh; the prevalency of sense and sensitive affections diverted their minds from inquiring into the intent of them. Sense and matter are often clogs to the mind, and sensible objects are the same often to spiritual motions. Our souls are never more raised than when they are abstracted from the entanglements of them. A pompous worship, made up of many sensible objects, weakens the spirituality of religion. Those that are most zealous for outward, are usually most cold and indifferent in inward observances; and those that overdo in carnal modes, usually underdo in spiritual affections. This was the Jewish state. [Note: Illyric de Velam. Mosis, p. 221 &c.] The

nature of the ceremonies being pompous and earthly by their show and beauty, meeting with their weakness and childish affections, filled their eyes with an outward lustre, allured their minds and detained them from seeking things higher and more spiritual; the kernel of those rights lay concealed in a thick shell; the spiritual glory was little seen, and the spiritual sweetness little tasted. Unless the Scripture be diligently searched, it seems to transfer the worship of God from the true faith and the spiritual motions of the heart, and stake it down to outward observances, and the opus operatum. Besides, the voice of the law did only declare sacrifices, and invited the worshippers to them with a promise of the atonement of sin, turning away the wrath of God. It never plainly acquainted them that those things were types and shadows of something future; that they were only outward purifications of the flesh; it never plainly told them, at the time of appointing them, that those sacrifices could not abolish sin, and reconcile them to God. Indeed, we see more of them since their death and dissection, in that one Epistle to the Hebrews, than can be discerned in the five books of Moses. Besides, man naturally affects a carnal life, and therefore affects a carnal worship; he designs the gratifying his sense, and would have a religion of the same nature. Most men have no mind to busy their reasons about the things of sense, and are naturally unwilling to raise them up to those things which are allied to the spiritual nature of God; and therefore the more spiritual any ordinance is, the more averse is the heart of man to it. There is a simplicity of the gospel from which our minds are easily corrupted by things that pleasure the sense, as Eve was by the curiosity of her eyes, and the liquorishness of her palate. [Note: 2 Corinthians 11:3.] From this principle hath sprung all the idolatry in the world. The Jews knew they had a God who had delivered them, but they would have a sensible God to go before them; [Note: Exodus 32:1.] and the papacy at this day is a witness of the truth of this natural corruption.

4. Upon these accounts, therefore, God never testified himself well pleased with that kind of worship. He was not displeased with them, as they were his own institution, and ordained for the representing (though in an obscure manner) the glorious things of the gospel; nor was he offended with those people's observance of them; for, since he had commanded them, it was their duty to perform them, and their sin to neglect them; but he was displeased with them as they were practiced by them, with souls as morally carnal in the practices, as the ceremonies were materially carnal in their substance. It was not their disobedience to observe them; but it was a disobedience, and a contempt of the end of the institution to rest upon them; to be warm in them, and cold in morals; they fed upon the bone and neglected the marrow; pleased themselves with the shell, and sought not for the kernel; they joined not with them the internal worship of God; fear of him, with faith in the promised Seed, which lay veiled under those coverings (Hosea 6:6); "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings;" and therefore he seems sometimes weary of his own institutions, and calls them not his own, but their sacrifices, their feasts (Isaiah 1:11; Isaiah 1:14): they were his by appointment, theirs by abuse; the institution was from his goodness and condescension, therefore his; the corruption of them was from the vice of their nature, therefore theirs. He often blamed them for their carnality in them; showed his dislike of placing all their religion in them; gives the sacrificers, on that account, no better a title than that of the princes of Sodom and Gomorrah; [Note: Isaiah 1:10.] and compares the sacrifices themselves to the "cutting off a dog's neck," "swine's blood," and "the murder of a man." [Note: Isaiah 6:3.] And indeed God never valued them, or expressed any delight in them; he despised the feasts of the wicked (Amos 5:21); and had no esteem for the material offerings of the godly (Psalms 50:13): "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" which he speaks to his

saints and people, before he comes to reprove the wicked; which he begins (ver. 16), "But to the wicked, God said," &c. So slightly he esteems them, that he seems to disown them to be any part of his command, when he brought his people out of the land of Egypt (Jeremiah 7:21): "I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices." He did not value and regard them, in comparison with that inward frame which he had required by the moral law; that being given before the law of ceremonies, obliged them, in the first place, to an observance of those precepts. They seemed to be below the nature of God, and could not of themselves please him. None could in reason persuade themselves that the death of a beast was a proportionable offering for the sin of a man, or ever was intended for the expiation of transgression. In the same rank are all our bodily services under the gospel; a loud voice without spirit, bended bulrushes without inward affections, are no more delightful to God, than the sacrifices of animals; it is but a change of one brute for another of a higher species; a mere brute for that part of man which hath an agreement with brutes; such a service is a mere animal service, and not spiritual.

5. And therefore God never intended that sort of worship to be durable, and had often mentioned the change of it for one more spiritual. It was not good or evil in itself; whatsoever goodness it had was solely derived to it by institution, and therefore it was mutable. It had no conformity with the spiritual nature of God who was to be worshipped, nor with the rational nature of man who was to worship; and therefore he often speaks of taking away the new moons, and feasts, and sacrifices, and all the ceremonial worship, as things he took no pleasure in, to have a worship more suited to his excellent nature; but he never speaks of removing the gospel administration, and the worship prescribed there, as being more agreeable to the nature and perfections of God, and displaying them more illustriously to the world. The apostle tells us, it was to be "disannulled because of its weakness;" [Note: Hebrews 7:18.] a determinate time was fixed for its duration, till the accomplishment of the truth figured under that pedagogy. [Note: Galatians 4:2.] Some of the modes of that worship being only typical, must naturally expire and be insignificant in their use, upon the finishing of that by the Redeemer, which they did prefigure: and other parts of it, though God suffered them so long, because of the weakness of the worshipper, yet because it became not God to be always worshipped in that manner, he would reject them, and introduce another more spiritual and elevated. "Incense and a pure offering" should be offered everywhere unto his name. [Note: Malachi 1:11.] He often told them he would make a "new covenant by the Messiah," and the old should be rejected; [Note: Pascal. Pen. 142.] that the "former things should not be remembered, and the things of old no more considered," when he should do "a new thing in the earth." [Note: Isaiah 43:18-19.] Even the ark of the covenant, the symbol of his presence, and the glory of the Lord in that nation, should not any more be remembered and visited; [Note: Jeremiah 3:16.] that the temple and sacrifices should be rejected, and others established; that the order of the Aaronical priesthood should be abolished, and that of Melchizedek set up in the stead of it, in the person of the Messiah, to endure forever; [Note: Psalms 110:1-7.] that Jerusalem should be changed; a new heaven and earth created; a worship more conformable to heaven, more advantageous to earth. God had proceeded in the removal of some parts of it, before the time of taking down the whole furniture of this house; the pot of manna was lost; Urim and Thummim ceased; the glory of the temple was diminished; and the ignorant people wept at the sight of the one, without raising their faith and hope in the consideration of the other, which was promised to be filled with a spiritual glory. And as soon as ever the gospel was spread in the world, God thundered out his judgments upon that place in which he had fixed all those legal observances; so

that the Jews, in the letter and flesh, could never practise the main part of their worship, since they were expelled from that place where it was only to be celebrated. It is one thousand six hundred years since they have been deprived of their altar, which was the foundation of all the Levitical worship, and have wandered in the world without a sacrifice, a prince, or priest, an ephod or teraphim. [Note: Hosea 3:4.] And God fully put an end to it in the command he gave to the apostles, and in them to us, in the presence of Moses and Elias, to hear his Son only (Matthew 17:5): "Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." And at the death of our Saviour, testified it to that whole nation and the world, by the rending in twain the veil of the temple. The whole frame of that service, which was carnal, and, by reason of the corruption of man, weakened, is nulled; and a spiritual worship is made known to the world, that we might now serve God in a more spiritual manner, and with more spiritual frames.

Prop. VI. The service and worship the gospel settles is spiritual, and the performance of it more spiritual. Spirituality is the genius of the gospel, as carnality was of the law; the gospel is therefore called spirit; we are abstracted from the employments of sense, and brought nearer to a heavenly state. The Jews had angels' bread poured upon them; we have angels' service prescribed to us, the praises of God, communion with God in spirit, through his Son Jesus Christ, and stronger foundations for spiritual affections. It is called a "reasonable service;" [Note: Romans 12:1.] it is suited to a rational nature, though it finds no friendship from the corruption of reason. It prescribes a service fit for the reasonable faculties of the soul, and advanceth them while it employs them. The word reasonable may be translated "word-service," [Note: Vide Hammond, in loc.] as well as reasonable service; an evangelical service, in opposition to a law service. All evangelical service is reasonable, and all truly reasonable service is evangelical. The matter of the worship is spiritual; it consists in love of God, faith in God, recourse to his goodness, meditation on him, and communion with him. It lays aside the ceremonial, spiritualizeth the moral. The commands that concerned our duty to God, as well as those that concerned our duty to our neighbor, were reduced by Christ to their spiritual intention. The motives are spiritual; it is a state of more grace, as well as of more truth, [Note: John 1:17.] supported by spiritual promises, beaming out in spiritual privileges; heaven comes down in it to earth, to spiritualize earth for heaven. The manner of worship is more spiritual; higher flights of the soul, stronger ardors of affection, sincerer aims at his glory; mists are removed from our minds, clogs from the soul, more of love than fear; faith in Christ kindles the affections, and works by them. The assistances to spiritual worship are greater. The Spirit doth not drop, but is plentifully poured out. It doth not light sometimes upon, but dwells in the heart. Christ suited the gospel to a spiritual heart, and the Spirit changeth the carnal heart to make it fit for a spiritual gospel. He blows upon the garden, and causes the spices to flow forth; and often makes the soul in worship like the chariots of Aminadab, in a quick and nimble motion. Our blessed Lord and Saviour, by his eath, discovered to us the nature of God; and after his ascension sent his Spirit to fit us for the worship of God, and converse with him. One spiritual evangelical believing breath is more delightful to God than millions of altars made up of the richest pearls, and smoking with the costliest oblations, because it is spiritual; and a mite of spirit is of more worth than the greatest weight of flesh: one holy angel is more excellent than a whole world of mere bodies.

Prop. VII. Yet the worship of God with our bodies is not to be rejected upon the account that God requires a spiritual worship. Though we must perform the weightier duties of the law, yet we are

not to omit and leave undone the lighter precepts, since both the magnalia and minutula legis, the greater and the lesser duties of the law, have the stamp of divine authority upon them. As God under the ceremonial law did not command the worship of the body and the observation of outward rites without the engagement of the spirit, so neither doth he command that of the spirit without the peculiar attendance of the body. The Schwelksendians denied bodily worship; and the indecent postures of many in public attendance intimate no great care either of composing their bodies or spirits. A morally discomposed body intimates a tainted heart. Our bodies as well as our spirits are to be presented to God. [Note: Romans 12:1.] Our bodies in lieu of the sacrifices of beasts, as in the Judaical institutions; body for the whole man; a living sacrifice, not to be slain, as the beasts were, but living a new life, in a holy posture, with crucified affections. This is the inference the apostle makes of the privileges of justification, adoption, co-heirship with Christ, which he before discoursed of; privileges conferred upon the person, and not upon a part of man.

1. Bodily worship is due to God. He hath a right to an adoration by our bodies, as they are his by creation; his right is not diminished, but increased, by the blessing of redemption: (1 Corinthians 6:20) "For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are God's." The body, as well as the spirit, is redeemed, since our Saviour suffered crucifixion in his body, as well as agonies in his soul. Body is not taken here for the whole man, as it may be in Romans 12:1-21; but for the material part of our nature, it being distinguished from the spirit. If we are to render to God an obedience with our bodies, we are to render him such acts of worship with our bodies as they are capable of. As God is the Father of spirits, so he is the God of all flesh; therefore the flesh he hath framed of the earth, as well as the noble portion he hath breathed into us, cannot be denied him without a palpable injustice. The service of the body we must not deny to God, unless we will deny him to be the author of it, and the exercise of his providential care about it. The mercies of God are renewed every day upon our bodies as well as our souls, and, therefore, they ought to express a fealty to God for his bounty everyday. "Both are from God; both should be for God. Man consists of body and soul; the service of man is the service of both. The body is to be sanctified as well as the soul; and, therefore, to be offered to God as well as the soul. Both are to be glorified, both are to glorify. As our Saviour's divinity was manifested in his body, so should our spirituality in ours. To give God the service of the body and not of the soul, is hypocrisy; to give God the service of the spirit and not of the body, is sacrilege; to give him neither, atheism." [Note: Sherman's Greek in the Temple, pp. 61, 62.] If the only part of man that is visible were exempted from the service of God, there could be no visible testimonies of piety given upon any occasion. Since not a moiety of man, but the whole is God's creature, he ought to pay a homage with the whole, and not only with a moiety of himself.

2. Worship in societies is due to God, but this cannot be without some bodily expressions. The law of nature doth as much direct men to combine together in public societies for the acknowledgment of God, as in civil communities for self-preservation and order; and a notice of a society for religion is more ancient than the mention of civil associations for politic government (Genesis 4:26): "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," viz., in the time of Seth. No question but Adam had worshipped God before, as well as Abel, and a family religion had been preserved; but, as mankind increased in distinct families, they knit together in companies to solemnize the worship of God. [Note: Stillingfleet's Irenicum, c. 1. § I. p. 23.] Hence, as some think, those that incorporated together for such ends, were called the "sons of God;" sons by profession, though not sons by

adoption; as those of Corinth were saints by profession, though in such a corrupted church they could not be all so by regeneration; yet saints, as being of a Christian society, and calling upon the name of Christ, that is, worshipping God in Christ, though they might not be all saints in spirit and practice. So Cain and Abel met together to worship (Genesis 4:3) “at the end of the days,” at a set time. God settled a public worship among the Jews, instituted synagogues for their convening together, whence called the “synagogues of God.” [Note: Psalms 74:8.] The Sabbath was instituted to acknowledge God a common benefactor. Public worship keeps up the memorials of God in a world prone to atheism, and a sense of God in a heart prone to forgetfulness. The angels sung in company, not singly, at the birth of Christ, [Note: Luke 2:13.] and praised God not only with a simple elevation of their spiritual nature, but audibly, by forming a voice in the air. Affections are more lively, spirits more raised in public than private; God will credit his own ordinance. Fire increaseth by laying together many coals on one place; so is devotion inflamed by the union of many hearts, and by a joint presence; nor can the approach of the last day of judgment, or particular judgments upon a nation, give a writ of ease from such assemblies. (Hebrews 10:25): “Not forsaking the assembling ourselves together; but so much the more as you see the day approaching.” Whether it be understood of the day of judgment, or the day of the Jewish destruction and the Christian persecution, the apostle uses it as an argument to quicken them to the observance, not to encourage them to a neglect. Since, therefore, natural light informs us, and divine institution commands us, publicly to acknowledge ourselves the servants of God, it implies the service of the body. Such acknowledgments cannot be without visible testimonies, and outward exercises of devotion, as well as inward affections. This promotes God’s honor, checks others’ profaneness, allures men to the same expressions of duty; and though there may be hypocrisy and an outward garb without an inward frame, yet better a moiety of worship than none at all; better acknowledge God’s right in one than disown it in both.

3. Jesus Christ, the most spiritual worshipper, worshipped God with his body. He prayed orally, and kneed, “Father, if it be thy will,” [Note: Luke 22:41-42.] &c. He blessed with his mouth, “Father, I thank thee.” [Note: Matthew 11:26.] He lifted up his eyes as well as elevated his spirit, when he praised his Father for mercy received, or begged for the blessings his disciples wanted. [Note: John 11:41; John 12:1.] The strength of the spirit must have vent at the outward members. The holy men of God have employed the body in significant expressions of worship; Abraham in falling on his face, Paul in kneeling, employing their tongues, lifting up their hands. Though Jacob was bed-ridden, yet he would not worship God without some devout expression of reverence; it is in one place “leaning upon his staff” [Note: Hebrews 11:21.] in another, “bowing himself upon his bed’s head.” [Note: Genesis 47:31.] The reason of the diversity is in the Hebrew word, which, without vowels, may be read mittah, a bed, or matteh, a staff; however, both signify a testimony of adoration by a reverent gesture of the body. Indeed, in angels and separated souls, a worship is performed purely by the spirit; but while the soul is in conjunction with the body, it can hardly perform a serious act of worship without some tincture upon the outward man and reverential composure of the body. Fire cannot be in the clothes but it will be felt by the members, nor flames be pent up in the soul without bursting out in the body. The heart can no more restrain itself from breaking out, than Joseph could inclose his affections without expressing them in tears to his brethren. [Note: Genesis 42:1-2.] “We believe, and therefore speak.” [Note: 2 Corinthians 4:13.] To conclude: God hath appointed some parts of worship which cannot be performed without the body, as sacraments; we have need of them because we are not wholly spiritual and incorporeal

creatures. The religion which consists in externals only is not for an intellectual nature; a worship purely intellectual is too sublime for a nature allied to sense, and depending much upon it. The christian mode of worship is proportioned to both; it makes the sense to assist the mind, and elevates the spirit above the sense. Bodily worship helps the spiritual: the members of the body reflect back upon the heart, the voice bars distractions, the tongue sets the heart on fire in good as well as in evil. It is as much against the light of nature to serve God without external significations, as to serve him only with them without the intention of the mind. As the invisible God declares himself to men by visible works and signs, so should we declare our invisible frames by visible expressions. God hath given us a soul and body in conjunction; and we are to serve him in the same manner he hath framed us.

II. The second thing I am to show is, what spiritual worship is. In general, the whole spirit is to be employed; the name of God is not sanctified but by the engagement of our souls. Worship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God and actual thoughts of his majesty; recognizing him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of his attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge. This is the sole act of the spirit of man. The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving. This must be done with understanding: (Psalms 47:7) "Sing ye praise with understanding;" with a knowledge and sense of his greatness, goodness, and wisdom. It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences his majesty, is ravished with his amiableness, embraceth his goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and pitcheth all his affections upon him. We must worship God understandingly; it is not else a reasonable service. The nature of God and the law of God abhor a blind offering; we must worship him heartily, else we offer him a dead sacrifice. A reasonable service is that wherein the mind doth truly act something with God. All spiritual acts must be acts of reason, otherwise they are not human acts, because they want that principle which is constitutive of man, and doth difference him from other creatures. Acts done only by sense are the acts of a brute; acts done by reason are the acts of a man. That which is only an act of sense cannot be an act of religion. The sense, without the conduct of reason, is not the subject of religious acts; for then beasts were capable of religion as well as men. There cannot be religion where there is not reason; and there cannot be the exercise of religion where there is not an exercise of the rational faculties; nothing can be a christian act that is not a human act. Besides, all worship must be for some end; the worship of God must be for God. It is by the exercise of our rational faculties that we only can intend an end. An ignorant and carnal worship is a brutish worship. Particularly,

1. Spiritual worship is a worship from a spiritual nature. Not only physically spiritual, so our souls are in their frame; but morally spiritual, by a renewing principle. The heart must be first cast into the mould of the gospel, before it can perform a worship required by the gospel. Adam living in Paradise might perform a spiritual worship; but Adam fallen from his rectitude could not we, being heirs of his nature, are heirs of his impotence. Restoration to a spiritual life must precede any act of spiritual worship. As no work can be good, so no worship can be spiritual, till we are created in Christ. [Note: Ephesians 2:10.] Christ is our life. [Note: Colossians 3:4.] As no natural action can be performed without life in the root or heart, so no spiritual act without Christ in the soul. Our being in Christ is as necessary to every spiritual act as the union of our soul with our body is necessary to natural action. Nothing can exceed the limits of its nature; for then it should exceed

itself in acting, and do that which it hath no principle to do. A beast cannot act like a man, without partaking of the nature of a man; nor a man act like an angel, without partaking of the angelical nature. How can we perform spiritual acts without a spiritual principle? Whatsoever worship proceeds from the corrupted nature, cannot deserve the title of spiritual worship, because it springs not from a spiritual habit. If those that are evil cannot speak good things, those that are carnal cannot offer a spiritual service. Poison is the fruit of a viper's nature (Matthew 12:34): "O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." As the root is, so is the fruit. If the soul be habitually carnal, the worship cannot be actually spiritual. There may be an intention of spirit, but there is no spiritual principle as a root of that intention. A heart may be sensibly united with a duty, when it is not spiritually united with Christ in it. Carnal motives and carnal ends may fix the mind in an act of worship, as the sense of some pressing affliction may enlarge a man's mind in prayer. Whatsoever is agreeable to the nature of God must have a stamp of Christ upon it; a stamp of his grace in performance, as well as of his mediation in the acceptance. The apostle lived not, but Christ lived in him; [Note: Galatians 2:20.] the soul worships not, but Christ in him. Not that Christ performs the act of worship, but enables us spiritually to worship, after he enables us spiritually to live. As God counts not any soul living but in Christ, so he counts not any a spiritual worshipper but in Christ. The goodness and fatness of the fruit come from the fatness of the olive wherein we are engrafted. We must find healing in Christ's wings, before God can find spirituality in our services. All worship issuing from a dead nature is but a dead service. A living action cannot be performed, without being knit to a living root.

2. Spiritual worship is done by the influence and with the assistance of the Spirit of God. A heart may be spiritual, when a particular act of worship may not be spiritual. The Spirit may dwell in the heart, when he may suspend his influence on the act. Our worship is then spiritual, when the fire that kindles our affections comes from heaven, as that fire upon the altar wherewith the sacrifices were consumed. God tastes a sweetness in no service, but as it is dressed up by the hand of the Mediator, and hath the air of his own Spirit in it; they are but natural acts, without a supernatural assistance; without an actual influence, we cannot act from spiritual motives, nor for spiritual ends, nor in a spiritual manner. We cannot mortify a lust without the Spirit, [Note: Romans 8:13.] nor quicken a service without the Spirit. Whatsoever corruption is killed, is slain by his power; whatsoever duty is spiritualised, is refined by his breath. He quickens our dead bodies in our resurrection; [Note: Romans 8:11.] he renews our dead souls in our regeneration; he quickens our carnal services in our adorations; the choicest acts of worship are but infirmities without his auxiliary help. [Note: Romans 8:26.] We are logs, unable to move ourselves, till he raise our faculties to a pitch agreeable to God; puts his hand to the duty, and lifts that up and us with it. Never any great act was preformed by the apostles to God, or for God; but they are said to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Christ could not have been conceived immaculate as that "holy thing," without the Spirit's overshadowing the Virgin; nor any spiritual act conceived in our heart, without the Spirit's moving upon us, to bring forth a living religion from us. The acts of worship are said to be in the Spirit, "supplacation in the Spirit;" [Note: Ephesians 6:18.] not only with the strength and affection of our own spirits, but with the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost, if Jude may be the interpreter; [Note: Jude 1:20.] the Holy Ghost exciting us, impelling us, and firing our souls by his divine flame; raising up the affections, and making the soul cry with a holy importunity, Abba, Father. To render our worship spiritual, we should, before every engagement in it, implore the

actual presence of the Spirit, without which we are not able to send forth one spiritual breath or groan; but be wind-bound like a ship without a gale, and our worship be no better than carnal. How doth the spouse solicit the Spirit with an "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south wind," [Note: Song of Solomon 4:16.] &c.

3. Spiritual worship is done with sincerity. When the heart stands right to God, and the soul performs what it pretends to perform; when we serve God with our spirits, as the apostle (Romans 1:9), "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son:" this is not meant of the Holy Ghost; for the apostle would never have called the Spirit of God his own spirit; but with my spirit, that is, a sincere frame of heart. A carnal worship, whether under the law or gospel, is, when we are busied about external rites, without an inward compliance of soul. God demands the heart; "My son, give me thy heart;" [Note: Proverbs 23:26.] not give me thy tongue, or thy lips, or thy hands; these may be given without the heart, but the heart can never be bestowed without these as its attendants. A heap of services can be no more welcome to God, without our spirits, than all Jacob's sons could be to Joseph, without the Benjamin he desired to see. God is not taken with the cabinet, but the jewel; he first respected Abel's faith and sincerity, and then his sacrifice; he disrespected Cain's infidelity and hypocrisy, and then his offering. For this cause he rejected the offerings of the Jews, the prayers of the Pharisees, and the alms of Ananias and Sapphira, because their hearts and their duties were at a distance from one another. In all spiritual sacrifices, our spirits are God's portion. Under the law, the reins were to be consumed by the fire on the altar, because the secret intentions of the heart were signified by them (Psalms 7:9), "The Lord trieth the heart and the reins." It was an ill omen among the heathen, if a victim wanted a heart. The widow's mites, with her heart in them, were more esteemed than the richer offerings without it. [Note: Moulin. Sermons, Decad. 4. Sermon IV. p. 80.] Not the quantity of service, but the will in it, is of account with this infinite Spirit. All that was to be brought for the framing of the tabernacle was to be offered "willingly with the heart." [Note: Exodus 25:7.] The more of will, the more of spirituality and acceptableness to God (Psalms 119:108), "Accept the free-will offering of my lips." Sincerity is the salt which seasons every sacrifice. The heart is most like to the object of worship; the heart in the body is the spring of all vital actions; and a spiritual soul is the spring of all spiritual actions. How can we imagine God can delight in the mere service of the body, any more than we can delight in converse with a carcass? Without the heart it is no worship; it is a stage play; an acting a part without being that person really which is acted by us: a hypocrite, in the notion of the word, is a stage-player. We may as well say a man may believe with his body, as worship God only with his body. Faith is a great ingredient in worship; and it is "with the heart man believes unto righteousness." [Note: Romans 10:10.] We may be truly said to worship God, though we want perfection; but we cannot be said to worship him, if we want sincerity; a statue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a service; it wants only a voice, the gestures and postures are the same; nay, the service is better; it is not a mockery; it represents all that it can be framed to; but to worship without our spirits, is a presenting God with a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing else; a compliment; a mere lie; a "compassing him about with lies." [Note: Hosea 11:12.] Without the heart the tongue is a liar; and the greatest zeal a dissembling with him. To present the spirit, is to present with that which can never naturally die; to present him only the body, is to present him that which is every day crumbling to dust, and will at last lie rotting in the grave; to offer him a few rags, easily torn; a skin for a sacrifice, a thing unworthy the majesty of God; a fixed eye and elevated hands, with a sleepy heart and earthly soul, are pitiful things for an

ever-blessed and glorious Spirit: nay, it is so far from being spiritual, that it is blasphemy; to pretend to be a Jew outwardly, without being so inwardly, is, in the judgment of Christ, to blaspheme. [Note: Revelation 2:9.] And is not the same title to be given with as much reason to those that pretend a worship and perform none? Such a one is not a spiritual worshipper, but a blaspheming devil in Samuel's mantle.

4. Spiritual worship is performed with an unitedness of heart. The heart is not only now and then with God, but "united to fear or worship his name." [Note: Psalms 86:11.] A spiritual duty must have the engagement of the spirit, and the thoughts tied up to the spiritual object. The union of all the parts of the heart together with the body is the life of the body; and the moral union of our hearts is the life of any duty. A heart quickly flitting from God makes not God his treasure; he slights the worship, and therein affronts the object of worship. All our thoughts ought to be ravished with God; bound up in him as in a bundle of life; but when we start from him to gaze after every feather, and run after every bubble, we disown a full and affecting excellency, and a satisfying sweetness in him. When our thoughts run from God, it is a testimony we have no spiritual affection to God; affection would stake down the thoughts to the object affected; it is but a mouth love, as the prophet praiseth it; [Note: Ezekiel 33:31.] but their hearts go "after their covetousness;" covetous objects pipe, and the heart danceth after them; and thoughts of God are shifted oft to receive a multitude of other imaginations; the heart and the service staid awhile together, and then took leave of one another. The Psalmist [Note: Psalms 139:18.] still found his heart with God when he awaked; still with God in spiritual affections and fixed meditations. A carnal heart is seldom with God, either in or out of worship; if God should knock at the heart in any duty, it would be found not at home, but straying abroad. Our worship is spiritual when the door of the heart is shut against all intruders, as our Saviour commands in closet-duties. [Note: Matthew 6:6.] It was not his meaning to command the shutting the closet-door, and leave the heart-door open for every thought that would be apt to haunt us. Worldly affections are to be laid aside if we would have our worship spiritual; this was meant by the Jewish custom of wiping or washing off the dust of their feet before their entrance into the temple, and of not bringing move in their girdles. To be spiritual in worship, is to have our sons gathered and bound up wholly in themselves, and offered to God. Our loins must be girt, as the fashion was in the eastern countries, where they wore long garments, that they might not waver with the wind, and be blown between their legs, to obstruct them in their travel: our faculties must not hang loose about us. He is a carnal worshipper that gives God but a piece of his heart, as well as he that denies him the whole of it; that hath some thoughts pitched upon God in worship, and as many willingly upon the world. David sought God, not with a moiety of his heart, but with his "whole heart;" with his entire frame; [Note: Psalms 119:10.] he brought not half his heart, and left the other in the possession of another master. It was a good lesson Pythagoras gave his scholars, [Note: Ο γὰρ πῦρ πῦρρον δεῖ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν Θέῳ. lamblie. lib. i. c. 518. p. 87.] "Not to make the observance of God a work by the bye." If those guests be invited, or entertained kindly, or if they come unexpected, the spirituality of that worship is lost; the soul kicks down what it wrought before: but if they be brow-beaten by us, and our grief rather than our pleasure, they divert our spiritual intention from the work in hand, but hinder not God's acceptance of it as spiritual, because they are not the acts of our will, but offences to our wills.

5. Spiritual worship is performed with a spiritual activity, and sensibleness of God; with an active understanding to meditate on his excellency, and an active will to embrace him when he drops upon the soul. If we understand the amiableness of God, our affections will be ravished; if we understand the immensity of his goodness, our spirits will be enlarged. We are to act with the highest intention suitable to the greatness of that God with whom we have to do (Psalms 150:2): "Praise him according to his excellent greatness;" not that we can worship him equally, but in some proportion the frame of the heart is to be suite to the excellency of the object; our spiritual strength is to be put out to the utmost, as creatures that act naturally do. The sun shines, and the fire burns to the utmost of their natural power. This is so necessary, that David, a spiritual worshipper, prays for it before he sets upon acts of adoration (Psalms 80:18): "Quicken us, that we may call upon thy name;" as he was loth to have a drowsy faculty, he was loth to have a drowsy instrument, and would willingly have them as lively as himself (Psalms 57:8): "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early." How would this divine soul screw himself up to God, and be turned into nothing but a holy flame! Our souls must be boiling hot when we serve the Lord. [Note: Romans 12:11. ζήλοντες] The heart doth no less burn when it spiritually comes to God, than when God doth spiritually approach to it; [Note: Luke 24:32.] a Nabal's heart, one as cold as a stone, cannot offer up a spiritual service. Whatsoever is enjoined us as our duty, ought to be performed with the greatest intenseness of our spirit. As it is our duty to pray, so it is our duty to pray with the most fervent importunity. It is our duty to love God, but with the purest and most sublime affections; every command of God requires the whole strength of the creature to be employed in it. That love to God wherein all our duty to God is summed up, is to be with all our strength, with all our might, &c. [Note: Lady Falkland's Life, p. 130.] Though in the covenant of grace he hath mitigated the severity of the law, and requires not from us such an elevation of our affections as was possible in the state of innocence, yet God requires of us the utmost moral industry to raise our affections to a pitch, at least equal to what they are in other things. What strength of affection we naturally have, ought to be as much and more excited in acts of worship, than upon other occasions and our ordinary works. As there was an inactivity of soul in worship, and a quickness to sin, when sin had the dominion; so when the soul is spiritualized, the temper is changed; there is an inactivity to sin, and an ardor in duty; the more the soul is "dead to sin," the more it is "alive to God," [Note: Romans 6:11.] and the more lively too in all that concerns God and his honor; for grace being a new strength added to our natural, determines the affections to new objects, and excites them to a greater vigor. And as the hatred of sin is more sharp, the love to everything that destroys the dominion of it is more strong; and acts of worship may be reckoned as the chiefest batteries against the power of this inbred enemy. When the Spirit is in the soul, like the rivers of waters flowing out of the belly, the soul hath the activity of a river, and makes haste to be swallowed up in God, as the streams of the river in the sea. Christ makes his people "kings and priests to God;" [Note: Revelation 1:6.] first kings, then priests; gives first a royal, temper of heart, that they may offer spiritual sacrifices as priests, kings and priests to God, acting with a magnificent spirit in all their motions to him. We cannot be spiritual priests, till we be spiritual kings. The Spirit appeared in the likeness of fire, and where he resides, communicates, like fire, purity and activity. Dulness is against the light of nature. I do not remember that the heathen ever offered a snail to any of their false deities, nor an ass, but to Priapus, their unclean idol; but the Persians sacrificed to the sun a horse, a swift and generous creature. God provided against those in the law, commanding an ass' firstling, the offspring of a sluggish creature, to be redeemed, or his neck

broke, but by no means to be offered to him. [Note: Exodus 13:13.] God is a Spirit infinitely active, and therefore frozen and benumbed frames are unsuitable to him; he “rides upon a cherub” and flies; he comes upon the “wings of the wind;” he rides upon a “swift cloud;” [Note: Isaiah 19:1.] and therefore demands of us not a dull reason, but an active spirit. God is a living God, and therefore must have a lively service. Christ is life, and slothful adorations are not fit to be offered up in the name of life. The worship of God is called wrestling in Scripture; and Paul was a striver in the service of his Master, [Note: Colossians 1:29.] “in an agony.” [Note: ἡγωνιζόμενος.] Angels worshipped God spiritually with their wings on; and when God commands them to worship Christ, the next Scripture quoted is, that he makes them “flames of fire.” [Note: Hebrews 1:7.] If it be thus, how may we charge ourselves? What Paul said of the sensual widow, [Note: 1 Timothy 5:6.] that she is “dead while she lives,” we may say often of ourselves, we are dead while we worship. Our hearts are in duty as the Jews were in deliverances, as those “in a dream;” [Note: Psalms 126:1.] by which unexpectedness God showed the greatness of his care and mercy; and we attend him as men in a dream, whereby we discover our negligence and folly. This activity doth: not consist in outward acts; the body may be hot, and the heart may be faint, but in an inward stirring, meltings, flights. In the highest raptures the body is most insensible. Strong spiritual affections are abstracted from outward sense.

6. Spiritual worship is performed with acting spiritual habits. When all the living springs of grace are opened, as the fountains of the deep were in the deluge, the soul and all that is within it, all the spiritual impresses of God upon it, erect themselves to “bless his holy name.” [Note: Psalms 103:1.] This is necessary to make a worship spiritual. As natural agents are determined to act suitable to their proper nature, so rational agents are to act conformable to a rational being. When there is a conformity between the act and the nature whence it flows, it is a good act in its kind; if it be rational, it is a good rational act, because suitable to its principle; as a man endowed, with reason must act suitable to that endowment, and exercise his reason in his acting; so a Christian endued with grace, must act suitable to that nature, and exercise his grace in his acting. Acts done by a natural inclination are no more human acts than the natural acts of a beast may be said to be human; though they are the acts of a man, as he is the efficient cause of them, yet they are not human acts, because they arise not from that principle of reason which denominates him a man. So acts of worship performed by a bare exercise of reason, are not christian and spiritual acts, because they come not from the principle which constitutes him a Christian; reason is not the principle, for then all rational creatures would be Christians. They ought, therefore, to be acts of a higher principle, exercises of that grace whereby Christians are what they are; not but that rational acts in worship are due to God, for worship is due from us as men, and we are settled in that rank of being by our reason. Grace doth not exclude reason, but ennobles it, and calls it up to another form; but we must not rest in a bare rational worship, but exert that principle whereby we are Christians. To worship God with our reason, is to worship him as men; to worship God with our grace is to worship him as Christians, and so spiritually; but to worship him only with our bodies, is no better than brutes. Our desires of the word are to issue from the regenerate principle (1 Peter 2:2): “As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word;” it seems to be not a comparison, but a restriction. All worship must have the same spring, and be the exercise of that principle, otherwise we can have no communion with God. Friends that have the same habitual dispositions, have a fundamental fitness for an agreeable converse with one another; but if the temper wherein their likeness consists be languishing, and the string out of tune, there is not an actual fitness; and

the present indisposition breaks the converse, and renders the company troublesome. Though we may have the habitual graces which compose in us a resemblance to God, yet for want of acting those suitable dispositions, we render ourselves unfit for his converse, and make the worship, which is fundamentally spiritual, to become actually carnal. As the will cannot naturally;act to any object but by the exercise of its affections, so the heart cannot spiritually act towards God but by the exercise of graces. This is God's music (Ephesians 5:19): "Singing and making melody to God in your hearts." Singing and all other acts of worship are outward, but the spiritual melody is "by grace in the heart" (Colossians 3:16): this renders it a spiritual worship; for it is an effect of the fulness of the spirit in the soul, as (Colossians 3:19), "But be filled with the Spirit." The overflowing of the Spirit in the heart, setting the soul of a believer thus on work to make a spiritual melody to God, shows that something higher than bare reason is put in tune in the heart. Then is the fruit of the garden pleasant to Christ, when the Holy Spirit, "the north and south wind, blow upon the spices," and strike out the fragrantcy of them. [Note: Song of Solomon 4:16.] Since God is the Author of graces, and bestows them to have a glory from them, they are best employed about him and his service. It is fit he should have the cream of his own gifts. Without the exercise of grace we perform but a work of nature, and offer him a few dry bones without marrow. The whole set of graces must be one way or other exercised. If any treble be wanting in a lute, there will be great defect, in the music. If any one spirital string be dull, the spiritual harmony of worship will be spoiled. And therefore;

1. Faith must be acted in worship; a confidence in God. A natural worship cannot be performed without a natural confidence in the goodness of God; whosoever comes to him, must regard him as a rewarder, and a faithful Creator. [Note: Hebrews 11:6.] A spiritual worship cannot be performed without an evangelical confidence in him as a gracious Redeemer. To think him a tyrant, meditating revenge, damps the soul; to regard him as a gracious king, full of tender bowels, spirits the affections to him. The mercy of God is the proper object of trust (Psalms 33:18): "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." The worship of God in the Old Testament is most described by fear; in the New Testament by faith. Fear, or the worship of God, and hope in his mercy are lined together; when they go hand in hand, the accepting eye of God is upon us; when we do not trust, we do not worship. Those of Judah had the temple-worship among them, especially in Josiah's tune (Zephaniah 3:2), the time of that prophecy; yet it was accounted no worship, because no trust in the worshippers. Interest in God cannot be improved without an exercise of fait. The gospel-worship is prophesied of, to be a confidence in God, as in a husband more than in a lord (Hosea 2:16): "Thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali." "Thou shalt call me;" that is, thou shalt worship me, worship being often comprehended under invocation. More confidence is to be exercised in a husband or father, than in a lord or master. If a man have not faith, he is without Christ; and though a man be in Christ by the habit of faith, he performs a duty out of Christ without an act of faith: without the habit of faith, our persons are out of Christ; and without the exercise of faith, the duties are out of Christ. As the want of faith in a person is the death of the soul, so the want of faith in a service is the death of the offering. Though a man were at the cost of an ox, yet to kill it without bringing it to the "door of the tabernacle," was not a sacrifice, but a murder (Leviticus 17:3-4). The tabernacle was a type of Christ, and a look to him is necessary in every spiritual sacrifice. As there must be faith to make any act an act of obedience, so there must be faith to make any act of worship spiritual. That service is not spiritual that is not vital; and it cannot be vital without the exercise of a vital principle;

all spiritual life is “hid in Christ,” and drawn from him by faith (Galatians 2:20). Faith, as it hath relation to Christ, makes every act of worship a living act, and, consequently, a spiritual act. Habitual unbelief cuts us off from the body of Christ (Romans 11:20): “Because of unbelief they were broken off;” and a want of actuated belief breaks us off from a present communion with Christ in spirit. As unbelief in us hinders Christ from doing any mighty work, so unbelief in us hinders us from doing any mighty spiritual duty; so that the exercise of faith, and a confidence in God, is necessary to every duty.

2. Love must be acted to render a worship spiritual. Though God commanded love in the Old Testament, yet the manner of giving the law bespoke more of fear than love. The dispensation of the law was with fire, thunder, &c., proper to raise horror, and benumb the spirit; which effect it had upon the Israelites, when they desired that God would speak no more to them. Grace is the genius of the gospel, proper to excite the affection of love. The law was given by the “disposition of angels,” with signs to amaze; the gospel was ushered in with the “songs of angels,” composed of peace and good-will, calculated to ravish the soul. Instead of the terrible voice of the law, “Do this and live,” the comfortable voice of the gospel is, “Grace, grace!” Upon this account the principle of the Old Testament was fear, and the worship often expressed by the fear of God. The principle of the New Testament is love. The Mount Sinai gendereth to bondage (Galatians 4:24); Mount Sion, from whence the gospel or evangelical law goes forth, gendereth to liberty; and therefore the “spirit of bondage unto fear,” as the property of the law, is opposed to the state of adoption, the principle of love, as the property of the gospel (Romans 8:15); and therefore the worship of God under the gospel, or New Testament, is oftener expressed by love than fear, as proceeding from higher principles, and acting nobler passions. In this state we are to serve him without fear (Luke 1:74); without a bondage fear; not without a fear of unworthy treating him; with a “fear of his goodness” as it is prophesied of (Hosea 9:5). Goodness is not the object of terror, but reverence; God, in the law, had more the garb of a judge; in the gospel, of a father; the name of a father is sweeter and bespoaks more of affection. As their services were with a feeling of the thunders of the law in their consciences, so is our worship to be with a sense of gospel grace in our spirits; spiritual worship is that, therefore, which is exercised with a spiritual and heavenly affection, proper to the gospel. The heart should be enlarged according to the liberty the gospel gives of drawing near to God as a father. As he gives us the nobler relation of children, we are to act the nobler qualities of children. Love should act according to its nature, which is desired of union; desire of a moral union by affections, as well as a mystical union by faith; as flame aspires to reach flame, and become one with it. In every act of worship we should endeavor to be united to God, and become one spirit with him. This grace doth spiritualize worship; in that one word, love, God hath wrapt up all the devotion he requires of us; it is the total sum of the first table, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God:” it is to be acted in everything we do; but in worship our hearts should more solemnly rise up and acknowledge him amiable and lovely, since the law is stripped of its cursing power, and made sweet in the blood of the Redeemer. Love is a thing acceptable of itself, but nothing acceptable without it; the gifts of one man to another are spiritualized by it. We would not value a present without the affection of the nor; every man would lay claim to the love of others, though he would not to their possessions. Love is God’s right in every service, and the noblest thing we can bestow upon him in our adorations of him. God’s gifts to us are not so estimable without his love; nor our services valuable by him without the exercise of a choice affection. Hezekiah regarded not his deliverance without the love of the Deliverer; “In love to my soul thou hast delivered me” (Isaiah

38:17). So doth God say, In love to my honor thou hast worshipped me: so that love must be acted, to render our worship spiritual.

3. A spiritual sensibleness of our own weakness is necessary to make our worship spiritual. Affections to God cannot be without relentings in ourselves. When the eye is spiritually fixed upon a spiritual God, the heart will mourn that the worship is no more spiritually suitable. The more we act love upon God, as amiable and gracious, the more we should exercise grief in ourselves, as we are vile and offending. Spiritual worship is a melting worship, as well as an elevating worship; it exalts God, and debaseth the creature. The Publican was more spiritual in his humble address to God, when the Pharisee was wholly carnal with his swelling language. A spiritual love in worship will make us grieve that we have given him so little, and could give him no more. It is a part of spiritual duty to bewail our carnality mixed with it; as we receive mercies spiritually, when we receive them with a sense of God's goodness and our own vileness; in the same manner we render a spiritual worship.

4. Spiritual desires for God render the service spiritual; when the soul "follows hard after him" (Psalms 3:8); pursues after God as a God of infinite and communicative goodness, with sighs and groans unutterable. A spiritual soul seems to be transformed into hunger and thirst, and becomes nothing but desire. A carnal worshipper is taken with the beauty and magnificence of the temple; a spiritual worshipper desires to see the glory of God in the sanctuary (Psalms 3:2), he pants after God: as he came to worship, to find God, he boils up in desires for God, and is loth to go from it without God, "the living God" (Psalms 42:2). He would see the Urim and the Thummim; the unusual sparkling of the stones upon the high-priest's breast-plate. That deserves not the title of spiritual worship, when the soul makes no longing inquiries: "Saw you him whom my soul loves?" A spiritual worship is when our desires are chiefly for God in the worship; as David desires to dwell in the house of the Lord; but his desire is not terminated there, but to behold the beauty of the Lord (Psalms 27:4), and taste the ravishing sweetness of his presence. No doubt but Elijah's desires for the enjoyment of God while he was mounting to heaven, were as fiery as the chariot wherein he was carried. Unutterable groans acted in worship are the fruit of the Spirit, and certainly render it a spiritual service (Romans 8:26). Strong appetites are agreeable to God, and prepare us to eat the fruit of worship. A spiritual Paul presseth forward to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection; and a spiritual worshipper actually aspires in every duty to know God, and the power of his grace. To desire worship as an end is carnal; to desire it as a means, and act desires in it for communion with God in it, is spiritual, and the fruit of a spiritual life.

5. Thankfulness and admiration are to be exercised in spiritual service. This is a worship of spirits; praise is the adoration of the blessed angels (Isaiah 6:3), and of glorified spirits (Revelation 4:11): "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power;" and (Revelation 5:13-14), they worship him ascribing "Blessing, honor, glory, and power to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever." Other acts of worship are confined to this life, and leave us as soon as we have set our foot in heaven; there, no notes but this of praise are warbled out; the power, wisdom, love, and grace in the dispensation of the gospel, seat themselves in the thoughts and tongues of blessed souls. Can a worship on earth be spiritual, that hath no mixture of an eternal heavenly duty with it? The worship of God in innocence had been chiefly an admiration of him in the works of creation; and should not our evangelical worship be an admiration of him in the works of redemption, which is a restoration to a better state? After the petitioning for pardoning grace

(Hosea 14:2), there is a rendering the calves or heifers of our lips, alluding to the heifers used in eucharistical sacrifices. The praise of God is the choicest sacrifice and worship under a dispensation of redeeming grace; this is the prime and eternal part of worship under the gospel. The Psalmist (Psalms 150:1-6.), speaking of the gospel times, spurs on to this kind of worship; "Sing to the Lord a new song; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king; let the saints be joyful in glory, and sing aloud upon their beds; let the high praises of God be in their mouths;" he begins and ends both psalms with "Praise ye the Lord." That cannot be a spiritual and evangelical worship, that hath nothing of the praise of God in the heart. The consideration of God's adorable perfections, discovered in the gospel, will make us come to him with more seriousness; beg blessings of him with more confidence; fly to him with a winged faith and love, and more spiritually glorify him in our attendances upon him.

6. Spiritual worship is performed with delight. The evangelical worship is prophetically signified by keeping the feast of tabernacles; "They shall go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16): why that feast, when there were other feasts observed by the Jews? That was a feast celebrated with the greatest joy, typical of the gladness which was to be under the exhibition of the Messiah, and a thankful commemoration of the redemption wrought by him. It was to be celebrated five days after the "solemn day of atonement" (Leviticus 23:34, compared with Leviticus 23:27), wherein there was one of the solemnest types of the sacrifice of the death of Christ. In this feast they commemorated their exchange of Egypt for Canaan; the manna wherewith they were fed; the water out of the rock wherewith they were refreshed; in remembrance of this, they poured water on the ground, pronouncing those words in Isaiah, they shall "draw waters out of the wells of salvation;" which our Saviour refers to himself (John 7:37), inviting them to him, to drink "upon the last day, the great day of the feast of tabernacles," wherein the solemn ceremony was observed. Since we are freed by the death of the Redeemer from the curses of the law, God requires of us a joy in spiritual privileges. A sad frame in worship gives the lie to all gospel liberty, to the purchase of the Redeemer's death, the triumphs of his resurrection: it is a carriage, as if we were under the influences of the legal fire and lightning, and an entering a protest against the freedom of the gospel. The evangelical worship is a spiritual worship; and praise, Joy, and delight are prophesied of, as great ingredients in attendance on gospel ordinances (Isaiah 12:3-5). What was occasion of terror in the worship of God under the law, is the occasion of delight in the worship of God under the gospel. The justice and holiness of God, so terrible in the law, becomes comfortable under the gospel; since they have feasted themselves on the active and passive obedience of the Redeemer. The approach is to God as gracious, not to God as unpacified; as a son to a father, not as a criminal to a judge. Under the law, God was represented as a judge; remembering their sin in their sacrifices, and representing the punishment they had merited: in the gospel as a father, accepting the atonement, and publishing the reconciliation wrought by the Redeemer. Delight in God is a gospel frame; therefore the more joyful, the more spiritual: "The sabbath is to be a delight;" not only in regard of the day, but in regard to the duties of it (Isaiah 58:13); in regard of the marvellous work he wrought on it; raising up our blessed Redeemer on that day, whereby a foundation was laid for the rendering our persons and services acceptable to God (Psalms 118:24; "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it." A lumpish frame becomes not a day and a duty, that hath so noble and spiritual a mark upon it. The angels, in the first act of worship after the creation, were highly joyful (Job 38:7): "They shouted for joy," &c. The

saints have particularly acted this in their worship. David would not content himself with an approach to the altar, without going to God as his “exceeding joy” (Psalms 43:4). My triumphant joy when he danced before the ark, he seems to be transformed into delight and pleasure (2 Samuel 6:14; 2 Samuel 6:16). He had as much delight in worship, as others had in their harvest and vintage. And those that took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, would as joyfully attend upon the communications of God. Where there is a fulness of the Spirit, there is a “waking melody to God in the heart” (Ephesians 5:18-19); and where there is an acting of love (as there is in all spiritual services), the proper fruit of it is joy in a near approach to the object of the soul’s affection. Love is appetites unionz; the more love, the more delight in the approachings of God to the soul, or the outgoings of the soul to God. As the object of worship is amiable in a spiritual eye, so the means tending to a communion with this object are delightful in the exercise. Where there is no delight in a duty, there is no delight in the object of the duty; the more of grace, the more of pleasure in the actings of it; as the more of nature there is in any natural agent, the more of pleasure in the act, so the more heavenly the worship, the more spiritual. Delight is the frame and temper of glory. A heart filled up to the brim with joy, is a heart filled up to the brim with the Spirit; joy is the fruit of the Holy Ghost (Galatians 5:22). (1.) Not the joy of God’s dispensation flowing from God, but a gracious active joy streaming to God. Theie is a joy, when the comforts of God are dropped into the soul, as oil upon the wheel; which indeed makes the faculties move with more speed and activity in his service, like the chariots of Aminadab; and a soul may serve God in the strength of this taste, and its delight terminate in the sensible comfort. This is not the joy I mean, but such a joy that hath God for its object, delighting in him as the term, in worship as the way to him; the first is God’s dispensation, the other is our duty; the first is an act of God’s favor to us, the second a sprout of habitual grace in us. The comforts we have from God may elevate our duties; but the grace we have within doth spiritualize our duties. (2.) Nor is every delight an argument of a spiritual service. All the requisites to worship must be taken in. A man may invent a worship and delight in it; as Micah in the adoration of his idol, when he was glad he had got both an Ephod and a Levite (Judges 17:1-13). As a man may have a contentment in sin, so he may have a contentment in worship; not because it is a worship of God, but the worship of his own invention, agreeable to his own humor and design, as (Isaiah 58:2) it is said, they “delighted in approaching to God;” but it was for carnal ends. Novelty engenders complacency; but it must be a worship wherein God will delight; and that must be a worship according to his own rule and infinite wisdom, and not our shallow fancies. God requires a cheerfulness in his service, especially under the gospel, where he sits upon a throne of grace; discovers himself in his amiableness, and acts the covenant of grace, and the sweet relation of a father. The priests of old were not to sully themselves with any sorrow, when they were in the exercise of their functions. God put a bar to the natural affections of Aaron and his sons, when Nadab and Abihu had been cut off by a severe hand of God (Leviticus 10:6). Every true Christian in a higher order of priesthood, is a person dedicated to joy and peace, offering himself a lively sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; and there is no christian duty, but is to be set off and seasoned with cheerfulness: he that loves a cheerful giver in acts of charity, requires no less a cheerful spirit in acts of worship; as this is an ingredient in worship, so it is the means to make your spirits intent in worship. When the heart triumphs in the consideration of divine excellency and goodness, it will be angry at anything that offers to jog and disturb it.

7. Spiritual worship is to be performed, though with a delight in God, yet with a deep reverence of God. The gospel, in advancing the spirituality of worship, takes off the terror, but not the reverence of God; which is nothing else in its own nature, but a due and high esteem of the excellency of a thing according to the nature of it; and, therefore, the gospel presenting us with more illustrious notices of the glorious nature of God, is so far from indulging any disesteem of him, that it requires of us a greater reverence suitable to the height of its discovery, above what could be spelt in the book of creation; the gospel worship is therefore expressed by trembling (Hosea 11:10): "They shall walk after the Lord; he shall roar like a lion; when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the West." When the lion of the tribe of Judah shall lift up his powerful voice in the gospel, the western Gentiles shall run trembling to walk after the Lord. God hath always attended his greatest manifestations with remarkable characters of majesty, to create a reverence in his creature he caused the "wind to march before him," to cut the mountain, when he manifested himself to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11); "A wind and a cloud of fire," before that magnificent vision to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4-5); "Thunders and lightnings" before the giving the law (Exodus 19:18); and a "mighty wind" before the giving the Spirit (Acts 2:1-47.): God requires of us an awe of him in the very act of performance. The angels are pure, and cannot fear him as sinners, but in "reverence they cover their faces" when they stand before him (Isaiah 6:2): his power should make us reverence him, as we are creatures; his justice, as we are sinners; his goodness, as we are restored creatures. "God is clothed with unspeakable majesty; the glory of his face shines brighter than the lights of heaven in their beauty. Before him the angels tremble, and the heavens melt; we ought not therefore to come before him with the sacrifice of fools, nor tender a duty to him, without falling low upon our faces, and bowing the knees of our hearts in token of reverence." [Note: Daille, sur 3 Jean. p. 150.] Not a slavish fear, like that of devils; but a "godly fear," like that of saints (Hebrews 12:28); joined with a sense of an unmovable kingdom, becometh us; and this the apostle calls a grace necessary to make our service acceptable, and therefore the grace necessary to make it spiritual, since nothing finds admission to God, but what is of a spiritual nature. The consideration of his glorious nature should imprint an awful respect upon our souls to him; his goodness should make his majesty more adorable to us, as his majesty makes his goodness more, admirable in his condescensions to us. As God is a Spirit, our worship must be spiritual; and being, as he is, the supreme Spirit, our worship must be reverential; we must observe the state he takes upon him in his ordinances; "He is in heaven, we upon the earth;" we must not therefore be "hasty to utter anything before God" (Ecclesiastes 5:7). Consider him a Spirit in the highest heavens, and ourselves spirits dwelling in a dreggy earth. Loose and garish frames debase him to our own quality; slight postures of spirit intimate him to be a slight and mean being; our being in covenant with him, must not lower our awful apprehensions of him; as lie is the Lord thy God, it is a glorious and fearful name, or wonderful (Deuteronomy 28:58); though he lay by his justice to believers, he doth not lay by his majesty; when we have a confidence in him, because he is the Lord our God, we must have awful thoughts of his majesty, because his name is glorious. God is terrible from his holy places, in regard of the great things he doth for his Israel (Psalms 68:35); we should behave ourselves with that inward honor and respect of him, as if he were present to our bodily eyes; the higher apprehensions we have of his majesty, the greater awe will be upon our hearts in his presence, and the greater spirituality in our acts. We should manage our hearts so, as if we had a view of God in his heavenly glory.

8. Spiritual worship is to be performed with humility in our spirits. This is to follow upon the reverence of God. As we are to have high thoughts of God, that we may not debase him; we must have low thoughts of ourselves, not to vaunt before him. When we have right notions of the Divine Majesty, we shall be as worms in our own thoughts, and creep as worms into his presence; we can never consider him in his glory, but we have a fit opportunity to reflect upon ourselves, and consider how basely we revolted from him, and how graciously we are restored by him. As the gospel affords us greater discoveries of God's nature, and so enhanceth our reverence of him, so it helps us to a fuller understanding of our own vileness and weakness, and therefore is proper to engender humility; the more spiritual and evangelical therefore any service is, the more humble it is. That is a spiritual service that doth most manifest the glory of God; and this cannot be manifested by us, without manifesting our own emptiness and nothingness. The heathens were sensible of the necessity of humility by the light of nature; [Note: Plutarch, Moral. p. 344.] after the name of God, signified by ■■ inscribed on the temple at Delphos, followed Γν■θ■ σεαυτιον, whereby was insinuated, that when we have to do with God, who is the only Ens, we should behave ourselves with a sense of our own infirmity, and infinite distance from him. As a person, so a duty leavened with pride, hath nothing of sincerity, and therefore nothing of spirituality in it (Habakkuk 2:4): "His soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him." The elders that were crowned by God to be kings and priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices, uncrown themselves in their worship of him, and cast down their ornaments at "his feet" [Note: Revelation 4:10. compared with Revelation 5:10.] the Greek word to worship, προσκυνε■v, signifies to creep like a dog upon his belly before his master; to lie low. How deep should our sense be of the privilege of God's admitting us to his worship, and affording us such a mercy under our deserts of wrath! How mean should be our thoughts, both of our persons and performances! How patiently should we wait upon God for the success of worship! How did Abraham, the father of the faithful, equal himself to the earth, when he supplicated the God of heaven, and devote himself to him under the title of very "dust and ashes!" (Genesis 18:27.) Isaiah did but behold an evangelical apparition of God and the angels worshipping him, and presently reflects upon his "own uncleanness" (Isaiah 6:5). God's presence both requires and causes humility. How lowly is David in his own opinion, after a magnificent duty performed by himself and his people (1 Chronicles 29:14): "Who am I? and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly?" The more spiritual the soul is in its carriage to God, the more humble it is; and the more gracious God is in his communications to the soul, the lower it lies. God commanded not the fiercer creatures to be offered to him in sacrifices, but lambs and kids, meek and lowly creatures; none that had stings in their tails, or venom in their tongues. [Note: Caudam aculeatam vel linguam nigram, Alexand. ab Alex. l. 3. c. 12.] The meek lamb was the daily sacrifice; the doves were to be offered by pairs; God would not have honey mixed with any sacrifice (Leviticus 2:11), that breeds choler, and choler pride; but oil he commanded to be used, that supple and mollifies the parts. Swelling pride and boiling passions render our services carnal; they cannot be spiritual, without a humble sweetness and an innocent sincerity; one grain of this transcends the most costly sacrifices: a contrite heart puts a gloss upon worship (Psalms 51:16-17). The departure of men and angels from God, began in pride; our approaches and return to him must begin in humility; and therefore all those graces, which are bottomed on humility, must be acted in worship, as faith, and a sense of our own indigence. Our blessed Saviour, the most spiritual worshiper, prostrated himself in the garden with the greatest lowliness, and offered himself upon the cross a sacrifice with the greatest humility. Melted souls in worship have the most

spiritual conformity to the person of Christ in the state of humiliation, and his design in that state; as worship without it is not suitable to God, so neither is it advantageous for us. A time of worship is a time of God's communication. The vessel must be melted to receive the mould it is designed for; softened wax is fittest to receive a stamp, and a spiritually melted soul fittest to receive a spiritual impression. We cannot perform duty in an evangelical and spiritual strain, without the meltingness and meanness in ourselves which the gospel requires.

9. Spiritual worship is to be performed with holiness. God is a holy Spirit; a likeness to God must attend the worshipping of God as he is; holiness is alway in season; "It becomes his house forever" (Psalms 91:5). We can never serve the living God till we "have consciences purged from dead works" (Hebrews 11:14). Dead works in our consciences are unsuitable to God, an eternal living Spirit. The more mortified the heart, the more quickened the service. Nothing can please an infinite purity but that which is pure; since God is in his glory, in his ordinances, we must not be in our filthiness. The holiness of his Spirit doth sparkle in his ordinances; the holiness of our spirits ought also to sparkle in our observance of them. The holiness of God is most celebrated in the worship of angels; [Note: Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8.] spiritual worship ought to be like angelical; that cannot be with souls totally impure. As there must be perfect holiness to make a worship perfectly spiritual; so there must be some degree of holiness to make it in any measure spiritual. God would have all the utensils of the sanctuary employed about his service to be holy; the inwards of the sacrifice were to be rinsed thrice. [Note: As the Jewish doctors observe on Leviticus 1:9.] The crop and feathers of sacrificed doves were to be hung eastward towards the entrance of the temple, at a distance from the holy of holies, where the presence of God was most eminent (Leviticus 1:16). When Aaron was to go into the holy of holies, he was to "sanctify himself" in an extraordinary manner (Leviticus 16:4). The priests were to be bare-footed in the temple, in the exercise of their office; shoes alway were to be put off upon holy ground: "Look to thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," saith the wise man (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Strip the affections, the feet of the soul, of all the dirt contracted; discard all earthly and base thoughts from the heart. A beast was not to touch the Mount Sinai, without losing his life; nor can we come near the throne with brutish affections, without losing the life and fruit of the worship. An unholy soul degrades himself from a spirit to a brute, and the worship from spiritual to brutish. If any unmortified sin be found in the life, as it was in the comers to the temple, it taints and pollutes the worship (Isaiah 1:15). All worship is an acknowledgment of the excellency of God as he is holy; hence it is called, a "sanctifying God's name" (Jeremiah 7:9-10); how can any person sanctify God's name that hath not a holy resemblance to his nature? If he be not holy as he is holy, he cannot worship him according to his excellency in spirit and in truth; no worship is spiritual wherein we have not a communion with God. But what intercourse can there be between a holy God, and an impure creature; between light and darkness? We have no fellowship with him in any service, unless "we walk in the light," in service and out of service, as he is light (1 John 1:7). The heathen thought not their sacrifices agreeable to God without washing their hands; whereby they signified the preparation of their hearts, before they made the oblation: clean hands without a pure heart, signify nothing; the frame of our hearts must answer the purity of the outward symbols (Psalms 26:6): "I will wash my hands in innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord;" he would observe the appointed ceremonies, but not without "cleansing his heart as well as his hands." Vain man is apt to rest upon outward acts and rites of worship; but this must alway be practised; the words are in the present tense, "I wash," "I compass." Purity in worship ought to be our continual care. If we

would perform a spiritual service, wherein we would have communion with God, it must be in holiness; if we would walk with Christ, it must be in "white" (Revelation 3:4), alluding to the white garments the priests put on, when they went to perform their service; as without this we cannot see God in heaven, so neither can we see the beauty of God in his own ordinances.

10. Spiritual worship is performed with spiritual ends, with raised aims at the glory of God. No duty can be spiritual that hath a carnal aim; where God is the sole object, he ought to be the principal end; in all our actions he is to be our end, as he is the principle of our being; much more in religious acts, as he is the object of our worship. The worship of God in Scripture is expressed by the "seeking of him" (Hebrews 11:6); him, not ourselves; all is to be referred to God. As we are "not to live to ourselves, that being the sign of a carnal state, so we are not to worship for ourselves" (Romans 14:7-8). As all actions are denominated good from their end, as well as their object, so upon the same account they are denominated spiritual. The end spiritualizeth our natural actions, much more our religious; then are our faculties devoted to him when they centre in him. If the intention be evil, there is nothing but darkness in the whole service (Luke 11:34). The first institution of the Sabhath, the solemn day for worship, was to contemplate the glory of God in his stupendous works of creation, and render him a homage for them (Revelation 4:11): "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honor, glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." No worship can be returned without a glorifying of God; and we cannot actually glorify him, without direct aims at the promoting his honor. As we have immediately to do with God, so we are immediately to mind the praise of God. As we are not to content ourselves with habitual grace, but be rich in the exercise of it in worship, so we are not to acquiesce in the habitual aims at the glory of God, without the actual overflowings of our hearts in those aims. It is natural for man to worship God for self; self-righteousness is the rooted aim of man in his worship since his revolt from God, and being sensible it is not to be found in his natural actions, he seeks for it in his moral and religious. By the first pride we flung God off from being our sovereign, and from being our end, since a pharisaical spirit struts it in nature, not only to do things to be seen of men, but to be admired by God (Isaiah 58:3). "Wherefore have we fasted and thou takest no knowledge?" This is to have God worship them, instead of being worshipped by them. Cain's carriage after his sacrifice testified some base end in his worship; he came not to God as a subject to a sovereign, but as if he had been the sovereign, and God the subject; and when his design is not answered, and his desire not gratified, he proves more a rebel to God, and a murderer of his brother. Such base scents will rise up in our worship from the body of death which cleaves to us, and mix themselves with our services, as weeds with the fish in the net. David, therefore, after his people had offered willingly to the temple, begs of God that their "hearts might be prepare to him" (1 Chronicles 29:18); that their hearts might stand right to God, without any squinting to self-ends. Some present themselves to God, as poor men offer a present to a great person not to honor him, but to gain for themselves a reward richer than their gift. "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?" &c. (Malachi 3:14). Some worship him, intending thereby to make him amends for the wrong they have done him; wipe off their scores, and satisfy their debts; as though a spiritual wrong could be recompensed with a bodily service, and an infinite Spirit be outwitted and appeased by a carnal flatter. Self is the spirit of carnality; to pretend a homage to God, and intend only the advantage of self, is rather to mock him than worship him. When we believe that we ought to be satisfied, rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves, imagine that he should submit his own honor to our advantage; we make ourselves more glorious

than God, as though we were not made for him, but he hath a being only for us; this is to have a very low esteem of the majesty of God. Whatsoever any man aims at in worship above the glory of God, that he forms as an idol to himself instead of God, and sets up a golden image, God counts not this as a worship. The offerings made in the wilderness for forty years together, God esteemed as not offered to him (Amos 5:25): "Have you offered to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" They did it not to God, but to themselves; for their own security, and the attainment of the possession of the promised land. A spiritual worshipper performs not worship for some hopes of carnal advantage; he uses ordinances as means to bring God and his soul together, to be more fitted to honor God in the world, in his particular place; when he hath been inflamed and humble in any address or duty, he gives God the glory; his heart suits the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer, ascribes the kingdom, power, and glory to God alone, and if any viper of pride starts out upon him, he endeavors presently to shake it off. That which was the first end of our framing, ought to be the chief end of our acting towards God; but when men have the same ends in worship as brutes, the satisfaction of a sensitive part, the service is no more than brutish. The acting for a sensitive end is unworthy the majesty of God to whom we address, and unbecoming a rational creature. The acting for a sensitive end is not a rational, much less can it be a spiritual service; though the act may be good in itself, yet not good in the agent, because he wants a due end. We are, then, spiritual, when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love, viz., his own glory.

11. Spiritual service is offered to God in the name of Christ. Those are only "spiritual sacrifices, that are offered up to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5); that are the fruits of the sanctification of the Spirit, and offered in the mediation of the Son: as the altar sanctifies the gift, so doth Christ spiritualize our services for God's acceptation; as the fire upon the altar separated the airy and finer parts of the sacrifice from the terrene and earthly; this is the golden altar upon which the prayers of the saints are offered up "before the throne" (Revelation 8:3). As all that we have from God streams through his blood, so all that we give to God ascends by virtue of his merits. All the blessings God gave to the Israelites came out of Sion, [Note: Psalms 134:3. "The Lord bless thee out of Sion."] that is, from the gospel hid under the law; all the duties we present to God are to be presented in Sion, in an evangelical manner; all our worship must be bottomed on Christ. God hath intended that we should "honor the Son, as we honor the Father;" as we honor the Father by offering our service only to him, so we are to honor the Son by offering it only in his name; in him alone God is well pleased, because in him alone he finds our services spiritual and worthy of acceptation; we must therefore take fast hold of him with our spirits, and the faster we hold him, the more spiritual is our worship. To do anything in the name of Christ, is not to believe the worship shall be accepted for itself, but to have our eye fixed upon Christ for the acceptance of it, and not to rest upon the work done, as carnal people are apt to do. The creatures present their acknowledgments to God by man; and man can only present his by Christ. It was utterly unlawful after the building of the temple, to sacrifice anywhere else; the temple being a type of Christ, it is utterly unlawful for us to present our services in any other name than his. This is the way to be spiritual. If we consider God out of Christ, we can have no other notions but those of horror and bondage. We behold him a Spirit, but environed with justice and wrath for sinners; but the consideration of him in Christ, veils his justice, draws forth his mercy, represents him more a father than a judge. In Christ the aspect of justice is changed, and by that the temper of the creature; so that in and by this Mediator, we "can have a spiritual boldness, and access to God with

confidence" (Ephesians 3:12), whereby the spirit is kept from benumbness and distraction, and our souls quickened and refined. The thoughts kept upon Christ in a duty of worship quickly elevates the soul, and spiritualizeth the whole service. Sin makes our services black, and the blood of Christ makes both our persons and services white. To conclude this head. God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach to him with cheerfulness; he is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before him with reverence; he is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with the deepest humility; he is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; he is a Spirit infinitely glorious, we must therefore acknowledge his excellency in all that we do, and in our measures contribute to his glory, by having the highest aims in his worship; he is a Spirit infinitely provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying Mediator and Intercessor.

III. The third general is, Why a spiritual worship is due to God, and to be offered to him. We must consider the object of worship, and the subject of worship; the worshipper and the worshipped. God is a spiritual Being; man is a reasonable creature. The nature of God informs us what is fit to be presented to him; our own nature informs us what is fit to be presented by us.

Reason I. The best we have is to be presented to God in worship. For,

1. Since God is the most excellent Being, he is to be served by us with the most excellent thing we have, and with the choicest veneration. God is so incomprehensibly excellent, that we cannot render him what he deserves: we must render him what we are able to offer: the best of our affections; the flower of our strength; the cream and top of our spirits. By the same reason that we are bound to give God the best worship, we must offer it to him in the best manner. We cannot give to God anything too good for so blessed a Being; God being a "great king," slight services become not his majesty (Malachi 1:13-14); it is unbecoming the majesty of God, and the reason of a creature, to give him a trivial thing; it is unworthy to bestow the best of our strength on our lust, and the worst and weakest in the service of God. An infinite Spirit should have affections as near to infinite as we can; as he is a Spirit without bounds, so he should have a service without limits; when we have given him all, we cannot serve him according to the excellency of his nature (Joshua 24:19); and shall we give him less than all? His infinite excellency, and our dependence on him as creatures, demands the choicest adoration; our spirits, being the noblest part of our nature, are as due to him as the service of our bodies, which are the vilest; to serve him with the worst only, is to diminish his honor.

2. Under the law, God commanded the best to be offered him. He would have the males, the best of the kind; the fat, the best of the creature; [Note: Exodus 29:13. The inward fat, not the offal.] he commanded them to offer him the firstlings of the flock; not the firstlings of the womb, but the firstlings of the year the Jewish cattle having two breeding-times, in the beginning of the spring and the beginning of September; the latter breed was the weaker, which Jacob knew (Genesis 30:1-43.) when he laid the rods before the cattle when they were strong in the spring, and withheld them when they were feeble in the autumn. One reason (as the Jews say) why God accepted not the offering of Cain was, because he brought the meanest, not the best of the fruit; and therefore, it is said, only that he brought of the "fruit" of the ground (Genesis 4:3), not the first of the fruit, or the best of the fruit, as Abel, who brought the "firstling" of his flock, and the fat thereof (Genesis 4:4).

3. And this the heathen practised by the, light of nature. They for the most part offered males, as being more worthy; and burnt the male, not the female frankincense, as it is divided into those two kinds; they offered the best, when they offered their children to Moloch. Nothing more excellent than man, and nothing dearer to parents than their children, which are part of themselves. When the Israelites would have a golden calf for a representation of God, they would dedicate their jewels, and strip their wives and children of their richest ornaments, to show their devotion. Shall men serve their dumb idols with the best of their substance, and the strength of their souls; and shall the living God have a duller service from us, than idols had from them? God requires no such hard, but delightful worship from us, our spirits.

4. All creatures serve man, by the providential order of God, with the best they have. As we, by God's appointment, receive from creatures the best they can give, ought we not with a free will to render to God the best we can offer? The beasts give us their best fat; the trees their best fruit; the sun its best light; the foun. tins their best streams; shall God order us the best from creatures, and we put him off with the worst from ourselves?

5. God hath given us the choicest thing he had—a Redeemer that was the power of God, and the wisdom of God; the best he had in heaven, his own Son, and in himself a sacrifice for us, that we might be enabled to resent ourselves a sacrifice to him. And Christ offered himself for us, the best he had, and that with the strength of the Deity through the eternal Spirit; and shall we grudge God the best part of ourselves? As God would have a worship from his creature, so it must be with the best part of his creature. If we have “given ourselves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5), we can worship with no less than ourselves. What is the man without his spirit? If we are to worship God with all that we have received from him, we must worship him with the best part we have received from him; it is but a small glory we can give him with the best, and shall we deprive him of his right by giving him the worst? As what we are is from God, so what we are ought to be for God. Creation is the foundation of worship (Psalms 100:2-3): “Serve the Lord with gladness; know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us.” He hath ennobled us with spiritual affections; where is it fittest for us to employ them, but upon him? and at what time, but when we come solemnly to converse with him? Is it justice to deny him the honor of his best gift to us? our souls are more his gift to us, than anything in the world; other things are so given that they are often taken from us, but our spirits are the most durable gift. Rational faculties cannot be removed without a dissolution of nature. Well then, as he is God, he is to be honored with all the propensions and ardor that the infiniteness and excellency of such a Being require, and the incomparable obligations he hath laid upon us in this state deserve at our hands. In all our worship, therefore, our minds ought to be filled with the highest admiration, love, and reverence. Since our end was to glorify God, we answer not our end, and honor him not, unless we give him the choicest we have. [Note: Amyraut, Mor. Tom II. p. 311.]

Reason II. We cannot else act towards God according to the nature of rational creatures. Spiritual worship is due to God, because of his nature; and due from us, because of our nature. As we are to adore God, so we are to adore him as men; the nature of a rational creature makes this impression upon him; he cannot view his own nature without having this duty striking upon his mind. As he knows, by inspection into himself, that there was a God that made him; so, that he is made to be in subjection to God, subjection to him in his spirit as well as his body, and ought morally to testify this natural dependence on him. His constitution informs him that he hath a

capacity to converse with God; that he cannot converse with him, but by those inward faculties; if it could be managed by his body without his spirit, beasts might as well converse with God as men. It can never be a "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1), as it ought to be, unless the reasonable faculties be employed in the management of it; it must be a worship prodigiously lame, without the concurrence of the chiefest art of man with it. As we are to act conformably to the nature of the object, so also to the nature of our own faculties. Our faculties, in the very gift of them to us, were destined to be exercised, about what? What? All other things but the Author of them. It is a conceit cannot enter into the heart of a rational creature, that he should act as such a creature in other things, and as a stone in things relating to the donor of them; as a man, with his mind about him in the affairs of the world; as a beast, without reason in his acts towards God. If a man did not employ his reason in other things, he would be an unprofitable creature in the world: if he do not employ his spiritual faculties in worship, he denies them the proper end and use for which they were given him; it is a practical denial that God hath given him a soul, and that God hath any right to the exercise of it. If there were no worship appointed by God in the world, the natural inclination of man to some kind of religion would be in vain; and if our inward faculties were not employed in the duties of religion they would be in vain; the true end of God in the endowment of us with them would be defeated by us, as much as lies in us, if we did not serve him with that which we have from him solely at his own cost. As no man can with reason conclude, that the rest commanded on the Sabbath and the sanctification of it, was only a rest of the body, that had been performed by the beasts as well as men, but some higher end was aimed at for the rational creature; so no man can think that the command for worship terminated only in the presence of the body; that God should give the command to man as a reasonable creature, and expect no other service from him than that of a brute. God did not require a worship from man for any want he had, or any essential honor that could accrue to him, but that men might testify their gratitude to him, and dependence on him. It is the most horrid ingratitude not to have lively and deep sentiments of gratitude after such obligations, and not to make those due acknowledgments that are proper for a rational creature. Religion is the highest and choicest act of a reasonable creature; no creature under heaven is capable of it that wants reason. As it is a violation of reason not to worship God, so it is no less a violation of reason not to worship him with the heart and spirit; it is a high dishonor to God, and defeats him not only of the service due to him from man, but that which is due to him from all the creatures. Every creature, as it is an effect of God's power and wisdom, doth passively worship God; that is, it doth afford matter of adoration to man that hath reason to collect it, and return it where it is due. Without the exercise of the soul, we can no more hand it to God, than without such an exercise, we can gather it from the creature; so that by this neglect, the creatures are restrained from answering their chief end; they cannot pay any service to God without man; nor can man, without the employment of his rational faculties, render a homage to God, any more than boasts can. This engagement of our inward power stands firm and inviolable, let the modes of worship be what they will, or the changes of them by the sovereign authority of God never so frequent; this could not expire or be changed as long as the nature of man endured. As man had not been capable of a command for worship, unless he had been endued with spiritual faculties; so he is not active in a true practice of worship, unless they be employed by him in it. The constitution of man makes this manner of worship perpetually obligatory, and the oblation can never cease, till man cease to be a creature furnished with such faculties; in our worship, therefore, if we would act like rational creatures, we should extend all the powers of our souls to

the utmost pitch, and essay to have apprehensions of God, equal to the excellency of his nature, which, though we may attempt, we can never attain.

Reason III. Without this engagement of our spirits no act is an act of worship. True worship, being an acknowledgment of God and the perfections of his nature, results only from the soul, that being only capable of knowing God and those perfections which are the object and motive of worship. The posture of the body is but to testify the inward temper and affection of the mind; if, therefore, it testifies what it is not, it is a lie, and no worship; the cringes a beast may be taught to make to an altar may as well be called worship, since a man thinks as little of that God he pretends to honor, as the beast doth of the altar to which he bows. Worship is a reverent remembrance of God, and giving some honor to him with the intention of the soul; it cannot justly have the name of worship, that wants the essential part of it; it is an ascribing to God the glory of his nature, an owning subjection and obedience to him as our sovereign Lord; this is as impossible to be performed without the spirit, as that there can be life and motion in a body without a soul; it is a drawing near to God, not in regard of his essential presence, so all things are near to God, but in an acknowledgment of his excellency, which is an act of the spirit; without this, the worst of men in a place of worship are as near to God as the best. The necessity of the conjunction of our soul ariseth from the nature of worship, which being the most serious thing we can be employed in, the highest converse with the highest object requires the choicest temper of spirit in the performance. That cannot be an act of worship, which is not an act of piety and virtue; but there is no act of virtue done by the members of the body, without the concurrence of the powers of the soul. We may as well call the presence of a dead carcass in a place of worship, an act of religion, as the presence of a living body without an intent spirit; the separation of the soul from one is natural, the other moral; that renders the body lifeless, but this renders the act loathsome to God; as the being of the soul gives life to the body, so the operation of the soul gives life to the actions. As he cannot be a man that wants the form of a man, a rational soul; so that cannot be a worship that wants an essential part, the act of the spirit; God will not vouchsafe any acts of man so noble a title without the requisite qualifications (Hosea 5:6): "The shall go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord," &c. A multitude of lambs and bullocks for sacrifice, to appease God's anger. God would not give it the title of worship, though instituted by himself, when it wanted the qualities of such a service. "The spirit of whoredom was in the midst of them" (v. 4). In the judgment of our Saviour, it is a "vain worship, when the traditions of men are taught for the doctrines of God" (Matthew 15:9); and no less vain must it be, when the bodies of men are presented to supply the place of their spirits. As an omission of duty is a contempt of God's sovereign authority, so the omission of the manner of it is a contempt of it, and of his amiable excellency; and that which is a contempt and mockery, can lay no just claim to the title of worship.

Reason IV. There is in worship an approach of God to man. It was instituted to this purpose, that God might give out his blessings to man; and ought not our spirits to be prepared and ready to receive his communications? We are, in such acts, more peculiarly, in his presence. In the Israelites hearing the law, it is said, God was to "come among them" (Exodus 19:10-11). Then, men are said to stand before the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:8): "God, before whom I stand" (1 Kings 17:1): that is, whom I worship; and therefore when Cain forsook the worship of God settled in his father's family, he is said, "to go out from the presence of the Lord" (Genesis 4:6). God is essentially present in the world; graciously present in his church. The name of the evangelical city

is Jehovah Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35), “the Lord is there.” God is more graciously present in the evangelical institutions than in the legal; he “loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Psalms 87:2); his evangelical law and worship which was to go forth from Zion, as the other did from Sinai (Micah 4:2). God delights to approach to men, and converse with them in the worship instituted in the gospel, more than in all the dwellings of Jacob. If God be graciously present, ought not we to be spiritually present? A lifeless carcass service becomes not so high and delectable a presence as this; it is to thrust him from us, not invite him to us; it is to Practise in the ordinances what the prophet predicts concerning men s usage of our Saviour (Isaiah 53:2): “There is no form, no comeliness, nor beauty that we should desire him.” A slightness in worship reflects upon the excellency of the object of worship. God and his worship are so linked together, that whosoever thinks the one not worth his inward care, esteems the other not worth his inward affection. How unworthy a slight is it of God, who proffers the opening his treasure; the re-impressing his image; conferring his blessings; admits us into his presence, when he hath no need for us; who hath millions of angels to attend him in his court, and celebrate his praise! He that worships not God with his spirit, regards not God’s presence in his ordinances, and slights the great end of God in them, and that perfection he may attain by them. We can only expect what God hath promised to give, when we tender to him what he hath commanded us to present. If we put off God with a shell, he will put us off with a husk. How can we expect his heart, when we do not give him ours; or hope for the blessing needful for us, when we render not the glory due to him? It cannot be an advantageous worship without spiritual graces; for those are uniting, and union is the ground of all communion.

Reason V. To have a spiritual worship is God’s end in the restoration of the creature, both in redemption by his Son and sanctification by his spirit. A fitness for spiritual offerings was the end of the “coming of Christ” (Malachi 3:3); he should purge them as gold and silver by fire, a spirit burning up their dross, melting them into a holy compliance with and submission to God. To what purpose? That they may offer to the lord an offering in righteousness; a pure offering from a purified spirit; he came to “bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18) in such a garb, as that we might be fit to converse with him. Can we be thus, without a fixedness of our spirits on him? The offering of spiritual sacrifices is the end of making any a “spiritual habitation” and a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5). We can no more be worshippers of God without a worshipper’s nature, than a man can be a man without human nature. As man was at first created for the honor and worship of God, so the design of restoring that image which was defaced by sin tends to the same end. We are not brought to God by Christ, nor are our services presented to hire, if they be without our spirits; would any man that undertakes to bring another to a prince, introduce him in a slovenly and sordid habit, such a garb that he knows hateful to him? or bring the clothes or skin of a man stuffed with straw, instead of the person? to come with our skins before God, without our spirits, is contrary to the design of God in redemption and regeneration. If a carnal worship would have pleased God, a carnal heart would have served his turn, without the expense of his Spirit in sanctification. He bestows upon man a spiritual nature, that he may return to him a spiritual service; he enlightens the understanding, that he may have a rational service; and new moulds the will, that he may have a voluntary service. As it is the milk of the word wherewith he feeds us, so it is the service of the word wherewith we must glorify him. So much as there is of confusedness in our understanding, so much of starting and levity in our wills, so much of slipperiness and skipping in our affections; so much is abated of the due qualities of the worship of God, and so much we fall short of the end

of redemption and sanctification.

Reason VI. A spiritual worship is to be offered to God, because no worship but that can be acceptable. We can never be secured of acceptance without it; he being a Spirit, nothing but the worship in a spirit can be suitable to him: what is unsuitable, cannot be acceptable; there must be something in us, to make our services capable of being presented by Christ for an actual acceptation. No service is "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," but as it is a spiritual sacrifice, and offered by a spiritual heart (1 Peter 2:5). The sacrifice is first spiritual, before it be acceptable to God by Christ; when it is "an offering in righteousness," it is then, and only then, pleasant to the Lord (Malachi 3:3-4). No prince would accept a gift that is unsuitable to his majesty, and below the condition of the person that presents it. Would he be pleased with a bottle of water for drink, from one that hath his cellar full of wine? How unacceptable must that be that is unsuitable to the Divine Majesty! And what can be more unsuitable than a withdrawing the operations of our souls from him, in the oblation of our bodies? We as little glorify God as God, when we give him only a corporeal worship, as the heathen did, when they represented him in a corporeal shape (Romans 1:21); one as well as the other denies his spiritual nature: this is worse, for had it been lawful to represent God to the eye, it could not have been done but by a bodily figure suited to the sense; but since it is necessary to worship him, it cannot be by a corporeal attendance, without the operation of the Spirit. A spiritual frame is more pleasing to God than the highest exterior adornments, than the greatest gifts, and the highest prophetic illuminations. "The glory of the second temple" exceeded the glory of the first (Haggai 2:8-9). As God accounts the spiritual glory of ordinances most beneficial for us, so our spiritual attendance upon ordinances is most pleasing to him; he that offers the greatest services without it, offers but flesh (Hosea 8:13): "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of my offerings, but the Lord accepts them not." Spiritual frames are the soul of religious services; all other carriages without them are contemptible to this spirit: we can never lay claim to that promise of God, none shall "seek my face in vain." We affect a vain seeking of him, when we want a due temper of spirit for him; and vain spirits shall have vain returns: it is more contrary to the nature of God's holiness to have communion with such, than it is contrary to the nature of light to have communion with darkness. To make use of this:

Use 1. First it serves for information.

1. If spiritual worship be required by God, how sad is it for them that they are so far from giving God a spiritual worship, that they render him no worship at all! I speak not of the neglect of public, but of private; when men present not a devotion to God from one year's end to the other. The speech of our Saviour, that we must worship God in spirit and truth, implies that a worship is due to him from every one; that is the common impression upon the consciences of all men in the world, if they have not by some constant course in gross sins, hardened their souls, and stifled those natural sentiments. There was never a nation in the world without some kind of religion; and no religion was ever without some modes to testify a devotion; the heathens had their sacrifices and purifications; and the Jews, by God's order, had their rites, whereby they were to express their allegiance to God. Consider,

(1.) Worship is a duty incumbent upon all men. It is a homage mankind owes to God, under the relation wherein he stands obliged to him; it is a prime and immutable justice to own our allegiance to him; it is as unchangeable a truth that God is to be worshipped, as that God is; he is to be

worshipped as God, as creator, and therefore by all, since he is the Creator of all, the Lord of all, and all are his creatures, and all are his subjects. Worship is founded upon creation (Psalms 100:2-3): it is due to God for himself and his own essential excellency, and therefore due from all; it is due upon the account of man's nature; the human rational nature is the same in all. Whatsoever is due to God upon the account of man's nature, and the natural obligations he hath laid upon man, is due from all men; because they all enjoy the benefits which are proper to their nature. Man in no state was exempted, nor can be exempted from it; in Paradise he had his Sabbath and sacraments; man therefore dissolves the obligation of a reasonable nature, by neglecting the worship of God. Religion is in the first place to be minded. As soon as Noah came out of the ark, he contrived not a habitation for himself, but an altar for the Lord, to acknowledge him the author of his preservation from the deluge (Genesis 8:20): and wheresoever Abraham came, his first business was to erect an altar, and pay his arrears of gratitude to God, before he ran upon the score for new mercies (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:4; Genesis 13:18): he left a testimony of worship wherever he came.

(2.) Wholly therefore to neglect it, is a high degree of atheism. He that calls not upon God, "saith in his heart, There is no God;" and seems to have the sentiments of natural conscience, as to God, stifled in him (Psalms 14:1; Psalms 14:4): it must arise from a conceit that there is no God, or that we are equal to him, adoration not being due from persons of an equal state; or that God is unable, or unwilling to take notice of the adoring acts of his creatures: what is any of these but an undeifying the supreme Majesty? When we lay aside all thoughts of paying any homage to him, we are in a fair way opinionatively to deny him, as much as we practically disown him. Where there is no knowledge of God, that is, no "acknowledgment of God," a gap is opened to all licentiousness (Hosea 4:1-2); and that by degrees brawns the conscience, and razeth out the sense of God. Those forsake God that "forget his holy mountain" (Isaiah 65:11); they do not practically own him as the Creator of their souls or bodies. It is the sin of Cain, who turning his back upon worship, is said to "go out from the presence of the Lord" (Genesis 4:16). Not to worship him with our spirits, is against his law of creation: not to worship him at all, is against his act of creation; not to worship him in truth, is hypocrisy; not to worship him at all, is atheism; whereby we render ourselves worse than the worms in the earth, or a toad in a ditch.

(3.) To perform a worship to a false God, or to the true God in a false manner, seems to be less a sin than to live in perpetual neglect of it. Though it be directed to a false object instead of God, yet it is under the notion of a God, and so is an acknowledgment of such a Being as God in the world; whereas the total neglect of any worship, is a practical denying of the existence of any supreme Majesty. Whosoever constantly omits a public and private worship, transgresses against an universally received dictate; for all nations have agreed in the common notion of worshipping God, though they have disagreed in the several modes and rites whereby they would testify that adoration. By a worship of God, though superstitious, a veneration and reverence of such a being is maintained in the world; whereas by a total neglect of worship, he is virtually disowned and discarded, if not from his existence, yet from his providence and government of the world; all the mercies we breathe in are denied to flow from him. A foolish worship owns religion, though it bespatters it; as if a stranger coming into a country mistakes the subject for the prince, and pays that reverence to the subject which is due to the prince; though he mistakes the object, yet he owns an authority; or if he pays any respect to the true prince of that country after the mode of his

own, though appearing ridiculous in the place where he is, he owns the authority of the prince; whereas the omission of all respect would be a contempt of majesty: and, therefore, the judgments of God have been more signal upon the sacrilegious contemners of worship among the heathens, than upon those that were diligent and devout in their false worship; and they generally owned the blessings received to the preservation of a sense and worship of a Deity among them. Though such a worship be not acceptable to God, and every man is bound to offer to God a devotion agreeable to his own mind; yet it is commendable, not as worship, but as it speaks an acknowledgment of such a being as God, in his power and creation, and his beneficence in his providence. Well, then, omissions of worship are to be avoided. Let no man execute that upon himself which God will pronounce at last as the greatest misery, and bid God depart from him, who will at last be loth to hear God bid him depart from him. Though man hath natural sentiments that God is to be worshipped, yet having an hostility in his nature, he is apt to neglect, or give it him in a slight manner; he therefore sets a particular mark and notice of attention upon the fourth command, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabhath day." Corrupt nature is apt to neglect the worship of God, and flag in it. This command, therefore, which concerns his worship, he fortifies with several reasons. Nor let any neglect worship, because they cannot find their hearts spiritual in it. The further we are from God, the more carnal shall we be. No man can expect heat by a distance from the sunbeams, or other means of warmth. Though God commanded a circumcised heart in the Jewish services, yet he did not warrant a neglect of the outward testimonies of religion he had then appointed. He expected, according to his command, that they should offer the sacrifices, and practise the legal purification he had commanded; he would have them diligently observed, though he had declared that he imposed them only for a time; and our Saviour ordered the practice of those positive rites as long as the law remained unrepealed, as in the case of the leper (Mark 14:4). It is an injustice to refuse the offering ourselves to God according to the manner he hath in his wisdom prescribed and required. If spiritual worship be required by God, then,

2. It informs us, that diligence in outward worship is not to be rested in. Men may attend all their days on worship, with a juiceless heart and unquickened frame, and think to compensate the neglect of the manner with abundance of the matter of service. [Note: Daille, Melange des Sermons. Ser. ii.] Outward expressions are but the badges and liveries of service, not the service itself. As the strength of sin lies in the inward frame of the heart, so the strength of worship in the inward complexion and temper of the soul. What do a thousand services avail, without cutting the throat of our carnal affections? What are loud prayers, but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, without divine charity? A pharisaical diligence in outward forms, without inward spirit, had no better a title vouchsafed by our Saviour than that of hypocritical. God desires not sacrifices, nor delights in burnt-offerings: shadows are not to be offered instead of substance. God required the heart of man for itself, but commanded outward ceremonies as subservient to inward worship, and goads and spurs unto it. They were never appointed as the substance of religion, but auxiliaries to it. What value had the offering of the human nature of Christ been of, if he had not had a divine nature to qualify him to be the Priest? and what is the oblation of our bodies, without a priestly act of the spirit in the presentation of it? Could the Israelites have called themselves worshippers of God according to his order, if they had brought a thousand lambs that had died in a ditch, or been killed at home? They were to be brought living to the altar; the blood shed at the foot of it. A thousand sacrifices killed without had not been so valuable as one brought alive to the place of offering: one sound sacrifice is better than a thousand rotten ones. As God took no pleasure in the

blood of beasts without its relation to the Antitype; so he takes no pleasure in the outward rites of worship, without faith in the Redeemer. To offer a body with a sapless spirit, is a sacrilege of the same nature with that of the Israelites when they offered dead beasts. A man without spiritual worship is dead while he worships, though by his diligence in the externals of it, he may, like the angel of the church of Sardis, "have a name to live" (Revelation 3:1). What security can we expect from a multitude of dead services? What weak shields are they against the holy eye and revenging wrath of God! What man, but one out of his wits, would solicit a dead man to be his advocate or champion? Diligence in outward worship is not to be rested in.

Use II. shall be for examination. Let us try ourselves concerning the manner of our worship. We are now in the end of the world, and the dregs of time; wherein the apostle predicts there may be much of a form, and little of the power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 3:5); and, therefore, it stands us in hand to search into ourselves, whether it be not thus with us? whether there be as much reverence in our spirits as there may be devotion in our countenances and outward carriages.

1. How, therefore, are our hearts prepared to worship? Is our diligence greater to put our hearts in an adoring posture, than our bodies in a decent garb? or are we content to have a muddy heart, so we may have a dressed carcass? To have a spirit a cage of unclean birds, while we wipe the filth from the outside of the platter, is no better than a pharisaical devotion, and deserves no better a name than that of a whited sepulchre. Do we take opportunities to excite and quicken our spirits to the performance, and cry aloud with David, "Awake, awake, my glory!" Are not our hearts asleep when Christ knocks? When we hear the voice of God, "Seek my face;" do we answer him with warm resolutions, "Thy face, Lord, we will seek?" (Psalms 27:8.) Do we comply with spiritual motions, and strike whilst the iron is hot? Is there not more of reluctancy than readiness? Is there a quick rising of the soul in reverence to the motion, as Eglon to Ehud; or a sullen hanging the head at the first approach of it? Or if our hearts seem to be engaged and on fire, what are the motives that quicken that fire? Is it only the blast of a natural conscience, fear of hell, desires of heaven, as abstracted from God? or is it an affection to God; an obedient will to please him; longings to enjoy him, as a holy and sanctifying God in his ordinances, as well as a blessed and glorified God in heaven? What do we expect in our approaches from him? that which may make divine impressions upon us, and more exactly conform us to the Divine nature? or do we design nothing but an empty formality, a rolling eye, and a filling the air with a few words, without any openings of heart to receive the incomes, which, according to the nature of the duty, might be conveyed to us? Can this be a spiritual worship? The soul then closely waits upon him, when its expectation is only from him (Psalms 62:6). Are our hearts seasoned with a sense of sin; a sight of our spiritual wants; raised notions of God; lowing affections to him; strong appetite after a spiritual fulness? Do we rouse up our sleepy spirits, and make a covenant with all that is within us to attend upon him? So much as we want of this, so much we come short of a spiritual worship. In Psalms 57:7 ("My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed"), David would fix his heart, before he would engage in a praising act of worship. He appeals to God about it, and that with doubling the expression, as being certain of an inward preparedness. Can we make the same appeals in a fixation of spirit?

2. How are our hearts fixed upon him; how do they cleave to him in the duty? Do we resign our spirits to God, and make them an entire holocaust, a whole burnt-offering in his worship? or do we not willingly admit carnal thoughts to mix themselves with spiritual duties, and fasten our minds to

the creature, under pretences of directing them to the Creator? Do we not pass a mere compliment upon God, by some superficial act of devotion; while some covetous, envious, ambitious, voluptuous imagination may possess our minds? Do we not invert God's order, and worship a lust instead of God with our spirits, that should not have the least service, either from our souls or bodies, but with a spiritual disdain be sacrificed to the just indignation of God? How often do we fight against his will, while we cry, "Hail, Master!" instead of crucifying our own thoughts, crucifying the Lord of our lives; our outward carriage plausible, and our inward stark naught! Do we not often regard iniquity more than God in our hearts, in a time of worship?—roll some filthy imagination as a sweet morsel under our tongues, and taste more sweetness in that than in God? Do not our spirits smell rank of earth, while we offer to heaven; and have we not hearts full of thick clay, as their "hands were full of blood?" (Isaiah 1:15.) When we sacrifice, do we not wrap up our souls in communion with some sordid fancy, when we should entwine our spirits about an amiable God? While we have some fear of him, may we not have a love to something else above him? This is to worship, or swear by the Lord, and by Malcham (Zephaniah 1:5). How often doth an apish fancy render a service inwardly ridiculous, under a grave outward posture; skipping to the shop, warehouse, counting-house, in the space of a short prayer! and we are before God as a Babel, a confusion of internal languages; and this in those parts of worship which are, in the right use, most agreeable to God, profitable for ourselves, ruinous to the kingdom of sin and Satan, and means to bring us into a closer communion with the Divine Majesty. Can this be a spiritual worship?

3. How do we act our graces in worship? Though the instrument be strung, if the strings be not wound up, what melody can be the issue? All readiness and alacrity discover a strength of nature; and a readiness in spirituals discovers a spirituality in the heart. As unaffected thoughts of God are not spiritual thoughts, so unaffected addresses to God are not spiritual addresses. Well, then, what awakenings, and elevations of faith and love have we? What strong outflowings of our souls to him? What indignation against sin? What admirations of redeeming grace? How low have we brought our corruptions to the footstool of Christ, to be made his conquered enemies? How straitly have we clasped our faith about the cross and throne of Christ, to become his intimate spouse? Do we in hearing hang upon the lips of Christ; in prayer take hold of God, and will not let him go; in confessions rend the caul of our hearts, and indite our souls before him with a deep humility? Do we act more by a soaring love than a drooping fear? So far as our spirits are servile, so far they are legal and carnal; so much as they are free and spontaneous, so much they are evangelical and spiritual. As men under the law are subject to the constraint of "bondage all their life-time" (Hebrews 2:15), in all their worship; so under the gospel they are under a constraint of love (2 Corinthians 5:14): how then are believing affections exercised, which are alway accompanied with holy fear; a fear of his goodness that admits us into his presence, and a fear to offend him in our act of worship? So much as we have of forced or feeble affection, so much we have of carnality.

4. How do we find our hearts after worship? By an after carriage we may judge of the spirituality of it.

(1.) How are we as to inward strength? When a worship is spiritually performed, grace is more strengthened, corruption more mortified; the soul, like Samson after his awakening, goes out with a renewed strength; as the inward man is renewed day by day, that is, every day; so it is renewed in every worship. Every shower makes the grass and fruit grow in good ground where the root is

good, and the weeds where the ground is naught; the more prepared the heart is to obedience in other duties after worship, the more evidence there is that it hath been spiritual in the exercise of it. It is the end of God in every dispensation, as in that of John Baptist, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17): when the heart is by worship prepared for fresh acts of obedience, and hath a more exact watchfulness against the encroachments of sin. As carnal men after worship sprout up in spiritual wickedness, so do spiritual worshippers in spiritual graces; spiritual fruits are a sign of a spiritual frame. When men are more prone to sin after duty, it is a sign there was but little communion with God in it; and a greater strength of sin, because such an act is contrary to the end of worship which is the subduing of sin. It is a sign the physic hath wrought well, when the stomach hath a better appetite to its appointed food; and worship hath been well performed, when we have a stronger inclination to other acts well pleasing to God, and a more sensible distaste of those temptations we too much relished before. It is a sign of a good concoction, when there is a greater strength in the vitals of religion, a more eager desire to know God. When Moses had been praying to God, and prevailed with him, he puts up a higher request to "behold his glory" (Exodus 33:13; Exodus 33:18): when the appetite stands strong to fuller discoveries of God, it is a sign there hath been a spiritual converse with him.

(2.) How is it especially as to humility? The Pharisees' worship was, without dispute, carnal; and we find them not more humble after all their devotions, but overgrown with more weeds of spiritual pride; they performed them as their righteousness. What men dare plead before God in his day, they plead before him in their hearts in their day; but this men will do at the day of judgment: "We have prophesied in thy name," &c. (Matthew 7:21). They show what tincture their services left upon their spirits; that which excludes them from any acceptation at the last day, excludes them from any estimation of being spiritual in this day. The carnal worshippers charge God with injustice in not rewarding them, and claim an acceptation as a compensation due to them (Isaiah 58:3): "Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?" A spiritual worshipper looks upon his duties with shame, as well as he doth upon his sins with confusion; and implores the mercy of God for the one as well as the other. In Psalms 143:2, the prophet David, after his supplications, begs of God not to enter into judgment with him; and acknowledges any answer that God should give him, as a fruit of his faithfulness to his promise, and not the merit of his worship: "In thy faithfulness answer me," &c. Whatsoever springs from a gracious principle, and is the breath of the Spirit, leaves a man more humble; whereas, that which proceeds from a stock of nature, hath the true blood of nature running in the veins of it; viz., that pride which is naturally derived from Adam. The breathing of the Divine Spirit is, in everything, to conform us to our Redeemer; that being the main work of his office, is his work in every particular christian act influenced by him. Now Jesus Christ, in all his actions, was an exact pattern of all humility. After the institution and celebration of the supper, a special act of worship in the church, though he had a sense of all the authority his Father had given him, yet he "humbles himself to wash his disciples' feet" (John 13:2-4); and after his sublime prayer (John 17:1-26.), "He humbles himself to the death, and offers himself" to his murderers, because of his Father's pleasure. (John 18:1): "When he had spoken those words, he went over the brook Kedron into the garden." What is the end of God in appointing worship, is the end of a spiritual heart in offering it; not his own exaltation, but God's glory. Glorifying the name of God is the fruit of that evangelical worship the Gentiles were in time to give to God (Psalms 86:9): "All nations which thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name." Let us examine, then, what debasing ourselves

there is in a sense of our own vileness, and distance from so glorious a Spirit. Self-denial is the heart of all gospel grace. Evangelical, spiritual worship cannot be without the ingredient of the main evangelical principle.

(3.) What delight is there after it? What pleasure is there, and what is the object of that pleasure? Is it the communion we have had with God, or a fluency in ourselves? Is it something which hath touched our hearts, or tickled our fancies? As the strength of sin is known by the delightful thoughts of it after the commission; so is the spirituality of duty, by the object of our delightful remembrance after the performance. It was a sign David was spiritual in the worship of God in the tabernacle, when he enjoyed it, because he longed for the spiritual part of it, when he was exiled from it; his desires were not only for liberty to revisit the tabernacle, but to see the “power and glory of God in the sanctuary,” as he had seen it before (Psalms 63:2): his desires for it could not have been so ardent, if his reflection upon what had past had not been delightful; nor could his soul be poured out in him, for the want of such opportunities, if the remembrance of the converse he had had with God, had not been accompanied with a delightful relish (Psalms 42:4). Let us examine what delight we find in our spirits after worship.

Use III. is of comfort. And it is very comfortable to consider, that the smallest worship with the heart and spirit, flowing from a principle of grace, is more acceptable than the most pompous veneration; yea, if the oblation were as precious as the whole circuit of heaven and earth without it. That God that values a cup of cold water given to any as his disciple, will value a sincere service above a costly sacrifice. God hath his eye upon them that honor his nature; he would not “seek such to worship him,” if he did not intend to accept such a worship from them; when we therefore invoke him, and praise him, which are the prime parts of religion, he will receive it as a sweet savor from us, and overlook infirmities mixed with the graces. The great matter of discomfort, and that which makes us question the spirituality of worship, is the many starts of our spirits, and roving to other things. For answer to which,

1. It is to be confessed that these starts are natural to us. Who is free from them? We bear in our bosoms a nest of turbulent thoughts, which, like busy gnats, will be buzzing about us while we are in our most inward and spiritual converses. Many wild beasts lurk in a man's heart, as in a close and covert wood, and scarce discover themselves but at our solemn worship. No duty so holy, no worship so spiritual, that can wholly privilege us from them; they will jog us in our most weighty employments, that, as God said to Cain, sin lies at the door, and enters in, and makes a riot in our souls. As it is said of wicked men, “they cannot sleep” for multitude of thoughts (Ecclesiastes 5:12); so it may be of many a good man, he cannot worship for multitude of thoughts; there will be starts, and more in our religious than natural employments; it is natural to man. Some therefore think, the bells tied to Aaron's garments, between the pomegranates, were to warn the people, and recall their fugitive minds to the present service, when they heard the sound of them, upon the least motion of the high-priest. The sacrifice of Abraham, the father of the faithful, was not exempt from the fowls pecking at it (Genesis 15:11). Zechariah himself was drowsy in the midst of his visions, which being more amazing, might cause a heavenly intentness (Zechariah 4:1): “The angel that talked with me, came again and awaked me, as a man is awaked out of sleep.” He had been roused up before, but he was ready to drop down again; his heart was gone, till the angel jogged him. We may complain of such imaginations, as Jeremiah doth of the enemies of the Jews (Lamentations 4:19). Our persecutors are swifter than eagles; they light upon us with as much

speed as eagles upon a carcass; they pursue us upon the mountain of divine institutions, and they lay wait for us in the wilderness, in our retired addresses to God. And this will be so while,

(1.) There is natural corruption in us. There are in a godly man two contrary principles, flesh and spirit, which endeavor to hinder one another's acts, and are alway stirring upon the offensive or defensive part (Galatians 5:17). There is a body of death, continually exhaling its noisome vapors: it is a body of death in our worship, as well as in our natures; it snaps our resolutions asunder (Romans 7:19); it hinders us in the doing good, and contradicts our wills in the stirring up evil. This corruption being seated in all the faculties, and a constant domestic in them, has the greater opportunity to trouble us, since it is by those faculties that we spiritually transact with God; and it stirs more in the time of religious exercises, though it be in part mortified; as a wounded beast, though tired, will rage and strive to its utmost, when the enemy is about to fetch a blow at it. All duties of worship tend to the wounding of corruption; and it is no wonder to feel the striving of sin to defend itself and offend us, when we have our arms in our hands to mortify it, that the blow may be diverted which is directed against it. The apostles had aspiring thoughts; and being persuaded of an earthly kingdom, expected a grandeur in it; and though we find some appearance of it at other times, as when they were casting out devils, and gave an account of it to their Master, he gives them a kind of a check (Luke 10:20), intimating that there was some kind of evil in their rejoicing upon that account; yet this never swelled so high, as to break out into a quarrel who should be greatest, until they had the most solemn ordinance, the Lord's supper, to quell it (Luke 22:24). Our corruption is like lime, which discovers not its fire by any smoke or heat, till you cast water, the enemy of fire, upon it; neither doth our natural corruption rage so much, as when we are using means to quench and destroy it.

(2.) While there is a devil, and we in his precinct. As he accuseth us to God, so he disturbs us in ourselves; he is a bold spirit, and loves to intrude himself when we are conversing with God: we read, that when the angels presented themselves before God, Satan comes among them (Job 1:6). Motions from Satan will thrust themselves in with our most raised and angelical frames; he loves to take off the edge of our spirits from God; he acts but after the old rate; he from the first envied God an obedience from man, and envied man the felicity of communion with God; he is unwilling God should have the honor of worship, and that we should have the fruit of it; he hath himself lost it, and therefore is unwilling we should enjoy it; and being subtle, he knows how to make impressions upon us suitable to our inbred corruptions, and assault us in the weakest part. He knows all the avenues to get within us (as he did in the temptation of Eve), and being a spirit, he wants not a power to dart them immediately upon our fancy; and being a spirit, and therefore active and nimble, he can shoot those darts faster than our weakness can beat them off. He is diligent also, and watcheth for his prey, and seeks to devour our services as well as our souls, and snatch our best morsels from us. We know he mixed himself with our Saviour's retirements in the wilderness, and endeavored to fly-blow his holy converse with his Father in the preparation to his mediatory work. Satan is God's ape, and imitates the Spirit in the office of a remembrancer; as the Spirit brings good thoughts and divine promises to mind, to quicken our worship, so the devil brings evil things to mind, and endeavors to fasten them in our souls to disturb us; and though all the foolish starts we have in worship are not purely his issue, yet being of kin to him, he claps his hands, and sets them on like so many mastiffs, to tear the service in pieces. And both those distractions, which arise from our own corruption and from Satan, are most rife in worship, when

we are under some pressing affliction. This seems to be David's case, Psalms 86:1-17 : when in Psalms 86:11 he prays God to unite his heart to fear and worship his name; he seems to be under some affliction, or fear of his enemies: "O free me from those distractions of spirit, and those passions which arise in my soul, upon considering the designs of my enemies against me, and press upon me in my addresses to thee, and attendances on thee." Job also in his affliction complains (Job 17:11) that "his purposes were broken off;" he could not make an even thread of thoughts and resolutions; they were frequently snapt asunder, like rotten yarn when one is winding it up. Good men and spiritual worshippers have lain under this trouble. Though they are a sign of weakness of grace, or some obstructions in the acting of strong grace, yet they are not alway evidences of a want of grace; what ariseth from our own corruption, is to be matter of humiliation and resistance; what ariseth from Satan, should edge our minds to a noble conquest of them. If the apostle did comfort himself with his disapproving of what rose from the natural spring of sin within him, with his consent to the law, and dissent from his lust; and charges it not upon himself, but upon the sin that dwelt in him, with which he had broken off the former league, and was resolved never to enter into amity with it; by the same reason we may comfort ourselves, if such thoughts are undelighted in, and alienate not our hearts from the worship of God by all their busy intrusions to interrupt us.

2. These distractions (not allowed) may be occasions, by an holy improvement, to make our hearts more spiritual after worship, though they disturb us in it, by answering those ends for which we may suppose God permits them to invade us. And that is, First, When they are occasions to humble us,

(1.) For our carriage in the particular worship. There is nothing so dangerous as spiritual pride; it deprived devils and men of the presence of God, and will hinder us of the influence of God. If we had had raised and uninterrupted motions in worship, we should be apt to be lifted up; and the evil stands read to tempt us to self-confidence. You know how it was with Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1-7); his buffetings were occasions to render him more spiritual than his raptures, because more humble. God suffers those wanderings, starts, and distractions, to prevent our spiritual pride; which is as a worm at the root of spiritual worship, and mind us of the dusty frame of our spirits, how easily they are blown away; as he sends sickness to put us in mind of the shortness of our breath, and the easiness to lose it. God would make us ashamed of ourselves in his presence; that we may own, that what is good in any duty, is merely from his grace and Spirit, and not from ourselves; that with Paul we may cry out, "By grace we are what we are," and by grace we do what we do; we may be hereby made sensible, that God can alway find something in our exactest worship, as a ground of denying us the successful fruit of it. If we cannot stand upon our duties for salvation, what can we bottom upon in ourselves? If therefore they are occasions to make us out of love with any righteousness of our own, to make us break our hearts for them, because we cannot keep them out; if we mourn for them as our sins, and count them our great afflictions, we have attained that brokenness which is a choice ingredient in a spiritual sacrifice. Though we have been disturbed by them, yet we are not robbed of the success; we may behold an answer of our worship in our humiliation, in spite of all of them.

(2.) For the baseness of our nature. These unsteady motions help us to discern that heap of vermin that breeds in our nature. Would any man think he had such an averseness to his Creator and Benefactor; such an unsuitableness to him; such an estrangedness from him, were it not for

his inspection into his distracted frame? God suffers this to hang over us as a rod of correction, to discover and fetch out the folly of our hearts. Could we imagine our natures so highly contrary to that God who is so infinitely amiable, so desirable an object; or that there should be so much folly and madness in the heart, as to draw back from God in those services which God hath appointed as pipes through which to communicate his grace, to convey himself, his love and goodness to the creature? If, therefore, we have a deep sense of, and strong reflections upon our base nature, and bewail that mass of averseness which lies there, and that fulness of irreverence towards the God of our mercies, the object of our worship, it is a blessed improvement of our wanderings and diversions. Certainly, if any Israelite had brought a lame and rotten lamb to be sacrificed to God, and afterward had bewailed it, and laid open his heart to God in a sensible and humble confession of it, that repentance had been a better sacrifice, and more acceptable in the sight of God, than if he had brought a sound and a living offering.

Secondly, When they are occasions to make us prize duties of worship. When we argue, as rationally we may, that they are of singular use, since our corrupt hearts and a malicious devil doth chiefly endeavor to hinder us from them, and that we find we have not those gadding thoughts when we are upon worldly business, or upon any sinful design which may dishonor God and wound our souls. This is a sign sin and Satan dislike worship, for he is too subtle a spirit to oppose that which would further his kingdom. As it is an argument the Scripture is the word of God, because the wickedness of the world doth so much oppose it, so it is a ground to believe the profitableness and excellency of worship, because Satan and our own unruly hearts do so much interrupt us in it: if, therefore, we make this use of our cross-steps in worship, to have a greater value for such duties, more affections to them, and desires to be frequent in them, our hearts are growing spiritual under the weights that would depress them to carnality.

Thirdly, When we take a rise from hence, to have heavenly admirations of the graciousness of God, that he should pity and pardon so many slight addresses to him, and give any gracious returns to us. Though men have foolish rangings every day, and in every duty, yet free grace is so tender as not to punish them (Genesis 8:21): "And the Lord smelt a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not curse the ground for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." It is observable, that this was just after a sacrifice which Noah offered to God (Genesis 8:20): but probably not without infirmities common to human nature, which may be grounded upon the reason God gives, that though he had destroyed the earth before, because of the "evil of man's imaginations" (Genesis 6:5), he still found evil imaginations; he doth not say in the heart of Cham, or others of Noah's family, but in man's heart, including Noah also, who had both the judgments of God upon the former world, and the mercy of God in his own preservation, before his eyes; yet God saw evil imaginations rooted in the nature of man, and though it were so, yet he would be merciful. If, therefore, we can, after finding our hearts so vagrant in worship, have real frames of thankfulness that God hath spared us, and be heightened in our admirations at God's giving us any fruit of such a distracted worship, we take advantage from them to be raised into an evangelical frame, which consists in the humble acknowledgments of the grace of God. When David takes a review of those tumultuous passions which had rued his mind, and possessed him with unbelieving notions of God in the persons of his prophets (Psalms 116:11), how high doth his soul mount in astonishment and thankfulness to God for his mercy! (Psalms 116:12.) Notwithstanding his distrust, God did graciously perform his promise, and answer his

desire: then it is, "What shall I render to the Lord?" His heart was more affected for it, because it had been so passionate in former distrusts. It is indeed a ground of wondering at the patience of the Spirit of God, that he should guide our hearts when they are so apt to start out, as it is the patience of a master to guide the hand of his scholar, while he mixes his writing with many blots. It is not one or two infirmities the Spirit helps us in, and helps over, but many (Romans 8:26). It is a sign of a spiritual heart, when he can take a rise to bless God for the renewing and blowing up his affections, in the midst of so many incursions from Satan to the contrary, and the readiness of the heart too much to comply with them.

Fourthly, When we take occasion from thence to prize the mediation of Christ. The more distractions jog us, the more need we should see of going out to a Saviour by faith. One part of our Saviour's office is to stand between us and the infirmities of our worship. As he is an advocate, he presents our services, and pleads for them and us (1 John 2:1), for the sins of our duties, as well as for our other sins. Jesus Christ is an High-priest, appointed by God to take away the "iniquities of our holy things," which was typified by Aaron's plate upon his mitre (Exodus 28:36; Exodus 28:38). Were there no imperfections, were there no creeping up of those frogs into our minds, we should think our worship might merit acceptance with God upon its own account; but if we behold our own weakness, that not a tear, a groan, a sigh, is so pure, but must have Christ to make it entertainable; that there is no worship without those blemishes; and upon this, throw all our services into the arms of Christ for acceptance, and solicit him to put his merits in the front, to make our ciphers appear valuable; it is a spiritual act, the design of God in the gospel being to advance the honor and mediation of his Son. That is a spiritual and evangelical act which answers the evangelical design. The design of Satan, and our own corruption is defeated, when those interruptions make us run swifter, and take faster hold on the High-priest who is to present our worship to God, and our own souls receive comfort thereby. Christ had temptations offered to him by the devil in his wilderness retirement, that, from an experimental knowledge, he might be able more "compassionately to succor us" (Hebrews 2:18); we have such assaults in our retired worship especially, that we may be able more highly to value him and his mediation.

3. Let us not, therefore, be discouraged by those interruptions and starts of our hearts.

(1.) If we find in ourselves a strong resistance of them. The flesh will be lusting; that cannot be hindered; yet if we do not fulfil the lusts of it, rise up at its command, and go about its work, we may be said to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-17): we "walk in the Spirit," if we "fulfil not the lusts of the flesh," though there be a lusting of the flesh against the Spirit; so we worship in the Spirit, though there be carnal thoughts arising if we do not fulfil them; though the stirring of them discovers some contrariety in us to God, yet the resistance manifests that there is a principle of contrariety in us to them; that as there is something of flesh that lusts against the spirit, so there is something of spirit in worship which lusts against the flesh: we must take heed of omitting worship, because of such inroads, and lying down in the mire of a total neglect. If our spirits are made more lively and vigorous against them; if those cold vapors which have risen from our hearts make us, like a spring in the midst of the cold earth, more warm, there is, in this case, more reason for us to bless God, than to be discouraged. God looks upon it as the disease, not the wilfulness of our nature; as the weakness of the flesh, not the willingness of the spirit. If we would shut the door upon them, it seems they are unwelcome company; men do not use to lock their doors upon those they love; if they break in and disturb us with their impertinences, we need not be discomforted,

unless we give them a share in our affections, and turn our back upon God to entertain them; if their presence makes us sad, their flight would make us joyful.

(2.) If we find ourselves excited to a stricter watch over our hearts against them; as travellers will be careful when they come to places where they have been robbed before, that they be not so easily surprised again. We should not only lament when we have had such foolish imaginations in worship breaking in upon us, but also bless God that we have had no more, since we have hearts so fruitful of weeds. We should give God the glory when we find our hearts preserved from these intruders, and not boast of ourselves, but return him our praise for the watch and guard he kept over us, to preserve us from such thieves. Let us not be discomforted; for as the greatness of our sins, upon our turning to God, is no hindrance to our justification, because it doth not depend upon our conversion as the meritorious cause, but upon the infinite value of our Saviour's satisfaction, which reaches the greatest sins as well as the least; so the multitude of our bewailed distractions in worship are not a hindrance to our acceptance, because of the uncontrollable power of Christ's intercession.

Use IV. is for exhortation. Since spiritual worship is due to God, and the Father seeks such to worship him, how much should we endeavor to satisfy the desire and order of God, and act conformable to the law of our creation and the love of redemption! Our end must be the same in worship which was God's end in creation and redemption; to glorify his name, set forth his perfections, and be rendered fit, as creatures and redeemed ones, to partake of that grace which is the fruit of worship. An evangelical dispensation requires a spiritual homage; to neglect, therefore, either the matter or manner of gospel duties, is to put a slight upon gospel privileges. The manner of duty is ever of more value than the matter; the scarlet dye is more precious than the doth tintured with it. God respects more the disposition of the sacrificer than the multitude of the sacrifices. [Note: Μᾶλλον τὸ δαίμνιον πρὸς τὸ τὴν φύσιντων θεὸς ἢ τὴν θυομένων πλῆθος. Porphy. de Abstinencia.] The solemn feasts appointed by God were but dung as managed by the Jews (Malachi 2:3). The heart is often welcome without the body, but the body never grateful without the heart. The inward acts of the spirit require nothing from without to constitute them good in themselves; but the outward acts of devotion require inward acts to render them savory to God. As the goodness of outward acts consists not in the acts themselves, so the acceptableness of them results not from the acts themselves, but from the inward frame animating and quickening those acts, as blood and spirits running through the veins of a duty to make it a living service in the sight of God. Imperfections in worship hinder not God's acceptance of it, if the heart, spirited by grace, be there to make it a sweet savor. The stench of burning flesh and fat in the legal sacrifices might render them noisome to the outward senses; but God smelt a sweet savor in them, as they respected Christ. When the heart and spirit are offered up to God, it may be a savory duty, though attended with unsavory imperfections; but a thousand sacrifices without a stamp of faith, a thousand spiritual duties with an habitual carnality, are no better than stench with God. The heart must be purged, as well as the temple was by our Saviour, of the thieves that would rob God of his due worship. Antiquity had some temples wherein it was a crime to bring' any gold; therefore those that came to worship laid their gold aside before they went into the temple. We should lay aside our worldly and trading thoughts before we address to worship (Isaiah 26:9) "With my spirit within me will I seek thee early." Let not our minds be gadding abroad, and exiled from God and themselves. It will be thus when the "desire of our soul is to his name, and the

remembrance of him" (Isaiah 26:8). When he hath given so great and admirable a gift as that of his Son, in whom are all things necessary to salvation, righteousness, peace, and pardon of sin, we should manage the remembrance of his name in worship with the closest unitedness of heart, and the most spiritual affections. The motion of the spirit is the first act in religion; to this we are obliged in every act. The devil requires the spirit of his votaries; should God have a less dedication than the devil?

Motives to back this exhortation.

I. Not to give God our spirit is a great sin. It is a mockery of God, not worship, contempt, not adoration, whatever our outward fervency or protestations may be. [Note: "Non valet protestatio contra factum" is a rule in the civil law.] Every alienation of our hearts from him is a real scorn put upon him. The acts of the soul are real, and more the acts of the man than the acts of the body; because they are the acts of the choicest part of man, and of that which is the first spring of all bodily motions; it is the λογος ενδιαθετος, the internal speech whereby we must speak with God. To give him, therefore, only an external form of worship without the life of it, is a taking his name in vain. We mock him, when we mind not what we are speaking to him, or what he is speaking to us; when the motions of our hearts are contrary to the motions of our tongues; when we do anything before him slovenly, impudently, or rashly. As in a lutinist it is absurd to sing one tune and play another; so it is a foul thing to tell God one thing with our lips, and think another with our hearts. It is a sin like that the apostle chargeth the heathens with (Romans 1:28) "They like not to retain God in their knowledge" Their stomachs are sick while they are upon any duty, and never leave working till they have thrown up all the spiritual part of worship, and rid themselves of the thoughts of God, which are as unwelcome and troublesome guests to them. When men behave themselves in the sight of God, as if God were not God, they do not only defame him, but deny him, and violate the unchangeable perfections of the Divine nature.

1. It is against the majesty of God, when we have not awful thoughts of that great Majesty to whom we address; when our souls cleave not to him when we petition him in prayer, or when he gives out his orders to us in his Word. It is a contempt of the majesty of a prince, if, whilst he is speaking to us, we listen not to him with reverence and attention, but turn our backs on him, to play with one of his hounds, or talk with a beggar; or while we speak to him, to rake in a dunghill. Solomon adviseth us to "keep our foot when we go to the house of God" (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Our affections should be steady, and not slip away again; why? (Ecclesiastes 5:2 because "God is in heaven," &c. He is a God of majesty; earthly, dirty frames are unsuitable to the God of heaven; low spirits are unsuitable to the Most High. We would not bring our mean servants or dirty dogs into a prince's presence chamber; yet we bring not only our worldly, but our profane affections into God's presence. We give in this case those services to God which our Governor would think unworthy of him (Malachi 1:8). The more excellent and glorious God is, the greater contempt of him it is to suffer such foolish affections to be competitors with him for our hearts. It is a scorn put upon him to converse with a creature, while we are dealing with him; but a greater to converse in our thoughts and fancies with some sordid lust, which is most hateful to him; and the more aggravation it attracts, in that we are to apprehend him the most glorious object sitting upon his throne in time of worship, and ourselves standing as vile creatures before him, supplicating for our lives, and the conveyance of grace and mercy to our souls; as if a grand mutineer, instead of humbly begging the pardon of his offended prince, should present his petition not only scribbled and blotted, but

besmeared with some loathsome excrement. It is unbecoming both the majesty of God, and the worship itself, to present him with a picture instead of a substance, and bring a world of nasty affections in our hearts, and ridiculous toys in our heads before him, and worship with indisposed and heedless souls. He is a great King (Malachi 1:14): therefore address to him with fear and reverence.

2. It is against the life of God. Is a dead worship proportioned to a living God? The separation of heavenly affections from our souls before God, makes them as much a carcass in his sight, as the divorce of the soul makes the body a carcass. When the affections are separated, worship is no longer worship, but a dead offering, a lifeless bulk; for the essence and spirit of worship is departed. Though the soul be present with the body in a way of information, yet it is not present in a way of affection, and this is the worst; for it is not the separation of the soul from informing that doth separate a man from God, but the removal of our affections from him. If a man pretend an application to God, and sleep and snore all the time, without question such a one did not worship. In a careless worship the heart is morally dead while the eyes are open: the heart of the spouse (Song of Solomon 5:2) waked while her eyes slept; and our hearts, on the contrary, sleep while our eyes wake. Our blessed Saviour hath died to purge our consciences from dead works and frames, that we may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14); to serve God as a God of life. David's soul cried and fainted for God under this consideration (Psalms 42:2); but to present our bodies without our spirits, is such a usage of God, that implies he is a dead image, not worthy of any but a dead and heartless service, like one of those idols the Psalmist speaks of (Psalms 115:5), that have "eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not;" no life in it. Though it be not an objective idolatry, because the worship is directed to the true God; yet I may call it a subjective idolatry in regard of the frame, fit only to be presented to some senseless stock. We intimate God to be no better than an idol, and to have no more knowledge of us and insight into us, than an idol can have. If we did believe him to be the living God, we durst not come before him with services so unsuitable to him, and reproaches of him.

3. It is against the infiniteness of God. We should worship God with those boundless affections which bear upon them a shadow or image of his infiniteness; such are the desires of the soul which know no limits, but start out beyond whatsoever enjoyment the heart of man possesses. No creeping creature was to be offered to God in sacrifice, but such as had legs to run, or wings to fly. For us to come before God with a light creeping frame, is to worship him with the lowest finite affections, as though anything, though never so mean or torn, might satisfy an infinite Being; as though a poor shallow creature could give enough to God without giving him the heart, when, indeed, we cannot give him a worship proportionable to his infiniteness, did our hearts swell as large as heaven in our desires for him in every act of our duties.

4. It is against the spirituality of God. God being a Spirit, calls for a worship in spirit; to withhold this from him implies him to be some gross corporeal matter. As a Spirit, he looks for the heart; a wrestling heart in prayer, a trembling heart in the Word (Isaiah 56:2). To bring nothing but the body when we come to a spiritual God to beg spiritual benefits, to wait for spiritual communications, which can only be dispensed to us in a spiritual manner, is unsuitable to the spiritual nature of God. A mere carnal service implicitly denies his spirituality, which requires of us higher engagements than mere corporeal ones. Worship should be rational, not an imaginative service, wherein is require the activity of our noblest faculties; and our fancy ought to have no share in it,

but in subserviency to the more spiritual part of our soul.

5. It is against the supremacy of God. As God is one and the only Sovereign; so our hearts should be one, cleaving wholly to him, and undivided from him. In pretending to deal with him, we acknowledge his deity and sovereignty; but in withholding our choicest faculties and affections from him, and the starting of our minds to vain objects, we intimate their equality with God, and their right as well as his to our hearts and affections. It is as if a princess should commit adultery with some base scullion while she is before her husband, which would be a plain denial of his sole right to her. It intimates that other things are superior to God; they are true sovereigns that engross our hearts. If a man were addressing himself to a prince, and should in an instant turn his back upon him, upon a beck or nod from some inconsiderable person; is it not an evidence that that person that invited him away hath a greater sovereignty over him than that prince to whom he was applying himself? And do we not discard God's absolute dominion over us, when, at the least beck of a corrupt inclination, we can dispose of our hearts to it, and alienate them from God? as they, in Ezekiel 33:32, left the service of God for the service of their covetousness, which evidenced that they owned the authority of sin more than the authority of God. This is not to serve God as our Lord and absolute Master, but to make God serve our turn, and submit his sovereignty to the supremacy of some unworthy affection. The creature is preferred before the Creator, when the heart runs most upon it in time of religious worship, and our own carnal interest swallows up the affections that are due to God. It is "an idol set up in the heart" (Ezekiel 14:4) in his solemn presence, and attracts that devotion to itself which we only owe to our Sovereign Lord; and the more base and contemptible that is to which the spirit is devoted, the more contempt there is of God's dominion. Judas's kiss, with a "Hail Master!" was no act of worship, or an owning his Master's authority, but a designing the satisfaction of his covetousness in the betraying of him.

6. It is against the wisdom of God. God, as a God of order, has put earthly things in subordination to heavenly; and we, by this unworthy carriage, invert this order, and put heavenly things in subordination to earthly; in placing mean and low things in our hearts, and bringing them so placed into God's presence, which his wisdom at the creation put under our feet. A service without spiritual affections is a "sacrifice of fools" (Ecclesiastes 5:1), which have lost their brains and understandings: a foolish spirit is very unsuitable to an infinitely wise God. Well may God say of such a one, as Achish of David, who seemed mad, "Why have you brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?" (1 Samuel 21:15.)

7. It is against the omniscience of God. To carry it fair without, and impertinently within, is as though God had not an all-seeing eye that could pierce into the heart, and understand every motion of the inward faculties; as though God were easily cheated with an outward fawning service, like an apothecary's box with a gilded title, that may be full of cobwebs within. What is such a carriage, but a design to deceive God, when, with Herod, we pretend to worship Christ, and intend to murder all the motions of Christ in our souls. A heedless spirit, an estrangement of our souls, a giving the reins to them to run out from the presence of God to see every reed shaken with the wind, is to deny him to be the Searcher of hearts, and the Discerner of secret thoughts; as though he could not look through us to the darkness and remoteness of our minds, but were an ignorant God, who might be put off with the worst as well as the best in our flock. If we did really believe there were a God of infinite knowledge, who saw our frames and whether we came dressed with wedding garments suitable to the duties we are about to perform, should we be so

garish, and put him off with such trivial stuff, without any reverence of his Majesty?

8. It is against the holiness of God. To alienate our spirits is to offend him while we pretend to worship him; though we may be mighty officious in the external part, yet our base and carnal affections make all our worship but as a heap of dung; and who would not look upon it as an affront to lay dung before a prince's throne? (Proverbs 21:27), "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;" how much more when he brings it with a wicked mind? A putrefied carcass under the law had not been so great an affront to the holiness of God, as a frothy unmelted heart, and a wanton fancy, in a time of worship. God is so holy, that if we could offer the worship of angels, and the quintessence of our souls in his service, it would be beneath his infinite purity; how unworthy, then, are they of him, when they are presented not only without the sense of our uncleanness, but sullied with the fumes and exhalations of our corrupt affections, which are as so many plague-spots upon our duties, contrary to the unspotted purity of the Divine nature? Is not this an unworthy conceit of God, and injurious to his infinite holiness?

9. It is against the love and kindness of God. It is a condescension in God to admit a piece of earth to offer up a duty to him, when he hath myriads of angels to attend him in his court, and celebrate his praise. To admit man to be an attendant on him, and a partner with angels, is a high favor. It is not a single mercy, but a heap of mercies, to be admitted into the presence of God (Psalms 5:7): "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercies." When the blessed God is so kind as to give us access to his majesty, do we not undervalue his kindness when we deal uncivilly with him, and deny him the choicest part of ourselves? It is a contempt of his sovereignty, as our spirits are due to him by nature; a contempt of his goodness, as our spirits are due to him by gratitude. How abusive a carriage is it to make use of his mercy to encourage our impudence, that should excite our fear and reverence! How unworthy would it be for an indigent debtor to bring to his indulgent creditor an empty purse instead of payment! When God holds out his golden sceptre to encourage our approaches to him, stands ready to give us the pardon of sin and full felicity, the best things he hath, is it a fit requital of his kindness to give him a formal outside only, a shadow of religion; to have the heart overruled with other thoughts and affections, as if all his proffers were so contemptible as to deserve only a slight at our hands? It is a contempt of the love and kindness of God.

10. It is against the sufficiency and fulness of God. When we give God our bodies, and the creature our spirits, it intimates a conceit that there is more content to be had in the creature than in God blessed forever; that the waters in the cistern are sweeter than those in the fountain. Is not this a practical giving God the lie, and denying those promises wherein he hath declared the satisfaction he can give to the spirit, as he is the God of the spirits of all flesh? If we did imagine the excellency and loveliness of God were worthy to be the ultimate object of our affections, the heart would attend more closely upon him, and be terminated in him; did we believe God to be all-sufficient, full of grace and goodness, a tender Father, not willing to forsake his own, willing, as well as able, to supply their wants, the heart would not so lamely attend upon him, and would not upon every impertinency be diverted from him. There is much of a wrong notion of God, and a predominancy of the world above him in the heart, when we can more savorily relish the thoughts of low inferior things than heavenly, and let our spirits upon every trifling occasion be fugitive from him; it is a testimony that we make not God our chiefest good. If apprehensions of his excellency did possess our souls, they would be fastened on him, glued to him; we should not listen to that

rabble of foolish thoughts that steal our hearts so often from him. Were our breathings after God as strong as the pantings of the hart after the water-brooks, we should be like that creature, not diverted in our course by every puddle. Were God the predominant satisfactory object in our eye, he would carry our whole soul along with him. When our spirits readily retreat from God in worship upon every giddy motion, it is a kind of repentance that ever we did come near him, and implies that there is a fuller satisfaction, and more attractive excellency in that which doth so easily divert us, than in that God to whose worship we did pretend to address ourselves. It is as if, when we are petitioning a prince, we should immediately turn about, and make request to one of his guard, as though so mean a person were more able to give us the boon we want than the sovereign is.

II. Consideration by way of motive. To have our spirits off from God in worship is a bad sign: it was not so in innocence. The heart of Adam could cleave to God: the law of God was engraven upon him, he could apply himself to the fulfilling of it without any twinkling. There was no folly and vanity in his mind, no independency in his thoughts, no duty was his burden; for there was in him a proneness to, and a delight in, all the duties of worship. It is the fall hath distempered us; and the more unwieldiness there is in our spirits, the more carnal our affections are in worship, the more evidence there is of the strength of that revolted state.

1. It argues much corruption in the heart. As by the eructations of the stomach, we may judge of the windiness and foulness of it; so, by the inordinate motions of our minds and hearts, we may judge of the weakness of its complexion. A strength of sin is evidenced by the eruptions and ebullitions of it in worship, when they are more sudden, numerous, and vigorous than the motions of grace. When the heart is apt, like tinder, to catch fire from Satan, it is a sign of much combustible matter suitable to his temptation. Were not corruption strong, the soul could 'not turn so easily from God when it is in his presence, and hath an advantageous opportunity to create a fear and awe of God in it. Such base fruit could not sprout up so suddenly, were there not much sap and juice in the root of sin. What communion with a living root can be evidenced without exercises of an inward life? That spirit, which is a well of living waters in a gracious heart, will be especially springing up when it is before God.

2. It shows much affection to earthly things, and little to heavenly. There must needs be an inordinate affection to earthly things, when, upon every slight solicitation, we can part with God, and turn the back upon a service glorious for him and advantageous for ourselves, to wed our hearts to some idle fancy that signifies nothing. How can we be said to entertain God in our affections, when we give him not the precedency in our understandings, but let every trifle jostle the sense of God out of our minds? Were our hearts fully determined to spiritual things, such vanities could not seat themselves in our understandings, and divide our spirits from God. Were our hearts balanced with a love to God, the world could never steal our hearts so much from his worship, but his worship would draw our hearts to it. It shows abase neutrality in the greatest concernments; a halting between God and Baal; a contrariety between affection and conscience, when natural conscience presses a man to duties of worship, and his other affections pull him back, draw him to carnal objects, and make him slight that whereby he may honor God. God argues the profaneness of the Jews' hearts from the wickedness they brought into his house, and acted there (Jeremiah 23:11): "Yea, in my house," that is, my worship, "I found their wickedness," saith the Lord. Carnality in worship is a kind of an idolatrous frame; when the heart is renewed, idols are cast to the moles and the bats (Isaiah 2:20).

3. It shows much hypocrisy to have our spirits off from God. The mouth speaks, and the carriage pretends what the heart doth not think; there is a dissent of the heart from the pretence of the body. Instability is a sure sign of hypocrisy. Double thoughts argue a double heart. The wicked are compared to chaff (Psalms 1:4), for the uncertain and various motions of their minds, by the least wind of fancy. The least motion of a carnal object diverts the spirit from God, as the scent of carrion doth the raven from the fight it was set upon. The people of God are called God's spouse, and God calls himself their husband; whereby is noted the most intimate union of the soul with God; and that there ought to be the highest love and affection to him, and faithfulness in his worship; but when the heart doth start from him in worship, it is a sign of the unsteadfastness of it with God, and a disrelish of any communion with him; it is, as God complains of the Israelites, a going a whoring after our own imaginations. As grace respects God as the object of worship, so it looks most upon God in approaching to him. Where there is a likeness and love, there is a desire of converse and intimacy; if there be no spiritual entwining about God in our worship, it is a sign there is no likeness to him, no true sense of him, no renewed image of God in us; every living image will move strongly to join itself with its original copy, and be glad, with Jacob, to sit steadily in those chariots that shall convey him to his beloved Joseph.

III. Consider the danger of a carnal worship.

1. We lose the comfort of worship. The soul is a great gainer when it offers a spiritual worship, and as great a loser when it is unfaithful with God. Treachery and perfidiousness hinder commerce among men; so doth hypocrisy in its own nature communion with God. God never promised anything to the carcass, but to the spirit of worship. God hath no obligation upon him, by any word of his, to reward us with himself, when we perform it not to himself; when we give an outside worship, we have only the outside of an ordinance; we can expect no kernel, when we give God only the shell: he that only licks the outside of the glass, can never be refreshed with the rich cordial enclosed within. A cold and lazy formality will make God to withdraw the light of his countenance, and not shine with any delightful communications upon our souls; but if we come before him with a liveliness of affections, and steadiness of heart, he will draw the veil, and cause his glory to display itself before us. An humble praying Christian, and a warm, affectionate Christian in worship, will soon find a God who is delighted with such frames, and cannot long withhold himself from the soul. When our hearts are inflamed with love to him in worship, it is a preparation to some act of love on his part, whereby he intends further to gratify us. When John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, that is, in spiritual employment, and meditation, and other duties, he had that great revelation of what should happen to the church in all ages (Revelation 1:10); his being in the Spirit, intimates his ordinary course on that day, and not any extraordinary act in him, though it was followed with an extraordinary discovery of God to him; when he was thus engaged, "he heard a voice behind him." God doth not require of us spirituality in worship to advantage himself, but that we might be prepared to be advantaged by him. If we have a clear and well-disposed eye, it is not a benefit to the sun, but fits us to receive benefits from his beams. Worship is an act that perfects our own souls; they are then most widened by spiritual frames, to receive the influence of divine blessings, as an eye most opened receives the fruit of the sun's light better than the eye that is shut. The communications of God are more or less, according as our spiritual frames are more or less in our worship; God will not give his blessings to unsuitable hearts. What a nasty vessel is a carnal heart for a spiritual communication! The chief end of every

duty enjoined by God, is to have communion with him; and therefore it is called a drawing near to God; it is impossible, therefore, that the outward part of any duty can answer the end of God in his institution. It is not a bodily appearance or gesture whereby men can have communion with God, but by the impressions of the heart upon God; without this, all the rich streams of grace will run beside us, and the growth of the soul be hindered and impaired. A “diligent hand makes rich,” saith the wise man; a diligent heart in spiritual worship, brings in rich incomes to the humble and spiritual soul.

2. It renders the worship not only unacceptable, but abominable to God. It makes our gold to become dross, it soils our duties, and bespots our souls. A carnal and unsteady frame shows an indifferency of spirit at best; and lukewarmness is as ungrateful to God, as heavy and nauseous meat is to the stomach; he “spews them out of his mouth” (Revelation 3:16). As our gracious God Both overlook infirmities where intentions are good, and endeavors serious and strong; so he loathes the services where the frames are stark naught (Psalms 66:18): “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.” Lukewarm and indifferent services stink in the nostrils of God. The heart seems to loathe God when it starts from him upon every occasion, when it is unwilling to employ itself about, and stick close to him: and can God be pleased with such a frame? The more of the heart and spirit is in any service, the more real goodness there is in it, and the more savory it is to God; the less of the heart and spirit, the less of goodness, and the more nauseous to God, who loves righteousness and “truth in the inward parts” (Psalms 51:6). And therefore infinite goodness and holiness cannot but hate worship presented to him with deceitful, carnal, and flitting affections; they must be more nauseous to God, than a putrefied carcass can be to man; they are the profanings of that which should be the habitation of the Spirit; they make the spirit, the seat of duty, a filthy dunghill; and are as loathsome to God, as money-changers in the temple were to our Saviour. We see the evil of carnal frames, and the necessity and benefit of spiritual frames: for further help in this last, let us practise these following directions:

1. Keep up spiritual frames out of worship. To avoid low affections, we must keep our hearts as much as we can in a settled elevation. If we admit unworthy dispositions at one time, we shall not easily be rid of them in another; [Note: Fitzherbert, Pol. in Relig. Part II. c. 19, § 12.] as he that would not be bitten with gnats in the night, must keep his windows shut in the day: when they are once entered, it is not easy to expel them; in which respect, one adviseth to be such out of worship as we would be in worship. If we mix spiritual affections with our worldly employments, worldly affections will not mingle themselves so easily with our heavenly engagements. If our hearts be spiritual in our outward calling, they will scarce be carnal in our religious service. If “we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). A spiritual walk in the day will hinder carnal lustings in worship. The fire was to be kept alive upon the altar, when sacrifices were not offered, from morning till night, from night till morning, as well as in the very time of sacrifice. A spiritual life and vigor out of worship would render it at its season sweet and easy, and preserve a spontaneity and preparedness to it, and make it both natural and pleasant to us. Anything that doth unhinge and discompose our spirits, is inconsistent with religious services, which are to be performed with the greatest sedateness and gravity. All irregular passions disturb the serenity of the spirit, and open the door for Satan: saith the apostle (Ephesians 4:26-27), “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil.” Where wrath breaks the lock, the devil will quickly be over the threshold; and though they be allayed, yet they leave the heart sometime after,

like the sea rolling and swelling after the storm is ceased. Mixture with ill company leaves a tincture upon us in worship. Ephraim's allying himself with the Gentiles, bred an indifferency in religion (Hosea 7:8): "Ephraim hath mixed himself with the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned:" it will make our hearts, and consequently our services, half dough, as well as half baked; these and the like, make the Holy Spirit withdraw himself, and then the soul is like a windbound vessel, and can make no way. When the sun departs from us, it carries its beams away with it; then "doth darkness spread itself over the earth, and the beasts of the forests creep out" (Psalms 104:20). When the Spirit withdraws awhile from a good man, it carries away (though not habitual, yet) much of the exciting and assisting grace; and then carnal dispositions perk up themselves from the bosom of natural corruption. To be spiritual in worship, we must bar the door at other times against that which is contrary to it; as he that would not be infected with a contagious disease, carries some preservative about with him, and inures himself to good scents. To this end, be much in secret ejaculations to God; these are the purest flights of the soul, that have more of fervor and less of carnality; they preserve a liveliness in the spirit, and make it more fit to perform solemn stated worship with greater freedom and activity; a constant use of this would make our whole lives, lives of worship. As frequent sinful acts strengthen habits of sin, so frequent religious acts strengthen habits of grace.

2. Excite and exercise particularly a love to God, and dependence on him. Love is a commanding affection, a uniting grace; it draws all the faculties of the soul to one centre. The soul that loves God, when it hath to do with him, is bound to the beloved object; it can mind nothing else during such impressions. When the affection is set to the worship of God, everything the soul hath will be bestowed upon it; as David's disposition was to the temple (1 Chronicles 29:3). Carnal frames, like the fowls, will be lighting upon the sacrifice, but not when it is inflamed; though the scent of the flesh invite them, yet the heat of the fire drives them to their distance. A flaming love will singe the flies that endeavor to interrupt and disturb us. The happiness of heaven consists in a full attraction of the soul to God, by his glorious influence upon it; there will be such a diffusion of his goodness throughout the souls of the blessed, as will unite the affections perfectly to him; these affections which are scattered here, will be there gathered into one flame, moving to him, and centering in him: therefore, the more of a heavenly frame possesses our affections here, the more settled and uniform will our hearts be in all their motions to God, and operations about him. Excite a dependence on him: (Proverbs 16:3) "Commit thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Let us go out in God's strength, and not in our own; vain is the help of man in anything, and vain is the help of the heart. It is through God only we can do valiantly in spiritual concerns as well as temporal; the want of this makes but slight impressions upon the spirit.

3. Nourish right conceptions of the majesty of God in your minds. Let us consider that we are drawing to God, the most amiable object, the best of beings, worthy of infinite honor, and highly meriting the highest affections we can give; a God that made the world by a word, that upholds the great frame of heaven and earth; a Majesty above the conceptions of angels; who uses not his power to strike us to our deserved punishment, but his love and bounty to allure us; a God that gave all the creatures to serve us, and can, in a trice, make them as much our enemies as he hath now made them our servants. Let us view him in his greatness, and in his goodness, that our hearts may have a true value of the worship of so great a majesty, and count it the most worthy employment with all diligence to attend upon him. When we have a fear of God, it will make our

worship serious; when we have a joy in God, it will make our worship durable. Our affections will be raised when we represent God in the most reverential, endearing, and obliging circumstances. We honor the majesty of God, when we consider him with due reverence according to the greatness and perfection of his works, and in this reverence of his majesty doth worship chiefly consist. Low thoughts of God will make low frames in us before him. If we thought God an infinite glorious Spirit, how would our hearts be lower than our knees in his presence! How humbly, how believingly pleading is the Psalmist, when he considers God to be without comparison in the heavens; to whom none of the sons of the mighty can be likened; when there was none like to him in strength and faithfulness round about (Psalms 89:8-8). We should have also deep impressions of the omniscience of God, and remember we have to deal with a God that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, to whom the most secret temper is as visible as the loudest words are audible; that though man judges by outward expressions, God judges by inward affections. As the law of God regulates the inward frames of the heart, so the eye of God pitches upon the inward intentions of the soul. If God were visibly present with us, should we not approach to him with strong affections, summon our spirits to attend upon him, behave ourselves modestly before him? Let us consider he is as really present with us, as if he were visible to us; let us, therefore, preserve a strong sense of the presence of God. No man, but one out of his wits, when he were in the presence of a prince, and making a speech to him, would break off at every period, and run after the catching of butterflies. Remember in all worship you are before the Lord, to whom all things are open and naked.

4. Let us take heed of inordinate desires after the world. As the world steals away a man's heart from the word, so it doth from all other worship; "It chokes the word" (Matthew 13:27); it stifles all the spiritual breathings after God in every duty; the edge of the soul is bunted by it, and made too dull for such sublime exercises. The apostle's rule in prayer, when he joins "sobriety with watching unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7), is of concern in all worship, sobriety in the pursuit and use of all worldly things. A man drunk with worldly fumes cannot watch, cannot be heavenly, affectionate, spiritual in service. There is a magnetic force in the earth to hinder our flights to heaven. Birds, when they take their first flights from the earth, have more flutterings of their wings, than when they are mounted further in the air, and got more without the sphere of the earth's attractiveness: the motion of their wings is more steady, that you can perceive them stir; they move like a ship with a full gale. The word is a clog upon the soul, and a bar to spiritual frames; it is as hard to elevate the heart to God in the midst of a hurry of worldly affairs, as it is difficult to meditate when we are near a great noise of waters falling from a precipice, or in the midst of a volley of muskets. Thick clayey affections bemire the heart, and make it unfit for such high flights it is to take in worship; therefore, get your hearts clear from worldly thoughts and desires, if you would be more spiritual in worship.

5. Let us be deeply sensible of our present wants, and the supplies we may meet with in worship. Cold affections to the things we would have will grow cooler; weakness of desire for the communications in worship, will freeze our hearts at the time of worship, and make way for vain and foolish diversions. A beggar that is ready to perish, and knows he is next door to ruin, will not slightly and dully beg an alms, and will not be diverted from his importunity by every slight call, or the moving of an atom in the air. Is it pardon we would have? let us apprehend the blackness of sin, with the aggravations of it as it respects God; let us be deeply sensible of the want of pardon and worth of mercy, and get your affections into such a frame as a condemned man would do; let us

consider, that as we are now at the throne of God's grace, we shall shortly be at the bar of God's justice; and if the soul should be forlorn there, how fixedly and earnestly would it plead for mercy! Let us endeavor to stir up the same affections now, which we have seen some dying men have, and which we suppose despairing souls would have done at God's tribunal. We must be sensible that the life or death of our souls depends upon worship. [Note: Guliel. Paris. Rhetor. Divin. c. 26, p. 350, Colossians 1:1-29.] Would we not be ashamed to be ridiculous in our carriage while we are eating; and shall we not be ashamed to be cold or garish before God, when the salvation of our souls, as well as the honor of God, is concerned? If we did see the heaps of sins, the eternity of punishment due to them; if we did see an angry and offended Judge; if we did see the riches of merey, the glorious outgoings of God in the sanctuary, the blessed doles he gives out to men when they spiritually attend upon him, both the one and the other would make us perform our duties humbly, sincerely, earnestly, and affectionately, and wait upon him with our whole souls, to have misery averted, and mercy bestowed. Let our sense of this be encouraged by the consideration of our Saviour presenting his merits; with what affection doth he present his merits, his blood shed upon the cross, now in heaven? And shall our hearts be cold and frozen, flitting and unsteady, when his affections are so much concerned? Christ doth not present any man's case and duties without a sense of his wants; and shall we have none of our own? Let me add this; let us affect our hearts with a sense of what supplies we have met with in former worship; the delightful remembrance of what converse we have had with God in former worship would spiritualize our hearts for the present worship. Had Peter had a view of Christ's glory in the mount fresh in his thoughts, he would not so easily have turned his back upon his Master, nor would the Israelites have been at leisure for their idolatry, had they preserved the sense of the majesty of God discovered in his late thunders from Mount Sinai.

6. If anything intrudes that may choke the worship, cast it speedily out. We cannot hinder Satan and our own corruption from presenting coolers to us, but we may hinder the success of them; we cannot hinder the gnats from buzzing about us when we are in our business, but we may prevent them from settling upon us. A man that is running on a considerable errand, will shun all unnecessary discourse, that may make him forget or loiter in his business. What though there may be something offered that is good in itself, yet if it hath a tendency to despoil God of his honor, and ourselves of the spiritual intentness in worship, send it away. Those that weed a field of corn, examine not the nature and particular virtues of the weeds, but consider only how they choke the corn, to which the native juice of the soil is designed. Consider what you are about; and if anything interpose that may divert you, or cool your affections in your present worship, cast it out.

7. As to private worship, let us lay hold of the most melting opportunities and frames. When we find our hearts in a more than ordinary spiritual frame, let us look upon it as a call from God to attend him; such impressions and notions are God's voice, inviting us into communion with him in some particular act of worship, and promising us some success in it. When the Psalmist had a secret motion to "seek God's face" (Psalms 27:8), and complied with it, the issue is the encouragement of his heart, which breaks out into an exhortation to others to be of good courage, and wait on the Lord (Psalms 27:13-14): "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." One blow will do more on the iron when it is hot, than a hundred when it is cold; melted metals may be stamped with any impression; but, once hardened, will with difficulty be brought into the figure we intend. [Note: Reynolds.]

8. Let us examine ourselves at the end of every act of worship, and chide ourselves for any carnality we perceive in them. Let us take a review of them, and examine the reason, why art thou so low and carnal, O my soul? as David did of his disquietedness (Psalms 42:6): "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" If any unworthy frames have surprised us in worship, let us seek them out after worship; call them to the bar; make an exact scrutiny into the causes of them, that we may prevent their incursions another time; let our pulses beat quick by way of anger and indignation against them; this would be a repairing what hath been amiss; otherwise they may grow, and clog an afterworship more than they did a former. Daily examination is an antidote against the temptations of the following day, and constant examination of ourselves after duty is a preservative against vain encroachments in following duties; and upon the finding them out, let us apply the blood of Christ by faith for our cure, and draw strength from the death of Christ for the conquest of them, and let us also be humbled for them. God lifts up the humble; when we are humbled for our carnal frames in one duty, we shall find ourselves by the grace of God more elevated in the next.

On The Eternity of God

ON THE ETERNITY OF GOD

Psalms 90:2.—Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. The title of this psalm is a prayer; the author, Moses. Some think not only this, but the ten following psalms, were composed by him. The title wherewith he is dignified is, “The man of God,” as also in Deuteronomy 33:1. One inspired by him to be his interpreter, and deliver his oracles; one particularly directed by him; [Note: Coccei in loc.] one who as a servant did diligently employ himself in his master’s business, and acted for the glory of God; [Note: Austin in loc.] he was the minister of the Old Testament, and the prophet of the New. [Note: Pareus in loc.]

There are two parts of this Psalms 1:1-6. A complaint of the frailty of man’s life in general (Psalms 90:1-17); and then a particular complaint of the condition of the church (Psalms 90:8-10). 2. A prayer (Psalms 90:12). But before he speaks of the shortness of human life, he fortifies them by the consideration of the refuge they had, and should find in God (Psalms 90:1). “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. We have had no settled abode in the earth, since the time of Abraham’s being called out from Ur of the Chaldees. We have had Canaan in a promise, we have it not yet in possession; we have been exposed to the cruelties of an oppressing enemy, and the incommodities of a desert wilderness; we have wanted the fruits of the earth, but not the dews of heaven. Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Abraham was under thy conduct; Isaac and Jacob under thy care; their posterity was multiplied by thee, and that under their oppressions. Thou hast been our shield against dangers, our security in the times of trouble; when we were pursued to the Red Sea, it was not a creature delivered us; and when we feared the pinching of our bowels in the desert, it was no creature rained manna upon us. Thou hast been our dwelling-place; thou hast kept open house for us, sheltered us against storms, and preserved us from mischief, as a house doth an inhabitant from wind and weather; and that not in one or two, but in all generations. Some think an allusion is here made to the ark, to which they were to have recourse in all emergencies. Our refuge and defence hath not been from created things; not from the ark, but from the God of the ark.” Observe,

1. God is a perpetual refuge and security to his people. His providence is not confined to one generation; it is not one age only that tastes of his bounty and compassion. His eye never yet slept, nor hath he suffered the little ship of his church to be swallowed up, though it hath been tossed upon the waves; he hath always been a haven to preserve us, a house to secure us; he hath always had compassions to pity us, and power to protect us; he hath had a face to shine, when the world hath had an angry countenance to frown. [Note: Theodoret in loc.] He brought Enoch home by an extraordinary translation from a brutish world; and when he was resolved to reckon with men for their brutish lives, he lodged Noah, the phoenix of the world, in an ark, and kept him alive as a spark in the midst of many waters, whereby to rekindle a church in the world; in all generations he is a dwelling-place to secure his people here, or entertain them above. His

providence is not wearied, nor his care fainting; he never wanted will to relieve us, “for he hath been our refuge,” nor ever can want power to support us, “for he is a God from everlasting to everlasting.” The church never wanted a pilot to steer her, and a rock to shelter her, and dash in pieces the waves which threaten her.

2. How worthy is it to remember former benefits, when we come to beg for new. Never were the records of God’s mercies so exactly revised, as when his people have stood in need of new editions of his power. How necessary are our wants to stir us up to pay the rent of thankfulness in arrear! He renders himself doubly unworthy of the mercies he wants, that doth not gratefully acknowledge the mercies he hath received. God scarce promised any deliverance to the Israelites, and they, in their distress, scarce prayed for any deliverance; but that from Egypt was mentioned on both sides, by God to encourage them, and by them to acknowledge their confidence in him. The greater our dangers, the more we should call to mind God’s former kindness. We are not only thankful to acknowledge the mercies bestowed upon our persons, or in our age, but those of former times. “Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.” Moses was not living in the former generations, yet he appropriates the former mercies to the present age. Mercies, as well as generations, proceed out of the loins of those that have gone before. All mankind are but one Adam; the whole church but one body. In the second verse he backs his former consideration. 1. By the greatness of his power in forming the world. 2. By the boundlessness of his duration: “From everlasting to everlasting.” As thou hast been our dwelling-place, and expended upon us the strength of thy power and riches of thy love, so we have no reason to doubt the continuance on thy part, if we be not wanting on our parts; for the vast mountains and fruitful earth are the works of thy hands, and there is less power requisite for our relief, than there was for their creation; and though so much strength hath been upon various occasions manifested, yet thy arm is not weakened, for “from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” [Note: ■■■, strong.] Thou hast always been God, and no time can be assigned as the beginning of thy being. [Note: Amyrald in loc.] The mountains are not of so long a standing as thyself; they are the effects of thy power, and therefore cannot be equal to thy duration; since they are the effects, they suppose the precedency of their cause. If we would look back, we can reach no further than the beginning of the creation, and account the years from the first foundation of the world; but after that we must lose ourselves in the abyss of eternity; we have no cue to guide our thoughts; we can see no bounds in thy eternity. But as for man, he traverseth the world a few days, and by thy order pronounced concerning all men, returns to the dust, and moulders into the grave. By mountains, some understand angels, as being creatures of a more elevated nature; by earth, they understand human nature, the earth being the habitation of men. There is no need to divert in this place from the letter to such a sense. The description seems to be poetical, and amounts to this: he neither began with the beginning of time, nor will expire with the end of it; he did not begin when he made himself known to our fathers, but his being did precede the creation of the world, before any created being was formed, and any time settled. [Note: ■ναρχος κα■ ■τελ■υτητος, Theodoret in loc.] “Before the mountains were brought forth,” or before they were begotten or born; the word being used in those senses in Scripture; before they stood up higher than the rest of the earthly mass God had created. It seems that mountains were not casually cast up by the force of the deluge softening the ground, and driving several parcels of it together, to grow up into a massy body, as the sea doth the sand in several places; but they were at first formed by God. The eternity of God is here described, 1. In his priority: “Before the world.”

2. In the extension of his duration: "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends; he is not a temporary, but an eternal God; it takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after; though the eternity of God be one permanent state, without succession, yet the spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception, divides it into two parts; one past before the foundation of the world, another to come after the destruction of the world; as he did exist before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages. Many truths lie couched in the verse.

1. The world hath a beginning of being: it was not from eternity, it was once nothing; had it been of a very long duration, some records would have remained of some memorable actions done of a longer date than any extant. 2. The world owes its being to the creating power of God: "Thou hast formed it" out of nothing into being; Thou, that is, God; it could not spring into being of itself; it was nothing; it must have a former. 3. God was in being before the world: the cause must be before the effect; that word which gives being, must be before that which receives being. 4. This Being was from eternity: "From everlasting." 5. This Being shall endure to eternity: "To everlasting." 6. There is but one God, one eternal: "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." None else but one hath the property of eternity; the gods of the heathen cannot lay claim to it.

Doct. God is of an eternal duration. The eternity of God is the foundation of the stability of the covenant, the great comfort of a Christian. The design of God in Scripture is, to set forth his dealing with men in the way of a covenant. The priority of God before all things begins the Bible: "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1). His covenant can have no foundation, but in his duration before and after the world: [Note: Calv. in loc.] and Moses here mentions his eternity, not only with respect to the essence of God, but to his federal providence; as he is the dwelling-place of his people in all generations. The duration of God forever is more spoken of in Scripture than his eternity, *à parte ante*, though that is the foundation of all the comfort we can take from his immortality: if he had a beginning, he might have an end, and so all our happiness, hope and being would expire with him; but the Scripture sometimes takes notice of his being without beginning, as well as without end: "Thou art from everlasting" (Psalms 93:2); "Blessed be God from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalms 41:13); "I was set up from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:23): if his wisdom were from everlasting, himself was from everlasting: whether we understand it of Christ the Son of God, or of the essential wisdom of God, it is all one to the present purpose. The wisdom of God supposeth the essence of God, as habits in creatures suppose the being of some power or faculty as their subject. The wisdom of God supposeth mind and understanding, essence and substance. The notion of eternity is difficult; as Austin said of time, [Note: Confes. lib. ii. Confes. 14.] if no man will ask me the question, what time is, I know well enough what it is; but if any ask me what it is, I know not how to explain it; so may I say of eternity; it is easy in the word pronounced, but hardly understood, and more hardly expressed; it is better expressed by negative than positive words. Though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we may comprehend that there is an eternity; as, though we cannot comprehend the essence of God what he is, yet we may comprehend that he is; we may understand the notion of his existence, though we cannot understand the infiniteness of his nature; yet we may better understand eternity than infiniteness; we can better conceive a time with the addition of numberless days and years, than imagine a Being without bounds; whence the apostle joins his eternity with his power; "His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20); because, next to the power of God, apprehended in the creature, we

come necessarily by reasoning, to acknowledge the eternity of God. He that hath an incomprehensible power must needs have an eternity of nature; his power is most sensible in the creatures to the eye of man, and his eternity easily from thence deducible by the reason of man. Eternity is a perpetual duration, which hath neither beginning nor end; time hath both. Those things we say are in time that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts; eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state; a perfect possession of life without any variation; it comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages; it never begins; it endures after every, duration of time, and never ceaseth; it doth as much outrun time, as it went before the beginning of it: time supposeth something before it; but there can be nothing before eternity; it were not then eternity. Time hath a continual succession; the former time passeth away and another succeeds: the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time; as the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity in an infinite immutable duration. Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, and is always one water; but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity. [Note: Moulin. Cod. 1, Ser. 2, p. 52.] A thing is said to be eternal, or everlasting rather, in Scripture,

1. When it is of a long duration, though it will have an end; when it hath no measures of time determined to it; so circumcision is said to be in the flesh for an “everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:13); not purely everlasting, but so long as that administration of the covenant should endure. And so when a servant would not leave his master, but would have his ear bored, it is said, he should be a servant “forever” (Deuteronomy 15:17); i. e. till the jubilee, which was every fiftieth year: so the meat-offering they were to offer is said to be “perpetual” (Leviticus 6:20); Canaan is said to be given to Abraham for an “everlasting” possession (Genesis 17:8); when as the Jews are expelled from Canaan, which is given a prey to the barbarous nations. Indeed circumcision was not everlasting; yet the substance of the covenant whereof this was a sign, viz. that God would be the God of believers, endures forever; and that circumcision of the heart, which was signified by circumcision of the flesh, shall remain forever in the kingdom of glory: it was not so much the lasting of the sign, as of the thing signified by it, and the covenant sealed by it: the sign had its abolition; so that the apostle is so peremptory in it, that he asserts, that if any went about to establish it, he excluded himself from a participation of Christ (Galatians 5:2). The sacrifices were to be perpetual, in regard to the thing signified by them; viz. the death of Christ, which was to endure in the efficacy of it and the passover was to be “forever” (Exodus 12:24), in regard of the redemption signified by it, which was to be of everlasting remembrance. Canaan was to be an everlasting possession, in regard of the glory of heaven typified, to be forever conferred upon the spiritual seed of Abraham.

2. When a thing hath no end, though it hath a beginning. So angels and souls are everlasting; though their being shall never cease, yet there was a time when their being began; they were nothing before they were something, though they shall never be nothing again, but shall live in endless happiness or misery. But that properly is eternal that hath neither beginning nor end; and thus eternity is a property of God. In this doctrine I shall show, I. How God is eternal, or in what respects eternity is his property. II. That he is eternal, and must needs be so. III. That eternity is only proper to God, and not common to him with any creature. IV. The use.

I. How God is eternal, or in what respects he is so. Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any measures of time, as immensity is a denying of him any bounds of place. As immensity is the diffusion of his essence, so eternity is the duration of his essence; and when we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending, all flux and change. As the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time: as it is his immensity to be everywhere, so it is his eternity to be alway. As created things are said to be somewhere in regard of place, and to be present, past, or future, in regard of time; so the Creator in regard of place is everywhere, in regard of time is semper. [Note: Gassend.] His duration is as endless as his essence is boundless: he always was and always will be, and will no more have an end than he had a beginning; and this is an excellency belonging to the Supreme Being. [Note: Crellius de Deo, c. 18. p. 41.] As his essence comprehends all beings, and exceeds them, and his immensity surmounts all places; so his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them. [Note: Lingend Tom. II. p. 496.]

1. God is without beginning. "In the beginning" God created the world (Genesis 1:1). God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be set wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, so is God before all his creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the everlasting God (Genesis 21:33) the eternal God. [Note: ■■ ■■■■.] —It is opposed to the heathen gods, which were but of yesterday, new coined, and so new; but the eternal God was before the world was made. In that sense it is to be understood; "The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). The gospel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary god, but of that God that was before all ages: though the manifestation of it be in time, yet the purpose and resolve of it was from eternity. If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a Decree before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world he loved Christ as a Mediator; a fore-ordination of him was before the foundation of the world (John 17:24); a choice of men, and therefore a Chooser before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4); a grace given in Christ before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9), and therefore a Donor of that grace. From those places, saith Crellius, it appears that God was before the foundation of the world, but they do not assert an absolute eternity; but to be before all creatures is equivalent to his being from eternity. [Note: Coccei Sum. p. 48. Theol. Gerhard Exeges. c. 86. 4. p. 266.] Time began with the foundation of the world; but God being before time, could have no beginning in time. Before the beginning of the creation, and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity; nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was without beginning. To be in time is to have a beginning; to be before all time is never to have a beginning, but always to be; for as between the Creator and creatures there is no medium, so between time and eternity there is no medium. It is as easily deduced that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God. If he had a beginning, he must have it from another, or from himself; if from another, that from whom he received his being would be better than he, so more a God than he. He cannot be God that is not supreme; he cannot be supreme that owes his being to the power of another. He would not be said only to have immortality as he is (1 Timothy 6:16), if he had it dependent upon another; nor could he have a beginning from himself; if he had given beginning to himself, then he was once nothing; there was a time when he was not; if he was

not, how could he be the Cause of himself? It is impossible for any to give a beginning and being to itself: if it acts it must exist, and so exist before it existed. A thing would exist as a cause before it existed as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cause that he is; if, therefore, God doth exist, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity. Therefore, when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood that he hath no cause of existence without himself. Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called the "Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:9), as being before all days and time, and eminently containing in himself all times and ages. Though, indeed, God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh; but no creature can find out any beginning of God: it is impossible there should be any beginning of him.

2. God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what he is. He remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch him (James 1:17). He will continue in being as long as he hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add never so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end as from a beginning; for "the Lord shall endure forever" (Psalms 9:7). As it is impossible he should not be, being from all eternity, so it is impossible that he should not be to all eternity. The Scripture is most plentiful in testimonies of this eternity of God, *à parte post*, or after the creation of the world: he is said to "live forever" (Revelation 4:9-10). The earth shall perish, but God shall "endure forever," and his "years shall have no end" (Psalms 102:27). Plants and animals grow up from small beginnings, arrive to their full growth, and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in God by all the revolutions of time. Hence some think the incorruptibility of the Deity was signified by the *shittim*, or cedar wood, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature (Exodus 25:10). That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what should make him cease to be what eternally he hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of his perfections? He cannot will his own destruction; that is against universal nature in all things to cease from being, if they can preserve themselves. He cannot desert his own being, because he cannot but love himself as the best and chiefest good. The reason that anything decays is either its own native weakness, or a superior power of something contrary to it. There is no weakness in the nature of God that can introduce any corruption, because he is infinitely simple without any mixture; nor can he be overpowered by anything else; a weaker cannot hurt him, and a stronger than he there cannot be; nor can he be outwitted or circumvented, because of his infinite wisdom. [Note: Crellius de Deo, c. 18, p. 41.] As he received his being from none, so he cannot be deprived of it by any: as he doth necessarily exist, so he doth necessarily always exist. This, indeed, is the property of God; nothing so proper to him as always to be. Whatsoever perfections any being hath, if it be not eternal, it is not divine. God only is immortal; [Note: 1 Timothy 6:16. Daille, in loc.] he only is so by a necessity of nature. Angels, souls, and bodies too, after the resurrection, shall be immortal, not by nature, but grant; they are subject to return to nothing, if that word that raised them from nothing should speak them into nothing again. It is as easy with God to strip them of it, as to invest them with it; nay, it is impossible but that they should perish, if God should withdraw his power from preserving them, which he exerted in creating them; but God is immovably fixed in his own being; that as

none gave him his life, so none can deprive him of his life, or the least particle of it. Not a jot of the happiness and life which God infinitely possesses can be lost; it will be as durable to everlasting, as it hath been possessed from everlasting.

3. There is no succession in God. God is without succession or change. It is apart of eternity; "from everlasting to everlasting he is God," i. e. the same. God doth not only always remain in being, but he always remains the same in that being: "thou art the same" (Psalms 102:27). The being of creatures is successive; the being of God is permanent, and remains entire with all its perfections unchanged in an infinite duration. Indeed, the first notion of eternity is to be without beginning and end, which notes to us the duration of a being in regard of its existence; but to have no succession, nothing first or last, notes rather the perfection of a being in regard of its essence. The creatures are in a perpetual flux; something is acquired or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of existence when he is a man, as he was when he was a child; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him. Every day he acquires something till he comes to his maturity; every day he loseth something till he comes to his period. A man is not the same at night that he was in the morning; something is expired, and something is added; every day there is a change in his age, a change in his substance, a change in his accidents. But God hath his whole being in one and the same point, or moment of eternity. He receives nothing as an addition to what he was before; he loseth nothing of what he was before; he is always the same excellency and perfection in the same infiniteness as ever. His years do not fail (Hebrews 1:12), his years do not come and go as others do; there is not this day, to-morrow, or yesterday, with him. As nothing is past or future with him in regard of knowledge, but all things are present, so nothing is past or future in regard of his essence. He is not in his essence this day what he was not before, or will be the next day and year what he is not now. All his perfections are most perfect in him every moment; before all ages, after all ages. [Note: Lessius de Perfect. Divin. lib. iv. c. 1.] As he hath his whole essence undivided in every place, as well as in an immense space, so he hath all his being in one moment of time, as well as in infinite intervals of time. Some illustrate the difference between eternity and time by the similitude of a tree, or a rock standing upon the side of a river, or shore of the sea; the tree stands always the same and unmoved, while the waters of the river glide along at the foot. The flux is in the river, but the tree acquires nothing but a diverse respect and relation of presence to the various parts of the river as they flow. The waters of the river press on, and push forward one another, and what the river had this minute, it hath not the same the next. [Note: Gamacheus in Aquin. Part 1. Qu. 10. c. 1.] So are all sublunary things in a continual flux. And though the angels have no substantial change, yet they have an accidental; for the actions of the angels this day are not the same individual actions which they performed yesterday: but in God there is no change; he always remains the same. Of a creature, it may be said he was, or he is, or he shall be; of God it cannot be said but only he is. [Note: Gaassend. Tom. 1. Physic. § 1. lib. ii, c. 7. p. 223.] He is what he always was, and he is what he always will be; whereas a creature is what he was not, and will be what he is not now. As it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is a flame: but it is not the same individual flame as was before, nor is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more. While it continues it may be said there is a flame; yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts. So of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is. But God is the same, without any succession of parts and of time; of him it may be said, "He is." He is no more now than he was, and he shall be no more hereafter

than he is. God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself. [Note: Daille, *Melange de Sermon*, p. 252.] He sees all things sliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immovable nature. All other things pass from one state to another; from their original, to their eclipse and destruction; but God possesses his being in one indivisible point, having neither beginning, end, nor middle.

(1.) There is no succession in the knowledge of God. The variety of successions and changes in the world make not succession, or new objects in the Divine mind; for all things are present to him from eternity in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world, in regard of their existence. He doth not know one thing now, and another anon; he sees all things at once; "Known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18); but in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal council of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, there is yet no succession in God in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world; yet both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present to him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as if they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God; yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying and rising at the same time; so that there is succession in things when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come, in regard of their existence; but there is not past, present, and to come, in regard of God's knowledge of them, [Note: Parsiensis.] because he sees and knows not by any other, but by himself; he is his own light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees; beholding himself, he beholds all things.

(2.) There is no succession in the decrees of God. He doth not decree this now, which he decreed not before; for as his works were known from the beginning of the world, so his works were decreed from the beginning of the world; as they are known at once, so they are decreed at once; there is a succession in the execution of them; first grace, then glory; but the purpose of God for the bestowing of both, was in one and the same moment of eternity. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Ephesians 1:4): The choice of Christ, and the choice of some in him to be holy and to be happy, were before the foundation of the world. It is by the eternal counsel of God all things appear in time; they appear in their order according to the counsel and will of God from eternity. The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world; but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.

(3.) God is his own eternity. He is not eternal by grant, and the disposal of any other, but by nature and essence. [Note: Calov. Socinian.] The eternity of God is nothing else but the duration of God; and the duration of God is nothing else but his existence enduring. [Note: *Existencia durans*.] If eternity were anything distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not God, necessary to perfect God. As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, so eternity is the choice perfection of God, yea, the gloss and lustre of all

others. Every perfection would be imperfect, if it were not always a perfection. God is essentially whatsoever he is, and there is nothing in God but his essence. Duration or continuance in being in creatures, differs from their being; for they might exist but for one instant, in which case they may be said to have being, but not duration, because all duration includes prius et posterius. All creatures may cease from being if it be the pleasure of God; they are not, therefore, durable by their essence, and therefore are not their own duration, no more than they are their own existence. And though some creatures, as angels, and souls, may be called everlasting, as a perpetual life is communicated to them by God; yet they can never be called their own eternity, because such a duration is not simply necessary, nor essential to them, but accidental, depending upon the pleasure of another; there is nothing in their nature that can hinder them from losing it, if God, from whom they received it, should design to take it away; but as God is his own necessity of existing, so he is his own duration in existing; as he doth necessarily exist by himself, so he will always necessarily exist by himself. [Note: Gassend.]

(4.) Hence all the perfections of God are eternal. In regard of the Divine eternity, all things in God are eternal; his power, mercy, wisdom, justice, knowledge. God himself were not eternal if any of his perfections, which are essential to him, were not eternal also; he had not else been a perfect God from all eternity, and so his whole self had not been eternal. If anything belonging to the nature of a thing be wanting, it cannot be said to be that thing which it ought to be. If anything requisite to the nature of God had been wanting one moment, he could not have been said to be an eternal God.

II. God is eternal. The Spirit of God in Scripture condescends to our capacities in signifying the eternity of God by days and years, which are terms belonging to time, whereby we measure it (Psalms 102:27). But we must no more conceive that God is bounded or measured by time, and hath succession of days, because of those expressions, than we can conclude him to have a body, because members are ascribed to him in Scripture, to help our conceptions of his glorious nature and operations. Though years are ascribed to him, yet then are such as cannot be numbered, cannot be finished, since there is no proportion between the duration of God, and the years of men. "The number of his years cannot be searched out, for he makes small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof" (Job 36:26-27). The numbers of the drops of rain which have fallen in all parts of the earth since the creation of the world, if subtracted from the number of the years of God, would be found a small quantity, a mere nothing, to the years of God. As all the nations in the world compared with God, are but as the "drop of a bucket, worse than nothing, than vanity" (Isaiah 40:15); so all the ages of the world, if compared with God, amount not to so much as the one hundred thousandth part of a minute; the minutes from the creation may be numbered, but the years of the duration of God being infinite, are without measure. As one day is to the life of man, so are a thousand years to the life of God. The Holy Ghost expresseth himself to the capacity of man, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to the capacity of man. [Note: Psalms 90:4. Amyrald, Trin. p. 44.] If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions four hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all those; for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are

material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years. [Note: Daille, Vent. Sermons, Sem I. sur 102 Psalms 27:1-14, p. 21.] Sometimes this eternity is expressed by parts, as looking backward and forward; by the differences of time, “past, present, and to come” (Revelation 1:8), “which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8). [Note: Crellius weakens this argument, De Deo, c. 18, p. 42.] Though this might be spoken of anything in being, though but for an hour, it was the last minute, it is now, and it will be the next minute; yet the Holy Ghost would declare something proper to God, as including all parts of time; he always was, is now, and always shall be. It might always be said of him, he was, and it may always be said of him, he will be; there is no time when he began, no time when he shall cease. It cannot be said of a creature he always was, he always is what he was, and he always will be what he is; but God always is what he was, and always will be what he is; so that it is a very significant expression of the eternity of God, as can be suited to our capacities.

1. His eternity is evident, by the name God gives himself (Exodus 3:14): “And God said unto Moses, I am that I am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, ‘I Am hath sent me unto you.’ ” This is the name whereby he is distinguished from all creatures; I Am, is his proper name. This description being in the present tense, shows that his essence knows no past, nor future; if it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be; but I Am; I am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore, at the greatest distance from not being, and that is eternal. So that it signifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability. As I Am speaks the want of no blessedness, so it speaks the want of no duration; and therefore the French, wherever they find this word Jehovah, in the Scripture, which we translate Lord, and Lord eternal, render it the Eternal,—I am always and immutably the same. The eternity of God is opposed to the volubility of time, which is extended into past, present and to come. Our time is but a small drop, as a sand to all the atoms and small particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded sea of being. “I Am that I Am;” i. e. an infinite life; I have not that now, which I had not formerly; I shall not afterwards have that which I have not now; I am that in every moment which I was, and will be in all moments of time; nothing can be added to me, nothing can be detracted from me; there is nothing superior to him, which can detract from him; nothing desirable that can be added to him. Now if there were any beginning and end of God, any succession in him, he could not be “I Am;” [Note: Thes. Salmur. p. 1. p 146, Thes. 14.] for in regard of what was past, he would not be; in regard of what was to come, he is not yet; and upon this account a heathen argues well; [Note: Plutarch de El. I. p. 392.] of all creatures it may be said they were, or they will be; but of God it cannot be said anything else but est, God is, because he fills an eternal duration. A creature cannot be said to be, if it be not yet, nor if it be not now, but hath been. [Note: Perer. in Exodus 3:1-22. Disput. 13.] God only can be called “I Am;” all creatures have more of not being, than being; for every creature was nothing from eternity, before it was made something in time; and if it be incorruptible in its whole nature, it will be nothing to eternity after it hath been something in time; and if it be not corruptible in its nature, as the angels, or in every part of its nature, as man in regard of his soul; yet it hath not properly a being, because it is dependent upon the pleasure of God to continue it, or deprive it of it; and while it is, it is mutable, and all mutability is a mixture of not being. If God therefore be properly “I Am,” i. e. being, it follows that he always was; for if he were not always, he must, as was argued before, be produced by some other, or by himself; by another he could not; then he had not been God, but a creature; nor by himself, for then as producing, he must be before himself, as produced; he had

been before he was. And he always will be; for being "I Am," having all being in himself, and the fountain of all being to everything else, how can he ever have his name changed to I am not.

2. God hath life in himself (John 5:26): "The Father hath life in himself;" he is the "living God;" therefore "steadfast forever" (Daniel 6:26). He hath life by his essence, not by participation. He is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives not light or life from anything; and therefore he hath an unlimited life, not a drop of life, but a fountain; not a spark of a limited life, but a life transcending all bounds. He hath life in himself; all creatures have their life in him and from him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist; for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life. What doth necessarily exist therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence, without influence of any efficient cause. When God pronounced his name, "I Am that I Am," angels and men were in being; the world had been created above two thousand four hundred years; Moses, to whom he then speaks, was in being; yet God only is, because he only hath the fountain of being in himself; but all that they were was a rivulet from him. He hath from nothing else, that he Both subsist; everything else hath its subsistence from him as their root, as the beam from the sun, as the rivers and fountains from the sea. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogm. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 6, § 6, 7.] All life is seated in God, as in its proper throne, in its most perfect purity. God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally. He is a pure act, nothing but vigor and act; he hath by his nature that life which others have by his grant; whence the Apostle saith (1 Timothy 6:16) not only that he is immortal, but he hath immortality in a full possession; free simple, not depending upon the will of another, but containing all things within himself. He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be. He always was, because he received his being from no other, and none can take away that being which was not given by another. If there were any space before he did exist, then there was something which made him to exist; life would not then be in him, but in that which produced him into being; he could not then be God, but that other which gave him being would be God. [Note: Amyrald de Trinit. p. 48.] And to say God sprung into being by chance, when we see nothing in the world that is brought forth by chance, but hath some cause of its existence, would be vain; for since God is a being, chance, which is nothing, could not bring forth something; and by the same reason, that he sprung up by chance, he might totally vanish by chance. What a strange notion of a God would this be! such a God that had no life in himself but from chance! Since he hath life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence, he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be determined to a time, than he can to a place. What hath life in itself, hath life without bounds, and can never desert it, nor be deprived of it; so that he lives necessarily, and it is absolutely impossible that he should not live; whereas all other things "live, and move, and have their being in him" (Acts 17:28); and as they live by his will, so they can return to nothing at his word.

3. If God were not eternal, he were not immutable in his nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity; for whatsoever begins, is changed in its passing from not being to being. It began to be what it was not; and if it ends, it ceaseth to be what it was; it cannot therefore be said to be God, if there were neither beginning or ending, or succession in it (Malachi 3:6): "I am the Lord, I change not;" (Job 37:23): "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." God argues here, saith Calvin, from his unchangeable nature as Jehovah, to his immutability in his

purpose. Had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change from nothing to something. A change of essence is greater than a change of purpose. God is a sun glittering always in the same glory; no growing up in youth; no passing on to age. If he were not without succession, standing in one point of eternity, there would be a change from past to present, from present to future. The eternity of God is a shield against all kind of mutability. If anything sprang up in the essence of God that was not there before, he could not be said to be either an eternal, or an unchanged substance.

4. God could not be an infinitely perfect Being, if he were not eternal. A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Whatsoever is contracted within the limits of time, cannot swallow up all perfections in itself. God hath an unsearchable perfection. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7.) He cannot be found out: he is infinite, because he is incomprehensible. Incomprehensibility ariseth from an infinite perfection, which cannot be fathomed by the short line of man's understanding. His essence in regard of its diffusion, and in regard of its duration, is incomprehensible, as well as his action: if God, therefore, had beginning, he could not be infinite; if not infinite, he did not possess the highest perfection; because a perfection might be conceived beyond it. If his being could fail, he were not perfect; can that deserve the name of the highest perfection, which is capable of corruption and dissolution? To be finite and limited, is the greatest imperfection, for it consists in a denial of being. He could not be the most blessed Being if he were not always so, and should not forever remain so; and whatsoever perfections he had, would be soured by the thoughts, that in time they would cease, and so could not be pure affections, because not permanent; but "He is blessed from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalms 41:13). Had he a beginning, he could not have all perfection without limitation; he would have been limited by that which gave him beginning; that which gave him being would be God, and not himself, and so more perfect than he: but since God is the most sovereign perfection, than which nothing can be imagined perfecter by the most capacious understanding, He is certainly "eternal;" being infinite, nothing can be added to him, nothing detracted from him.

5. God could not be omnipotent, almighty, if he were not eternal. The title of almighty agrees not with a nature that had a beginning; whatsoever hath a beginning was once nothing; and when it was nothing, could act nothing: where there is no being there is no power. Neither doth the title of almighty agree with a perishing nature: he can do nothing to purpose, that cannot preserve himself against the outward force and violence of enemies, or against the inward causes of corruption and dissolution. No account is to be made of man, because "his breath is in his nostrils" (Isaiah 2:22); could a better account be made of God, if he were of the like condition? He could not properly be almighty, that were not always mighty; if he be omnipotent, nothing can impair him; he that hath all power, can have no hurt. If he doth whatsoever he pleaseth, nothing can make him miserable, since misery consists in those things which happen against our will. [Note: Voet. Natural. Theol. p. 310.] The almightiness and eternity of God are linked together: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8): almighty because eternal, and eternal because almighty.

6. God would not be the first cause of all if he were not eternal; but he is the first and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things: [Note: Revelation 1:8. Ficin. de Immort. lib. ii. c. 5.] that which is the first cannot begin to be; it were not then the first; it cannot cease to be:

whatsoever is dissolved, is dissolved into that whereof it doth consist, which was before it, and then it was not the first. The world might not have been; it was once nothing; it must have some cause to call it out of nothing: nothing hath no power to make itself something; there is a superior cause, by whose will and power it comes into being, and so gives all the creatures their distinct forms. [Note: Coccei Sum. Theol. c. 8.] This power cannot but be eternal; it must be before the world; the founder must be before the foundation; and his existence must be from eternity; or we must say nothing did exist from eternity: [Note: Crellius de Deo, c. 18. p. 48.] and if there were no being from eternity, there could not now be any being in time. What we see, and what we are, must arise from itself or some other; it cannot from itself: if anything made itself, it had a power to make itself; it then had an active power before it had a being; it was something in regard of power, and was nothing in regard of existence at the same time. Suppose it had a power to produce itself, this power must be conferred upon it by another; and so the power of producing itself, was not from itself, but from another; but if the power of being was from itself, why did it not produce itself before? why was it one moment out of being? [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 10, 11.] If there be any existence of things, it is necessary that that which was the "first cause," should "exist from eternity." Whatsoever was the immediate cause of the world, yet the first and chief cause wherein we must rest, must have nothing before it; if it had anything before it, it were not the first; he therefore that is the first cause, must be without beginning; nothing must be before him; if he had a beginning from some other, he could not be the first principle and author of all things; if he be the first cause of all things, he must give himself a beginning, or be from eternity: he could not give himself a beginning; whatsoever begins in time was nothing before, and when it was nothing, it could do nothing; it could not give itself anything, for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not. If he made himself in time, why did he not make himself before? what hindered him? It was either because he could not, or because he would not; if he could not, he always wanted power, and always would, unless it were bestowed upon him, and then he could not be said to be from himself. If he would not make himself before, then he might have made himself when he would: how had he the power of willing and nilling without a being? Nothing cannot will or nill; nothing hath no faculties; so that it is necessary to grant some eternal being, or run into inextricable labyrinths and mazes. If we deny some eternal being, we must deny all being; our own being, the being of everything about us; unconceivable absurdities will arise. So, then, if God were the cause of all things, he did exist before all things, and that from eternity.

III. Eternity is only proper to God, and not communicable. It is as great a madness to ascribe eternity to the creature, as to deprive the Lord of the creature of eternity. [Note: Bapt.] It is so proper to God, that when the apostle would prove the deity of Christ, he proves it by his immutability and eternity, as well as his creating power: "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." (Hebrews 1:10-12) The argument had not strength, if eternity belonged essentially to any but God; and therefore he is said only to have "immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16): all other things receive their being from him, and can be deprived of their being by him: all things depend on him; he of none all other things are like clothes, which would consume if God preserved them not.

Immortality is appropriated to God, i. e. an independent immortality. Angels and souls have an immortality, but by donation from God, not by their own essence; dependent upon their Creator, not necessary in their own nature: God might have annihilated them after he had created them; so that their duration cannot properly be called an eternity, it being extrinsical to them, and dependent

upon the will of their Creator, by whom they may be extinguished; it is not an absolute and necessary, but a precarious immortality. Whatsoever is not God, is temporary; whatsoever is eternal, is God. It is a contradiction to say a creature can be eternal; as nothing eternal is created, so nothing created is eternal. What is distinct from the nature of God cannot be eternal, eternity being the essence of God. Every creature, in the notion of a creature, speaks a dependence on some cause, and therefore cannot be eternal. As it is repugnant to the nature of God not to be eternal, so it is repugnant to the nature of a creature to be eternal; for then a creature would be equal to the Creator, and the Creator, or the Cause, would not be before the creature, or effect. [Note: Lessius de Perfect. lib. iv. c. 2.] It would be all one to admit many gods, as many eternals; and all one to say, God can be created, as to say a creature can be uncreated, which is to be eternal.

1. Creation is a producing something from nothing. What was once nothing, cannot therefore be eternal; not being was eternal; therefore its being could not be eternal, for it should be then before it was, and would be something when it was nothing. It is the nature of a creature to be nothing before it was created; what was nothing before it was, cannot be equal with God in an eternity of duration.

2. There is no creature but is mutable, therefore not eternal. As it had a change from nothing to something, so it may be changed from being to not being. If the creature were not mutable, it would be most perfect, and so would not be a creature, but God; for God only is most perfect. It is as much the essence of a creature to be mutable, as it is the essence of God to be immutable. Mutability and eternity are utterly inconsistent.

3. No creature is infinite, therefore not eternal: to be infinite in duration is all one as to be infinite in essence. It is as reasonable to conceive a creature immense, filling all places at once, as eternal, extended to all ages; because neither can be without infiniteness, which is the property of the Deity. [Note: Ibid.] A creature may as well be without bounds of place, as limitations of time.

4. No effect of an intellectual free agent can be equal in duration to its cause. The productions of natural agents are as ancient often as themselves; the sun produceth a beam as old in time as itself; but who ever heard of a piece of wise workmanship as old as the wise artificer? God produced a creature, not necessarily and naturally, as the sun doth a beam, but freely, as an intelligent agent. The sun was not necessary; it might be or not be, according to the pleasure of God. A free act of the will is necessary to precede in order of time, as the cause of such effects as are purely voluntary. [Note: Crellius de Deo, c. 18. p. 43.] Those causes that act as soon as they exist act naturally, necessarily, not freely, and cannot cease from acting. But suppose a creature might have existed by the will of God from eternity; yet, as some think, it could not be said absolutely, and in its own nature to be eternal, because eternity was not of the essence of it. The creature could not be its own duration; for though it were from eternity, it might not have been from eternity, because its existence depended upon the free will of God, who might have chose whether he would have created it or no. God only is eternal; “the first and the last, the beginning and the end;” who, as he subsisted before any creature had a being, so he will eternally subsist if all creatures were reduced to nothing.

IV. Use 1. Information. If God be of an eternal duration, then “Christ is God.” Eternity is the property of God, but it is ascribed to Christ: “He is before all things” (Colossians 1:17), i. e. all

created things; he is therefore no creature, and if no creature, eternal. "All things were created by him," both in heaven and in earth, angels, as well as men, whether they be thrones or dominions (Colossians 1:16). If all things were his creatures, then he is no creature; if he were, all things were not created by him, or he must create himself. He hath no difference of time; for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever:" [Note: Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8. "He which is, and which was, and which is to come."] the same, with the name of God, "I Am," which signifies his eternity. He is no more to-day than he was yesterday, nor will be any other to-morrow than he is to-day; and therefore Melchizedec, whose descent, birth, and death, father and mother, beginning and end of days, are not upon record, was a type of the existence of Christ without difference of time; "Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God" (Hebrews 7:3). The suppression of his birth and death was intended by the Holy Ghost as a type of the excellency of Christ's person in regard of his eternity, and the duration of his charge in regard of his priesthood. As there was an appearance of an eternity in the suppression of the race of Melchisedec, so there is a true eternity in the Son of God. How could the eternity of the Son of God be expressed by any resemblance so well, as by such a suppression of the beginning and end of this great person, different from the custom of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, who often records the generations and ends of holy men; and why might not this, which was a kind of a shadow of eternity, be a representation of the true eternity of Christ, as well as the restoration of Isaac to his father without death, is said to be a figure of the resurrection of Christ after a real death? [Note: Mestræzat. in loc.] Melchisedec is only mentioned once (without any record of his extraction) in his appearance to Abraham after his victory, as if he came from heaven only for that action, and instantly disappeared again, as if he had been an eternal person. And Christ himself hints his own eternity: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28). He goes to the Father as he came from the Father; he goes to the Father "for everlasting," so he came from the Father "from everlasting;" there is the same duration in coming forth from the Father, as in returning to the Father. But more plainly: he speaks of a glory that he "had with the Father before the world was" (John 17:5), when there was no creature in being. This is an actual glory, and not only in decree; for a decreed glory believers had, and why may not every one of them say the same words, "Father, glorify me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was," if it were only a glory in decree? Nay, it maybe said of every man, he was before the world was, because he was so in decree. Christ speaks of something peculiar to him, a glory in actual possession before the world was: "Glorify me, embrace, honor me as thy Son, whereas I have now been, in the eyes of the world, handled disgracefully as a servant." If it were only in decree, why is not the like expression used of others in Scripture as well as of Christ? Why did he not use the same words for his disciples that were then with him, who had a glory in decree? His eternity is also mentioned in the Old Testament: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (Proverbs 8:22). If he were the work of God, he existed before himself, if he existed before all the works of God. It is so not properly meant of the essential wisdom of God, since the discourse runs in the name of a person; and several passages there are which belong not so much to the essential wisdom of God, as Proverbs 8:13 : "The evil way and the froward mouth do I hate," which belongs rather to the holiness of God, than to the essential wisdom of God; besides, it is distinguished from Jehovah, as possessed by, him, "and rejoicing before him." Yet plainer: "Out of thee," i. e. Bethlehem, "shall he come forth to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old,

from everlasting," ■■■■■ ■■■■■ "from the ways of eternity" (Micah 5:2). There are two goings forth of Christ described, one from Bethlehem, in the days of his incarnation, and another from eternity. The Holy Ghost adds, after his prediction of his incarnation, his going out from everlasting, that none should doubt of his deity. If this going out from everlasting were only in the purpose of God, it might be said of David, and of every creature; and in Isaiah 9:6 he is particularly called the "everlasting," or "eternal Father;" not the Father in the Trinity, but a Father to us; yet "eternal," the "Father of eternity." As he is the "mighty God," so he is "the everlasting Father." Can such a title be ascribed to any whose being depends upon the will of another, and may be dashed out at the pleasure of a superior? As the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, so the eternity of Christ is the ground of the Christian religion. Could our sins be perfectly expiated had he not an eternal divinity to answer for the offences committed against an eternal God? Temporary sufferings had been of little validity, without an infiniteness and eternity in his person to add weight to his passion.

2. If God be eternal, he knows all things as present. All things are present to him in his eternity; for this is the notion of eternity, to be without succession. [Note: Petav.] If eternity be one indivisible point, and is not diffused into preceding and succeeding parts, then that which is known in it or by it is perceived without any succession, for knowledge is as the substance of the person knowing; if that hath various actions and distinct from itself, then it understands things in differences of time as time presents them to view. But, since God's being depends not upon the revolutions of time, so neither does his knowledge; it exceeds all motions of years and days, comprehends infinite spaces of past and future. God considers all things in his eternity in one simple knowledge, as if they were now acted before him: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" ■π■ α■voς, à seculo, "from eternity" (Acts 15:18). God's knowledge is co-eternal with him; if he knows that in time which he did not know from eternity, he would not be eternally perfect, since knowledge is the perfection of an intelligent nature.

3. How bold and foolish is it for a mortal creature to censure the counsels and actions of an eternal God, or be too curious in his inquisitions! It is by the consideration of the unsearchable number of the years of God that Elihu checks too bold inquiries: "who hath enjoined him his way, or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out." [Note: Job 36:26, compared with Job 36:23.] Eternity sets God above our inquiries and censures. Infants of a day old are not able to understand the acts of wise and gray heads: shall we, that are of so short a being and understanding as yesterday, presume to measure the motions of eternity by our scanty intellects? We that cannot foresee an unexpected accident which falls in to blast a well-laid design, and run a ship many leagues back from the intended harbor; we cannot understand the reason of things we see done in time, the motions of the sea, the generation of rain, the nature of light, the sympathies and antipathies of the creatures; and shall we dare to censure the actions of an eternal God, so infinitely beyond our reach? The counsels of a boundless being are not to be scanned by the brain of a silly worm, that hath breathed but a few minutes in the world. Since eternity cannot be comprehended in time, it is not to be judged by a creature of time: "Let us remember to magnify his works which we behold," because he is eternal, which is the exhortation of Elihu, backed by this doctrine of God's eternity (Job 36:24), and not accuse any work of him who is the "Ancient of Days," or presume to direct him of whose eternity we come infinitely short. Whenever, therefore, any unworthy notion of the

counsels and works of God is suggested to us by Satan, or our own corrupt hearts, let us look backward to God's eternal and our own short duration, and silence ourselves with the same question wherewith God put a stop to the reasoning of Job—"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4), and reprove ourselves for our curiosity, since we are of so short a standing, and were nothing when the eternal God laid the first stone of the world.

4. What a folly and boldness is there in sin, since an eternal God is offended thereby! All sin is aggravated by God's eternity. The blackness of the heathen idolatry was in changing the glory of the incorruptible God (Romans 1:23); erecting resemblances of him contrary to his immortal nature; as if the eternal God, whose life is as unlimited as eternity, were like those creatures whose beings are measured by the short ell of time, which are of a corruptible nature, and daily passing on to corruption; they could not really deprive God of his glory and immortality, but they did in estimation. There is in the nature of every sin a tendency to reduce God to a not being. He that thinks unworthily of God, or acts unworthily towards him, doth (as much as in him lies) sully and destroy these two perfections of his, immutability and eternity. It is a carriage, as if he were as contemptible as a creature that were but of yesterday, and shall not remain in being to-morrow. He that would put an end to God's glory by darkening it, would put an end to God's life by destroying it. He that should love a beast with as great an affection as he loves a man, contemns a rational nature; and he that loves a perishing thing with the same affection he should love an everlasting God, contemns his eternity; he debaseth the duration of God below that of the world. The low valuation of God speaks him in his esteem no better than withering grass, or a gourd, which lasts for a night; and the creature which possesses his affection, to be a good that lasts forever. How foolish, then, is every sin that tends to destroy a being that cannot destroy or desert himself; a Being, without whose eternity the sinner himself could not have had the capacity of a being to affront him! How base is that which would not let the works of God remain in their established posture! How much more base is not enduring the fountain and glory of all beings, that would not only put an end to the beauty of the world, but the eternity of God!

5. How dreadful is it to lie under the stroke of an eternal God! His eternity is as great a terror to him that hates him, as it is a comfort to him that loves him; because he is the "living God, an everlasting king, the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation" (Jeremiah 10:10). Though God be least in their thoughts, and is made light of in the world, yet the thoughts of God's eternity, when he comes to judge the world, shall make the slights of him tremble. That the Judge and punisher lives forever, is the greatest grievance to a soul in misery, and adds an inconceivable weight to it, above what the infiniteness of God's executive power could do without that duration. His eternity makes the punishment more dreadful than his power; his power makes it sharp, but his eternity renders it perpetual; ever to endure, is the sting at the end of every lash. And how sad is it to think that God lays his eternity to pawn for the punishment of obstinate sinners, and engageth it by an oath, that he will "whet his glittering sword," that his "hand shall take hold of judgment," that he will "render vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him;" a reward proportioned to the greatness of their offences, and the glory of an eternal God! "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever;" (Deuteronomy 32:40-41): i. e., as surely as I live forever, I will whet my glittering sword. As none can convey good with a perpetuity, so none can convey evil with such a lastingness as God. It is a great loss to lose a ship richly fraught in the bottom of the sea, never to be cast upon the shore; but how much greater is it to lose eternally a sovereign God,

which we were capable of eternally enjoying, and undergo an evil as durable as that God we slighted, and were in a possibility of avoiding! The miseries of men after this life are not eased, but sharpened, by the life and eternity of God.

Use 2. Of comfort. What foundation of comfort can we have in any of God's attributes, were it not for his infiniteness and eternity, though he be "merciful, good, wise, faithful?" What support could there be, if they were perfections belonging to a corruptible God? What hopes of a resurrection to happiness can we have, or of the duration of it, if that God that promised it were not immortal to continue it, as well as powerful to effect it? His power were not Almighty, if his duration were not eternal.

1. If God be eternal, his covenant will be so. It is founded upon the eternity of God; the oath whereby he confirms it, is by his life. Since there is none greater than himself, he swears by himself (Hebrews 6:13), or by his own life, which he engageth together with his eternity for the full performance; so that if he lives forever, the covenant shall not be disannulled; it is an "immutable counsel" (Hebrews 6:16-17). The immutability of his counsel follows the immutability of his nature. Immutability and eternity go hand in hand together. The promise of eternal life is as ancient as God himself in regard of the purpose of the promise, or in regard of the promise made to Christ for us. "Eternal life which God promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2): As it hath an ante-eternity, so it hath a posteternity; therefore the gospel, which is the new covenant published, is termed the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6), which can no more be altered and perish, than God can change and vanish into nothing; he can as little morally deny his truth, as he can naturally desert his life. The covenant is there represented in a green color, to note its perpetual verdure; the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant "about the throne, was like to an emerald" (Revelation 4:3), a stone of a green color, whereas the natural rainbow had many colors; this but one, to signify its eternity.

2. If God be eternal, he being our God in covenant, is an eternal good and possession. "This God is our God forever and ever" (Psalms 48:14): "He is a dwelling place in all generations." We shall traverse the world awhile, and then arrive at the blessings Jacob wished for Joseph, "the blessings of the everlasting hills" (Genesis 49:26). If an estate of a thousand pound per annum render a man's life comfortable for a short term, how much more may the soul be swallowed up with joy in the enjoyment of the Creator, whose years never fail, who lives forever to be enjoyed, and can keep us in life forever to enjoy him! Death, indeed, will seize upon us by God's irreversible order, but the immortal Creator will make him disgorge his morsel, and land us in a glorious immortality; our souls at their dissolution, and our bodies at the resurrection, after which they shall remain forever, and employ the extent of that boundless eternity, in the fruition of the sovereign and eternal God; for it is impossible that the believer, who is united to the immortal God that is from everlasting to everlasting, can ever perish; for being in conjunction with him who is an ever-flowing fountain of life, he cannot suffer him to remain in the jaws of death. While God is eternal, and always the same, it is not possible that those that partake of his spiritual life, should not also partake of his eternal. It is from the consideration of the endlessness of the years of God that the church comforts herself that "her children shall continue, and their seed be established forever" (Psalms 102:27-28). And from the eternity of God Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:12) concludes the eternity of believers, "Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? we shall not die, O Lord." After they are retired from this world, they shall live forever with God, without any

change by the multitude of those imaginable years and ages that shall run forever. It is that God that hath neither beginning nor end, that is our God; who hath not only immortality in himself, but immortality to give out to others. As he hath "abundance of spirit" to quicken them (Malachi 2:15), so he hath abundance of immortality to continue them. It is only in the consideration of this a man can with wisdom say, "Soul, take thy ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years" (Luke 12:19-20): to say it of any other possession is the greatest folly in the judgment of our Saviour. "Mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality;" "rivers of pleasure" shall be "for evermore." Death is a word never spoken there by any; never heard by any in that possession of eternity; it is forever put out as one of Christ's conquered enemies. The happiness depends upon the presence of God, with whom believers shall be forever present. Happiness cannot perish as long as God lives; he is the first and the last; the first of all delights, nothing before him; the last of all pleasures, nothing beyond him; a paradise of delights in every point, without a flaming sword.

3. The enjoyment of God will be as fresh and glorious after many ages, as it was at first. God is eternal, and eternity knows no change; there will then be the fullest possession without any decay in the object enjoyed. There can be nothing past, nothing future; time neither adds to it, nor detracts from it; that infinite fulness of perfection which flourisheth in him now, will flourish eternally, without any discoloring of it in the least, by those innumerable ages that shall run to eternity, much less any despoiling him of them: "He is the same in his endless duration" (Psalms 102:27). As God is, so will the eternity of him be, without succession, without division; the fulness of joy will be always present; without past to be thought of with regret for being gone; without future to be expected with tormenting desires. When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux; an entire possession of all together, without the passing away of pleasures that may be wished to return, or expectation of future joys which might be desired to hasten. Time is fluid, but eternity is stable; and after many ages, the joys will be as savory and satisfying as if they had been but that moment first tasted by our hungry appetites. When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon you, it shall be so far from ever setting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the sands on the seashore, the sun, in the light of whose countenance you shall live, shall be as bright as at the first appearance; he will be so far from ceasing to flow, that he will flow as strong, as full, as at the first communication of himself in glory to the creature. God, therefore, as sitting upon his throne of grace, and acting according to his covenant, is like a jasper-stone, which is of a green color, a color always delightful (Revelation 4:3); because God is always vigorous and flourishing; a pure act of life, sparkling new and fresh rays of life and light to the creature, flourishing with a perpetual spring, and contenting the most capacious desire; forming your interest, pleasure, and satisfaction; with an infinite variety, without any change or succession; he will have variety to increase delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite and eternal God: he is not a cistern, but a fountain, wherein water is always living, and never putrefies.

4. If God be eternal, here is a strong ground of comfort against all the distresses of the church, and the threats of the church's enemies. God's abiding forever is the plea Jeremy makes for his return to his forsaken church: "Thou, O Lord, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation" (Lamentations 5:19-20). The church is weak; created things are easily cut off; what prop is there, but that God that lives forever? What, though Jerusalem lost its bulwarks, the temple were defaced, the land wasted; yet the God of Jerusalem sits upon an eternal throne, and from

everlasting to everlasting there is no diminution of his power. The prophet intimates in this complaint, that it is not agreeable to God's eternity to forget his people, to whom he hath from eternity borne good-will. In the greatest confusions, the church's eyes are to be fixed upon the eternity of God's throne, where he sits as governor of the world. No creature can take any comfort in this perfection, but the church; other creatures depend upon God, but the church is united to him. The first discovery of the name "I am," which signifies the divine eternity, as well as immutability, was for the comfort of the "oppressed Israelites in Egypt" (Exodus 3:14-15): it was then published from the secret place of the Almighty, as the only strong cordial to refresh them: it hath not yet, it shall not ever lose its virtue in any of the miseries that have, or shall successively befall the church. It is a comfort as durable as the God whose name it is; he is still "I Am;" and the same to the church, as he was then to his Israel. His spiritual Israel have a greater right to the glories of it, than the carnal Israel could have. No oppression can be greater than theirs; what was a comfort suited to that distress, hath the same suitableness to every other oppression. It was not a temporary name, but a name forever; his "memorial to all generations" (Exodus 30:15), and reacheth to the church of the Gentiles with whom he treats as the God of Abraham; ratifying that covenant by the Messiah, which he made with Abraham, the father of the faithful. The church's enemies are not to be feared; they may spring as the grass, but soon after do wither by their own inward principles of decay, or are cut down by the hand of God (Psalms 92:7-9). They may be instruments of the anger of God, but "they shall be scattered as the workers of iniquity by the hand of the Lord, that is high for evermore" (Psalms 92:8), and is engaged by his promise, to preserve a church in the world. They may threaten, but their breath may vanish as soon as their threatenings are pronounced; for they carry their breath in no surer a place than their own nostrils, upon which the eternal God can put his hand, and sink them with all their rage. Do the prophets and instructors of the church "live forever" (Zechariah 1:5)? No: shall, then, the adversaries and disturbers of the church live forever? They shall vanish as a shadow; their being depends upon the eternal God of the faithful, and the everlasting Judge of the wicked. He that inhabits eternity is above them that inhabit mortality; and must, whether they will or no, "say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister" (Job 17:14.) When they will act with a confidence, as if they were living gods, he will not be mated; but evidence himself to be a living God above them. Why, then, should mortal men be feared in their frowns, when an immortal God hath promised protection in his word, and lives forever to perform it?

5. Hence follows another comfort; since God is eternal, he hath as much power as will to be as good as his word. His promises are established upon his eternity; and his perfection is a main ground of trust; "Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4). ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■ His name is doubled; that name, Jah and Jehovah, which was always the strength of his people; and not a single one, but the strength or rock of eternities: not a failing, but an eternal truth and power; that as his strength is eternal, so our trust in him should imitate his eternity in its perpetuity; and therefore in the despondency of his people, as if God had forgot his promises, and made no account of them, or his word, and were weary of doing good, he calls them to reflect on what they had heard of his eternity, which is attended with immutability, who hath an infiniteness of power to perform his will, and an infiniteness of understanding to judge of the right seasons of it. His wisdom, will, truth, have always been, and will to eternity be the same (Isaiah 40:27-28). He wants not life, any more than love, forever to help us; since his word is past, he will never fail us; since his life continues, he can never be out of a capacity to relieve us; and,

therefore, whenever we foolishly charge him by our distrustful thoughts, we forget his love, which made the promise, and his eternal life, which can accomplish it. As his word is the bottom of our trust, and his truth is the assurance of his sincerity, so his eternity is the assurance of his ability to perform: "His word stands forever" (ver. 8). A man may be my friend this day, and be in another world to-morrow; and though he be never so sincere in his word, yet death snaps his life asunder, and forbids the execution. But as God cannot die, so he cannot lie; because he is the eternity of Israel: "The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent," ■■■■ perpetuity, or eternity of Israel (1 Samuel 15:29). Eternity implies immutability; we could have no ground for our hopes, if we knew him not to be longer lived than ourselves. The Psalmist beats off our hands from trust in men, "because their breath goes forth, they return to their earth, and in that day their thoughts perish" (Psalms 146:3-4). And if the God of Jacob were like them, what happiness could we have in making him our help? As his sovereignty in giving precepts had not been a strong ground of obedience, without considering him as an eternal lawgiver, who could maintain his rights; so his kindness in making the promises had not been a strong ground of confidence, without considering him as an eternal promiser, whose thoughts and whose life can never perish. [Note: Crellius de Deo, c. 18, p. 44, 45.] And this may be one reason why the Holy Ghost mentions so often the post-eternity of God, and so little his ante-eternity; because that is the strongest foundation of our faith and hope, which respects chiefly that which is future, and not that which is past; yet, indeed, no assurance of his after-eternity can be had, if his ante-eternity be not certain. If he had a beginning, he may have an end; and if he had a change in his nature, he might have in his counsels; but since all the resolves of God are as himself is, eternal, and all the promises of God are the fruits of his counsel, therefore they cannot be changed; if he should change them for the better, he would not have been eternally wise, to know what was best; if for the worse, he had not been eternally good or just. Men may break their promises, because they are made without foresight; but God, that inhabits eternity, foreknows all things that shall be done under the sun, as if they had been then acting before him; and nothing can intervene, or work a change in his resolves; because the least circumstances were eternally foreseen by him. Though there may be variations, and changes to our sight, the wind may tack about, and every hour new and cross accidents happen; yet the eternal God, who is eternally true to his word, sits at the helm, and the winds and the waves obey him. And though he should defer his promise a thousand years, yet he is "not slack" (2 Peter 3:8-9); for he defers it but a day to his eternity: and who would not with comfort stay a day in expectation of a considerable advantage?

Use 3. For exhortation. 1. To something which concerns us in ourselves; 2. To something which concerns us with respect to God.

1. To something which concerns us in ourselves.

(1.) Let us be deeply affected with our sins long since committed. Though they are past with us, they are, in regard of God's eternity, present with him; there is no succession in eternity, as there is in time. All things are before God at once; our sins are before him, as if committed this moment, though committed long ago. As he is what he is in regard of duration, so he knows what he knows in regard of knowledge. As he is not more than he was, nor shall not be any more than he is, so he always knew what he knows, and shall not cease to know what he now knows. As himself, so his knowledge, is one indivisible point of eternity. He knows nothing but what he did know from eternity; he shall know no more for the future than he now knows. Our sins being present with him

in his eternity, should be present with us in our regard of remembrance of them, and sorrow for them.

What though many years are lapsed, much time run out, and our iniquities almost blotted out of our memory; yet since a thousand years are, in God's sight, and in regard of his eternity, but as a day—"A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalms 90:4)—they are before him. For suppose a man were as old as the world, above five thousand six hundred years; the sins committed five thousand years ago, are, according to that rule, but as if they were committed five days ago; so that sixty-two years are but as an hour and a half; and the sins committed forty years since as if they were committed but this present hour. But if we will go further, and consider them but as a watch of the night, about three hours (for the night, consisting of twelve hours, was divided into set watches), then a thousand years are but as three hours in the sight of God; and then sins committed sixty years ago are but as if they were committed within this five minutes. Let none of us set light by the iniquities committed many years ago, and imagine that length of time can wipe out their guilt. No: let us consider them in relation to God's eternity, and excite an inward remorse, as if they had been but the birth of this moment.

(2.) Let the consideration of God's eternity abate our pride. This is the design of the verses following the text: the eternity of God being so sufficient to make us understand our own nothingness, which ought to be one great end of man, especially as fallen. The eternity of God should make us as much disesteem ourselves, as the excellency of God made Job abhor himself (Job 42:5-6. His excellency should humble us under a sense of our vanity, and his eternity under a sense of the shortness of our duration. If man compares himself with other creatures, he may be too sensible of his greatness; but if he compares himself with God, he cannot but be sensible of his baseness.

1st. In regard of our impotence to comprehend this eternity of God. How little do we know, how little can we know, of God's eternity! We cannot fully conceive it, much less express it; we have but a brutish understanding in all those things, as Agur said of himself (Proverbs 3:7). What is infinite and eternal, cannot be comprehended by finite and temporary creatures; if it could, it would not be infinite and eternal; [Note: Charrontois. Vent. liv. i. c. 5, p. 17, &c.] for to know a thing, is to know the extent and cause of it. It is repugnant to eternity to be known, because it hath no limits, no causes; the most soaring understanding cannot have a proportionable understanding of it. What disproportion is there between a drop of water and the sea in their greatness and motion; yet by a drop we may arrive to a knowledge of the nature of the sea, which is a mass of drops joined together; but the longest duration of times cannot make us know what eternity is, because there is no proportion between time and eternity. The years of God are as numberless as his thoughts (Psalms 40:5), and our minds as far from reckoning the one as the other. If our understandings are too gross to comprehend the majesty of his infinite works, they are much more too sort to comprehend the infiniteness of his eternity.

2d. In regard of the vast disproportion of our duration to this duration of God.

[1.] We have more of nothing than being. We were nothing from an unbegun eternity, and we might have been nothing to an endless eternity, had not God called us into being; and if he please we may be nothing by as short an annihilating word, as we were something by a creating word. As it is the prerogative of God to be, "I am that I am;" so it is the property of a creature to be, "I am not

what I am;" I am not by myself what I am, but by the indulgence of another. I was nothing formerly; I may be nothing again, unless he that is "I Am" make me to subsist what I now am. Nothing is as much the title of the creature as being is the title of God. Nothing is so holy as God, because nothing hath being as God: "There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none besides thee" (1 Samuel 2:2). Man's life is an image, a dream, which are next to nothing; and if compared with God, worse than nothing; a nullity as well as a vanity, because "with God only is the fountain of life" (Psalms 36:9). The creature is but a drop of life from him, dependent on him: a drop of water is a nothing if compared with the vast conflux of waters and numberless drops in the ocean. How unworthy is it for dust and ashes, kneaded together in time, to strut against the Father of eternity! Much more unworthy for that which is nothing, worse than nothing, to quarrel with that which is only being, and equal himself with Him that inhabits eternity.

[2.] What being we have had a beginning. After an unaccountable eternity was run out, in the very dregs of time, a few years ago we were created, and made of the basest and vilest dross of the world, the slime and dust of the earth; made of that wherewith birds build their nests; made of that which creeping things make their habitation, and beasts trample upon. How monstrous is pride in such a creature, to aspire, as if he were the Father of eternity, and as eternal as God, and so his own eternity!

[3.] What being we have is but of a short duration in regard of our life in this world. Our life is in a constant change and flux; we remain not the same an entire day; youth quickly succeeds childhood, and age as speedily treads upon the heels of youth; there is a continual defluxion of minutes, as there is of sands in a glass. He is as a watch wound up at the beginning of his life, and from that time is running down, till he comes to the bottom; some part of our lives is cut off every day, every minute. Life is but a moment: what is past cannot be recalled, what is future cannot be ensured. If we enjoy this moment, we have lost that which is past, and shall presently lose this by the next that is to come. The short duration of men is set out in Scripture by such creatures as soon disappear: a worm (Job 25:6), that can scarce outlive a winter; grass, that withers by the summer sun. Life is a "flower," soon withering (Job 14:2); a "vapor," soon vanishing (James 4:14); a "smoke," soon disappearing (Psalms 102:3). The strongest man is but compacted dust; the fabric must moulder; the highest mountain falls and comes to naught.

Time gives place to eternity; we live now, and die tomorrow. Not a man since the world began ever lived a day in God's sight; for no man ever lived a thousand years. The longest day of any man's life never amounted to twenty-four hours in the account of divine eternity: a life of so many hundred years, with the addition "he died," makes up the greatest part of the history of the patriarchs (Genesis 5:1-32.); and since the life of man hath been curtailed, if any be in the world eighty years, he scarce properly lives sixty of them, since the fourth part of time is at least consumed in sleep. A greater difference there is between the duration of God and that of a creature, than between the life of one for a minute, and the life of one that should live as many years as the whole globe of heaven and earth, if changed into papers, could contain figures. And this life, though but of a short duration according to the period God hath determined, is easily cut off; the treasure of life is deposited in a brittle vessel. A small stone hitting against Nebuchadnezzar's statue will tumble it down into a poor and nasty grave; a grape-stone, the bone of a fish, a small fly in the throat, a moist damp, are enough to destroy an earthly eternity, and reduce it to nothing. What a nothing, then, is our shortness, if compared with God's eternity; our

frailty, with God's duration! How humble, then, should perishing creatures be before an eternal God, with whom "our days are as a hand's breadth, and our age as nothing!" (Psalms 39:5.) The angels, that have been of as long a duration as heaven and earth, tremble before him; the heavens melt at his presence; and shall we, that are but of yesterday, approach a divine eternity with unhumbled souls, and offer the calves of our lips with the pride of devils, and stand upon our terms with him, without falling upon our faces, with a sense that we are but dust and ashes, and creatures of time? How easy is it to reason out man's humility! but how hard is it to reason man into it!

(3.) Let the consideration of God's eternity take off our love and confidence from the world, and the things thereof. The eternity of God reproaches a pursuit of the world, as preferring a momentary pleasure before an everlasting God; as though a temporal world could be a better supply than a God whose years never fail. Alas! what is this earth men are so greedy of, and will get, though by blood and sweat? What is this whole earth, if we had the entire possession of it, if compared with the vast heavens, the seat of angels and blessed spirits? It is but as an atom to the greatest mountain, or as a drop of dew to the immense ocean. How foolish is it to prefer a drop before the sea, or an atom before the world! The earth is but a point to the sun; the sun with its whole orb, but a little part of the heavens if compared with the whole fabric. If a man had the possession of all those, there could be no comparison between those that have had a beginning, and shall have an end, and God who is without either of them. Yet how many are there that make nothing of the divine eternity, and imagine an eternity of nothing!

[1.] The world hath been but of a short standing. It is not yet six thousand years since the foundations of it were laid, and therefore it cannot have a boundless excellency, as that God, who hath been from everlasting, Both possess. If Adam had lived to this day, and been as absolute lord of his posterity, as he was of the other creatures, had it been a competent object to take up his heart? had he not been a madman, to have preferred this little created pleasure before an everlasting uncreated God? a thing that had a dependent beginning, before that which had an independent eternity?

[2.] The beauties of the world are transitory and perishing. The whole world is nothing else but a fluid thing; the fashion of it is a pageantry, "passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31): though the glories of it might be conceived greater than they are, yet they are not consistent, but transient; there cannot be an entire enjoyment of them, because they grow up and expire every moment, and slip away between our fingers while we are using them. Have we not heard of God's dispersing the greatest empires like "chaff before a whirlwind," or as "smoke out of a chimney" (Hosea 13:3), which, though it appears as a compacted cloud, as if it would choke the sun, is quickly scattered into several parts of the air, and becomes invisible? Nettles have often been heirs to stately palaces, as God threatens Israel (Hosea 9:6). We cannot promise ourselves over night anything the next day. A kingdom with the glory of a throne may be cut off in a morning (Hosea 10:15). The new wine may be taken from the mouth when the vintage is ripe; the devouring locust may snatch away both the hopes of that and the harvest (Joel 1:15); they are, therefore, things which are not, and nothing cannot be a fit object for confidence or affection; "Wilt thou set thy eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves whigs" (Proverbs 23:5). They are not properly beings, because they are not stable, but flitting. They are not, because they may not be the next moment to us what they are this: they are but cisterns, not springs, and broken cisterns, not sound

and stable; no solidity in their substance, nor stability in their duration. What a foolish thing is it then, to prefer a transient felicity, a mere nullity, before an eternal God! What a senseless thing would it be in a man to prefer the map of a kingdom, which the band of a child can tear in pieces, before the kingdom shadowed by it! How much more inexcusable is it to value things, that are so far from being eternal, that they are not so much as dusky resemblances of an eternity. Were the things of the world more glorious than they are, yet they are but as a counterfeit sun in a cloud, which comes short of the true sun in the heavens, both in glory and duration; and to esteem them before God, is inconceivably baser, than if a man should value a party-colored bubble in the air, before a durable rock of diamonds. The comforts of this world are as candles, that will end in a snuff; whereas the felicity that flows from an eternal God, is like the sun, that shines more and more to a perfect day.

[3.] They cannot therefore be fit for a soul, which was made to have an interest in God's eternity. The soul being of a perpetual nature, was made for the fruition of an eternal good; without such a good it can never be perfect. Perfection, that noble thing, riseth not from anything in this world, nor is a title due to a soul while in this world; it is then they are said to be made perfect, when they arrive at that entire conjunction with the eternal God in another life (Hebrews 7:23). The soul cannot be ennobled by an acquaintance with these things, or established by a dependence on them; they cannot confer what a rational nature should desire, or supply it with what it wants. The soul hath a resemblance to God in a post-eternity; why should it be drawn aside by the blandishments of earthly things, to neglect its true establishment, and lackey after the body, which is but the shadow of the soul, and was made to follow it and serve it? But while it busieth itself altogether in the concerns of a perishing body, and seeks satisfaction in things that glide away, it becomes rather a body than soul, descends below its nature, reproacheth that God who hath imprinted upon it an image of his own eternity, and loseth the comfort of the everlastingness of its Creator. How shall the whole world, if our lives were as durable as that, be a happy eternity to us, who have souls that shall survive all the delights of it, which must fry in those flames that shall fire the whole frame of nature at the general conflagration of the world? (2 Peter 3:10.)

[4.] Therefore let us provide for a happy interest in the eternity of God. Man is made for an eternal state. The soul hath such a perfection in its nature, that it is fit for eternity, and cannot display all its operations but in eternity. To an eternity it must go, and live as long as God himself lives. Things of a short duration are not proportioned to a soul made for an eternal continuance; to see that it be a comfortable eternity, is worth all our care. Man is a forecasting creature, and considers not only the present, but the future too, in his provisions for his family; and shall he disgrace his nature in casting off all consideration of a future eternity? Get possession, therefore, of the eternal God. "A portion in this life" is the lot of those who shall be forever miserable (Psalms 17:14). But God, "an everlasting portion," is the lot of them that are designed for happiness. "God is my portion forever" (Psalms 73:26). "Time is short." (1 Corinthians 7:29) The whole time for which God designed this building of the world, is of a little compass; it is a stage erected for rational creatures to act their parts upon for a few thousand years; the greatest part of which time is run out; and then shall time, like a rivulet, fall into the sea of eternity, from whence it sprung. As time is but a slip of eternity, so it will end in eternity; our advantages consist in the present instant; what is past never promised a return, and cannot be fetched back by all our vows. What is future, we cannot promise ourselves to enjoy; we may be snatched away before it comes. Every minute that passeth, speaks the fewer

remaining, till the time of death; and as we are every hour further from our beginning, we are nearer our end. The child born this day grows up, to grow nothing at last. In all ages there is "but a step between us and death," as David said of himself (1 Samuel 20:3). The little time that remains for the devil till the day of judgment, envenoms his wrath; he rageth, because "his time is short" (Revelation 12:12). The little time that remains between this moment and our death, should quicken our diligence to inherit the endless and unchangeable eternity of God.

[5.] Often meditate on the eternity of God. The holiness, power, and eternity of God, are the fundamental articles of all religion, upon which the whole body of it leans; his holiness for conformity to him, his power and eternity for the support of faith and hope. The strong and incessant cries of the four Casts, representing that christian church, are "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). Though his power is intimated, yet the chiefest are his holiness, three times expressed; and his eternity which is repeated, "who lives forever and ever" (Revelation 4:9). This ought to be the constant practice in the church of the Gentiles, which this book chiefly respects; the meditation of his converting grace manifested to Paul, ravished the apostle's heart; but not without the triumphant consideration of his immortality and eternity, which are the principal parts of the doxology: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal., invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17). It could be no great transport to the spirit, to consider him glorious without considering him immortal. The unconfinedness of his perfections in regard of time, presents the soul with matter of the greatest complacency. The happiness of our souls depends upon his other attributes, but the perpetuity of it upon his eternity. Is it a comfort to view his immense wisdom; his overflowing goodness; his tender mercy; his unerring truth? What comfort were there in any of those, if it were a wisdom that could be baffled; a goodness that could be damped; a mercy that can expire; and a truth that can perish with the subject of it? Without eternity, what were all his other perfections, but as glorious, yet withering flowers; a great, but a decaying beauty? By a frequent meditation of God's eternity, we should become more sensible of our own vanity and the world's triflingness; how nothing should ourselves; how nothing would all other things appear in our eyes! how coldly should we desire them! how feebly should we place any trust in them! Should we not think ourselves worthy of contempt to dote upon a perishing glory, to expect support from an arm of flesh, when there is an eternal beauty. to ravish us, an eternal arm to protect us? Asaph, when he considered God "a portion forever," thought nothing of the glories of the earth, or the beauties of the created heavens, worth his appetite or complacency, but "God" (Psalms 73:25-26). Besides, an elevated frame of heart at the consideration of God's eternity, would batter down the strongholds and engines of any temptation: a slight temptation will not know where to find and catch hold of a soul high and hid in a meditation of it; and if it doth, there will not be wanting from hence preservatives to resist and conquer it. What transitory pleasures will not the thoughts of God's eternity stifle? When this work busieth a soul, it is too great to suffer it to descend, to listen to a sleeveless errand from hell or the world. The wanton allurements of the flesh will be put off with indignation. The proffers of the world will be ridiculous when they are cast into the balance with the eternity of God, which sticking in our thoughts, we shall not be so easy a prey for the fowler's gin. Let us, therefore, often meditate upon this, but not in a bare speculation, without engaging our affections, and making every notion of the divine eternity end in a suitable impression upon our hearts. This would be much like the disciples gazing upon the heavens at the ascension of their Master, while they forgot the practice of his orders (Acts 1:11). We may else find

something of the nature of God, and lose ourselves, not only in eternity, but to eternity.

2. And hence the second part of the exhortation is, to something which concerns us with a respect to God.

(1.) If God be eternal, how worthy is he of our choicest affections, and strongest desires of communion with him! Is not everything to be valued according to the greatness of its being! How, then, should we love him, who is not only lovely in his nature, but eternally lovely; having from everlasting all those perfections centered in himself, which appear in time! If everything be lovely, by how much more it partakes of the nature of God, who is the chief good; how much more infinitely lovely is God, who is superior to all other goods, and eternally so! Not a God of a few minutes, months, years, or millions of years; not of the dregs of time or the top of time, but of eternity; above time, inconceivably immense beyond time. The loving him infinitely, perpetually, is an act of homage due to him for his eternal excellency; we may give him the one, since our souls are immortal, though we cannot the other, because they are finite. Since he incloseth in himself all the excellencies of heaven and earth forever, he should have an affection, not only of time in this world, but of eternity in future; and if we did not owe him a love for what we are by him, we owe him a love for what he is in himself; and more for what he is, than for what he is to us. He is more worthy of our affections because he is the eternal God, than because he is our Creator; because he is more excellent in his nature, than in his transient actions; the beams of his goodness to us, are to direct our thoughts and affections to him; but his own eternal excellency ought to be the ground and foundation of our affections to him. And truly, since nothing but God is eternal, nothing but God is worth the loving; and we do but a just right to our love, to pitch it upon that which can always possess us and be possessed by us; upon an object that cannot deceive our affection, and put it out of countenance by a dissolution. And if our happiness consists in being like to God, we should imitate him in loving him as he loves himself, and as long as he loves himself; God cannot do more to himself than love himself; he can make no addition to his essence, nor diminution from it. What should we do less to an eternal Being, than to bestow affections upon him, like his own to himself; since we can find nothing so durable as himself, for which we should love it?

(2.) He only is worthy of our best service. The Ancient of Days is to be serve before all that are younger than himself; our best obedience is due to him as a God of unconfined excellency; everything that is excellent deserves a veneration suitable to its excellency. As God is infinite, he hath right to a boundless service; as he is eternal, he hath right to a perpetual service: as service is a debt of justice upon the account of the excellency of his nature, so a perpetual service is as much a debt of justice upon the account of his eternity. If God be infinite and eternal, he merits an honor and comportment from his creatures, suited to the unlimited perfection of his nature, and the duration of his being. How worthy is the Psalmist's resolution! "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have any being" (Psalms 104:33). It is the use he makes of the endless duration of the glory of God; and will extend to all other service as well as praise. To serve other things, or to serve ourselves, is too vast a service upon that which is nothing. In devoting ourselves to God, we serve him that is, that was, so as that he never began; is to come, so as that he never shall end; by whom all things are what they are; who hath both eternal knowledge to remember our service, and eternal goodness to reward it.

On The Existence of God

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Psalms 14:1.—The fool hath said in his heart There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. This psalm is a description of the deplorable corruption by nature of every son of Adam, since the withering of that common root. Some restrain it to the Gentiles, as a wilderness full of briers and thorns, as not concerning the Jews, the garden of God, planted by his grace, and watered by the dew of heaven. But the apostle, the best interpreter, rectifies this in extending it by name to Jews, as well as Gentiles, (Romans 6:9.) “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin,” and (Romans 6:10-12) cites part of this psalm and other passages of scripture for the further evidence of it, concluding by Jews and Gentiles, every person in the world naturally in this state of corruption. The psalmist first declares the corruption of the faculties of the soul, The fool hath said in his heart; secondly, the streams issuing from thence, they are corrupt, &c.: the first in atheistical principles, the other in unworthy practice; and lays all the evil, tyranny, lust, and persecutions by men, (as if the world were only for their sake) upon the neglects of God, and the atheism cherished in their hearts. The fool, a term in scripture signifying a wicked man, used also by the heathen philosophers to signify a vicious person, ■■■■ as coming from ■■■■ signifies the extinction of life in men, animals, and plants; so the word ■■■■ is taken, a plant that hath lost all that juice that made it lovely and useful. [Note: Isaiah 40:7. ■■■■ ■■■■ “the flower fadeth.” Isaiah 28:1.] So a fool is one that hath lost his wisdom, and right notion of God and divine things which were communicated to man by creation; one dead in sin, yet one not so much void of rational faculties as of grace in those faculties, not one that wants reason, but abuses his reason. In Scripture the word signifies foolish. [Note: Mais ■■■■ and ■■■■■■ put together. Deuteronomy 32:6. “O foolish people and unwise.”]

Said in his heart; that is, he thinks, or he doubts, or he wishes. The thoughts of the heart are in the nature of words to God, though not to men. It is used in the like case of the atheistical person, (Psalms 10:11; Psalms 10:13) “He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.” He doth not form a syllogism, as Calvin speaks, that there is no God: he dares not openly publish it, though he dares secretly think it. He cannot raze out the thoughts of a Deity, though he endeavors to blot those characters of God in his soul. He hath some doubts whether there be a God or no: he wishes there were not any, and sometimes hopes there is none at all. He could not so ascertain himself by convincing arguments to produce to the world, but he tampered with his own heart to bring it to that persuasion, and smothered in himself those notices of a Deity; which is so plain against the light of nature, that such a man may well be called a fool for it.

There is no God [Note: ■■■■ ■■■■■■ “No God.” Muis.] ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ non potestas Domini, Chaldaee. It is not Jehovah, which name signifies the essence of God, as the prime and supreme being; but Eloahia, which name signifies the providence of God, God as a rector and judge. Not that he denies the existence of a Supreme Being, that created the world, but his regarding the

creatures, his government of the world, and consequently his reward of the righteous or punishments of the wicked.

There is a threefold denial of God, [Note: Cocceius.] 1. Quoad existentiam; this is absolute atheism. 2. Quoad Providentiam, or his inspection into, or care of the things of the world, bounding him in the heavens. 3. Quoad naturam, in regard of one or other of the perfections due to his nature. Of the denial of the providence of God most understand this, not excluding the absolute atheist, as Diagoras is reported to be, nor the skeptical atheist, as Protagoras, who doubted whether there were a God. [Note: Not owning him as the Egyptians called, θεον ενκοσμιον. Eugubin in cloc.] Those that deny the providence of God, do in effect deny the being of God; for they strip him of that wisdom, goodness, tenderness, mercy, justice, righteousness, which are the glory of the Deity. And that principle, of a greedy desire to be uncontrolled in their lusts, which induceth men to a denial of Providence, that thereby they might stifle those seeds of fear which infect and embitter their sinful pleasures, may as well lead them to deny that there is any such being as a God. That at one blow, their fears may be dashed all in pieces and dissolved by the removal of the foundation: as men who desire liberty to commit works of darkness, would not have the lights in the house dimmed, but extinguished. What men say against Providence, because they would have no check in their lusts, they may say in their hearts against the existence of God upon the same account; little difference between the dissenting from the one and disowning the other.

They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. He speaks of the atheist in the singular, "the fool;" of the corruption issuing in the life in the plural; intimating that though some few may choke in their hearts the sentiments of God and his providence, and positively deny them, yet there is something of a secret atheism in all, which is the fountain of the evil practices in their lives, not an utter disowning of the being of a God, but a denial or doubting of some of the rights of his nature. When men deny the God of purity, they must needs be polluted in soul and body, and in their actions. When the sense of religion is shaken off, all kinds of wickedness is eagerly rushed into, whereby they become as loathsome to God as putrefied carcases are to men. [Note: Atheism absolute is not in all men's judgments, but practical is in all men's actions. The Apostle in the Romans applying the latter part of it to all mankind, but not the former; as the word translated corrupt signifies.] Not one or two evil actions is the product of such a principle, but the whole scene of a man's life is corrupted and becomes execrable. No man is exempted from some spice of atheism by the depravation of his nature, which the psalmist intimates, "there is none that doeth good:" though there are indelible convictions of the being of a God, that they cannot absolutely deny it; yet there are some atheistical bubbleings in the hearts of men, which evidence themselves in their actions. As the apostle, (Titus 1:16,) "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." Evil works are a dust stirred up by an atheistical breath. He that habituates himself in some sordid can scarcely be said seriously and firmly to believe that there is a God in being; and the apostle doth not say that they know God, but they profess to know him: true knowledge and profession of knowledge are distinct. It intimates also to us, the unreasonableness of atheism in the consequence, when men shut their eyes against the beams of so clear a sun, God revengeth himself upon them for their impiety, by leaving them to their own wills, lets them fall into the deepest sink and dregs of iniquity; and since they doubt of him in their hearts, suffers them above others to deny him in their works, this the apostle

discourseth at large. [Note: Romans 1:24.] The text then is a description of man's corruption.

1. Of his mind. The fool hath said in his heart. No better title than that of a fool is afforded to the atheist.

2. Of the other faculties, 1. In sins of commission, expressed by the loathsomeness (corrupt, abominable), 2. In sins of omission (there is none that doeth good) he lays down the corruption of the mind as the cause, the corruption of the other faculties as the effect.

I. It is a great folly to deny or doubt of the existence or being of God: or, an atheist is a great fool.

II. Practical atheism is natural to man in his corrupt state. It is against nature as constituted by God, but natural, as nature is depraved by man: the absolute disowning of the being of a God is not natural to men, but the contrary is natural; but an inconsideration of God, or misrepresentation of his nature, is natural to man as corrupt.

III. A secret atheism, or a partial atheism, is the spring of all the wicked practices in the world: the disorders of the life spring from the ill dispositions of the heart. For the first, every atheist is a grand fool. If he were not a fool, he would not imagine a thing so contrary to the stream of the universal reason of the world, contrary to the rational dictates of his own soul, and contrary to the testimony of every creature, and link in the chain of creation: if he were not a fool, he would not strip himself of humanity, and degrade himself lower than the most despicable brute. It is a folly; for though God be so inaccessible that we cannot know him perfectly, yet he is so much in the light, that we cannot be totally ignorant of him; as he cannot be comprehended in his essence, he cannot be unknown in his existence; it is as easy by reason to understand that he is, as it is difficult to know what he is. The demonstrations reason furnisheth us with for the existence of God, will be evidences of the atheist's folly. One would think there were little need of spending time in evidencing this truth, since in the principle of it, it seems to be so universally owned, and at the first, proposal and demand, gains the assent of most men.

But, 1. Doth not the growth of atheism among us render this necessary? may it not justly be suspected, that the swarms of atheists are more numerous in our times, than history records to have been in any age, when men will not only say it in their hearts, but publish it with their lips, and boast that they have shaken off those shackles which bind other men's consciences? Doth not the bare-faced debauchery of men evidence such a settled sentiment, or at least a careless belief of the truth, which lies at the root, and sprouts up in such venomous branches in the world? Can men's hearts be free from that principle wherewith their practices are so openly depraved? It is true, the light of nature shines too vigorously for the power of man totally to put it out; yet loathsome actions impair and weaken the actual thoughts and considerations of a Deity, and are like mists that darken the light of the sun, though they cannot extinguish it: their consciences, as a candlestick, must hold it, though their unrighteousness obscure it, (Romans 1:18.) "Who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The engraved characters of the law of nature remain, though they daub them with their muddy lusts to make them illegible: so that since the inconsideration of a Deity is the cause of all the wickedness and extravagances of men; and as Austin saith, the proposition is always true, the fool hath said in his heart, &c. and more evidently true in this age than any, it will not be unnecessary to discourse of the demonstrations of this first principle. The apostles spent little time in urging this truth; it was taken for granted all over the world, and they were generally

devout in the worship of those idols they thought to be gods: that age run from one God to many, and our age is running from one God to none at all.

2. The existence of God is the foundation of all religion. The whole building totters if the foundation be out of course: if we have not deliberate and right notions of it, we shall perform no worship, no service, yield no affection to him. If there be not a God, it is impossible there can be one, for eternity is essential to the notion of a God; so all religion would be vain, and unreasonable to pay homage to that which is not in being, nor can ever be. We must first believe that he is, and that he is what he declares himself to be, before we can seek him, adore him, and devote our affections to him. [Note: Hebrews 11:6.] We cannot pay God a due and regular homage, unless we understand him in his perfections, what he is; and we can pay him no homage at all, unless we believe that he is.

3. It is fit we should know why we believe, that our belief of a God may appear to be upon undeniable evidence, and that we may give a better reason for his existence, than that we have heard our parents and teachers tell us so, and our acquaintance think so. It is as much as to say there is no God, when we know not why we believe there is, and would not consider the arguments for his existence.

4. It is necessary to depress that secret atheism which is in the heart of every man by nature. Though every visible object which offers itself to our sense, presents a deity to our minds, and exhorts us to subscribe to the truth of it; yet there is a root of atheism springing up sometimes in wavering thoughts and foolish imaginations, inordinate actions, and secret wishes. Certain it is, that every man that doth not love God, denies God; now can he that disaffects him, and hath a slavish fear of him, wish his existence, and say to his own heart with any cheerfulness, there is a God, and make it his chief care to persuade himself of it? he would persuade himself there is no God, and stifle the seeds of it in his reason and conscience, that he might have the greatest liberty to entertain the allurements of the flesh. It is necessary to excite men to daily and actual considerations of God and his nature, which would be a bar to much of that wickedness which overflows in the lives of men.

5. Nor is it unuseful to those who effectually believe and love him; [Note: Coccei Sum. Theol. e. 8. § 1.] for those who have had a converse with God, and felt his powerful influences in the secrets of their hearts, to take a prospect of those satisfactory accounts which reason gives of that God they adore and love; to see every creature justify them in their owning of him, and affections to him: indeed the evidences of a God striking upon the conscience of those who resolve to cleave to sin as their chiefest darling, will dash their pleasures with unwelcome mixtures.

I shall further premise this, That the folly of atheism is evidenced by the light of reason. Men that will not listen to Scripture, as having no counterpart of it in their souls, cannot easily deny natural reason, which riseth up on all sides for the justification of this truth. There, is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God, as well as the Scriptures are in declaring the nature of a God; there are outward objects in the world, and common principles in the conscience, whence it may be inferred.

For, 1. God in regard of his existence is not only the discovery of faith, but of reason. God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as

well as in his word. (Romans 1:19-20), "God hath showed it unto them,"—how? [Note: Aquin.] in his works; by the things that are made, it is a discovery to our reason, as shining in the creatures; and an object of our faith as breaking out upon us in the Scriptures: it is an article of our faith, and an article of our reason. Faith supposeth natural knowledge, as grace supposeth nature. Faith indeed is properly of things above reason, purely depending upon revelation. What can be demonstrated by natural light, is not so properly the object of faith; though in regard of the addition of a certainty by revelation it is so. The belief that God is, which the apostle speaks of, [Note: Hebrews 11:6.] is not so much of the bare existence of God, as what God is in relation to them that seek him, viz. a rewarder. The apostle speaks of the faith of Abel, the faith of Enoch, such a faith that pleases God: but the faith of Abel testified in his sacrifice, and the faith of Enoch testified in his walking with God, was not simply a faith of the existence of God. Cain in the time of Abel, other men in the world in the time of Enoch, believed this as well as they: but it was a faith joined with the worship of God, and desires to please him in the way of his own appointment; so that they, believed that God was such as he had declared himself to be in his promise to Adam, such an one as would be as good as his word, and bruise the serpent's head. He that seeks to God according to the mind of God, must believe that he is such a God that will pardon sin, and justify a seeker of him; that he is a God of that ability and will, to justify a sinner in that way he hath appointed for the clearing the holiness of his nature, and vindicating the honor of his law violated by man. No man can seek God or love God, unless he believe him to be thus; and he cannot seek God without a discovery of his own mind how he would be sought. For it is not a seeking God in any way of man's invention, that renders him capable of this desired fruit of a reward. He that believes God as a rewarder, must believe the promise of God concerning the Messiah. Men under the conscience of sin, cannot tell without a divine discovery, whether God will reward, or how he will reward the seekers of him; and therefore cannot act towards him as an object of faith. Would any man seek God merely because he is, or love him because he is, if he did not know that he should be acceptable to him? The bare existence of a thing is not the ground of affection to it, but those qualities of it and our interest in it, which render it amiable and delightful. How can men, whose consciences fly in their faces, seek God or love him, without this knowledge that he is a rewarder? Nature doth not show any way to a sinner, how to reconcile God's provoked justice with his tenderness. The faith the apostle speaks of here is a faith that eyes the reward as an encouragement, and the will of God as the rule of its acting; he doth not speak simply of the existence of God.

I have spoken the more of this place, because the Socinians [Note: Voet. Theol. Natural. cap. 3. § 1. p. 22.] use this to decry any natural knowledge of God, and that the existence of God is only to be known by revelation, so that by that reason any one that live without the Scripture hath no ground to believe the being of a God. The Scripture ascribes a knowledge of God to all nations in the world (Romans 1:19); not only a faculty of knowing, if they had arguments and demonstrations, as an ignorant man in any art hath a faculty to know; but it ascribes an actual knowledge (Romans 1:10) "manifest in them;" (Romans 1:21) "They knew God;" not they might know him; they knew him when they did not care for knowing him. The notices of God are as intelligible to us by reason, as any object in the world is visible; he is written in every letter.

2. We are often in the Scripture sent to take a prospect of the creatures for a discovery of God. The apostles drew arguments from the topics of nature, when they discoursed with those that

owned the Scripture (Romans 1:19), as well as when they treated with those that were ignorant of it, as Acts 14:16-17. And among the philosophers of Athens (Acts 17:27; Acts 17:29), such arguments the Holy Ghost in the apostles thought sufficient to convince men of the existence, unity, spirituality, and patience of God. Such arguments had not been used by them and the prophets from the visible things in the world to silence the Gentiles with whom they dealt, had not this truth, and much more about God, been demonstrable by natural reason: they knew well enough that probable arguments would not satisfy piercing and inquisitive minds. [Note: Ibid.] In Paul's account, the testimony of the creatures was without contradiction. God himself justifies this way of proceeding by his own example, and remits Job to the consideration of the creatures, to spell out something of his divine perfections. [Note: Job 38:39-40, &c. It is but one truth in philosophy and divinity; that which is false in one cannot be true in another; truth, in what appearance soever, doth never contradict itself.] And this is so convincing an argument of the existence of God, that God never vouchsafed any miracle, or put forth any act of omnipotency, besides what was evident in the creatures, for the satisfaction of the curiosity of any atheist, or the evincing of his being, as he hath done for the evidencing those truths which were not written in the book of nature, or for the restoring a decayed worship, or the protection or deliverance of his people. Those miracles in publishing the gospel, indeed, did demonstrate the existence of some supreme power; but they were not seals designedly affixed for that, but for the confirmation of that truth, which was above the ken of purblind reason, and purely the birth of divine revelation. Yet what proves the truth of any spiritual doctrine, proves also in that act the existence of the Divine Author of it. The revelation always implies a revealer, and that which manifests it to be a revelation, manifests also the supreme Revealer of it. By the same light the sun manifests other things to us, it also manifests itself. But what miracles could rationally be supposed to work upon an atheist, who is not drawn to a sense of the truth proclaimed aloud by so many wonders of the creation? Let us now proceed to the demonstration of the atheist's folly.

It is a folly to deny or doubt of a Sovereign Being, incomprehensible in his nature, infinite in his essence and perfections, independent in his operations, who hath given being to the whole frame of sensible and intelligible creatures, and governs them according to their several natures, by an unconceivable wisdom; who fills the heavens with the glory of his majesty, and the earth with the influences of his goodness.

It is a folly inexcusable to renounce, in this case, all appeal to universal consent, and the joint assurances of the creatures.

Reason I. 'Tis a folly to deny or doubt of that which hath been the acknowledged sentiment of all nations, in all places and ages. There is no nation but hath owned some kind of religion, and, therefore, no nation but hath consented in the notion of a Supreme Creator and Governor.

1. This hath been universal. 2. It hath been constant and uninterrupted. 3. Natural and innate.

First, It hath been universally assented to by the judgments and practices of all nations in the world.

1. No nation hath been exempt from it. All histories of former and latter ages have not produced any one nation but fell under the force of this truth. Though they have differed in their religions, they have agreed in this truth; here both heathen, Turk, Jew, and Christian, centre without any

contention. No quarrel was ever commenced upon this score; though about other opinions wars have been sharp, and enmities irreconcilable. The notion of the existence of a Deity was the same in all, Indians as well as Britons, Americans as well as Jews. It hath not been an opinion peculiar to this or that people, to this or that sect of philosophers; but hath been as universal as the reason whereby men are differenced from other creatures, so that some have rather defined man by animal religiosum, than animal rationale. 'Tis so twisted with reason that a man cannot be accounted rational, unless he own an object of religion; therefore he that understands not this, renounceth his humanity when he renounceth a Divinity. No instance can be given of any one people in the world that disclaimed it. It hath been owned by the wise and ignorant, by the learned and stupid, by those who had no other guide but the dimmest light of nature, as well as those whose candles were snuffed by a more polite education, and that without any solemn debate and contention. Though some philosophers have been known to change their opinions in the concerns of nature, yet none can be proved to have absolutely changed their opinion concerning the being of a God. One died for asserting one God; none, in the former ages upon record, hath died for asserting no God. Go to the utmost bounds of America, you may find people without some broken pieces of the law of nature, but not without this signature and stamp upon them, though they wanted commerce with other nations, except as savage as themselves, in whom the light of nature was as it were sunk into the socket, who are but one remove from brutes, who clothe not their bodies, cover not their shame, yet were they as soon known to own a God, as they were known to be a people. They were possessed with the notion of a Supreme Being, the author of the world; had an object of religious adoration; put up prayers to the deity they owned for the good things they wanted, and the diverting the evils they feared. No people so untamed where absolute perfect atheism had gained a footing. No one nation of the world known in the time of the Romans that were without their ceremonies, whereby they signified their devotion to a deity. They had their places of worship, where they made their vows, presented their prayers, offered their sacrifices, and implored the assistance of what they thought to be a god; and in their distresses run immediately, without any deliberation, to their gods: so that the notion of a deity was as inward and settled in them as their own souls, and, indeed, runs in the blood of mankind. The distempers of the understanding cannot utterly deface it; you shall scarce find the most distracted bedlam, in his raving fits, to deny a God, though he may blaspheme, and fancy himself one.

2. Nor doth the idolatry and multiplicity of gods in the world weaken, but confirm this universal consent. Whatsoever unworthy conceits men have had of God in all nations, or whatsoever degrading representations they have made of him, yet they all concur in this, that there is a Supreme Power to be adored. Though one people worshipped the sun, others the fire,—and the Egyptians, gods out of their rivers, gardens, and fields; yet the notion of a Deity existent, who created and governed the world, and conferred daily benefits upon them, was maintained by all, though applied to the stars, and in part to those sordid creatures. All the Dagon of the world establish this truth, and fall down before it. Had not the nations owned the being of a God, they had never offered incense to an idol: had there not been a deep impression of the existence of a Deity, they had never exalted creatures below themselves to the honor of altars: men could not so easily have been deceived by forged deities, if they had not had a notion of a real one. Their fondness to set up others in the place of God, evidenced a natural knowledge that there was One who had a right to be worshipped. If there were not this sentiment of a Deity, no man would ever have made an image of a piece of wood, worshipped it, prayed to it, and said, “Deliver me, for thou

art my God.” [Note: Isaiah 44:17.] They applied a general notion to a particular image. The difference is in the manner, and immediate object of worship, not in the formal ground of worship. The worship sprung from a true principle, though it was not applied to a right object: while they were rational creatures, they could not deface the notion; yet while they were corrupt creatures it was not difficult to apply themselves to a wrong object from a true principle. A blind man knows he hath a way to go as well as one of the clearest sight; but because of his blindness he may miss the way and stumble into a ditch. No man would be imposed upon to take a Bristol stone instead of a diamond, if he did not know that there were such things as diamonds in the world: nor any man spread forth his hands to an idol, if he were altogether without the sense of a Deity. Whether it be a false or a true God men apply to, yet in both, the natural sentiment of a God is evidenced; all their mistakes were grafts inserted in this stock, since they would multiply gods rather than deny a Deity.

How should such a general submission be entered into by all the world, so as to adore things of a base alloy, [Note: Charron de la Sageese, Liv. i. ch. 7. p. 43, 44.] if the force of religion were not such, that in any fashion a man would seek the satisfaction of his natural instinct to some object of worship? This great diversity confirms this consent to be a good argument, for it evidenceth it not to be a cheat, combination or conspiracy to deceive, or a mutual intelligence, but every one finds it in his climate, yea in himself. People would never have given the title of a God to men or brutes had there not been a pre-existing and unquestioned persuasion, that there was such a being;—how else should the notion of a God come into their minds?—the notion that there is a God must be more ancient. [Note: Gassend. Phys. § 1, lib. iv. c. 2. p. 291.]

3. Whatsoever disputes there have been in the world, this of the existence of God was never the subject of contention. All other things have been questioned. What jarrings were there among philosophers about natural things! into how many parties were they split! with what animosities did they maintain their several judgments! but we hear of no solemn controversies about the existence of a Supreme Being: this never met with any considerable contradiction: no nation, that hath but other things to question, would ever suffer this to be disparaged so much as by a public doubt. We find among the heathen contentions about the nature of God and the number of gods, some asserted an innumerable multitude of gods, some armed him to be subject to birth and death, some affirmed the entire world was God; others fancied him to be a circle of a bright fire; others that he was a spirit diffused through the whole world: [Note: Amyrant des Religion, p. 50.] yet they unanimously concurred in this, as the judgment of universal reason, that there was such a sovereign Being: and those that were skeptical in everything else, and asserted that the greatest certainty was that there was nothing certain, professed a certainty in this. The question was not whether there was a First Cause, but what it was. It is much the same thing, as the disputes about the nature and matter of the heavens, the sun and planets, though there be great diversity of judgments, yet all agree that there are heavens, sun, planets; so all the contentions among men about the nature of God, weaken not, but rather confirm, that there is a God, since there was never a public formal debate about his existence. [Note: Gassend. Phys. § 1, lib. iv. c. 2. p. 291.] Those that have been ready to pull out one another’s eyes for their dissent from their judgments, sharply censured one another’s sentiments, envied the births of one another’s wits, always shook hands with an unanimous consent in this; never censured one another for being of this persuasion, never called it into question; as what was never controverted among men professing Christianity,

but acknowledged by all, though contending about other things, has reason to be judged a certain truth belonging to the christian religion; so what was never subjected to any controversy, but acknowledged by the whole world, hath reason to be embraced as a truth without any doubt.

4. This universal consent is not prejudiced by some few dissenters. History doth not reckon twenty professed atheists in all ages in the compass of the whole world: and we have not the name of any one absolute atheist upon record in Scripture; yet it is questioned, whether any of them, noted in history with that infamous name, were downright deniers of the existence of God, but rather because they disparaged the deities commonly worshipped by the nations where they lived, as being of a clearer reason to discern that those qualities, vulgarly attributed to their gods, as lust and luxury, wantonness and quarrels, were unworthy of the nature of a god. [Note: Gassend. Phys. § 1. lib. iv. c. 7. p. 282.] But suppose they were really what they are termed to be, what are they to the multitude of men that have sprung out of the loins of Adam? not so much as one grain of ashes is to all that were ever turned into that form by any fires in your chimneys. And many more were not sufficient to weigh down the contrary consent of the whole world, and bear down an universal impression. Should the laws of a country, agreed universally to by the whole body of the people, be accounted vain, because an hundred men of those millions disapprove of them, when not their reason, but their folly and base interest, persuades them to dislike them and dispute against them? What if some men be blind, shall any conclude from thence that eyes are not natural to men? shall we say that the notion of the existence of God is not natural to men, because a very small number have been of a contrary opinion? shall a man in a dungeon, that never saw the sun, deny that there is a sun, because one or two blind men tell him there is none, when thousands assure him there is. [Note: Gassend. *ibid.* p. 290.] Why should then the exceptions of a few, not one to millions, discredit that which is voted certainly true by the joint consent of the world? Add this, too, that if those that are reported to be atheists had had any considerable reason to step aside from the common persuasion of the whole world, it is a wonder it met not with entertainment by great numbers of those, who, by reason of their notorious wickedness and inward disquiets, might reasonably be thought to wish in their hearts that there were no God. It is strange if there were any reason on their side, that in so long a space of time as hath run out from the creation of the world, there could not be engaged a considerable number to frame a society for the profession of it. It hath died with the person that started it, and vanished as soon as it appeared. To conclude this, is it not folly for any man to deny or doubt of the being of a God, to dissent from all mankind, and stand in contradiction to human nature? What is the general dictate of nature is a certain truth. It is impossible that nature can naturally and universally lie. And therefore those that ascribe all to nature, and set it in the place of God, contradict themselves, if they give not credit to it in that which it universally affirms. A general consent of all nations is to be esteemed as a law of nature. [Note: Cicero.] Nature cannot plant in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity, for then the laws of nature would be destructive to the reason and minds of men. How is it possible, that a falsity should be a persuasion spread through all nations, engraven upon the minds of all men, men of the most towering, and men of the most creeping understanding; that they should consent to it in all places, and in those places where the nations have not had any known commerce with the rest of the known world? a consent not settled by any law of man to constrain people to a belief of it: and indeed it is impossible that any law of man can constrain the belief of the mind. Would not he deservedly be accounted a fool, that should deny that to be gold which hath been tried and examined by a great number of knowing goldsmiths, and hath passed

the test of all their touch-stones? What excess of folly would it be for him to deny it to be true gold, if it had been tried by all that had skill in that metal in all nations in the world!

Secondly, It hath been a constant and uninterrupted consent. It hath been as ancient as the first age of the world; no man is able to mention any time, from the beginning of the world, wherein this notion hath not been universally owned; it is as old as mankind, and hath run along with the course of the sun, nor can the date be fixed lower than that.

1. In all the changes of the world, this hath been maintained. In the overturnings of the government of states, the alteration of modes of worship, this hath stood unshaken. The reasons upon which it was founded were, in all revolutions of time, accounted satisfactory and convincing, nor could absolute atheism in the changes of any laws ever gain the favor of any one body of people to be established by a law. When the honor of the heathen idols was laid in the dust, this suffered no impair. The being of one God was more vigorously owned when the unreasonableness of multiplicity of gods was manifest; and grew taller by the detection of counterfeits. When other parts of the law of nature have been violated by some nations, this hath maintained its standing. The long series of ages hath been so far from blotting it out, that it hath more strongly confirmed it, and maketh further progress in the confirmation of it. Time, which hath eaten out the strength of other things, and blasted mere inventions, hath not been able to consume this. The discovery of all other impostures, never made this by any society of men to be suspected as one. It will not be easy to name any imposture that hath walked perpetually in the world without being discovered, and whipped out by some nation or other. Falsities have never been so universally and constantly owned without public control and question. And since the world hath detected many errors of the former age, and learning been increased, this hath been so far from being dimmed, that it hath shone out clearer with the increase of natural knowledge, and received fresh and more vigorous confirmations.

2. The fears and anxieties in the consciences of men have given men sufficient occasion to root it out, had it been possible for them to do it. If the notion of the existence of God had been possible to have been dashed out of the minds of men, they would have done it rather than have suffered so many troubles in their souls upon the commission of sin; since there did not want wickedness and wit in so many corrupt ages to have attempted it and prospered in it, had it been possible. How comes it therefore to pass, that such a multitude of profligate persons that have been in the world since the fall of man, should not have rooted out this principle, and dispossessed the minds of men of that which gave birth to their tormenting fears? How is it possible that all should agree together in a thing which created fear, and an obligation against the interest of the flesh, if it had been free for men to discharge themselves of it? No man, as far as corrupt nature bears sway in him, is willing to live controlled. The first man would rather be a god himself than under one: [Note: Genesis 3:5] why should men continue this notion in them, which shackled them in their vile inclinations, if it had been in their power utterly to deface it? If it were an imposture, how comes it to pass, that all the wicked ages of the world could never discover that to be a cheat, which kept them in continual alarms? Men wanted not will to shake off such apprehensions; as Adam, so all his posterity are desirous to hide themselves from God upon the commission of sin, [Note: Genesis 3:9.] and by the same reason they would hide God from their souls. What is the reason they could never attain their will and their wish by all their endeavors? Could they possibly have satisfied themselves that there were no God, they had discarded their fears, the disturbers of the

repose of their lives, and been unbridled in their pleasures. The wickedness of the world would never have preserved that which was a perpetual molestation to it, had it been possible to be razed out. But since men under the turmoils and lashes of their own consciences could never bring their hearts to a settled dissent from this truth, it evidenceth, that as it took its birth at the beginning of the world, it cannot expire, no not in the ashes of it, nor in anything but the reduction of the soul to that nothing from whence it sprung. This conception is so perpetual, that the nature of the soul must be dissolved before it be rooted out, nor can it be extinct while the soul endures.

3. Let it be considered also by us that own the Scripture, that the devil deems it impossible to root out this sentiment. It seems to be so perpetually fixed, that the devil did not think fit to tempt man to the denial of the existence of a Deity, but persuaded him to believe he might ascend to that dignity and become a god himself; Genesis 3:1, "Hath God said?" and he there owns him (ver. 5), "Ye shall become as gods." He owns God in the question he asks the woman, and persuades our first parents to be gods themselves. And in all stories, both ancient and modern, the devil was never able to tincture men's minds with a professed denial of the Deity, which would have opened a door to a world of more wickedness than hath been acted, and took away the bar to the breaking out of that evil, which is naturally in the hearts of men, to the greater prejudice of human societies. He wanted not malice to raze out all the notions of God, but power: he knew it was impossible to effect it, and therefore in vain to attempt it. He set up himself in several places of the ignorant world as a god, but never was able to overthrow the opinion of the being of a God. The impressions of a Deity were so strong as not to be struck out by the malice and power of hell.

What a folly is it then in any to contradict or doubt of this truth, which all the periods of time have not been able to wear out; which all the wars and quarrels of men with their own consciences have not been able to destroy; which ignorance and debauchery, its two greatest enemies, cannot weaken; which all the falsehoods and errors which have reigned in one or other part of the world, have not been able to banish; which lives in the consents of men in spite of all their wishes to the contrary, and hath grown stronger, and shone clearer, by the improvements of natural reason!

Thirdly, Natural and innate; which pleads strongly for the perpetuity of it. It is natural, though some think it not a principle writ in the heart of man; [Note: Pink. Ephesians 6:1-24, p. 10, 11.] it is so natural that every man is born with a restless instinct to be of some kind of religion or other, which implies some object of religion. The impression of a Deity is as common as reason, and of the same age with reason. [Note: King on Jonah, p. 16.] It is a relic of knowledge after the fall of Adam, like fire under ashes, which sparkles as soon as ever the heap of ashes is opened. A notion sealed up in the soul of every man; [Note: Amyrant des Religions, p. 6–9.] else how could those people who were unknown to one another, separate by seas and mounts, differing in various customs and manner of living, had no mutual intelligence one with another, light upon this as a common sentiment, if they had not been guided by one uniform reason in all their minds, by one nature common to them all: though their climates be different, their tempers and constitutions various, their imaginations in some things as distant from one another as heaven is from earth, the ceremonies of their religion not all of the same kind; yet wherever you find human nature, you find this settled persuasion. So that the notion of a God seems to be twisted with the nature of man, and is the first natural branch of common reason, or upon either the first inspection of a man into himself and his own state and constitution, or upon the first sight of any external visible object. Nature within man, and nature without man, agree upon the first meeting together to form this

sentiment, that there is a God. It is as natural as anything we call a common principle. One thing which is called a common principle and natural is, that the whole is greater than the parts. If this be not born with us, yet the exercise of reason essential to man settles it as a certain maxim; upon the dividing anything into several parts, he finds every part less than when they were altogether. By the same exercise of reason, we cannot cast our eyes upon anything in the world, or exercise our understandings upon ourselves, but we must presently imagine, there was some cause of those things, some cause of myself and my own being; so that this truth is as natural to man as anything he can call most natural or a common principle.

It must be confessed by all, that there is a law of nature writ upon the hearts of men, which will direct them to commendable actions, if they will attend to the writing in their own consciences. This law cannot be considered without the notice of a Lawgiver. For it is but a natural and obvious conclusion, that some superior hand engrafted those principles in man, since he finds something in him twitching him upon the pursuit of uncomely actions, though his heart be mightily inclined to them; man knows he never planted this principle of reluctancy in his own soul; he can never be the cause of that which he cannot be friends with. If he were the cause of it, why doth he not rid himself of it? No man would endure a thing that doth frequently molest and disquiet him, if he could cashier it. It is therefore sown in man by some hand more powerful than man, which riseth so high, and is rooted so strong, that all the force that man can use cannot pull it up. If therefore this principle be natural in man, and the law of nature be natural, the notion of a Lawgiver must be as natural, as the notion of a printer, or that there is a printer, is obvious upon the sight of a stamp impressed. After this the multitude of effects in the world step in to strengthen this beam of natural light, and the direct conclusion from thence is, that that power which made those outward objects, implanted this inward principle. This is sown in us, born with us, and sprouts up with our growth, or as one with; it is like letters carved upon the bark of a young plant, which grows up together with us, and the longer it grows the letters are more legible. [Note: Charleton.] This is the ground of this universal consent, and why it may well be termed natural. This will more evidently appear to be natural, because,

1. This consent could not be by mere tradition. 2. Nor by any mutual intelligence of governors to keep people in awe, which are two things the atheist pleads; the first hath no strong foundation, and that other is as absurd and foolish as it is wicked and abominable. 3. Nor was it fear first introduced it.

First, It could not be by mere tradition. Many things indeed are entertained by posterity which their ancestors delivered to them, and that out of a common reverence to their forefathers, and an opinion that they had a better prospect of things than the increase of the corruption of succeeding ages would permit them to have. But if this be a tradition handed from our ancestors, they also must receive it from theirs; we must then ascend to the first man, we cannot else escape a confounding ourselves with running into infinite. Was it then the only tradition he left to them? Is it not probable he acquainted them with other things in conjunction with this, the nature of God, the way to worship him, the manner of the world's existence, his own state? We may reasonably suppose him to have a good stock of knowledge; what is become of it? It cannot be supposed, that the first man should acquaint his posterity with an object of worship, and leave them ignorant of a mode of worship and of the end of worship. We find in Scripture his immediate posterity did the first in sacrifices, and without doubt they were not ignorant of the other: how come men to be so

uncertain in all other things, and so confident of this, if it were only a tradition? How did debates and irreconcilable questions start up concerning other things, and this remain untouched, but by a small number? Whatsoever tradition the first man left besides this, is lost, and no way recoverable, but by the revelation God hath made in his Word. How comes it to pass this of a God is longer lived than all the rest which we may suppose man left to his immediate descendants? How come men to retain the one and forget the other? What was the reason this survived the ruin of the rest, and surmounted the uncertainties into which the other sunk? Was it likely it should be handed down alone without other attendants on it at first? Why did it not expire among the Americans, who have lost the account of their own descent, and the stock from whence they sprung, and cannot reckon above eight hundred or a thousand years at most? Why was not the manner of the worship of a God transmitted as well as that of his existence? How came men to dissent in their opinions concerning his nature, whether he was corporeal or incorporeal, finite or infinite, omnipresent or limited? Why were not men as negligent to transmit this of his existence as that of his nature? No reason can be rendered for the security of this above the other, but that there is so clear a tincture of a Deity upon the minds of men, such traces and shadows of him in the creatures, such indelible instincts within, and invincible arguments without to keep up this universal consent. The characters are so deep that they cannot possibly be rased out, which would have been one time or other, in one nation or other, had it depended only upon tradition, since one age shakes off frequently the sentiments of the former. I cannot think of above one which may be called a tradition, which indeed was kept up among all nations, viz. sacrifices, which could not be natural but instituted. What ground could they have in nature, to imagine that the blood of beasts could expiate and wash off the guilt and stains of a rational creature? Yet they had in all places (but among the Jews, and some of them only) lost the knowledge of the reason and end of the institution, which the Scripture acquaints us was to typify and signify the redemption by the Promised Seed. This tradition hath been superannuated and laid aside in most parts of the world, while this notion of the existence of a God hath stood firm. But suppose it were a tradition, was it likely to be a mere intention and figment of the first man? Had there been no reason for it, this posterity would soon have found out the weakness of its foundation. What advantage had it been to him to transmit so great a falsehood to kindle the fears or raise the hopes of his posterity, if there were no God? It cannot be supposed he should be so void of that natural affection men in all ages bear to their descendants, as so grossly to deceive them, and be so contrary to the simplicity and plainness which appears in all things nearest their original.

Secondly, Neither was it by any mutual intelligence of governors among themselves to keep people in subjection to them. If it were a political design at first, it seems it met with the general nature of mankind very ready to give it entertainment.

1. It is unaccountable how this should come to pass. It must be either by a joint assembly of them, or a mutual correspondence. If by an assembly, who were the persons? Let the name of any one be mentioned. When was the time? Where was the place of this appearance? By what authority did they meet together? Who made the first motion, and first started this great principle of policy? By what means could they assemble from such distant parts of the world? Human histories are utterly silent in it, and the Scripture, the ancientest history, gives an account of the attempt of Babel, but not a word of any sign of this nature. What mutual correspondence could such have, whose interests are for the most part different, and their designs contrary to one another? How

could they, who were divided by such vast seas, have this mutual converse? How could those who were different in their customs and manners, agree so unanimously together in one thing to gull the people? If there had been such a correspondence between the governors of all nations, what is the reason some nations should be unknown to the world till of late times? How could the business be so secretly managed, as not to take vent, and issue in a discovery to the world? Can reason suppose so many in a joint conspiracy, and no man's conscience in his life under sharp afflictions, or on his death-bed, when conscience is most awakened, constrain him to reveal openly the cheat that beguiled the world? How came they to be so unanimous in this notion, and to differ in their rites almost in every country? why could they not agree in one mode of worship throughout all the world, as well as in this universal notion? If there were not a mutual intelligence, it cannot be conceived how in every nation such a state-engineer should rise up with the same trick to keep people in awe. What is the reason we cannot find any law in any one nation to constrain men to the belief of the existence of a God, since politic stratagems have been often fortified by laws? Besides, such men make use of principles received to effect their contrivances, and are not so impolitic as to build designs upon principles that have no foundation in nature. Some heathen lawgivers have pretended a converse with their gods, to make their laws be received by the people with a greater veneration, and fix with stronger obligation the observance and perpetuity of them; but this was not the introducing a new principle, but the supposition of an old received notion, that there was a God, and an application of that principle to their present design. The pretence had been vain had not the notion of a God been ingrafted. Politicians are so little possessed with a reverence of God, that the first mighty one in the Scripture (which may reasonably gain with the atheist the credit of the ancientest history in the world), is represented without any fear of God. [Note: Genesis 10:9. "Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord."] An invader and oppressor of his neighbors, and reputed the introducer of a new worship, and being the first that built cities after the flood (as Cain was the first builder of them before the flood), built also idolatry with them, and erected a new worship, and was so far from strengthening that notion the people had of God, that he endeavored to corrupt it. The first idolatry in common histories being noted to proceed from that part of the world; the ancientest idol being at Babylon, and supposed to be first invented by this person: whence, by the way, perhaps Rome is in the Revelations called Babylon, with respect to that similitude of their saint-worship, to the idolatry first set up in that place. [Note: Or if we understand it as some think, that he defended his invasions under a pretext of the preserving religion, it assures us that there was a notion of an object of religion before, since no religion can be without an object of worship.] 'Tis evident politicians have often changed the worship of a nation, but it is not upon record that the first thoughts of an object of worship ever entered into the minds of people by any trick of theirs. But to return to the present argument, the being of a God is owned by some nations that have scarce any form of policy among them. 'Tis as wonderful how any wit should hit upon such an invention, as it is absurd to ascribe it to any human device, if there were not prevailing arguments to constrain the consent. Besides, how is it possible they should deceive themselves? What is the reason the greatest politicians have their fears of a Deity upon their unjust practices, as well as other men they intend to befool? How many of them have had forlorn consciences upon a death-bed, upon the consideration of a God to answer an account to in another world? Is it credible they should be frightened by that wherewith they knew they beguiled others? No man satisfying his pleasures would impose such a deceit upon himself to render and make himself more miserable than the creatures

he hath dominion over.

2. It is unaccountable how it should endure so long a time; that this policy should be so fortunate as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise an empire over them, and meet with such an universal success. If the notion of a God were a state-engine, and introduced by some political grandees, for the ease of government, and preserving people with more facility in order, how comes it to pass the first broachers of it were never upon record? There is scarce a false opinion vented in the world, but may, as a stream, be traced to the first head and fountain. The inventors of particular forms of worship are known; and the reasons why they prescribed them known; but what grandee was the author of this? Who can pitch a time and person that sprung up this notion? If any be so insolent as to impose a cheat, he can hardly be supposed to be so successful as to deceive the whole world for many ages: impostures pass not free through the whole world without examination and discovery: falsities have not been universally and constantly owned without control and question. If a cheat imposeth upon some towns and countries, he will be found out by the more piercing inquiries of other places; and it is not easy to name any imposture that hath walked so long in its disguise in the world, without being unmasked and whipped out by some nation or other. If this had been a mere trick, there would have been as much craft in some to discern it as there was in others to contrive it. No man can be imagined so wise in a kingdom, but others may be found as wise as himself: and it is not conceivable, that so many clear-sighted men in all ages should be ignorant of it, and not endeavour to free the world from so great a falsity. It cannot be found that a trick of state should always beguile men of the most piercing insights, as well as the most credulous: that a few crafty men should befooled all the wise men in the world, and the world lie in a belief of it and never like to be freed from it. [Note: Fotherby de Theomastix, p. 64.] What is the reason the succeeding politicians never knew this stratagem; since /their maxims are usually handed to their successors. [Note: And there is not a Richlieu but leaves his axioms to a Mazarine.] This persuasion of the existence of God, owes not itself to any imposture or subtlety of men: if it had not been agreeable to common nature and reason, it could not so long have borne sway. The imposed yoke would have been cast off by multitudes; men would not have charged themselves with that which was attended with consequences displeasing to the flesh, and hindered them from a full swing of their rebellious passions; such a shackle would have mouldered of itself, or been broke by the extravagances human nature is inclined unto. The wickedness of men, without question, hath prompted them to endeavour to unmask it, if it were a cosenage, but could never yet be so successful as to free the world from a persuasion, or their own consciences from the tincture of the existence of a Deity. It must be therefore of an ancients date than the craft of statesmen, and descend into the world with the first appearance of human nature. Time, which hath rectified many errors, improves this notion, makes it shock down its roots deeper and spread its branches larger. It must be a natural truth that shines clear by the detection of those errors that have befooled the world, and the wit of man is never able to name any human author that first insinuated it into the beliefs of men.

Thirdly, Nor was it fear first introduced it. Fear is the consequent of wickedness. As man was not created with any inherent sin, so he was not created with any terrifying fears; the one had been against the holiness of the Creator, the other against his goodness: fear did not make this opinion, but the opinion of the being of a Deity was the cause of this fear, after his sense of angering the Deity by his wickedness. The object of fear is before the act of fear; there could not be an act of

fear exercised about the Deity, till it was believed to be existent, and not only so, but offended: for God as existent only, is not the object of fear or love; it is not the existence of a thing that excites any of those affections, but the relation a thing bears to us in particular. God is good, and so the object of love, as well as just, and thereby the object of fear. He was as much called Love, [Note: Ερως.] and Mens, or Mind, in regard of his goodness and understanding, by the heathens, as much as by any other name. Neither of those names were proper to insinuate fear; neither was fear the first principle that made the heathens worship a God; they offered sacrifices out of gratitude to some, as well as to other, out of fear; the fear of evils in the world, and the hopes of relief and assistance from their gods, and not a terrifying fear of God, was the principal spring of their worship. When calamities from the hands of men, or judgments by the influences of Heaven were upon them, they implored that which they thought a deity; it was not their fear of him, but a hope in his goodness, and persuasion of remedy from him, for the averting those evils that rendered them adorers of a God: if they had not had pre-existing notions of his being and goodness, they would never have made addresses to him, or so frequently sought to that they only apprehended as a terrifying object. [Note: Gassend. Phys. § 1. lib. iv. c 2. p. 291, 292.] When you hear men calling upon God in a time of affrighting thunder, you cannot imagine that the fear of thunder did first introduce the notion of a God, but implies, that it was before apprehended by them, or stamped upon them, though their fear doth at present actuate that belief, and engage them in a present exercise of piety; and whereas the Scripture saith, “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,” [Note: Proverbs 9:10. Psalms 111:10.] or of all religion; it is not understood of a distracted and terrifying fear, but a reverential fear of him, because of his holiness; or a worship of him, a submission to him, and sincere seeking of him.

Well, then, is it not a folly for an atheist to deny that which is the reason and common sentiment of the whole world; to strip himself of humanity, run counter to his own conscience, prefer a private before an universal judgment, give the lie to his own nature and reason, assert things impossible to be proved, nay, impossible to be acted, forge irrationalities for the support of his fancy against the common persuasion of the world, and against himself, and so much of God as is manifest in him and every man? [Note: Romans 1:19.]

Reason II. It is a folly to deny that which all creatures or all things in the world manifest [Note: Jupiter est quodcunque vides, &c.] Let us view this in Scripture, since we acknowledge it, and after consider the arguments from natural reason. The apostle resolves it (Romans 1:19-20), “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” They know, or might know, by the things that were made, the eternity and power of God; their sense might take a circuit about every object, and their minds collect the being and something of the perfections of the Deity. The first discourse of the mind upon the sight of a delicate piece of workmanship, is the conclusion of the being of an artificer, and the admiration of his skill and industry. The apostle doth not say, the invisible things of God are believed, or they have an opinion of them, but they are seen, and clearly seen. They are like crystal glasses, which give a clear representation of the existence of a Deity, like that mirror, reported to be in a temple in Arcadia, which represented to the spectator, not his own face, but the image of that deity which he worshipped. The whole world is like a looking-glass, which, whole and entire, represents the image of God, and every broken piece of it, every little shred of a creature doth the like; not only

the great ones, elephants and the leviathan, but ants, flies, worms, whose bodies rather than names we know: the greater cattle and the creeping things (Genesis 1:24); not naming there any intermediate creature, to direct us to view him in the smaller letters, as well as the greater characters of the world. His name is "glorious," and his attributes are excellent "in all the earth" [Note: Psalms 8:1.] in every creature, as the glory of the sun is in every beam and smaller flash; he is seen in every insect, in every spire of grass. The voice of the Creator is in the most contemptible creature. The apostle adds, that they are so clearly seen, that men are inexcusable if they have not some knowledge of God by them; if they might not certainly know them, they might have some excuse: so that his existence is not only probably, but demonstratively proved from the things of the world. [Note: Banes in Aquin. Par. 2. Qu. 2. Artic. 2. p. 78. Colossians 2:1-23.]

Especially the heavens declare him, which God "stretches out like a curtain," [Note: Psalms 104:2] or, as some render the word, a "skin," whereby is signified, that heaven is as an open book, which was anciently made of the skins of beasts, that by the knowledge of them we may be taught the knowledge of God. Where Scripture was not revealed, the world served for a witness of a God; whatever arguments the Scripture uses to prove it, are drawn from nature (though, indeed, it doth not so much prove as suppose the existence of a God); but what arguments it uses are from the creatures, and particularly the heavens, which are the public preachers of this doctrine. The breath of God sounds to all the world through those organ-pipes. His being is visible in their existence, his wisdom in their frame, his power in their motion, his goodness in their usefulness. They have a voice, and their voice is as intelligible as any common language. [Note: "For their voice goeth to the end of the earth," Psalms 19:1-2.] And those are so plain heralds of a Deity, that the heathen mistook them for deities, and gave them a particular adoration, which was due to that God they declared. The first idolatry seems to be of those heavenly bodies, which began probably in the time of Nimrod. In Job's time it is certain they admired the glory of the sun, and the brightness of the moon, not without kissing their hands, a sign of adoration. [Note: Job 31:26-27.] It is evident a man may as well doubt whether there be a sun, when he sees his beams gilding the earth, as doubt whether there be a God, when he sees his works spread in the world. The things in the world declare the existence of a God. 1. In their production. 2. Harmony. 3. Preservation. 4. Answering their several ends.

First, In their production. The declaration of the existence of God was the chief end for which they were created, that the notion of a supreme and independent Eternal Being might easier incur into the active understanding of man from the objects of sense, dispersed in every corner of the world, that he might pay a homage and devotion to the Lord of all (Isaiah 40:12-13; Isaiah 40:18-19, &c.), "Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth, it is he that sits upon the circle of the heaven," &c. How could this great heap be brought into being, unless a God had framed it? Every plant, every atom, as well as every star, at the first meeting, whispers this in our ears, "I have a Creator; I am witness to a Deity." Who ever saw statues or pictures but presently thinks of a statuary and limner? Who beholds garments, ships, or houses, but understands there was a weaver, a carpenter, an architect? [Note: Philo. ex Petav. Theolo. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 1, p. 4, somewhat changed.] Who can cast his eyes about the world, but must think of that power that formed it, and that the goodness which appears in the formation of it hath a perfect residence in some being? "Those things that are good must flow from something perfectly good: that which is chief in any kind is the cause of all of that kind. Fire, which is most hot, is the cause of all things

which are hot. There is some being, therefore, which is the cause of all that perfection which is in the creature; and this is God.” (Aquin. 1 qu. 2. Artic. 3.) All things that are demonstrate something from whence they are. All things have a contracted perfection, and what they have is communicated to them. Perfections are parcelled out among several creatures. Anything that is imperfect cannot exist of itself. We are led, therefore, by them to consider a fountain which bubbles up in all perfection; a hand which distributes those several degrees of being and perfection to what we see. We see that which is imperfect; our minds conclude something perfect to exist before it. Our eye sees the streams, but our understanding riseth to the head; as the eye sees the shadow, but the understanding informs us whether it be the shadow of a man or of a beast.

God hath given us sense to behold the objects in the world, and understanding to reason his existence from them. The understanding cannot conceive a thing to have made itself; that is against all reason. As they are made, they speak out a Maker, [Note: Romans 1:20.] and cannot be a trick of chance, since they are made with such an immense wisdom, that is too big for the grasp of all human understanding. Those that doubt whether the existence of God be an implanted principle, yet agree that the effects in the world lead to a supreme and universal cause; and that if we have not the knowledge of it rooted in our natures, yet we have it by discourse; since, by all masters of reason, a processus in infinitum must be accounted impossible in subordinate causes. This will appear in several things.

I. The world and every creature had a beginning. The Scripture ascertains this to us. [Note: Genesis 1:1-31. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” &c. Hebrews 11:3.] David, who was not the first man, gives the praise to God of his being “curiously wrought,” &c. (Psalms 139:14-15.) God gave being to men, and plants, and beasts, before they gave being to one another. He gives being to them now as the Fountain of all being, though the several modes of being are from the several natures of second causes.

It is true, indeed, we are ascertained that they were made by the true God; that they were made by his word; that they were made of nothing; and not only this lower world wherein we live, but, according to the Jewish division, the world of men, the world of stars, and the world of spirits and souls. We do not waver in it, or doubt of it, as the heathen did in their disputes; we know they are the workmanship of the true God, of that God we adore, not of false gods; “by his word,” without any instrument or engine, as in earthly structures; “of things which do not appear,” without any pre-existent matter, as all artificial works of men are framed. Yet the proof of the beginning of the world is affirmed with good reason; and if it had a beginning, it had also some higher cause than itself: every effect hath a cause. The world was not eternal, or from eternity. [Note: Daille 20. Sermon. Psalms 102:26. p. 13, 14.] The matter of the world cannot be eternal. Matter cannot subsist without form, nor put on any form without the action of some cause. This cause must be in being before it acted; that which is not cannot act. The cause of the world must necessarily exist before any matter was endued with any form; that, therefore, cannot be eternal before which another did subsist; if it were from eternity, it would not be subject to mutation. If the whole was from eternity, why not also the parts; what makes the changes so visible, then, if eternity would exempt it from mutability?

1. Time cannot be infinite, and, therefore, the world not eternal. All motion hath its beginning; if it were otherwise, we must say the number of heavenly revolutions of days and nights, which are past to this instant, is actually infinite, which cannot be in nature. [Note: Daille, ut supra.] If it were so, it must needs be granted that a part is equal to the whole; because infinite being equal to infinite, the number of days past, in all ages to the beginning of one year being infinite (as they would be, supposing the world had no beginning) would by consequence be equal to the number of days which shall pass to the end of the next; whereas that number of days past is indeed but a part; and so a part would be equal to the whole.

2. Generations of men, animals, and plants, could not be from eternity. If any man say the world was from eternity, then there must be propagations of living creatures in the same manner as are at this day; for without this the world could not consist. [Note: Petar. Theo. Dogmat. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 2. p. 15.] What we see now done must have been prepetually done, if it be done by a necessity of nature; but we see nothing now that doth arise but by a mutual propagation from another. If the world were eternal, therefore, it must be so in all eternity. Take any particular species. Suppose a man, if men were from eternity; then there were perpetual generations—some were born into the world, and some died. Now the natural condition of generation is, that a man doth not generate a man, nor a sheep a lamb, as soon as ever itself is brought into the world; but get strength and vigor by degrees, and must arrive to a certain stated age before they can produce the like; for whilst any thing is little and below the due age, it cannot increase its kind. Men, therefore, and other creatures, did propagate their kind by the same law, not as soon as ever they were born, but in the interval of some time; and children grew up by degrees in the mother's womb till they were fit to be brought forth. If this be so, then there could not be an eternal succession of propagating; for there is no eternal continuation of time. Time is always to be conceived as having one part before another; but that perpetuity of nativities is always after some time, wherein it could note for the weakness of age. If no man, then, can conceive a propagation from eternity, there must be then a beginning of generation in time, and, consequently, the creatures were made in time.

“If the world were eternal, it must have been in the same posture as it is now, in a state of generation and corruption; and so corruption must have been as eternal as generation, and then things that do generate and corrupt must have eternally been and eternally not have been: there must be some first way to set generation on work.” [Note: Wolseley, on Atheism, p. 47.] We must lose ourselves in our conceptions; we cannot conceive a father before a child, as well as we cannot conceive a child before a father: and reason is quite bewildered, and cannot return into a right way of conception, till it conceive one first of every kind: one first man, one first animal, one first plant, from whence others do proceed. The argument is unanswerable, and the wisest atheist (if any atheist can be called wise) cannot unloose the knot. We must come to something that is first in every kind, and this first must have a cause, not of the same kind, but infinite and independent; otherwise men run into inconceivable labyrinths and contradictions.

Man, the noblest creature upon earth, hath a beginning. No man in the world but was some years ago no man. If every man we see had a beginning, then the first man had also a beginning, then the world had a beginning: for the earth, which was made for the use of man, had wanted that end for which it was made. We must pitch upon some one man that was unborn; that first man must either be eternal; that cannot be, for he that hath no beginning hath no end; or must spring out of the earth as plants and trees do; [Note: Petav. ut supra, p. 10.] that cannot be; why should not the

earth produce men to this day, as it doth plants and trees? He was therefore made; and whatsoever is made hath some cause that made it, which is God. If the world were uncreated, it were then immutable, but every creature upon the earth is in a continual flux, always changing: [Note: Damason.] if things be mutable, they were created; if created, they were made by some author: whatsoever hath a beginning must have a maker; if the world hath a beginning, there was then a time when it was not; it must have some cause to produce it. That which makes is before that which is made, and this is God.

II. Which will appear further in this proposition, No creature can make itself; the world could not make itself.

If every man had a beginning, every man then was once nothing; he could not then make himself, because nothing cannot be the cause of something; 'The Lord he is God; he hath made us, and not we ourselves.' (Psalms 100:3.) Whatsoever begun in time was not; and when it was nothing, it had nothing, and could do nothing; and therefore could never give to itself, nor to any other, to be, or to be able to do: for then it gave what it had not, and did what it could not. Since reason must acknowledge a first of every kind, a first man, &c., it must acknowledge him created and made, not by himself: [Note: Petav. Theo. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 2. p.14.] why have not other men since risen up by themselves, not by chance? why hath not chance produced the like in that long time the world hath stood? If we never knew anything give being to itself, how can we imagine anything ever could? If the chiefest part of this lower world cannot, nor any part of it hath been known to give being to itself, then the whole cannot be supposed to give any being to itself: man did not form himself; his body is not from himself; it would then have the power of moving itself, but that it is not able to live or act without the presence of the soul. Whilst the soul is present, the body moves; when that is absent, the body lies as a senseless log, not having the least action or motion. His soul could not form itself. Can that which cannot form the least mote, the least grain of dust, form itself a nobler substance than any upon the earth? This will be evident to every man's reason, if we consider,

1. Nothing can act before it be. The first man was not, and therefore could not make himself to be. For anything to produce itself is to act; if it acted before it was, it was then something and nothing at the same time; it then had a being before it had a being; it acted when it brought itself into being. How could it act without a being, without it was? So that if it were the cause of itself, it must be before itself as well as after itself; it was before it was; it was as a cause before it was as an effect. Action always supposeth a principle from whence it flows; as nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation: there must be, therefore, something of real existence to give a being to those things that are, and every cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would be, if anything made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made. Who will say the house is before the carpenter, or the picture before the limner? The world as a creator must be before itself as a creature.

2. That which doth not understand itself and order itself could not make itself. If the first man fully understood his own nature, the excellency of his own soul, the manner of its operations, why was not that understanding conveyed to his posterity? Are not many of them found, who understand their own nature, almost as little as a beast understands itself; or a rose understands its own sweetness; or a tulip its own colors? The Scripture, indeed, gives us an account how this came

about, viz. by the deplorable rebellion of man, whereby death was brought upon them (a spiritual death, which includes ignorance, as well as an inability to spiritual action. [Note: Genesis 2:17; Psalms 49:8.]) Thus he fell from his honor, and became like the beasts that perish, and not retaining God in his knowledge, retained not himself in his own knowledge. But what reply can an atheist make to it, who acknowledges no higher cause than nature? If the soul made itself, how comes it to be so muddy, so wanting in its knowledge of itself, and of other things? If the soul made its own understanding, whence did the defect arise? If some first principle was settled by the first man in himself, where was the stop that he did not implant all in his own mind, and, consequently in the minds of all his descendants? Our souls know little of themselves, little of the world, are every day upon new inquiries, have little satisfaction in themselves, meet with many an invincible rub in their way, and when they seem to come to some resolution in some cases, stagger again, and, like a stone rolled up to the top of the hill, quickly find themselves again at the foot. How come they to be so purblind in truth? so short of that which they judge true goodness? How comes it to pass they cannot order their own rebellious affections, and suffer the reins they have to hold over their affections to be taken out of their hands by the unruly fancy and flesh? This no man that denies the being of a God, and the revelation in Scripture, can give an account of. Blessed be God that we have the Scripture, which gives us an account of those things, that all the wit of men could never inform us of; and that when they are discovered and known by revelation, they appear not contrary to reason!

3. If the first man made himself, how came he to limit himself? If he gave himself being, why did he not give himself all the perfections and ornaments of being? Nothing that made itself could sit down contented with a little, but would have had as much power to give itself that which is less, as to give itself being, when it was nothing. The excellences it wanted had not been more difficult to gain than the other which it possessed, as belonging to its nature. If the first man had been independent upon another, and had his perfection from himself, he might have acquired that perfection he wanted as well as have bestowed upon himself that perfection he had; and then there would have been no bounds set to him. He would have been omniscient and immutable. He might have given himself what he would; if he had had the setting his own bounds, he would have set none at all; for what should restrain him? No man now wants ambition to be what he is not; and if the first man had not been determined by another, but had given himself being, he would not have remained in that determinate being, no more than a toad would remain a toad, if it had power to make itself a man, and that power it would have had, if it had given itself a being. Whatsoever gives itself being, would give itself all degrees of being, and so would have no imperfection, because every imperfection is a want of some degree of being. He that could give himself matter and life, might give himself everything. [Note: Therefore the heathens called God τὸ ἄνυσ, the only Being. Other things were not beings, because they had not all degrees of being.] The giving of life is an act of omnipotence; and what is omnipotent in one thing may be in all. Besides, if the first man had made himself, he would have conveyed himself to all his posterity in the same manner; every man would have had all the perfections of the first man, as every creature hath the perfections of the same kind, from whence it naturally issues; all are desirous to communicate what they can to their posterity. Communicative goodness belongs to every nature. Every plant propagates its kind in the same perfection it hath itself; and the nearer anything comes to a rational nature, the greater affection it hath to that which descends from it; therefore this affection belongs to a rational nature much more. The first man, therefore, if he had had power to give

himself being, and, consequently, all perfection, he would have had as much power to convey it down to his posterity; no impediment could have stopped his way; then all souls proceeding from that first man would have been equally intellectual. What should hinder them from inheriting the same perfections? Whence should they have divers qualifications and differences in their understandings? No man then would have been subject to those weaknesses, doubtings, and unsatisfied desires of knowledge and perfection. But being all souls are not alike, it is certain they depend upon some other cause for the communication of that excellency they have. If the perfections of man be so contracted and kept within certain bounds, it is certain that they were not in his own power, and so were not from himself. Whatsoever hath a determinate being must be limited by some superior cause. There is, therefore, some superior power, that hath thus determined the creature by set bounds and distinct measures, and hath assigned to every one its proper nature, that it should not be greater or less than it is; who hath said of every one as of the waves of the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" [Note: Job 38:11.] and this is God. Man could not have reserved any perfection from his posterity; for since he doth propagate not by choice, but nature, he could no more have kept back any perfection from them, than he could, as he pleased, have given any perfection belonging to his nature to them.

4. That which hath power to give itself being, cannot want power to preserve that being. Preservation is not more difficult than creation. If the first man made himself, why did he not preserve himself? He is not now among the living in the world. How came he to be so feeble as to sink into the grave? Why did he not inspire himself with new heat and moisture, and fill his languishing limbs and declining body with new strength? Why did he not chase away diseases and death at the first approach? What creature can find the dust of the first man? All his posterity traverse the stage and retire again; in a short space their age departs, and is removed from them 'as a shepherd's tent,' and is 'cut off with pining sickness.' [Note: Isaiah 38:12.] 'The life of man is as a wind, and like a cloud that is consumed and vanishes away. The eye that sees him shall see him no more; he returns not to his house, neither doth his place know him any more.' [Note: Job 7:6-9.] The Scripture gives us the reason of this, and lays it upon the score of sin against his Creator, which no man without revelation can give any satisfactory account of. Had the first man made himself, he had been sufficient for himself, able to support himself without the assistance of any creature. He would not have needed animals and plants, and other helps to nourish and refresh him, nor medicines to cure him. He could not be beholden to other things for his support, which he is certain he never made for himself. His own nature would have continued that vigor, which once he had conferred upon himself. He would not have needed the heat and light of the sun; he would have wanted nothing sufficient for himself in himself; he needed not have sought without himself for his own preservation and comfort. What depends upon another is not of itself; and what depends upon things inferior to itself is less of itself. Since nothing can subsist of itself, since we see those things upon which man depends for his nourishment and subsistence, growing and decaying, starting into the world and retiring from it, as well as man himself; some preserving cause must be concluded, upon which all depends.

5. If the first man did produce himself, why did he not produce himself before?

It hath been already proved, that he had a beginning, and could not be from eternity. Why then did he not make himself before? Not because he would not. For having no being, he could have no will; he could neither be willing nor not willing. If he could not then, how could he afterwards? If it

were in his own power, he could have done it, he would have done it; if it were not in his own power, then it was in the power of some other cause, and that is God. How came he by that power to produce himself? If the power of producing himself were communicated by another, then man could not be the cause of himself. That is the cause of it which communicated that power to it. But if the power of being was in and from himself and in no other, nor communicated to him, man would always have been in act, and always have existed; no hindrance can be conceived. For that which had the power of being in itself was invincible by anything that should stand in the way of its own being.

We may conclude from hence, the excellency of the Scripture; that it is a word not to be refused credit. It gives us the most rational account of things in the 1James 2:1-26 d of Genesis, which nothing in the world else is able to do.

III. No creature could make the world. No creature can create another. If it creates of nothing, it is then omnipotent and so not a creature. If it makes something of matter unfit for that which is produced out of it, then the inquiry will be, Who was the cause of the matter? and so we must arrive to some uncreated being, the cause of all. Whatsoever gives being to any other must be the highest being, and must possess all the perfections of that which it gives being to. What visible creature is there which possesses the perfections of the whole world? If therefore an invisible creature made the world, the same inquiries will return whence that creature had its being? for he could not make himself. If any creature did create the world, he must do it by the strength and virtue of another, which first gave him being, and this is God. For whatsoever hath its existence and virtue of acting from another, is not God. If it hath its virtue from another, it is then a second cause, and so supposeth a first cause. It must have some cause of itself, or be eternally existent. If eternally existent, it is not a second cause, but God; if not eternally existent, we must come to something at length which was the cause of it, or else be bewildered without being able to give an account of anything. We must come at last to an infinite, eternal, independent Being, that was the first cause of this structure and fabric wherein we and all creatures dwell. The Scripture proclaims this aloud, "I am the Lord and there is none else: I form the light, and I create darkness." [Note: Isaiah 45:6-7; Deuteronomy 4:35.] Man, the noblest creature, cannot of himself make a man, the chiefest part of the world. If our parents only, without a superior power, made our bodies or souls, they would know the frame of them; as he that makes a lock knows the wards of it; he that makes any curious piece of arras, knows how he sets the various colors together, and how many threads went to each division in the web; he that makes a watch, having the idea of the whole work in his mind, knows the motions of it, and the reason of those motions. But both parents and children are equally ignorant of the nature of their souls and bodies, and of the reason of their motions. God only, that had the supreme hand in forming us, in whose "book all our members are written, which in continuance were fashioned," [Note: Psalms 139:16.] knows what we all are ignorant of. If man hath in an ordinary course of generation his being chiefly from a higher cause than his parents, the world then certainly had its being from some infinitely wise intelligent Being, which is God. If it were, as some fancy, made by an assembly of atoms, there must be some infinite intelligent cause that made them, some cause that separated them, some cause that mingled them together for the piling up so comely a structure as the world. It is the most absurd thing to think they should meet together by hazard, and rank themselves in that order we see, without a higher and a wise agent. So that no creature could make the world. For supposing any creature was formed before this

visible world, and might have a hand in disposing things, yet he must have a cause of himself, and must act by the virtue and strength of another, and this is God.

IV. From hence it follows, that there is a first cause of things, which we call God. There must be something supreme in the order of nature, something which is greater than all, which hath nothing beyond it or above it, otherwise we must run in infinitum. We see not a river, but we conclude a fountain; a watch, but we conclude an artificer. As all number begins from unity, so all the multitude of things in the world begins from some unity, oneness as the principle of it. It is natural to arise from a view of those things, to the conception of a nature more perfect than any. As from heat mixed with cold, and light mixed with darkness, men conceive and arise in their understandings to an intense heat and a pure light; and from a corporeal or bodily substance joined with an incorporeal, (as man is an earthly body and a spiritual soul, we ascend to a conception of a substance pure incorporeal and spiritual: so from a multitude of things in the world, reason leads us to one choice being above all. And since in all natures in the world, we still find a superior nature; the nature of one beast, above the nature of another; the nature of man above the nature of beasts; and some invisible nature, the worker of strange effects in the air and earth, which cannot be ascribed to any visible cause, we must suppose some nature above all those, of unconceivable perfection.

Every skeptic, one that doubts whether there be anything real or no in the world, that counts everything an appearance, must necessarily own a first cause. [Note: Coccei sum. Theol. c. 8. § 33, &c.] They cannot reasonably doubt, but that there is some first cause which makes the things appear so to them. They cannot be the cause of their own appearance. For as nothing can have a being from itself, so nothing can appear by itself and its own force. Nothing can be and not be at the same time. But that which is not and yet seems to be; if it be the cause why it seems to be what it is not, it may be said to be and not to be. But certainly such persons must think themselves to exist. If they do not, they cannot think; and if they do exist, they must have some cause of that existence. So that which way soever we turn ourselves, we must in reason own a first cause of the world. Well then might the Psalmist term an atheist a fool, that disowns a God against his own reason. Without owning a God as the first cause of the world, no man can give any tolerable or satisfactory account of the world to his own reason. And this first cause,

1. Must necessarily exist. It is necessary that He by whom all things are, should be before all things, and nothing before him. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 2. p. 10, 11.] And if nothing be before him, he comes not from any other; and then he always was, and without beginning. He is from himself; not that he once was not, but because he hath not his existence from another, and therefore of necessity he did exist from all eternity. Nothing can make itself, or bring itself into being; therefore there must be some being which hath no cause, that depends upon no other, never was produced by any other, but was what he is from eternity, and cannot be otherwise; and is not what he is by will, but nature, necessarily existing, and always existing without any capacity or possibility ever not to be.

2. Must be infinitely perfect. Since man knows he is an imperfect being, he must suppose the perfections he wants are seated in some other being which hath limited him, and upon which he depends. Whatsoever we conceive of excellency or perfection, must be in God. For we can conceive no perfection but what God hath given us a power to conceive. And he that gave us a

power to conceive a transcendent perfection above whatever we saw or heard of, hath much more in himself; else he could not give us such a conception.

Secondly, As the production of the world, so the harmony of all the parts of it declare the being and wisdom of a God. Without the acknowledging God, the atheist can give no account of those things. The multitude, elegancy, variety, and beauty of all things are steps whereby to ascend to one fountain and original of them. Is it not a folly to deny the being of a wise agent, who sparkles in the beauty and motions of the heavens, rides upon the wings of the wind, and is writ upon the flowers and fruits of plants? As the cause is known by the effects, so the wisdom of the cause is known by the elegancy of the work, the proportion of the parts to one another. Who can imagine the world could be rashly made, and without consultation, which, in every part of it, is so artificially framed? No work of art springs up of its own accord. [Note: Philo. Judae. Petav. Theo. Dog. Tom. 1. lib. i. c. 1. p. 9.] The world is framed by an excellent art, and, therefore, made by some skilful artist. As we hear not a melodious instrument, but we conclude there is a musician that touches it, as well as some skilful hand that framed and disposed it for those lessons; and no man that hears the pleasant sound of a lute but will fix his thoughts, not upon the instrument itself, but upon the skill of the artist that made it, and the art of the musician that strikes it, though he should not see the first, when he saw the lute, nor see the other, when he hears the harmony: so a rational creature confines not his thoughts to his sense when he sees the sun in its glory, and the moon walking in its brightness; but riseth up in a contemplation and admiration of that Infinite Spirit that composed, and filled them with such sweetness. This appears,

1. In the linking contrary qualities together. All things are compounded of the elements. Those are endued with contrary qualities, dryness and moisture, heat and cold. These would always be contending with and infesting one another's rights, till the contest ended in the destruction of one or both. Where fire is predominant, it would suck up the water; where water is prevalent, it would quench the fire. The heat would wholly expel the cold, or the cold overpower the heat, yet we see them chained and linked one within another in every body upon the earth, and rendering mutual offices for the benefit of that body wherein they are seated, and all conspiring together in their particular quarrels for the public interest of the body. How could those contraries, that of themselves observe no order, that are always preying upon one another, jointly accord together of themselves, for one common end, if they were not linked in a common band, and reduced to that order by some incomprehensible wisdom and power, which keeps a hand upon them, orders their motions and directs their events, and makes them friendly pass into one another's natures? Confusion had been the result of the discord and diversity of their natures; no composition could have been of those conflicting qualities for the frame of any body, nor any harmony arose from so many jarring strings, if they had not been reduced into concord by one that is supreme Lord over them, and knows how to dispose their varieties and enmities for the public good. If a man should see a large city or country, consisting of great multitudes of men, of different tempers, full of frauds, and factions, and animosities in their natures against one another, yet living together in good order and peace, without oppressing and invading one another, and joining together for the public good, he would presently conclude there were some excellent governor, who tempered them by his wisdom, and reserved the public peace, though he had never yet beheld him with his eye. [Note: Athanasius Petav. Tbeol. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 1. p. 4, 5.] It is as necessary to conclude a God, who moderates the contrarieties in the world, as to conclude a wise prince who overrules

the contrary dispositions in a state, making every one to keep his own bounds and confines. Things that are contrary to one another subsist in an admirable order.

2. In the subserviency of one thing to another. All the members of living creatures are curiously fitted for the service of one another, destined to a particular end, and endued with a virtue to attain that end, and so distinctly placed, that one is no hindrance to the other in its operations. [Note: Gassend. Physic § 1. lib. iv. c. 2. p. 315.] Is not this more admirable than to be the work of chance, which is incapable to settle such an order, and fix particular and general ends, causing an exact correspondency of all the parts with one another, and every part to conspire together for one common end? One thing is fitted for another. The eye is fitted for the sun, and the sun fitted for the eye. Several sorts of food are fitted for several creatures, and those creatures fitted with organs for the partaking that food.

(1.) Subserviency of heavenly bodies. The sun, the heart of the world, is not for itself, but for the good of the world, as the heart of man is for the good of the body. [Note: Lessius.] How conveniently is the sun placed, at a distance from the earth, and the upper heavens, to enlighten the stars above, and enliven the earth below! If it were either higher or lower, one part would want its influences. It is not in the higher parts of the heavens; the earth, then, which lives and fructifies by its influence would have been exposed to a perpetual winter and chillness, unable to have produced anything for the sustenance of man or beast. If seated lower, the earth had been parched up, the world made uninhabitable, and long since had been consumed to ashes by the strength of its heat. Consider the motion, as well as the situation of the sun. Had it stood still, one part of the world had been cherished by its beams, and the other left in a desolate widowhood, in a disconsolate darkness. Besides, the earth would have had no shelter from its perpendicular beams striking perpetually, and without any remission, upon it. The same inconveniences would have followed upon its fixedness as upon its too great nearness. By a constant day, the beauty of the stars had been obscured, the knowledge of their motions been prevented, and a considerable part of the glorious wisdom of the Creator, in those choice “works of his finders,” [Note: Psalms 8:3.] had been veiled from our eyes. It moves in a fixed line, visits all parts of the earth, scatters in the day its refreshing blessings in every creek of the earth, and removes the mask from the other beauties of heaven in the night, which sparkle out to the glory of the Creator. It spreads its light, warms the earth, cherisheth the seeds, excites the spirit in the earth, and brings fruit to maturity. View also the air, the vast, extent between heaven and earth, which serves for a water-course, a cistern for water, to bedew the face of the sun-burnt earth, to satisfy the desolate ground, and to cause the ‘bud of the tender herb to spring forth.’ [Note: Job 38:25; Job 38:27.] Could chance appoint the clouds of the air to interpose as fans between the scorching heat of the sun, and the faint bodies of the creatures? Can that be the ‘father of the rain, or beget the drops of dew?’ [Note: Job 38:28.] Could anything so blind settle those ordinances of heaven for the preservation of creatures on the earth? Can this either bring or stay the bottles of heaven, when the ‘dust grows into hardness, and the clouds cleave fast together?’ [Note: Job 38:37-38.]

(2.) Subserviency of the lower world, the earth, and sea, which was created to be inhabited, (Isaiah 45:18.) The sea affords water to the rivers, the rivers, like so many veins, are spread through the whole body of the earth, to refresh and enable it to bring forth fruit for the sustenance of man and beast, (Psalms 104:10-11.) “He sends the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills; they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. He causes

the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth.” (Psalms 104:14) The trees are provided for shades against the extremity of heat, a refuge for the panting beasts, an “habitation for birds,” wherein to make their nests (Psalms 104:17), and a basket for their provision. How are the valleys and mountains of the earth disposed for the pleasure and profit of man! Every year are the fields covered with harvests for the nourishing the creatures; no part is baren, but beneficial to man. The mountains that are not clothed with grass for his food, are set with stones to make him an habitation; they have their peculiar services of metals and minerals, for the conveniency and comfort, and benefit of man. Things which are not fit for his food, are medicines for his cure, under some painful sickness. Where the earth brings not forth corn, it brings forth roots for the service of other creatures. Wood abounds more in those countries where the cold is stronger than in others. Can this be the result of chance, or not rather of an Infinite Wisdom? Consider the usefulness of the sea, for the supply of rivers to refresh the earth: “Which go up by the mountains and down by the valleys into the place God hath founded for them” (Psalms 104:8): a store-house for fish, for the nourishment of other creatures, a shop of medicines for cure, and pearls for ornament: the band that ties remote nations together, by giving opportunity of passage to, and commerce with, one another. How should that natural inclination of the sea to cover the earth, submit to this subserviency to the creatures? Who hath pounded in this fluid mass of water in certain limits, and confined it to its own channel, for the accommodation of such creatures, who, by its common law, can only be upon the earth? Naturally the earth was covered with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. “Who set a bound that they might not pass over,” [Note: Psalms 104:6; Psalms 104:9.] that they return not again to cover the earth? Was it blind chance or an Infinite Power, that “shut up the sea with doors, and made thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and said, Hitherto shall thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?” [Note: Job 38:8-9; Job 38:11.] All things are so ordered, that they are not propter se, but propter aliud. What advantage accrues to the sun by its unwearied rolling about the world? Doth it increase the perfection of its nature by all its circuits? No; but it serves the inferior world, it impregnates things by its heat. Not the most abject thing but hath its end and use. There is a straight connection: the earth could not bring forth fruit without the heavens; the heavens could not water the earth without vapors from it.

(3.) All this subserviency of creatures centres in man. Other creatures are served by those things, as well as ourselves, and they are provided for their nourishment and refreshment, as well as ours; [Note: Amiralde de Trinitate, pp. 13, 18.] yet, both they, and all creatures meet in man, as lines in their centres. Things that have no life or sense, are made for those that have both life and sense; and those that have life and sense, are made for those that are endued with reason. When the Psalmist admiringly considers the heavens, moon and stars, he intimates man to be the end for which they were created (Psalms 8:3-4): “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” He expresseth more particularly the dominion that man hath “over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea” (Psalms 8:6-8); and concludes from thence, the “excellency of God’s name in all the earth.” All things in the world, one way or other, centre in an usefulness for man; some to feed him, some to clothe him, some to delight him, others to instruct him, some to exercise his wit, and others his strength. Since man did not make them, he did not also order them for his own use. If they conspire to serve him who never made them, they direct man to acknowledge another, who is the joint Creator both of the lord and the servants under his dominion; and, therefore, as the inferior natures are ordered by an invisible

hand for the good of man, so the nature of man is, by the same hand, ordered to acknowledge the existence and the glory of the Creator of him. This visible order man knows he did not constitute; he did not settle those creatures in subserviency to himself; they were placed in that order before he had any acquaintance with them, or existence of himself; which is a question God puts to Job, to consider of (Job 38:4): "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." All is ordered for man's use; the heavens answer to the earth, as a roof to a floor, both composing a delightful habitation for man; vapors ascend from the earth, and the heaven concocts them, and returns them back in welcome showers for the supplying of the earth. [Note: Jeremiah 10:13.] The light of the sun descends to beautify the earth, and employs its heat to midwife its fruits, and this for the good of the community, whereof man is the head; and though all creatures have distinct natures, and must act for particular ends, according to the law of their creation, yet there is a joint combination for the good of the whole, as the common end; just as all the rivers in the world, from what part soever they come, whether north or south, fall into the sea, for the supply of that mass of waters, which loudly proclaims some infinitely wise nature, who made those things in so exact an harmony. "As in a clock, the hammer which strikes the bell leads us to the next wheel, that to another, the little wheel to a greater, whence it derives its motion, this at last to the spring, which acquaints us that there was some artist that framed them in this subordination to one another for this orderly motion." [Note: Morn. de Verit. c. 1. p. 7.]

(4.) This order or subserviency is regular and uniform; everything is determined to its particular nature. [Note: Amirant.] The sun and moon day and night, months and years, determine the seasons, never are defective in coming back to their station and place; they wander not from their roads, shock not against one another, nor hinder one another in the functions assigned them. From a small grain or seed, a tree springs, with body, root, bark, leaves, fruit of the same shape, figure, smell, taste; that there should be as many parts in one, as in all of the same kind, and no more; and that in the womb of a sensitive creature should be formed one of the same kind, with all the due members, and no more; and the creature that produceth it knows not how it is formed, or how it is perfected. If we say this is nature, this nature is an intelligent being; if not, how can it direct all causes to such uniform ends? if it be intelligent, this nature must be the same we call God, "who ordered every herb to yield seed, and every fruit tree to yield fruit after its kind, and also every beast, and every creeping thing after its kind." (Genesis 1:11-12; Genesis 1:24.) And everything is determined to its particular season; the sap riseth from the root at its appointed time, enlivening and clothing the branches with a new garment at such a time of the sun's returning, not wholly hindered by any accidental coldness of the weather, it being often colder at its return, than it was at the sun's departure. All things have their seasons of flourishing, budding, blossoming, bringing forth fruit; they ripen in their seasons, cast their leaves at the same time, throw off their old clothes, and in the spring appear with new garments, but still in the same fashion. The winds and the rain have their seasons, and seem to be administered by laws for the profit of man. [Note: Coccei. sum. Theol. c. 8. § 77.] No satisfactory cause of those things can be ascribed to the earth, the sea, or the air, or stars. "Can any understand the spreading of his clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?" (Job 38:29.) The natural reason of those things cannot be demonstrated, without recourse to an infinite and intelligent being; nothing can be rendered capable of the direction of those things but a God. This regularity in plants and animals is in all nations. The heavens have the same motion in all parts of the world; all men have the same law of nature in their mind; all creatures are stamped with the same law of creation. In all parts the same creatures serve for the

same use; and though there be different creatures in India and Europe, yet they have the same subordination, the same subserviency to one another, and ultimately to man; which shows that there is a God, and but one God, who tunes all those different strings to the same notes in all places. Is it nature merely conducts these natural causes in due measure to their proper effects, without interfering with one another? Can mere nature be the cause of those musical proportions of time? You may as well conceive a lute to sound its own strings without the hand of an artist; a city well governed without a governor; an army keep its stations without a general, as imagine so exact an order without an orderer. Would any man, when he hears a clock strike, by fit intervals, the hour of the day, imagine this regularity in it without the direction of one that had understanding to manage it? He would not only regard the motion of the clock, but commend the diligence of the clockkeeper.

(5.) This order and subserviency is constant. Children change the customs and manners of their fathers; magistrates change the laws they have received from their ancestors, and enact new ones in their room: but in the world all things consist as they were created at the beginning; the law of nature in the creatures hath met with no change. Who can behold the sun rising in the morning, the moon shining in the night, increasing and decreasing in its due spaces, the stars in their regular motions night after night, for all ages, and yet deny a President over them? [Note: Petav. ex Athanas. Theol. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 1. § 4.] And this motion of the heavenly bodies, being contrary to the nature of other creatures, who move in order to rest, must be from some higher cause. But those, ever since the settling in their places, have been perpetually rounding the world. What nature, but one powerful and intelligent, could give that perpetual motion to the sun, [Note: Whether it be the sun or the earth that moves, it is all one. Whence have either of them this constant and uniform motion?] which being bigger than the earth a hundred sixty-six times, runs many thousand miles with a mighty swiftness in the space of an hour, with an unwearied diligence performing its daily task, and, as a strong man, rejoicing to run its race, for above five thousand years together, without intermission, but in the time of Joshua? [Note: Joshua 10:13] It is not nature's sun, but God's sun, which he 'makes to rise upon the just and unjust.' [Note: Matthew 5:45.] So a plant receives its nourishment from the earth, sends forth the juice to every branch, forms a bud which spreads it into a blossom and flower; the leaves of this drop off, and leave a fruit of the same color and taste, every year, which, being ripened by the sun, leaves seeds behind it for the propagation of its like, which contains in the nature of it the same kind of buds, blossoms, fruit, which were before; and being nourished in the womb of the earth, and quickened by the power of the sun, discovers itself at length, in all the progresses and motions which its predecessor did. Thus in all ages, in all places, every year it performs the same task, spins out fruit of the same color, taste, virtue, to refresh the several creatures for which they are provided. This settled state of things comes from that God who laid the "foundations of the earth," that it should "not be removed" forever; [Note: Psalms 104:5.] and set "ordinances for them" to act by a stated law; [Note: Job 38:33.] according to which they move as if they understood themselves to have made a covenant with their Creator. [Note: Jeremiah 33:20.]

3. Add to this union of contrary qualities, and the subserviency of one thing to another, the admirable variety and diversity of things in the world. What variety of metals, living creatures, plants! what variety and distinction in the shape of their leaves, flowers, smell, resulting from them! Who can number up the several sorts of beasts on the earth, birds in the air, fish in the sea? How

various are their motions! Some creep, some go, some fly, some swim; and in all this variety each creature hath organs or members, fitted for their peculiar motion. If you consider the multitude of stars, which shine like jewels in the heavens, their different magnitudes, or the variety of colors in the flowers and tapestry of the earth, you could no more conclude they made themselves, or were made by chance, than you can imagine a piece of arras, with a diversity of figures and colors, either wove itself, or were knit together by hazard.

How delicious is the sap of the vine, when turned into wine, above that of a crab! Both have the same womb of earth to conceive them, both agree in the nature of wood and twigs, as channels to con it into fruit. What is that which makes the one so sweet, the other so sour, or makes that sweet which was a few weeks before unpleasantly sharp? Is it the earth? No: they both have the same soil; the branches may touch each other; the strings of their roots may, under ground, entwine about one another. Is it the sun? both have the same beams. Why is not the taste and color of the one as gratifying as the other? Is it the root? the taste of that is far different from that of the fruit it bears. Why do they not, when they have the same soil, the same sun, and stand near one another, borrow something from one another's natures? No reason can be rendered, but that there is a God of infinite wisdom hath determined this variety, and bound up the nature of each creature within itself. "Everything follows the law of its creation; and it is worthy observation, that the Creator of them hath not given that power to animals, which arise from different species, to propagate the like to themselves; as mules, that arise from different species. No reason can be rendered of this, but the fixed determination of the Creator, that those species which were created by him should not be lost in those mixtures which are contrary to the law of the creation? [Note: Amiral. de Trinitate, p. 21.] This cannot possibly be ascribed to that which is commonly called nature, but unto the God of nature, who will not have his creatures exceed their bounds or come short of them.

Now since among those varieties there are some things better than other, yet all are good in their kind, and partake of goodness, [Note: Genesis 1:31.] there must be something better and more excellent than all those, from whom they derive that goodness, which inheres in their nature and is communicated by them to others: and this excellent Being must inherit, in an eminent way in his own nature, the goodness of all those varieties, since they made not themselves, but were made by another. All that goodness which is scattered in those varieties must be infinitely centered in that nature, which distributed those various perfections to them (Psalms 104:9): "He that planted the ear, shall not he hear; he that formed the eye, shall not he see; he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" The Creator is greater than the creature, and whatsoever is in his effects, is but an impression of some excellency in himself: there is, therefore, some chief fountain of goodness whence all those various goodnesses in the world do flow. From all this it follows, if there be an order, and harmony, there must be an Orderer: one that "made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion" (Jeremiah 10:12). Order being the effect, cannot be the cause of itself: order is the disposition of things to an end, and is not intelligent, but implies an intelligent Orderer; and, therefore, it is as certain that there is a God, as it is certain there is order in the world. Order is an effect of reason and counsel; this reason and counsel must have its residence in some being before this order was fixed: the things ordered are always distinct from that reason and counsel whereby they are ordered, and also after it, as the effect is after the cause. No man begins a piece of work but he hath the model

of it in his own mind: no man builds a house, or makes a watch, but he hath the idea or copy of it in his own head. This beautiful world bespeaks an idea of it, or a model: since there is such a magnificent wisdom in the make of each creature, and the proportion of one creature to another, this model must be before the world, as the pattern is always before the thing that is wrought by it. This, therefore, must be in some intelligent and wise agent, and this is God. Since the reason of those things exceed the reason and all the art of man, who can ascribe them to any inferior cause? Chance it could not be; the motions of chance are not constant, and at set seasons, as the motions of creatures are. That which is by chance is contingent, this is necessary; uniformity can never be the birth of chance. Who can imagine that all the parts of a watch can meet together and put themselves in order and motion by chance? "Nor can it be nature only, which indeed is a disposition of second causes. If nature hath not an understanding, it cannot work such effects. If nature therefore uses counsel to begin a thing, reason to dispose it, art to effect it, virtue to complete it, and power to govern it, why should it be called nature rather than God" [Note: Lactant.] Nothing so sure as that which hath an end to which it tends, hath a cause by which it is ordered to that end. Since therefore all things are ordered in subserviency to the good of man, they are so ordered by Him that made both man and them; and man must acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of his Creator, and act in subserviency to his glory, as other creatures act in subserviency to his good. Sensible objects were not made only to gratify the sense of man, but to hand something to his mind as he is a rational creature: to discover God to him as an object of love and desire to be enjoyed. If this be not the effect of it, the order of the creature, as to such an one, is in vain, and falls short of its true end. [Note: Coecei. sum. Theol. c. 8. § 63, 64.] To conclude this: As when a man comes into a palace, built according to the exactest rule of art, and with an unexceptionable conveniency for the inhabitants, he would acknowledge both the being and skill of the builder; so whosoever shall observe the disposition of all the parts of the world, their connection, comeliness, the variety of seasons, the swarms of different creatures, and the mutual offices they render to one another, cannot conclude less, than that it was contrived by an infinite skill, effected by infinite power, and governed by infinite wisdom. None can imagine a ship to be orderly conducted without a pilot; nor the parts of the world to perform their several functions without a wise guide; considering the members of the body cannot perform theirs, without the active presence of the soul. The atheist, then, is a fool to deny that which every creature in his constitution asserts, and thereby renders himself unable to give a satisfactory account of that constant uniformity in the motions of the creatures.

Thirdly, As the production and harmony, so particular creatures, pursuing and attaining their ends, manifest that there is a God. All particular creatures have natural instincts, which move them for some end. The intending of an end is a property of a rational creature; since the lower creatures cannot challenge that title, they must act by the understanding and direction of another; and since man cannot challenge the honor of inspiring the creatures with such instincts, it must be ascribed to some nature infinitely above any creature in understanding. No creature doth determine itself. Why do the fruits and grain of the earth nourish us, when the earth which instrumentally gives them that fitness, cannot nourish us, but because their several ends are determined by one higher than the world?

1. Several creatures have several natures. How soon will all creatures, as soon as they see the light, move to that whereby they must live, and make use of the natural arms God hath given their

kind, for their defence, before they are grown to any maturity to afford them that defence! The Scripture makes the appetite of infants to their milk a foundation of the divine glory, (Psalms 8:3), "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength" that is, matter of praise and acknowledgment of God, in the natural appetite they have to their milk and their relish of it. All creatures have a natural affection to their young ones; all young ones by a natural instinct, move to, and receive the nourishment that is proper for them; some are their own physicians, as well as their own caterers, and naturally discern what preserves them in life, and what restores them when sick. The swallow flies to its celandine, and the toad hastens to its plantain. Can we behold the spider's nets, or silkworm's web, the bee's closets, or the ant's granaries, without acknowledging a higher being than a creature who hath planted that genius in them? The consideration of the nature of several creatures God commended to Job, (Job 39:1-30, where he discourseth to Job of the natural instincts of the goat, the ostrich, horse, and eagle, &c.) to persuade him to the acknowledgment and admiration of God, and humiliation of himself. The spider, as if it understood the art of weaving, fits its web both for its own habitation, and a net to catch its prey. The bee builds a cell which serves for chambers to reside in, and a repository for its provision. Birds are observed to build their nests with a clammy matter without, for the firmer duration of it, and with a soft moss and down within, for the conveniency and warmth of their young. "The stork knows his appointed time," (Jeremiah 8:7), and the swallows observe the time of their coming; they go an return according to the seasons of the year; this they gain not by consideration, it descends to them with their nature; they neither gain nor increase it by rational deductions. It is not in vain to speak of these. How little do we improve by meditation those objects which daily offer themselves to our view, full of instructions for us! And our Saviour sends his disciples to smell God in the lilies. [Note: Matthew 6:28.] It is observed also, that the creatures offensive to man go single; if they went by troops, they would bring destruction upon man and beast; this is the nature of them, for the preservation of others.

2. They know not their end. They have a law in their natures, but have no rational understanding, either of the end to which they are appointed, or the means fit to attain it; they naturally do what they do, and move by no counsel of their own, but by a law impressed by some higher hand upon their natures. What plant knows why it strikes its root into the earth? doth it understand what storms it is to contest with? Or why it shoots up its branches towards heaven? doth it know it needs the droppings of the clouds to preserve itself, and make it fruitful? These are acts of understanding; the root is downward to preserve its own standing, the branches upward to preserve other creatures; this understanding is not in the creature itself, but originally in another. Thunders and tempests know not why they are sent; yet by the direction of a mighty hand, they are instruments of justice upon a wicked world. Rational creatures that act for some end, and know the end they aim at, yet know not the manner of the natural motion of the members to it. [Note: Coccei. sum. Theolog. c. 8. § 87, &c.] When we intend to look upon a thing, we take no counsel about the natural motion of our eyes, we know not all the principles of their operations, or how that dull matter whereof our bodies are composed, is subject to the order of our minds. We are not of counsel with our stomachs about the concoction of our meat, or the distribution of the nourishing juice to the several parts of the body. [Note: Peirson on the Creed, p. 35.] Neither the mother nor the foetus sit in council how the formation should be made in the womb. We know no more than a plant knows what stature it is of, and what medicinal virtue its fruit hath for the good of man; yet all those natural operations are perfectly directed to their proper end, by an higher wisdom than any

human understanding is able to conceive, since they exceed the ability of an inanimate or fleshly nature, yea, and the wisdom of a man. Do we not often see reasonable creatures acting for one end, and perfecting a higher than what they aimed at or could suspect? When Joseph's brethren sold him for a slave, their end was to be rid of an informer; [Note: Genesis 37:19-28.] but the action issued in preparing him to be the preserver of them and their families. Cyrus's end was to be a conqueror, but the action ended in being the Jews' deliverer (Proverbs 16:9). "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

3. Therefore there is some superior understanding and nature which so acts them. That which acts for an end unknown to itself, depends upon some overruling wisdom that knows that end. Who should direct them in all those ends, but He that bestowed a being upon them for those ends; who knows what is convenient for their life, security and propagation of their natures? [Note: Lessius de Providen. lib. i. p. 652.] An exact knowledge is necessary both of what is agreeable to them, and the means whereby they must attain it, which, since it is not inherent in them, is in that wise God, who puts those instincts into them, and governs them in the exercise of them to such ends. Any man that sees a dart flung, knows it cannot hit the mark without the skill and strength of an archer; or he that sees the hand of a dial pointing to the hours successively, knows that the dial is ignorant of its own end, and is disposed and directed in that motion by another. All creatures ignorant of their own natures, could not universally in the whole kind, and in every climate and country, without any difference in the whole world, tend to a certain end, if some overruling wisdom did not preside over the world and guide them: and if the creatures have a Conductor, they have a Creator; all things are "turned round about by his counsel, that they may do whatsoever he commands them, upon the face of the world in the earth." [Note: Job 37:12.] So that in this respect the folly of atheism appears. Without the owning a God, no account can given of those actions of creatures, that are an imitation of reason. To say the bees, &c. are rational, is to equal them to man: nay, make them his superiors, since they do more by nature than the wisest man can do by art: it is their own counsel whereby they act, or another's; if it be their own, they are reasonable creatures; if by another's, it is not mere nature that is necessary; then other creatures would not be without the same skill, there would be no difference among them. If nature be restrained by another, it hath a superior; if not, it is a free agent; it is an understanding Being that directs them; and then it is something superior to all creatures in the world; and by this, therefore, we may ascend to the acknowledgment of the necessity of a God.

Fourthly. Add to the production and order of the world and the creatures acting for their end, the preservation of them. Nothing can depend upon itself in its preservation, no more than it could in its being. If the order of the world was not fixed by itself, the preservation of that order cannot be continued by itself. Though the matter of the world after creation cannot return to that nothing whence it was fetched, without the power of God that made it, (because the same power is as requisite to reduce a thing to nothing as to raise a thing from nothing,) yet without the actual exerting of a power that made the creatures, they would fall into confusion. Those contesting qualities which are in every part of it, could not have preserved, but would have consumed, and extinguished one another, and reduced the world to that confused chaos, wherein it was before the Spirit moved upon the waters: as contrary parts could not have met together in one form, unless there had been one that had conjoined them; so they could not have kept together after their conjunction unless the same hand had preserved them. Natural contrarieties cannot be

reconciled. It is as great power to keep discords knit, as at first to link them. Who would doubt but that an army made up of several nations and humors, would fall into a civil war and sheathe their swords in one another's bowels, if they were not under the management of some wise general; or a ship dash against the rocks without the skill of a pilot? As the body hath neither life nor motion without the active presence of the soul, which distributes to every part the virtue of acting, sets every one in the exercise of its proper function, and resides in every part; so there is some powerful cause which doth the like in the world, that rules and tempers it. [Note: Gassend. Phys. § 6. lib. iv. c. 2. p. 101.] There is need of the same power and action to preserve a thing, as there was at first to make it. When we consider that we are preserved, and know that we could not preserve ourselves, we must necessarily run to some first cause which doth preserve us. All works of art depend upon nature, and are preserved while they are kept by the force of nature, as a statue depends upon the matter whereof it is made, whether stone or brass; this nature, therefore, must have some superior by whose influx it is preserved. Since, therefore, we see a stable order in the things of the world, that they conspire together for the good and beauty of the universe; that they depend upon one another; there must be some principle upon which they do depend; something to which the first link of the chain is fastened, which himself depends upon no superior, but wholly rests in his own essence and being. It is the title of God to be the "Preserver of man and beast." [Note: Psalms 36:6.] The Psalmist elegantly describeth it, (Psalms 104:24, &c.) "The earth is full of his riches: all wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season. When he opens his hand, he fills them with good; when he hides his face they are troubled; if he take away their breath, they die, and return to dust. He sends forth his Spirit, and they are created, and renews the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever; and the Lord shall rejoice in his works." Upon the consideration of all which, the Psalmist (Psalms 104:34) takes a pleasure in the meditation of God as the cause and manager of all those things; which issues into a joy in God, and a praising of him. And why should not the consideration of the power and wisdom of God in the creatures produce the same effect in the hearts of us, if he be our God? Or, as some render it, "My meditation shall be sweet," or acceptable to him, whereby I find matter of praise in the things of the world, and offer it to the Creator of it.

Reason III. It is a folly to deny that which a man's own nature witnesseth to him. The whole frame of bodies and souls bears the impress of the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator: a body framed with an admirable architecture, a soul endowed with understanding, will, judgment, memory, imagination. Man is the epitome of the world, contains in himself the substance of all natures, and the fulness of the whole universe; not only in regard of the universalness of his knowledge, whereby he comprehends the reasons of many things; but as all the perfections of the several natures of the world are gathered and united in man, for the perfection of his own, in a smaller volume. In his soul he partakes of heaven; in his body of the earth. There is the life of plants, the sense of beasts, and the intellectual nature of angels. "The Lord breathed into his nostril the breath of life, and man," [Note: Genesis 2:7.] &c.: ■■■■, of lives. Not one sort of lives, but several; not only an animal, but a rational life; a soul of a nobler extract and nature, than what was given to other creatures. So that we need not step out of doors, or cast our eyes any further than ourselves, to behold a God. He shines in the capacity of our souls, and the vigor of our members. We must fly from ourselves, and be stripped of our own humanity, before we can put off the notion of a Deity. He that is ignorant of the existence of God, must be possessed of so much folly, as to be ignorant of his own make and frame.

1. In the parts whereof he doth consist, body and soul.

First, Take a prospect of the body. The Psalmist counts it a matter of praise and admiration (Psalms 139:15-16): "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. When I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, in thy book all my members were written." The scheme of man and every member was drawn in his book. All the sinews, veins, arteries, bones, like a piece of embroidery or tapestry, were wrought by God, as it were, with deliberation; like an artificer, that draws out the model of what he is to do in writing, and sets it before him when he begins his work. And, indeed, the fabric of man's body, as well as his soul, is an argument for a Divinity. The artificial structure of it, the elegancy of every part, the proper situation of them, their proportion one to another, the fitness for their several functions, drew from Galen [Note: Lib iii. de Usu. Partium. Petav. Theol. Dog. Tom. I. lib. i. c. 1. p. 6.] (a heathen, and one that had no raised sentiments of a Deity) a confession of the admirable wisdom and power of the Creator, and that none but God could frame it.

1. In the order, fitness, and usefulness of every part. The whole model of the body is grounded upon reason. Every member hath its exact proportion, distinct office, regular motion. Every part hath a particular comeliness, and convenient temperament bestowed upon it, according to its place in the body. The heart is hot, to enliven the whole; the eye clear, to take in objects to present them to the soul. Every member is presented for its peculiar service and action. Some are for sense, some for motion, some for preparing, and others for dispensing nourishment to the several parts: they mutually depend upon and serve one another. What small strings fasten the particular members together, "as the earth, that hangs upon nothing!" [Note: Job 26:7.] Take but one part away, and you either destroy the whole, or stamp upon it some mark of deformity. All are knit together by an admirable symmetry; all orderly perform their functions, as acting by a settled law; none swerving from their rule, but in case of some predominant humor. And none of them, in so great a multitude of parts, stifled in so little a room, or jostling against one another, to hinder their mutual actions; none can be better disposed. And the greatest wisdom of man could not imagine it, till his eyes present them with the sight and connection of one part and member with another.

(1.) The heart. [Note: Theod. de Providen. Orat. 3.] How strongly it is guarded with ribs like a wall, that it might not be easily hurt! It draws blood from the liver, through a channel made for that purpose; rarefies it, and makes it fit to pass through the arteries and veins, and to carry heat and life to every part of the body: and by a perpetual motion, it sucks in the blood, and spouts it out again; which motion depends not upon the command of the soul, but is pure natural.

(2.) The mouth takes in the meat, the teeth grind it for the stomach, the stomach prepares it, nature strains it through the milky veins, the liver refines it, and mints it into blood, separates the purer from the drossy parts, which go to the heart, circuits through the whole body, running through the veins, like rivers through so many channels of the world, for the watering of the several parts; which are framed of a thin skin for the straining the blood through, for the supply of the members of the body, and framed with several valves or doors, for the thrusting the blood forwards to perform its circular motion.

(3.) The brain, fortified by a strong skull, to hinder outward accidents, a tough membrane or skin, to hinder any oppression by the skull; the seat of sense, that which coins the animal spirits, by purifying and refining those which are sent to it, and seems like a curious piece of needlework.

(4.) The ear, framed with windings and turnings, to keep any thing from entering to offend the brain; so disposed as to admit sounds with the greatest safety and delight; filled with an air within, by the motion whereof the sound is transmitted to the brain: [Note: Ecclesiastes 12:4.] as sounds are made in the air by diffusing themselves, as you see circles made in the water by the flinging in a stone. This is the gate of knowledge, whereby we hear the oracles of God, and the instruction of men for arts. It is by this they are exposed to the mind, and the mind of another man framed in our understandings.

(5.) What a curious workmanship is that of the eye, which is in the body, as the sun in the world; set in the head as in a watchtower, having the softest nerves for the receiving the greater multitude of spirits necessary for the act of vision! How is it provided with defence, by the variety of coats to secure and accommodate the little humor and part whereby the vision is made! Made of a round figure, and convex, as most commodious to receive the species of objects shaded by the eyebrows and eyelids; secured by the eyelids, which are its ornament and safety, which refresh it when it is too much dried by heat, hinder too much light from insinuating itself into it to offend it, cleanse it from impurities, by their quick motion preserve it from any invasion, and by contraction confer to the more evident discerning of things. Both the eyes seated in the hollow of the bone for security, yet standing out, that things may be perceived more easily on both sides. And this little member can behold the earth, and in a moment view things as high as heaven.

(6.) The tongue for speech framed like a musical instrument; the teeth serving for variety of sounds; the lungs serving for bellows to blow the organs as it were, to cool the heart, by a continual motion transmitting a pure air to the heart, expelling that which was smoky and superfluous. [Note: Coccei. sum. Theol. c. 8. § 49.] It is by the tongue that communication of truth hath a passage among men; it opens the sense of the mind; there would be no converse and commerce without it. Speech among all nations hath an elegancy and attractive force, mastering the affections of men. Not to speak of other parts, or of the multitude of spirits that act every part; the quick flight of them where there is a necessity of their presence. Solomon (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14.) makes an elegant description of them, in his speech of old age; and Job speaks of this formation of the body (Job 10:9-11), &c. Not the least part of the body is made in vain. The hairs of the head have their use, as well as are an ornament. The whole symmetry of the body is a ravishing object. Every member hath a signature and mark of God and his wisdom. He is visible in the formation of the members, the beauty of the parts, and the vigor of the body. This structure could not be from the body; that only hath a passive power, and cannot act in the absence of the soul. Nor can it be from the soul. How comes it then to be so ignorant of the manner of its formation? The soul knows not the internal parts of its own body, but by information from others, or inspection into other bodies. It knows less of the inward frame of the body than it doth of itself; but he that makes the clock can tell the number and motions of the wheels within, as well as what figures are without. This short discourse is useful to raise our admirations of the wisdom of God, as well as to demonstrate that there is an infinite wise Creator; and the consideration of ourselves every day, and the wisdom of God in our frame, would maintain religion much in the world; since all are so framed that no man can tell any error in the constitution of him. If thus the body of man is fitted for the service of his soul by an infinite God, the body ought to be ordered for the service of this God, and in obedience to him.

2. In the admirable difference of the features of men; which is a great argument that the world was made by a wise Being. This could not be wrought by chance, or be the work of mere nature, since we find never, or very rarely, two persons exactly alike. This distinction is a part of infinite wisdom; otherwise what confusion would be introduced into the world? Without this, parents could not know their children, nor children their parents, nor a brother his sister, nor a subject his magistrate. Without it there had been no comfort of relations, no government, no commerce. Debtors would not have been known from strangers, nor good men from bad. Propriety could not have been preserved, nor justice executed; the innocent might have been apprehended for the nocent; wickedness could not have been stopped by any law. The faces of men are the same for parts, not for features, a dissimilitude in a likeness. Man, like to all the rest in the world, yet unlike to any, and differenced by some mark from all, which is not to be observed in any other species of creatures. This speaks some wise agent which framed man; since, for the preservation of human society and order in the world, this distinction was necessary.

Secondly, As man's own nature witnesseth a God to him in the structure of his body, so also "in the nature of his soul." [Note: Ibid. c. 8. § 50, 51.] We know that we have an understanding in us; a substance we cannot see, but we know it by its operations; as thinking, reasoning, willing, remembering, and as operating about things that are invisible and remote from sense. This must needs be distinct from the body; for that being but dust and earth in its original, hath not the power of reasoning and thinking; for then it would have that power, when the soul were absent, as well as when it is present. Besides, if it had that power of thinking, it could think only of those things which are sensible, and made up of matter, as itself is. This soul hath a greater excellency; it can know itself, rejoice in itself, which other creatures in this world are not capable of. The soul is the greatest glory of this lower world; and, as one saith, "There seems to be no more difference between the soul and an angel, than between a sword in the scabbard and when it is out of the scabbard." [Note: More.]

1. Consider the vastness of its capacity. The understanding can conceive the whole world, and paint in itself the invisible pictures of all things. It is capable of apprehending and discoursing of things superior to its own nature. "It is suited to all objects, as the eye to all colors, or the ear to all sounds." [Note: Culverwell.] How great is the memory, to retain such varieties, such diversities! The will also can accommodate other things to itself. It invents arts for the use of man: prescribes rules for the government of states; ransacks the bowels of nature; makes endless conclusions, and steps in reasoning from one thing to another, for the knowledge of truth. It can contemplate and form notions of things higher than the world.

2. The quickness of its motion. "Nothing is more quick in the whole course of nature. The sun runs through the world in a day; this can do it in a moment. It can, with one flight of fancy, ascend to the battlements of heaven." [Note: Theodoret.] The mists of the air, that hinder the sight of the eye, cannot hinder the flights of the soul; it can pass in a moment from one end of the world to the other, and think of things a thousand miles distant. It can think of some mean thing in the world; and presently, by one cast, in the twinkling of an eye, mount up as high as heaven. As its desires are not bounded by sensual objects, so neither are the motions of it restrained by them. It will break forth with the greatest vigor, and conceive things infinitely above it; though it be in the body, it acts as if it were ashamed to be cloistered in it. This could not be the result of any material cause. Whoever knew mere matter understand, think, will? and what it hath not, it cannot give.

That which is destitute of reason and will, could never confer reason and will. It is not the effect of the body; for the body is fitted with members to be subject to it. It is in part ruled by the activity of the soul, and in part by the counsel of the soul; it is used by the soul, and knows not how it is used. [Note: Coccei. sum. Theolog. c. 8. § 51, 52.] Nor could it be from the parents, since the souls of the children often transcend those of the parents in vivacity, acuteness and comprehensiveness. One man is stupid, and begets a son with a capacious understanding; one is debauched and beastly in morals, and begets a son who, from his infancy, testifies some virtuous inclinations, which sprout forth in delightful fruit with the ripeness of his age. Whence should this difference arise,—a fool begat the wise man, and a debauched the virtuous man? The wisdom of the one could not descend from the foolish soul of the other; nor the virtues of the son, from the deformed and polluted soul of the parent. [Note: I do not dispute whether the soul were generated or no. Suppose the substance of it was generated by the parents, yet those more excellent qualities were not the result of them.] It lies not in the organs of the body: for if the folly of the parent proceeded not from their souls, but the ill disposition of the organs of their bodies, how comes it to pass that the bodies of the children are better organized beyond the goodness of their immediate cause? We must recur to some invisible hand, that makes the difference, who bestows upon one at his pleasure richer qualities than upon another. You can see nothing in the world endowed with some excellent quality, but you must imagine some bountiful hand did enrich it with that dowry. None can be so foolish as to think that a vessel ever enriched itself with that sprightly liquor wherewith it is filled; or that anything worse than the soul should endow it with that knowledge and activity which sparkles in it. Nature could not produce it. That nature is intelligent, or not; if it be not, then it produceth an effect more excellent than itself, inasmuch as an understanding being surmounts a being that hath no understanding. If the supreme cause of the soul be intelligent, why do we not call it God as well as nature? We must arise from hence to the notion of a God; a spiritual nature cannot proceed but from a spirit higher than itself, and of a transcendent perfection above itself. If we believe we have souls, and understand the state of our own faculties, we must be assured that there was some invisible hand which bestowed those faculties, and the riches of them upon us. A man must be ignorant of himself before he can be ignorant of the existence of God. By considering the nature of our souls, we may as well be assured that there is a God, as that there is a sun, by the shining of the beams in at our windows; and, indeed, the soul is a statue and representation of God, as the landscape of a country or a map represents all the parts of it, but in a far less proportion than the country itself is. The soul fills the body, and God the world; the soul sustains the body, and God the world; the soul sees, but is not seen; God sees all things, but is himself invisible. How base are they then that prostitute their souls, an image of God, to base things unexpressibly below their own nature!

3. I might add, the union of soul and body. Man is a kind of compound of angel and beast, of soul and body; if he were only a soul, he were a kind of angel; if only a body, he were another kind of brute. Now that a body as vile and dull as earth, and a soul that can mount up to heaven, and rove about the world, with so quick a motion, should be linked in so strait an acquaintance; that so noble a being as the soul should be inhabitant in such a tabernacle of clay; must be owned to some infinite power that hath so chained it.

Thirdly, Man witnesseth to a God in the operations and reflections of conscience. (Romans 2:15), "Their thoughts are accusing or excusing." An inward comfort attends good actions, and an inward

torment follows bad ones; for there is in every man's conscience fear of punishment and hope of reward; there is, therefore, a sense of some superior judge, which hath the power both of rewarding and punishing. If man were his supreme rule, what need he fear punishment, since no man would inflict any evil or torment on himself; nor can any man be said to reward himself, for all rewards refer to another, to whom the action is pleasing, and is a conferring some good a man had not before; if an action be done by a subject or servant, with hopes of reward, it cannot be imagined that he expects a reward from himself, but from the prince or person whom he eyes in that action, and for whose sake he doth it.

1. There is a law in the minds of men which is a rule of good and evil. There is a notion of good and evil in the consciences of men, which is evident by those laws which are common in all countries, for the preserving human societies, the encouragement of human virtue, and discouragement of vice, what standard should they have for those laws but a common reason? the design of those laws was to keep man within the bounds of goodness for mutual commerce, whence the apostle calls the heathen magistrate a "minister of God for good" (Romans 13:4): and "the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law" (Romans 2:14).

Man in the first instant of the use of reason, finds natural principles within himself; directing and choosing them, he finds a distinction between good and evil; how could this be if there were not some rule in him to try and distinguish good and evil? If there was not such a law and rule in man, he could not sin; for where there is no law there is no transgression. If man were a law to himself, and his own will his law, there could be no such thing as evil; whatsoever he willed, would be good and agreeable to the law, and no action could be accounted sinful; the worst act would be as commendable as the best. Everything at man's appointment would be good or evil. If there were no such law, how should men that are naturally inclined to evil disapprove of that which is unlovely, and approve of that good which they practise not? No man but inwardly thinks well of that which is good, while he neglects it; and thinks ill of that which is evil, while he commits it. Those that are vicious, do praise those that practise the contrary virtues. Those that are evil would seem to be good, and those that are blameworthy yet will rebuke evil in others. This is really to distinguish between good and evil; whence doth this arise, by what rule do we measure this, but by some innate principle? And this is universal, the same in one man as in another, the same in one nation as in another; they are born with every man, and inseparable from his nature (Proverbs 27:19): as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. Common reason supposeth that there is some hand which hath fixed this distinction in man; how could it else be universally impressed? No law can be without a lawgiver: no sparks but must be kindled, by some other. Whence should this law then derive its original? Not from man; he would fain blot it out, and cannot alter it when he pleases. Natural generation never intended it; it is settled therefore by some higher hand, which, as it imprinted it, so it maintains it against the violence of men, who, were it not for this law, would make the world more than it is, an aceldama and field of blood; for had there not been some supreme good, the measure of all other goodness in the world, we could not have had such a thing as good. The Scripture gives us an account that this good was distinguished from evil before man fell, they were objecta scibilia; good was commanded and evil prohibited, and did not depend upon man. From this a man may rationally be instructed that there is a God; for he may thus argue: I find myself naturally obliged to do this thing, and avoid that; I have, therefore, a superior that doth oblige me; I find something within me that directs me to such

actions, contrary to my sensitive appetite; there must be something above me, therefore, that puts this principle into man's nature; if there were no superior, I should be the supreme judge of good and evil; were I the lord of that law which doth oblige me, I should find no contradiction within myself, between reason and appetite.

2. From the transgression of this law of nature, fears do arise in the consciences of men. Have we not known or heard of men struck by so deep a dart, that could not be drawn out by the strength of men, or appeased by the pleasure of the world; and men crying out with horror, upon a death-bed, of their past life, when "their fear hath come as a desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind?" (Proverbs 1:27): and often in some sharp affliction, the dust hath been blown off from men's consciences, which for a while hath obscured the writing of the law. If men stand in awe of punishment, there is then some superior to whom they are accountable; if there were no God, there were no punishment to fear. What reason of any fear, upon the dissolution of the knot between the soul and body, if there were not a God to punish, and the soul remained not in being to be punished? How suddenly will conscience work upon the appearance of an affliction, rouse itself from sleep like an armed man, and fly, in a man's face before he is aware of it! It will "surprise the hypocrites" (Isaiah 38:14): it will bring to mind actions committed long ago, and set them in order before the face, as God's deputy, acting by his authority and omniscience. As God hath not left himself without a witness among the creatures (Acts 14:17), so he hath not left himself without a witness in a man's own breast.

(1.) This operation of conscience hath been universal. No nation hath been any more exempt from it than from reason; not a man but hath one time or other more or less smarted under the sting of it. All over the world conscience hath shot its darts; it hath torn the hearts of princes in the midst of their pleasures; it hath not flattered them whom most men flatter; nor feared to disturb their rest, whom no man dares to provoke. Judges have trembled on a tribunal, when innocents have rejoiced in their condemnation. The iron bars upon Pharaoh's conscience, were at last broke up, and he acknowledged the justice of God in all that he did, (Exodus 9:27): "I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Had they been like childish frights at the apprehension of bugbears, why hath not reason shaken them off? But, on the contrary, the stronger reason grows, the smarter those lashes are; groundless fears had been short-lived, age and judgment would have worn them off, but they grow sharper with the growth of persons. The Scripture informs us they have been of as ancient a date as the revolt of the first man, (Genesis 3:10): "I was afraid," saith Adam, "because I was naked" which was an expectation of the judgment of God. All his posterity inherit his fears, when God expresseth himself in any tokens of his majesty and providence in the world. Every man's conscience testifies that he is unlike what he ought to be, according to that law engraven upon his heart. In some, indeed, conscience may be seared or dimmer; or suppose some men may be devoid of conscience, shall it be denied to be a thing belonging to the nature of man? Some men have not their eyes, yet the power of seeing the light is natural to man, and belongs to the integrity of the body. Who would argue that, because some men are mad, and have lost their reason by a distemper of the brain, that therefore reason hath no reality, but is an imaginary thing? But I think it is a standing truth that every man hath been under the scourge of it, one time or other, in a less or a greater degree; for, since every man is an offender, it cannot be imagined, conscience, which is natural to man, and an active faculty, should always lie idle, without doing this part of its office. The apostle tells us of the thoughts accusing or

excusing one another, (or by turns,) according as the actions were. Nor is this truth weakened by the corruption in the world, whereby many have thought themselves bound in conscience to adhere to a false and superstitious worship and idolatry, as much as any have thought themselves bound to adhere to a worship commanded by God. This very thing infers that all men have a reflecting principle in them; it is no argument against the being of conscience, but only infers that it may err in the application of what it naturally owns. We can no more say, that because some men walk by a false rule, there is no such thing as conscience, than we can say that because men have errors in their minds, therefore they have no such faculty as an understanding; or because men will that which is evil, they have no such faculty as a will in them.

(2.) These operations of conscience are when the wickedness is most secret. These tormenting fears of vengeance have been frequent in men, who have had no reason to fear man, since their wickedness being unknown to any but themselves, they could have no accuser but themselves. They have been in many acts which their companions have justified them in; persons above the stroke of human laws, yea, such as the people have honored as gods, have been haunted by them. Conscience hath not been frightened by the power of princes, or bribed by the pleasures of courts. David was pursued by his horrors, when he was, by reason of his dignity, above the punishment of the law, or, at least, was not reached by the law; since, though the murder of Uriah was intended by him, it was not acted by him. Such examples are frequent in human records; when the crime hath been above any punishment by man, they have had an accuser, judge, and executioner in their own breasts. Can this be originally from a man's self? He who loves and cherishes himself, would fly from anything that disturbs him; it is a greater power and majesty from whom man cannot hide himself, that holds him in those fetters. What should affect their minds for that which can never bring them shame or punishment in this world, if there were not some supreme judge to whom they were to give an account, whose instrument conscience is? Doth it do this of itself? hath it received an authority from the man himself to sting him? It is some supreme power that doth direct and commission it against our wills.

(3.) These operations of conscience cannot be totally shaken off by man. If there be no God, why do not men silence the clamors of their consciences, and scatter those fears that disturb their rest and pleasures? How inquisitive are men after some remedy against those convulsions! Sometimes they would render the charge insignificant, and sing a rest to themselves, though they "walk in the wickedness of their own hearts." [Note: Deuteronomy 29:19.] How often do men attempt to drown it by sensual pleasures, and perhaps overpower it for a time; but it revives, reinforceth itself, and acts a revenge for its former stop. It holds sin to a man's view, and fixes his eyes upon it, whether he will or no. "The wicked are like a troubled sea, and cannot rest," (Isaiah 57:20): they would wallow in sin without control, but this inward principle will not suffer it; nothing can shelter men from those blows. What is the reason it could never be cried down? Man is an enemy to his own disquiet; what man would continue upon the rack, if it were in his power to deliver himself? Why have all human remedies been without success, and not able to extinguish those operations, though all the wickedness of the heart hath been ready to assist and second the attempt? It hath pursued men notwithstanding all the violence used against it; and renewed its scourges with more severity, as men deal with their resisting slaves. Man can as little silence those thunders in his soul, as he can the thunders in the heavens; he must strip himself of his humanity, before he can be stripped of an accusing and affrighting conscience; it sticks as close to

him as his nature; since man cannot throw out the process it makes against him, it is an evidence that some higher power secures its throne and standing. Who should put this scourge into the hand of conscience, which no man in the world is able to wrest out?

(4.) We may add, the comfortable reflections of conscience. There are excusing, as well as accusing reflections of conscience, when things are done as works of the "law of nature," (Romans 2:15): as it doth not forbear to accuse and torture, when a wickedness, though unknown to others, is committed; so when a man hath done well, though he be attacked with all the calumnies the wit of man can forge, yet his conscience justifies the action, and fills him with a singular contentment. As there is torture in sinning, so there is peace and joy in well-doing. Neither of those it could do, if it did not understand a Sovereign Judge, who punishes the rebels, and rewards the well-doer. Conscience is the foundation of all religion; and the two pillars upon which it is built, are the being of God, and the bounty of God to those that "diligently seek him." [Note: Hebrews 11:6.] This proves the existence of God. If there were no God, conscience were useless; the operations of it would have no foundation, if there were not an eye to take notice, and a hand to punish or reward the action. The accusations of conscience evidence the omniscience and the holiness of God; the terrors of conscience, the justice of God; the approbations of conscience, the goodness of God. All the order in the world owes itself, next to the providence of God, to conscience; without it the world would be a Golgotha. As the creatures witness, there was a first cause that produced them, so this principle in man evidenceth itself to be set by the same hand, for the good of that which it had so framed. There could be no conscience if there were no God, and man could not be a rational creature, if there were no conscience. As there is a rule in us, there must be a judge, whether our actions be according to the rule. And since conscience in our corrupted state is in some particular misled, there must be a power superior to conscience, to judge how it hath behaved itself in its deputed office; we must come to some supreme judge, who can judge conscience itself. As a man can have no surer evidence that he is a being, than because he thinks he is a thinking being; so there is no surer evidence in nature that there is a God, than that every man hath a natural principle in him, which continually cites him before God, and puts him in mind of him, and makes him one way or other fear him, and reflects upon him whether he will or no. A man hath less power over his conscience, than over any other faculty; he may choose whether he will exercise his understanding about, or move his will to such an object; but he hath no such authority over his conscience: he cannot limit it, or cause it to cease from acting and reflecting; and therefore, both that, and the law about which it acts, are settled by some Supreme Authority in the mind of man, and this is God.

Fourthly. The evidence of a God results from the vastness of desires in man, and the real dissatisfaction he hath in everything below himself. Man hath a boundless appetite after some sovereign good; as his understanding is more capacious than anything below, so is his appetite larger. This affection of desire exceeds all other affections. Love is determined to something known; fear, to something apprehended: but desires approach nearer to infiniteness, and pursue, not only what we know, or what we have a glimpse of, but what we find wanting in what we already enjoy. That which the desire of man is most naturally carried after is bonum; some fully satisfying good. We desire knowledge by the sole impulse of reason, but we desire good before the excitement of reason; and the desire is always after good, but not always after knowledge. Now the soul of man finds an imperfection in everything here, and cannot scrape up a perfect

satisfaction and felicity. In the highest fruitions of worldly things it is still pursuing something else, which speaks a defect in what it already hath. The world may afford a felicity for our dust, the body, but not for the inhabitant in it; it is too mean for that. Is there any one soul among the sons of men, that can upon a due inquiry say it was at rest and wanted no more, that hath not sometimes had desires after an immaterial good? The soul "follows hard after" such a thing, and hath frequent looks after it (Psalms 63:8). Man desires a stable good, but no sublunary thing is so; and he that doth not desire such a good, wants the rational nature of a man. This is as natural as understanding, will, and conscience. Whence should the soul of man have those desires? how came it to understand that something is still wanting to make its nature more perfect, if there were not in it some notion of a more perfect being which can give it rest? Can such a capacity be supposed to be in it without something in being able to satisfy it? if so, the noblest creature in the world is miserablest, and in a worse condition than any other. Other creatures obtain their ultimate desires, "they are filled with good," (Psalms 104:28); and shall man only have a vast desire without any possibility of enjoyment? Nothing in man is in vain; he hath objects for his affections, as well as affections for objects; every member of his body hath its end, and doth attain it; every affection of his soul hath an object, and that in this world; and shall there be none for his desire, which comes nearest to infinite of any affection planted in him? This boundless desire had not its original from man himself; nothing would render itself restless; something above the bounds of this world implanted those desires after a higher good, and made him restless in everything else. And since the soul can only rest in that which is infinite, there is something infinite for it to rest in; since nothing in the world, though a man had the whole, can give it a satisfaction, there is something above the world only capable to do it, otherwise the soul would be always without it, and be more in vain than any other creature. There is, therefore, some infinite being that can only give a contentment to the soul, and this is God. And that goodness which implanted such desires in the soul, would not do it to no purpose, and mock it in giving it an infinite desire of satisfaction, without intending it the pleasure of enjoyment, if it doth not by its own folly deprive itself of it. The felicity of human nature must needs exceed that which is allotted to other creatures.

Reason IV. As it is a folly to deny that which all nations in the world have consented to, which the frame of the world evidenceth, which man in his body, soul, operations of conscience, witnesseth to; so it is a folly to deny the being of God, which is witnessed unto by extraordinary occurrences in the world.

1. In extraordinary judgments. When a just revenge follows abominable crimes, especially when the judgment is suited to the sin by a strange concatenation and succession of providences, methodized to bring such a particular punishment; when the sin of a nation or person is made legible in the inflicted judgment, which testifies that it cannot be a casual thing. The Scripture gives us an account of the necessity of such judgments, to keep up the reverential thoughts of God in the world (Psalms 9:16): "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand: and jealousy is the name of God," (Exodus 34:14), "Whose name is jealous." He is distinguished from false gods by the judgments which he sends, as men are by their names. Extraordinary prodigies in many nations have been the heralds of extraordinary judgments, and presages of the particular judgments which afterwards they have felt, of which the Roman histories, and others, are full. That there are such things is undeniable, and that the events have been answerable to the threatening, unless we will throw away all human

testimonies, and count all the histories of the world forgeries. Such things are evidences of some invisible power which orders those affairs. And if there be invisible powers, there is also an efficacious cause which moves them; a government certainly there is among them, as well as in the world, and then we must come to some supreme governor which presides over them. Judgments upon notorious offenders have been evident in all ages; the Scripture gives many instances. I shall only mention that of Herod Agrippa, which Josephus mentions. [Note: Lib. 19. Antiq. Acts 12:21-23.] He receives the flattering applause of the people, and thought himself a God; but by the sudden stroke upon him, was forced by his torture to confess another. "I am God," saith he, "in your account, but a higher calls me away; the will of the heavenly Deity is to be endured." The angel of the Lord smote him. The judgment here was suited to the sin; he that would be a god, is eaten up of worms, the vilest creatures. Tully Hostilius, a Roman king, who counted it the most unroyal thing to be religious, or own any other God but his sword, was consumed himself, and his whole house, by lightning from heaven. Many things are unaccountable unless we have recourse to God. The strange revelations of murderers, that have most secretly committed their crimes; the making good some dreadful imprecations, which some wretches have used to confirm a lie, and immediately have been struck with that judgment they wished; the raising often unexpected persons to be instruments of vengeance on a sinful and perfidious nation; the overturning the deepest and surest counsels of men, when they have had a successful progress, and come to the very point of execution; the whole design of men's preservation hath been eaten in pieces by some unforeseen circumstance, so that judgments have broken in upon them without control, and all their subtleties been outwitted; the strange crossing of some in their estates, though the most wise, industrious, and frugal persons, and that by strange and unexpected ways; and it is observable how often everything contributes to carry on a judgment intended, as if they rationally designed it: all those loudly proclaim a God in the world; if there were no God, there would be no sin; if no sin, there would be no punishment.

2. In miracles. The course of nature is uniform; and when it is put out of its course, it must be by some superior power invisible to the world; and by whatsoever invisible instruments they are wrought, the efficacy of them must depend upon some first cause above nature. (Psalms 72:18): "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things," by himself and his sole power. That which cannot be the result of a natural cause, must be the result of something supernatural: what is beyond the reach of nature, is the effect of a power superior to nature; for it is quite against the order of nature, and is the elevation of something to such a pitch, which all nature could not advance it to. Nature cannot go beyond its own limits; if it be determined by another, as hath been formerly proved, it cannot lift itself above itself, without that power that so determined it. Natural agents act necessarily; the sun doth necessarily shine, fire doth necessarily burn: that cannot be the result of nature, which is above the ability of nature; that cannot be the work of nature which is against the order of nature; nature cannot do anything against itself, or invert its own course. We must own that such things have been, or we must accuse all the records of former ages to be a pack of lies; which whosoever doth, destroys the greatest and best part of human knowledge. The miracles mentioned in the Scripture, wrought by our Saviour, are acknowledged by the heathen, by the Jews at this day, though his greatest enemies. There is no dispute whether such things were wrought, "the dead raised," the "blind restored to sight." The heathens have acknowledged the miraculous eclipse of the sun at the passion of Christ, quite against the rule of nature, the moon being then in opposition to the sun; the propagation of

Christianity contrary to the methods whereby other religions have been propagated, that in a few years the nations of the world should be sprinkled with this doctrine, and give in a greater catalogue of martyrs courting the devouring flames, than all the religions of the world. To this might be added, the strange hand that was over the Jews, the only people in the world professing the true God, that should so often be befriended by their conquerors, so as to rebuild their temple, though they were looked upon as a people apt to rebel. Dion and Seneca observe, that wherever they were transplanted, they prospered, and gave laws to the victors; so that this proves also the authority of the Scripture, the truth of christian religion, as well as the being of a God, and a superior power over the world. To this might be added, the bridling the tumultuous passions of men for the preservation of human societies, which else would run the world into unconceivable confusions, (Psalms 65:7) "Which stilleth the noise of the sea, and the tumults of the people" as also the miraculous deliverance of a person or nation, when upon the very brink of ruin; the sudden answer of prayer when God hath been sought to, and the turning away a judgment, which in reason could not be expected to be averted, and the raising a sunk people from a ruin which seemed inevitable, by unexpected ways.

3. Accomplishments of prophecies. Those things which are purely contingent, and cannot be known by natural signs and in their causes, as eclipses and changes in nations, which may be discerned by an observation of the signs of the times; such things that fall not within this compass, if they be foretold and come to pass, are solely from some higher hand, and above the cause of nature. This in Scripture is asserted to be a notice of the true God (Isaiah 41:23): "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are God," and (Isaiah 46:10), "I am God declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And prophecy was consented to by all the philosophers to be from divine illumination: that power which discovers things future, which all the foresight of men cannot ken and conjecture, is above nature. And to foretell them so certainly as if they did already exist, or had existed long ago, must be the result of a mind infinitely intelligent; because it is the highest way of knowing, and a higher cannot be imagined: and he that knows things future in such a manner, must needs know things present and past. Cyrus was prophesied of by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28, and Isaiah 45:1) long before he was born; his victories, spoils, all that should happen in Babylon, his bounty to the Jews came to pass, according to that prophecy; and the sight of that prophecy which the Jews shewed him, as other historians report, was that which moved him to be favorable to the Jews.

Alexander's sight of Daniel's prophecy concerning his victories moved him to spare Jerusalem. And are not the four monarchies plainly deciphered in that book, before the fourth rose up in the world? That power which foretells things beyond the reach of the wit of man, and orders all causes to bring about those predictions, must be an infinite power, the same that made the world, sustains it and governs all things in it according to his pleasure, and to bring about his own ends; and this being is God.

Use I. If atheism be a folly, it is then pernicious to the world and to the atheist himself. Wisdom is the band of human societies, the glory of man. Folly is the disturber of families, cities, nations; the disgrace of human nature.

First, It is pernicious to the world.

1. It would root out the foundations of government. It demolisheth all order in nations. The being of a God is the guard of the world: the sense of a God is the foundation of civil order: without this there is no tie upon the consciences of men. What force would there be in oaths for the decisions of controversies, what right could there be in appeals made to one that had no being? A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion; there could be no ground of any commerce, when all the sacred bands of it in the consciences of men were snapt asunder, which are torn to pieces and utterly destroyed by denying the existence of God. What magistrate could be secure in his standing? what private person could be secure in his right? Can that then be a truth that is destructive of all public good? If the atheist's sentiment, that there were no God, were a truth, and the contrary that there were a God, were a falsity, it would then follow, that falsity made men good and serviceable to one another; that error were the foundation of all the beauty, and order, and outward felicity of the world, the fountain of all good to man. [Note: Lessius de Provid. p. 665.] If there were no God, to believe there is one, would be an error; and to believe there is none, would be the greatest wisdom, because it would be the greatest truth. And then as it is the greatest wisdom to fear God, upon the apprehension of his existence, so it would be the greatest error to fear him if there were none. [Note: Psalms 111:10.] It would unquestionably follow, that error is the support of the world, the spring of all human advantages; and that every part of the world were obliged to a falsity for being a quiet habitation, which is the most absurd thing to imagine. It is a thing impossible to be tolerated by any prince, without laying an eye to the root of the government.

2. It would introduce all evil into the world. "If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all measures and rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made when the measure and standard of them were removed? All good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God; so that if the foundation be demolished, the whole superstructure must tumble down: a man might be a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, and could not in a strict sense be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself, a law to himself. Nothing but evil deserves a censure, and nothing would be evil if there were no God, the Rector of the world against whom evil is properly committed. No man can make that morally evil that is not so in itself: as where there is a faint sense of God, the heart is more strongly inclined to wickedness; so where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, the flood-gates set open for all wickedness to rush in upon mankind. Religion pinions men from abominable practices, and restrains them from being slaves to their own passions: an atheist's arms would be loose to do anything." [Note: Lessius de Provid. p. 664.] Nothing so villanous and unjust but would be acted if the natural fear of a Deity were extinguished. The first consequence issuing from the apprehension of the existence of God, is his government of the world. If there be no God, then the natural consequence is that there is no supreme government of the world: such a notion would cashier all sentiments of good, and be like a Trojan horse, whence all impurity, tyranny, and all sorts of mischiefs would break out upon mankind: corruption and abominable works in the text are the fruit of the fool's persuasion that there is no God. The perverting the ways of men, oppression and extortion, owe their rise to a forgetfulness of God (Jeremiah 3:21): "They have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God." (Ezekiel 22:12): "Thou hast greedily gained by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord." The whole earth would be filled with violence, all flesh would corrupt their way, as it was before the deluge, when probably atheism did abound more than idolatry; and if not a disowning the being, yet denying the providence of God by the posterity of Cain: those of the

family of Seth only “calling upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 6:11-12, compared with Genesis 4:26). The greatest sense of a Deity in any, hath been attended with the greatest innocence of life and usefulness to others; and a weaker sense hath been attended with a baser impurity. If there were no God, blasphemy would be praiseworthy; as the reproach of idols is praiseworthy, because we testify that there is no divinity in them. [Note: Lessius de Provid. p. 665.] What can be more contemptible than that which hath no being? Sin would be only a false opinion of a violated law, and an offended deity. If such apprehensions prevail, what a wide door is opened to the worst of villanies! If there be no God, no respect is due to him; all the religion in the world is a trifle, and error; and thus the pillars of all human society, and that which hath made commonwealths to flourish, are blown away.

Secondly, It is pernicious to the atheist himself. If he fear no future punishment, he can never expect any future reward: all his hopes must be confined to a swinish and despicable manner of life, without any imaginations of so much as a drachm of reserved happiness. He is in a worse condition than the silliest animal, which hath something to please it in its life: whereas an atheist can have nothing here to give him a full content, no more than any other man in the world, and can have less satisfaction hereafter. He deposeth the noble end of his own being, which was to serve a God and have a satisfaction in him, to seek a God and be rewarded by him; and he that departs from his end, recedes from his own nature. All the content any creature finds, is in performing its end, moving according to its natural instinct; as it is a joy to the sun to run its race. [Note: Psalms 19:5.] In the same manner it is a satisfaction to every other creature, and its delight to observe the law of its creation. What content can any man have that runs from his end, opposeth his own nature, denies a God by whom and for whom he was created, whose image he bears, which is the glory of his nature, and sinks into the very dregs of brutishness? How elegantly it is described by Bildad, [Note: Job 18:7-8, &c. to the end.] “His own counsel shall cast him down, terrors shall make him afraid on every side, destruction shall be ready at his side, the first-born of death shall devour his strength, his confidence shall be rooted out, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation; he shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. And this is the place of him that knows not God.” [Note: Ver. 24.] If there be a future reckoning (as his own conscience cannot but sometimes inform him of), his condition is desperate, and his misery dreadful and unavoidable. It is not righteous a hell should entertain any else, if it refuse him.

Use II. How lamentable is it, that in our times this folly of atheism should be so rife! That there should be found such monsters in human nature, in the midst of the improvements of reason, and shinings of the gospel, who not only make the Scripture the matter of their jeers, but scoff at the judgments and providences of God in the world, and envy their Creator a being, without whose goodness they had none themselves; who contradict in their carriage what they assert to be their sentiment, when they dreadfully imprecate damnation to themselves! Whence should that damnation they so rashly wish be poured forth upon them, if there were not a revenging God? Formerly atheism was as rare as prodigious, scarce two or three known in an age; and those that are reported to be so in former ages, are rather thought to be counted so for mocking at the senseless deities the common people adored, and laying open their impurities. A mere natural strength would easily discover that those they adored for gods, could not deserve that title, since

their original was known, their uncleanness manifest and acknowledged by their worshippers. And probably it was so; since the Christians were termed ἄθεοι, because they acknowledged not their vain idols. [Note: As Justin informs us.]

I question whether there ever was, or can be in the world, an uninterrupted and internal denial of the being of God, or that men (unless we can suppose conscience utterly dead) can arrive to such a degree of impiety; for before they can stifle such sentiments in them (whatsoever they may assert), they must be utter strangers to the common conceptions of reason, and despoil themselves of their own humanity. He that dares to deny a God with his lips, yet sets up something or other as a God in his heart. Is it not lamentable that this sacred truth, consented to by all nations, which is the band of civil societies, the source of all order in the world, should be denied with a bare face, and disputed against in companies, and the glory of a wise Creator ascribed to an unintelligent nature, to blind chance? Are not such worse than heathens? They worshipped many gods, these none; they preserved a notion of God in the world under a disguise of images, these would banish him both from earth and heaven, and demolish the statutes of him in their own consciences; they degraded him, these would destroy him; they coupled creatures with him—(Romans 1:25), “Who worshipped the creature with the Creator,” as it may most properly be rendered—and these would make him worse than the creature, a mere nothing. Earth is hereby become worse than hell. Atheism is a persuasion which finds no footing anywhere else. Hell, that receives such persons, in this point reforms them: they can never deny or doubt of his being, while they feel his strokes. The devil, that rejoices at their wickedness, knows them to be in an error; for he “believes, and trembles at the belief.” [Note: James 2:19.] This is a forerunner of judgment. Boldness in sin is a presage of vengeance, especially when the honor of God is more particularly concerned therein; it tends to the overturning human society, taking off the bridle from the wicked inclinations of men and God appears not in such visible judgments against sin immediately committed against himself, as in the case of those sins that are destructive to human society. Besides, God, as Governor of the world, will uphold that, without which all his ordinances in the world would be useless. Atheism is point blank against all the glory of God in creation, and against all the glory of God in redemption, and pronounceth at one breath, both the Creator, and all acts of religion and divine institutions, useless and insignificant. Since most have had, one time or other, some risings of doubt, whether there be a God, though few do in expressions deny his being, it may not be unnecessary to propose some things for the further impressing this truth, and guarding themselves against such temptations.

1. It is utterly impossible to demonstrate there is no God. He can choose no medium, but will fall in as a proof for his existence, and a manifestation of his excellency, rather than against it. The pretences of the atheist are so ridiculous, that they are not worth the mentioning. They never saw God, and therefore know not how to believe such a being; they cannot comprehend him. He would not be a God, if he could fall within the narrow model of a human understanding; he would not be infinite, if he were comprehensible, or to be terminated by our sight. How small a thing must that be which is seen by a bodily eye, or grasped by a weak mind! If God were visible or comprehensible, he would be limited. Shall it be a sufficient demonstration from a blind man, that there is no fire in the room, because he sees it not, though he feel the warmth of it? The knowledge of the effect is sufficient to conclude the existence of the cause. Who ever saw his own life? Is it sufficient to deny a man lives, because he beholds not his life, and only knows it by his

motion? He never saw his own soul, but knows he hath one by his thinking power. The air renders itself sensible to men in its operations, yet was never seen by the eye. If God should render himself visible, they might question as well as now, whether that which was so visible were God, or some delusion. If he should appear glorious, we can as little behold him in his majestic glory, as an owl can behold the sun in its brightness: we should still but see him in his effects, as we do the sun by his beams. If he should show a new miracle, we should still see him but by his works; so we see him in his creatures, every one of which would be as great a miracle as any can be wrought, to one that had the first prospect of them. To require to see God, is to require that which is impossible (1 Timothy 6:16): "He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." It is visible that he is, "for he covers himself with light as with a garment" (Psalms 104:2); it is visible what he is, "for he makes darkness his secret place" (Psalms 18:11). Nothing more clear to the eye than light, and nothing more difficult to the understanding than the nature of it: as light is the first object obvious to the eye, so is God the first object obvious to the understanding. The arguments from nature do, with greater strength; evince his existence, than any pretences can manifest there is no God. No man can assure himself by any good reason there is none; for as for the likeness of events to him that is righteous, and him that is wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not (Ecclesiastes 9:2): it is an argument for a reserve of judgment in another state, which every man's conscience dictates to him, when the justice of God shall be glorified in another world, as much as his patience is in this.

2. Whosoever doubts of it, makes himself a mark, against which all the creatures fight. All the stars fought against Sisera for Israel: all the stars in heaven, and the dust on earth, fight for God against the atheist. He hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in the whole compass of heaven and earth. He is most unreasonable, that denies or doubts of that whose image and shadow he sees round about him; he may sooner deny the sun that warms him, the moon that in night walks in her brightness, deny the fruits he enjoys from the earth, yea, and deny that he doth exist. He must tear his own conscience, fly from his own thoughts, be changed into the nature of a stone, which hath neither reason nor sense, before he can disengage himself from those arguments which evince the being of a God. He that would make the natural religion professed in the world a mere romance, must give the lie to the common sense of mankind; he must be at an irreconcilable enmity with his own reason, resolve to hear nothing that it speaks, if he will not hear what it speaks in this case, with a greater evidence than it can ascertain anything else. God hath so settled himself in the reason of man, that he must vilify the noblest faculty God hath given him, and put off nature itself, before he can blot out the notion of a God.

3. No question but those that have been so bold as to deny that there was a God, have sometimes been much afraid they have been in an error, and have at least suspected there was a God, when some sudden prodigy hath presented itself to them, and roused their fears; and whatsoever sentiments they might have in their blinding prosperity, they have had other kind of motions in them in their stormy afflictions, and, like Jonah's mariners, have been ready to cry to him for help, whom they disdained to own so much as in being, while they swam in their pleasures. The thoughts of a Deity cannot be so extinguished, but they will revive and rush upon a man, at least under some sharp affliction. Amazing judgments will make them question their own apprehensions. God sends some messengers to keep alive the apprehension of him as a Judge, while men resolve not to own or reverence him as a Governor. A man cannot but keep a scent of

what was born with him; as a vessel that hath been seasoned first with a strong juice will preserve the scent of it, whatsoever liquors are afterwards put into it.

4. What is it for which such men rack their wits, to form notions that there is no God? Is it not that they would indulge some vicious habit, which hath gained the possession of their soul, which they know "cannot be favored by that holy God," whose notion they would raze out? [Note: Psalms 94:6-7.] Is it not for some brutish affection, as degenerative of human nature, as derogatory to the glory of God; a lust as unmanly as sinful? The terrors of God are the effects of guilt; and therefore men would wear out the apprehensions of a Deity, that they might be brutish without control. They would fain believe there were no God, that they might not be men, but beasts. How great a folly is it to take so much pains in vain, for a slavery and torment; to cast off that which they call a yoke, for that which really is one! There is more pains and toughness of soul requisite to shake off the apprehensions of God, than to believe that he is, and cleave constantly to him. What a madness is it in any to take so much pains to be less than a man, by razing out the apprehensions of God, when, with less pains, he may be more than an earthly man, by cherishing the notions of God, and walking answerably thereunto?

5. How unreasonable is it for any man to hazard himself at this rate in the denial of a God! The atheist saith he knows not that there is a God; but may he not reasonably think there may be one for aught he knows? and if there be, what a desperate confusion will he be in, when all his bravadoes shall prove false! What can they gain by such an opinion? A freedom, say they, from the burdensome yoke of conscience, a liberty to do what they list, that doth not subject them to divine laws. It is a hard matter to persuade any that they can gain this. They can gain but a sordid pleasure, unworthy the nature of man. But it were well that such would argue thus with themselves: If there be a God, and I fear and obey him, I gain a happy eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by firmly believing there is one. If I be deceived at last, and find a God, can I think to be rewarded by him, for disowning him? Do not I run a desperate hazard to lose his favor, his kingdom, and endless felicity for an endless torment? By confessing a God I venture no loss; but by denying him, I run the most desperate hazard, if there be one. He is not a reasonable creature, that will not put himself upon such a reasonable arguing. What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him, who shall meet with reproaches on God's part, and terrors on his own! All that he gains is a liberty to defile himself here, and a certainty to be despised hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

6. Can any such person say he hath done all that he can to inform himself of the being of God, or of other things which he denies? Or rather they would fain imagine there is none, that they may sleep securely in their lusts, and be free (if they could) from the thunder-claps of conscience. Can such say they have used their utmost endeavors to instruct themselves in this, and can meet with no satisfaction? Were it an abstruse truth it might not be wondered at; but not to meet with satisfaction in this which everything reminds us of, and helpeth, is the fruit of an extreme negligence, stupidity, and a willingness to be unsatisfied, and a judicial process of God against them. It is strange any man should be so dark in that upon which depends the conduct of his life, and the expectation of happiness hereafter. I do not know what some of you may think, but believe these things are not useless to be proposed for ourselves to answer temptations; we know not what wicked temptation in a debauched and skeptic age, meeting with a corrupt heart, may prompt men to; and though there may not be any atheist here present, yet I know there is more than one, who

have accidentally met with such, who openly denied a Deity; and if the like occasion happen, these considerations may not be unuseful to apply to their consciences. But I must confess, that since those that live in this sentiment, do not judge themselves worthy of their own care, they are not worthy of the care of others; and a man must have all the charity of the christian religion, which they despise, not to condemn them, and leave them to their own folly. As we are to pity madmen, who sink under an unavoidable distemper, we are as much to abominate them, who wilfully hug this prodigious frenzy.

Use III. If it be the atheist's folly to deny or doubt of the being of God, it is our wisdom to be firmly settled in this truth, that God is. We should never be without our arms in an age wherein atheism appears barefaced without a disguise. You may meet with suggestions to it, though the devil formerly never attempted to demolish this notion in the world, but was willing to keep it up, so the worship due to God might run in his own channel, and was necessitated to preserve it, without which he could not have erected that idolatry, which was his great design in opposition to God; yet since the foundations of that are torn up, and never like to be rebuilt, he may endeavor, as his last refuge, to banish the notion of God out of the world, that he may reign as absolutely without it, as he did before by the mistakes about the divine nature. But we must not lay all upon Satan; the corruption of our own hearts ministers matter to such sparks. It is not said Satan hath suggested to the fool, but "the fool hath said in his heart," there is no God. But let them come from what principle soever, silence them quickly, give them their dismiss; oppose the whole scheme of nature to fight against them, as the stars did against Sisera. Stir up sentiments of conscience to oppose sentiments of corruption. Resolve sooner to believe that yourselves are not, than that God is not; and if you suppose they at any time come from Satan, object to him that you know he believes the contrary to what he suggests. Settle this principle firmly in you, "let us behold Him that is invisible," as Moses did; [Note: Hebrews 11:27.] let us have the sentiments following upon the notion of a God, to be restrained by a fear of him, excited by a love to him, not to violate his laws and offend his goodness. He is not a God careless of our actions, negligent to inflict punishment, and bestow rewards, "he forgets not the labor of our love," [Note: Hebrews 6:10.] nor the integrity of our ways; he were not a God, if he were not a governor; and punishments and rewards are as essential to government, as a foundation to a building. His being and his government in rewarding, which implies punishment, (for the neglects of him are linked together) [Note: Hebrews 11:6.] are not to be separated in our thoughts of him.

1. Without this truth fixed in us, we can never give him the worship due to his name. When the knowledge of anything is fluctuating and uncertain, our actions about it are careless. We regard not that which we think doth not much concern us. If we do not firmly believe there is a God, we shall pay him no steady worship; and if we believe not the excellency of his nature, we shall offer him but a slight service. [Note: Malachi 1:13-14.] The Jews call the knowledge of the being of God the foundation and pillar of wisdom. [Note: Maimon. Funda Legis. cap. 1.] The whole frame of religion is dissolved without this apprehension, and totters if this apprehension be wavering. Religion in the heart is as water in a weatherglass, which riseth or falls according to the strength or weakness of this belief. How can any man worship that which he believes not to be, or doubts of? Could any man omit the paying a homage to one, whom he did believe to be an omnipotent, wise being, possessing (infinitely above our conceptions) the perfections of all creatures? He must either think there is no such being, or that he is an easy, drowsy, inobservant God, and not such

an one as our natural notions of him, if listened to, as well as the Scripture, represents him to be.

2. Without being rooted in this, we cannot order our lives. All our baseness, stupidity, dulness, wanderings, vanity, spring from a wavering and unsettledness in this principle. This gives ground to brutish pleasures, not only to solicit, but conquer us. Abraham expected violence in any place where God was not owned (Genesis 20:11), "Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will slay me for my wife's sake." The natural knowledge of God firmly impressed, would choke that which would stifle our reason and deface our souls. The belief that God is, and what he is, would have a mighty influence to persuade us to a real religion, and serious consideration, and casting about how to be like to him and united with him.

3. Without it we cannot have any comfort of our lives. Who would willingly live in a stormy world, void of a God? If we waver in this principle, to whom should we make our complaints in our afflictions? Where should we meet with supports? How could we satisfy ourselves with the hopes of a future happiness? There is a sweetness in the meditation of his existence, and that he is a Creator. [Note: Psalms 104:24.] Thoughts of other things have a bitterness mixed with them: houses, lands, children, now are, shortly they will not be; but God is, that made the world: his faithfulness as he is a Creator, is a ground to deposit our souls and concerns in our innocent sufferings. [Note: 1 Peter 4:19.] So far as we are weak in the acknowledgment of God, we deprive ourselves of our content in the view of his infinite perfections.

4. Without the rooting of this principle, we cannot have a firm belief of Scripture. The Scripture will be a slight thing to one that hath weak sentiments of God. The belief of a God must necessarily precede the belief of any revelation; the latter cannot take place without the former as a foundation. We must firmly believe the being of a God, wherein our happiness doth consist, before we can believe any means which conduct us to him. Moses begins with the Author of creation, before he treats of the promise of redemption. Paul preached God as a Creator to a university, before he preached Christ as Mediator. [Note: Acts 17:24.] What influence can the testimony of God have in his revelation upon one that doth not firmly assent to the truth of his being? All would be in vain that is so often repeated, "Thus saith the Lord," if we do not believe there is a Lord that speaks it. There could be no awe from his sovereignty in his commands, nor any comfortable taste of his goodness in his promises. The more we are strengthened in this principle, the more credit we shall be able to give to divine revelation, to rest in his promise, and to reverence his precept; the authority of all depends upon the being of the Revealer. To this purpose, since we have handled this discourse by natural arguments,

1. Study God in the creatures as well as in the Scriptures. The primary use of the creatures, is to acknowledge God in them; they were made to be witnesses of himself in his goodness, and heralds of his glory, which glory of God as Creator "shall endure forever" (Psalms 104:31): that whole psalm is a lecture of creation and providence. The world is a sacred temple; man is introduced to contemplate it, and behold with praise the glory of God in the pieces of his art. As grace doth not destroy nature, so the book of redemption blots not out that of creation. Had he not shown himself in his creatures, he could never have shown himself in his Christ; the order of things required it. God must be read wherever he is legible; the creatures are one book, wherein he hath writ a part of the excellency of his name, [Note: Psalms 8:9.] as many artists do in their works and watches. God's glory, like the filings of gold, is too precious to be lost wherever it drops:

nothing so vile and base in the world, but carries in it an instruction for man, and drives in further the notion of a God. As he said of his cottage, Enter here, Sunt hic etiam Dii, God disdains not this place: so the least creature speaks to man, every shrub in the field, every fly in the air, every limb in a body; Consider me, God disdains not to appear in me; he hath discovered in me his being and a part of his skill, as well as in the highest. The creatures manifest the being of God and part of his perfections. We have indeed a more excellent way, a revelation setting him forth in a more excellent manner, a firmer object of dependence, a brighter object of love, raising our hearts from self-confidence to a confidence in him. Though the appearance of God in the one be clearer than in the other, yet neither is to be neglected. The Scripture directs us to nature to view God; it had been in vain else for the apostle to make use of natural arguments. Nature is not contrary to Scripture, nor Scripture to nature; unless we should think God contrary to himself who is the Author of both.

2. View God in your own experiences of him. There is a taste and sight of his goodness, though no sight of his essence. [Note: Psalm 34:9] By the taste of his goodness you may know the reality of the fountain, whence it springs and from whence it flows; this surpasseth the greatest capacity of a mere natural understanding. Experience of the sweetness of the ways of Christianity is a mighty preservative against atheism. Many a man knows not how to prove honey to be sweet by his reason, but by his sense; and if all the reason in the world be brought against it, he will not be reasoned out of what he tastes. Have not many found the delightful illapses of God into their souls, often sprinkled with his inward blessings upon their seeking of him; had secret warnings in their approaches to him; and gentle rebukes in their consciences upon their swervings from him? Have not many found sometimes an invisible hand raising them up when they were dejected; some unexpected providence stepping in for their relief; and easily perceived that it could not be a work of chance, nor many times the intention of the instruments he hath used in it? You have often found that he is, by finding that he is a rewarder, and can set to your seals that he is what he hath declared himself to be in his word (Isaiah 34:12) "I have declared, and have saved; therefore you are my witnesses, with the Lord, that I am God." The secret touches of God upon the heart, and inward converses with him, are a greater evidence of the existence of a supreme and infinitely good Being, than all nature.

Use IV. Is it a folly to deny or doubt of the being of God? It is a folly also not to worship God, when we acknowledge his existence; it is our wisdom then to worship him. As it is not indifferent whether we believe there is a God or no; so it is not indifferent whether we will give honor to that God or no. A worship is his right as he is the Author of our being, and fountain of our happiness. By this only we acknowledge his Deity; though we may profess his being, yet we deny that profession in neglects of worship. To deny him a worship is as great a folly, as to deny his being. He that renounceth all homage to his Creator, envices him the being which he cannot deprive him of. The natural inclination to worship is as universal as the notion of a God; idolatry else had never gained footing in the world. The existence of God was never owned in any nation, but a worship of him was appointed. And many people who have turned their backs upon some other parts of the law of nature, have paid a continual homage to some superior and invisible being. The Jews give a reason why man was created in the evening of the Sabbath, because he should begin his being with the worship of his Maker. As soon as ever he found himself to be a creature, his first solemn act should be a particular respect to his Creator. "To fear God and keep his commandment," is the

whole of man, [Note: Ecclesiastes 12:13.] or is whole man [Note: Heb.] he is not a man but a beast, without observance of God. Religion is as requisite as reason to complete a man: he were not reasonable if he were not religious; because by neglecting religion, he neglects the chiefest dictate of reason. Either God framed the world with so much order, elegance, and variety to no purpose, or this was his end at least, that reasonable creatures should admire him in it, and honor him for it. The notion of God was not stamped upon men, the shadows of God did not appear in the creatures, to be the subject of an idle contemplation, but the motive of a due homage to God. He created the world for his glory, a people for himself, that he might have the honor of his works; that since we live and move in him, and by him, we should live and move to him and for him. It was the condemnation of the heathen world, that when they knew there was a God, they did not give him the glory due to him. [Note: Romans 1:21] He that denies his being, is an atheist to his essence: he that denies his worship, is an atheist to his honor.

If it be a folly to deny the being of God, it will be our wisdom, then, since we acknowledge his being, often to think of him. Thoughts are the first issue of a creature as reasonable: [Note: Proverbs 4:23.] He that hath given us the faculty whereby we are able to think, should be the principal object about which the power of it should be exercised. It is a justice to God, the author of our understandings, a justice to the nature of our understandings, that the noblest faculty should be employed about the most excellent object. Our minds are a beam from God; and, therefore, as the beams of the sun, when they touch the earth, should reflect back upon God. As we seem to deny the being of God not to think of him; we seem also to unsoul our souls in misemploying the activity of them any other way, like flies, to be oftener on dunghills than flowers. It is made the black mark of an ungodly man, or an atheist, that "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalms 10:4). What comfort can be had in the being of God without thinking of him with reverence and delight? A God forgotten is as good as no God to us.

On The Goodness of God

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD Mark 10:18.—And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. The words are part of a reply of our Saviour to the young man's petition to him: a certain person came in haste, "running" as being eager for satisfaction, to entreat his directions, what he should do to inherit everlasting life; the person is described only in general (Mark 10:17), "There came one," a certain man: but Luke describes him by his dignity (Luke 18:18), "A certain ruler;" one of authority among the Jews. He desires of him an answer to a legal question, "What he should do?" or, as Matthew hath it, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life" (Matthew 19:16)? He imagined everlasting felicity was to be purchased by the works of the law; he had not the least sentiments of faith: Christ's answer implies, there was no hopes of the happiness of another world by the works of the law, unless they were perfect, and answerable to every divine precept. He doth not seem to have any ill, or hypocritical intent in his address to Christ; not to tempt him, but to be instructed by him. He seems to come with an ardent desire, to be satisfied in his demand; he performed a solemn act of respect to him, he kneeled to him, γονυπετήσας, prostrated himself upon the ground; besides, Christ is said (ver. 21) to love him, which had been inconsistent with the knowledge Christ had of the hearts and thoughts of men, and the abhorrence he had of hypocrites, had he been only a counterfeit in this question. But the first reply Christ makes to him, respects the title of "Good Master," which this ruler gave him in his salutation.

1st, Some think, that Christ hereby would draw him to an acknowledgment of him as God; you acknowledge me "good;" how come you to salute me with so great a title, since you do not afford it to your greatest doctors? Lightfoot, in loc. observes, that the title of Rabbi bone is not in all the Talmud. You must own me to be God, since you own me to be "good:" goodness being a title only due, and properly belonging, to the Supreme Being. If you take me for a common man, with what conscience can you salute me in a manner proper to God? since no man is "good," no, not one, but the heart of man is evil continually. The Arians used this place, to back their denying the Deity of Christ: because, say they, he did not acknowledge himself "good," therefore he did not acknowledge himself God. But he doth not here deny his Deity, but reproves him for calling him good, when he had not yet confessed him to be more than a man. [Note: Erasm. in loc.] You behold my flesh, but you consider not the fulness of my Deity; if you account me "good," account me God, and imagine me not to be a simple and a mere man. [Note: Augustin.] He disowns not his own Deity, but allures the young man to a confession of it. Why callest thou me good, since thou dost not discover any apprehensions of my being more than a man? Though thou comest with a greater esteem to me than is commonly entertained of the doctors of the chair, why dost thou own me to be "good," unless thou own me to be God? If Christ had denied himself in this speech to be "good," he had rather entertained this person with a frown and a sharp reproof for giving him a title due to God alone, than have received him with that courtesy and complaisance as he did. [Note: Hensius in Matt.] Had he said, there is none "good" but the Father, he had excluded himself; but in saying, there is none "good" but God, he comprehends himself.

2d. Others say, that Christ had no intention to draw him to an acknowledgment of his Deity, but only asserts his divine authority or mission from God. For which interpretation Maldonat calls Calvin an Arianizer. [Note: Calvin in loc.] He doth not here assert the essence of his Deity, but the authority of his doctrine; as if he should have said, You do without ground give me the title of “good,” unless you believe I have a Divine commission for what I declare and act. Many do think me an impostor, an enemy of God, and a friend to devils; you must firmly believe that I am not so, as your rulers report me, but that I am sent of God, and authorized by him; you cannot else give me the title of good, but of wicked. And the reason they give for this interpretation, is, because it is a question, whether any of the apostles understood him, at this time, to be God, which seems to have no great strength in it; since not only the devil had publicly owned him to be the “Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34), but John the Baptist had borne record, that he was the “Son of God” (John 1:32; John 1:34); and before this time Peter had confessed him openly, in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). But I think Paroeus’ interpretation is best, which takes in both those; either you are serious or deceitful in this address; if you are serious, why do you call me “good,” and make bold to fix so great a title upon one you have no higher thoughts of than a mere man? Christ takes occasion from hence, to assert God to be only and sovereignly “good:” “There is none good but God.” [Note: Trismegist. Pœmœnd. cap. 2.] God only hath the honor of absolute goodness, and none but God merits the name of “good.” A heathen could say much after the same manner; All other things are far from the nature of good; call none else good but God, for this would be a profane error: other things are only good in opinion, but have not the true substance of goodness: he is “good” in a more excellent way than any creature can be denominated “good.” [Note: Eugubin. de Peron. Philos. lib. v. cap. 9.]

1. God is only originally good, good of himself. All created goodness is a rivulet from this fountain, but Divine goodness hath no spring; God depends upon no other for his goodness; he hath it in, and of, himself: man hath no goodness from himself, God hath no goodness from without himself: his goodness is no more derived from another than his being: if we were good by any external thing, that thing must be in being before him, or after him; if before him, he was not then himself from eternity; if after him, he was not good in himself from eternity. The end of his creating things, then, was not to confer a goodness upon his creatures, but to partake of a goodness from his creatures. God is good by and in himself, since all things are only good by him; and all that goodness which is in creatures, is but the breathing of his own goodness upon them: they have all their loveliness from the same hand they have their being from. Though by creation God was declared good, yet he was not made good by any, or by all the creatures. He partakes of none, but all things partake of him. He is so good, that he gives all, and receives nothing; only good, because nothing is good but by him nothing hath a goodness but from him.

2. God only is infinitely good. A boundless goodness that knows no limits, a goodness as infinite as his essence, not only good, but best; not only good, but goodness itself, the supreme inconceivable goodness. All things else are but little particles of God, small sparks from this immense flame, sips of goodness to this fountain. Nothing that is good by his influence can equal him who is good by himself: derived goodness can never equal primitive goodness. Divine goodness communicates itself to a vast number of creatures in various degrees; to angels, glorified spirits, men on earth, to every creature; and when it hath communicated all that the present world is capable of, there is still less displayed, than left to enrich another world. All

possible creatures are not capable of exhausting the wealth, the treasures, that Divine bounty is filled with.

3. God is only perfectly good, because only infinitely good. He is good without indigence, because he hath the whole nature of goodness, not only some beams that may admit of increase of degree. As in him is the whole nature of entity, so in him is the whole nature of excellency. As nothing hath an absolute perfect being but God, so nothing hath an absolutely perfect goodness but God; as the sun hath a perfection of heat in it, but what is warmed by the sun is but imperfectly hot, and equals not the sun in that perfection of heat wherewith it is naturally endued. The goodness of God is the measure and rule of goodness in everything else.

4. God only is immutably good. Other things may be perpetually good by supernatural power, but not immutably good in their own nature. Other things are not so good, but they may be bad; God is so good, that he cannot be bad. It was the speech of a philosopher, that it was a hard thing to find a good man, yea, impossible; but though it were possible to find a good man, he would be good but for some moment, or a short time: for though he should be good at this instant, it was above the nature of man to continue in a habit of goodness, without going awry and warping. [Note: Eugubin. de Peron. Philos. lib. v. cap. 9. p. 97. col.] But “the goodness of God endureth forever” (Psalms 52:1). God always glitters in goodness, as the sun, which the heathens called the visible image of the Divinity, doth with light. There is not such a perpetual light in the sun as there is a fulness of goodness in God; “no variableness” in him, as he is the “Father of Lights” (James 1:17).

Before I come to the doctrine, that is, the chief scope of the words, some remarks may be made upon the young man's question and carriage: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

1. The opinion of gaining eternal life by the outward observation of the law, will appear very unsatisfactory to an inquisitive conscience. This ruler armed, and certainly did confidently believe, that he had fulfilled the law (Mark 10:20): “All this have I observed from my youth;” yet he had not any full satisfaction in his own conscience; his heart misgave, and started upon some sentiments in him, that something else was required, and what he had done might be too weak, too short to shoot heaven's lock for him. And to that purpose he comes to Christ, to receive instructions for the piecing up whatsoever was defective. Whosoever will consider the nature of God, and the relation of a creature, cannot with reason think, that eternal life was of itself due from God as a recompense to Adam, had he persisted in a state of innocence. Who can think so great a reward due, for having performed that which a creature in that relation was obliged to do? Can any man think another obliged to convey an inheritance of a thousand pounds per annum upon his payment of a few farthings, unless any compact appears to support such a conceit? And if it were not to be expected in the integrity of nature, but only from the goodness of God, how can it be expected since the revolt of man, and the universal deluge of natural corruption? God owes nothing to the holiest creature; what he gives is a present from his bounty, not the reward of the creature's merit. And the apostle defies all creatures, from the greatest to the least, from the tallest angel to the lowest shrub, to bring out any one creature that hath first given to God (Romans 11:35); “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?” The duty of the creature, and God's gift of eternal life, is not a bargain and sale. God gives to the creature, he doth not properly repay; for he that repays hath received something of an equal value and worth before. When God crowns angels and men, he bestows upon them purely what is his own, not what is theirs by merit and and

natural obligation: though indeed, what God gives by virtue of a promise made before, is, upon the performance of the condition, due by gracious obligation. God was not indebted to man in innocence, but every man's conscience may now mind him that he is not upon the same level as in the state of integrity; and that he cannot expect anything from God, as the salary of his merit, but the free gift of Divine liberality. Man is obliged to the practice of what is good, both from the excellency of the Divine precepts, and the duty he owes to God; and cannot, without some declaration from God, hope for any other reward, than the satisfaction of having well acquitted himself. [Note: Amyrant, Morale.]

2. It is the disease of human nature, since its corruption, to hope for eternal life by the tenor of the covenant of works. Though this ruler's conscience was not thoroughly satisfied with what he had done, but imagined he might, for all that, fall short of eternal life, yet he still hugs the imagination of obtaining it by doing (Mark 10:17); "What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" This is natural to corrupted man. Cain thought to be accepted for the sake of his sacrifice; and, when he found his mistake, he was so weary of seeking happiness by doing, that he would court misery by murdering. All men set too high a value upon their own services. Sinful creatures would fain make God a debtor to them, and be purchasers of felicity: they would not have it conveyed to them by God's sovereign bounty, but by an obligation of justice upon the value of their works. The heathens thought God would treat men according to the merit of their services; and it is no wonder they should have this sentiment, when the Jews, educated by God in a wiser school, were wedded to that notion. The Pharisees were highly fond of it: it was the only argument they used in prayer for Divine blessing. You have one of them boasting of his frequency in fasting, and his exactness in paying his tithes (Luke 19:12); as if God had been beholden to him, and could not, without manifest wrong, deny him his demand. And Paul confesseth it to be his own sentiment before his conversion; he accounted this "righteousness of the law gain to him" (Php 3:7); he thought, by this, to make his market with God. The whole nation of the Jews affected it, [Note: Romans 10:3. "Going about to establish their own righteousness."] encompassing sea and land to make out a righteousness of their own, as the Pharisees did to make proselytes. The Papists follow their steps, and dispute for justification by the merit of works, and find out another key of works of supererogation, to unlock heaven's gate, than whatever the Scripture informed us of. It is from hence, also, that men are so ready to make faith, as a work, the cause of our justification. Man foolishly thinks he hath enough to set up himself after he hath proved bankrupt, and lost all his estate. This imagination is born with us, and the best Christians may find some sparks of it in themselves, when there are springings up of joy in their hearts, upon the more close performance of one duty than of another; as if they had wiped off their scores, and given God a satisfaction for their former neglects. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," was the boast of his disciples: "What shall we have, therefore?" was a branch of this root (Matthew 19:27). Eternal life is a gift, not by any obligation of right, but an abundance of goodness; it is owing, not to the dignity of our works, but the magnificent bounty of the Divine nature, and must be sued for by the title of God's promise, not by the title of the creature's services. We may observe,

3. How insufficient are some assents to Divine truth, and some expressions of affection to Christ, without the practice of christian precepts. This man addressed Christ with a profound respect, acknowledging him more than an ordinary person, with a more reverential carriage than we read any of his disciples paid to him in the days of his flesh; he fell down at his feet, kissed his knees,

as the custom was, when they would testify the great respect they had to any eminent person, especially to their rabbins. All this some think to be included in the word γονυπετισας, [Note: ver. 17. Lightfoot in loc.] He seems to acknowledge him the Messiah by giving him the title of “Good,” a title they did not give to their doctors of the chair; he breathes out his opinion, that he was able to instruct him beyond the ability of the law; he came with a more than ordinary affection to him, and expectation of advantage from him, evident by his departing sad, when his expectations were frustrated by his own perversity; it was a sign he had a high esteem of him from whom he could not part without marks of his grief. What was the cause of his refusing the instructions he pretended such an affection to receive? He had possessions in the world. How soon do a few drops of worldly advantages quench the first sparks of an ill-grounded love to Christ! How vain is a complimentary and cringing devotion, without a supreme preference of God, and valuation of Christ above every outward allurements. We may observe this,

4. We should never admit anything to be ascribed to us, which is proper to God. “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” If you do not acknowledge me God, ascribe not to me the title of Good. It takes off all those titles which fawning flatterers give to men, “mighty,” “invincible” to princes, “holiness” to the pope. We call one another good, without considering how evil; and wise, without considering how foolish; mighty, without considering how weak, and knowing, without considering how ignorant. No man, but hath more of wickedness than goodness; of ignorance than knowledge; of weakness than strength. God is a jealous God of his own honor; he will not have the creature share with him in his royal titles. It is a part of idolatry to give men the titles which are due to God; a kind of a worship of the creature together with the Creator. Worms will not stand out, but assault Herod in his purple, when he usurps the prerogative of God, and prove stiff and invincible vindicators of their Creator’s honor, when summoned to arms by the Creator’s word (Acts 12:22-23).

Doctrine. The observation which I intend to prosecute, is this:—Pure and perfect goodness is only the royal prerogative of God; goodness is a choice perfection of the Divine nature. This is the true and genuine character of God; he is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatsoever is comely, excellent, desirable; the highest good, because first good: whatsoever is perfect goodness, is God; whatsoever is truly goodness in any creature, is a resemblance of God. [Note: Ficin. in Dionys. de Divin. Nom. cap. 511.] All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. All gifts, all variety of goodness, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cause of all good, by an overflowing goodness of his nature, he refers all things to himself, as the end, for the representation of his own goodness; “Truly God is good” (Psalms 73:1). Certainly, it is an undoubted truth; it is written in his works of nature, and his acts of grace (Exodus 34:6). “He is abundant in goodness.” And every thing is a memorial, not of some few sparks, but of his greater goodness (Psalms 145:7). This is often celebrated in the Psalms, and men invited more than once, to sing forth the praises of it (Psalms 107:8; Psalms 107:15; Psalms 107:21; Psalms 107:31). It may better be admired than sufficiently spoken of, or thought of, as it merits. It is discovered in all his works, as the goodness of a tree in all its fruits; it is easy to be seen, and more pleasant to be contemplated. In general, 1. All nations in the world have acknowledged God good;

Τὸ γὰρ καλόν was one of the names the Platonists expressed him by; and good and God, are almost the same words in our language. All as readily consented in the notion of his goodness, as in that

of his Deity. Whatsoever divisions or disputes there were among them in the other perfections of God, they all agreed in this without dispute, saith Synesius. One calls him Venus, in regard of his loveliness. [Note: Empedocles.] Another calls him φωτα love, as being the band which ties all things together. [Note: Hesiod.] No perfection of the Divine nature is more eminently, nor more speedily visible in the whole book of the creation, than this. His greatness shines not in any part of it, where his goodness doth not as gloriously glisten: whatsoever is the instrument of his work, as his power; whatsoever is the orderer of his work, as his wisdom; yet nothing can be adored as the motive of his work, but the goodness of his nature. This only could induce him to resolve to create his wisdom then steps in, to dispose the methods of what he resolved; and his power follows to execute, what his wisdom hath disposed, and his goodness designed. His power in making, and his wisdom in ordering, are subservient to his goodness; and this goodness, which is the end of the creation, is as visible to the eyes of men, as legible to the understanding of men, as his power in forming them, and his wisdom in tuning them. And as the book of creation, so the records of his government must needs acquaint them with a great part of it, when they have often beheld him, stretching out his hand, to supply the indigent, relieve the oppressed, and punish the oppressors, and give them, in their distresses, what might “fill their hearts with food and gladness.” It is this the apostle (Romans 1:20-21,) means by his Godhead, which he links with his eternity and power, as clearly seen in the things that are made, as in a pure glass, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” The Godhead which comprehends the whole nature of God as discoverable to his creatures, was not known, yea, was impossible to be known, by the works of creation. There had been nothing then reserved to be manifested in Christ: but his goodness, which is properly meant there by his Godhead, was as clearly visible as his power. The apostle upbraids them with their unthankfulness, and argues their inexcusableness, because the arm of his power in creation made no due impression of fear upon their spirits, nor the beams of his goodness wrought in them sufficient sentiments of gratitude. Their not glorifying God, was a contempt of the former; and their not being thankful, was a slight of the latter. God is the object of honor, as he is powerful, and the object of thankfulness properly as he is bountiful. All the idolatry of the heathens, is a clear testimony of their common sentiment of the goodness of God: since the more eminently useful any person was in some advantageous invention for the benefit of mankind, they thought he merited a rank in the number of their deities. The Italians esteemed Pithagoras a god, because he was Φιλαίθροπος ἰατρός: [Note: Iamblich. Vit. Pythag. lib. i. col. 6. p. 43.] to be good and useful, was an approximation to the Divine nature. Hence it was, that when the Lystrians saw a resemblance of the Divine goodness in the charitable and miraculous cure of one of their crippled citizens, presently they mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods, and inferred from thence their right to divine worship, inquiring into nothing else but the visible character of their goodness and usefulness, to capacitate them for the honor of a sacrifice (Acts 14:8-11). Hence it was, that they adored those creatures that were a common benefit, as the sun and moon, which must be founded upon a preexistent notion, not only of a Being, but of the bounty and goodness of God, which was naturally implanted in them, and legible in all God’s works. And the more beneficial anything was to them, and the more sensible advantages they received from it, the higher station they gave it in the rank of their idols, and bestowed upon it a more solemn worship: an absurd mistake to think everything that was sensibly good to them, to be God, clothing himself in such a form to be adored by them. And upon this account the Egyptians worshipped God under the figure

of an ox; and the East Indians, in some parts of their country, deify a heifer, intimating the goodness of God, as their nourisher and preserver, in giving them corn, whereof the ox is an instrument in serving for ploughing, and preparing the ground.

2. The notion of goodness is inseparable from the notion of a God. We cannot own the existence of God, but we must confess also the goodness of his nature. Hence, the apostle gives to his goodness the title of his Godhead, as if goodness and godhead were convertible terms (Romans 1:20). As it is indissolubly linked with the being of a Deity, so it cannot be severed from the notion of it: we as soon, undeify him by denying him good, as by denying him great: Optimus, Maximus, the best, greatest, was the name whereby the Romans entitled Him. His nature is as good, as it is majestic; so doth the Psalmist join them (Psalms 145:6-7), "I will declare my greatness; they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness." They considered his goodness before his greatness, in putting Optimus before Maximus; greatness without sweetness, is an unruly and affrighting monster in the world; like a vast turbulent sea, always casting out mire and dirt. Goodness is the brightness and loveliness of our majestical Creator. To fancy a God without it, is to fancy a miserable, scanty, narrow-hearted, savage God, and so an unlovely, and horrible being: for he is not a God that is not good; he is not a God that is not the highest good: infinite goodness is more necessary to, and more straitly joined with an infinite Deity, than infinite power and infinite wisdom: we cannot conceive him God, unless we conceive him the highest good, having nothing superior to himself in goodness, as he hath nothing superior to himself in excellency and perfection. No man can possibly form a notion of God in his mind and yet form a notion of something better than God; for whoever thinks anything better than God, fancieth a God with some defect: by how much the better he thinks that thing to be, by so much the more imperfect he makes God in his thoughts. This notion of the goodness of God was so natural, that some philosophers and others, being startled at the evil they saw in the world, fancied, besides a good God, an evil principle, the author of all punishments in the world. This was ridiculous; for those two must be of equal power, or one inferior to the other; if equal, the good could do nothing, but the evil one would restrain him; and the evil one could do nothing, but the good one would contradict him; so they would be always contending, and never conquering: if one were inferior to the other, then there would be nothing but what that superior ordered. Good, if the good one were superior; and nothing but evil, if the bad one were superior. In the prosecution of this, let us see.

I. What this goodness is. II. Some propositions concerning the nature of it. III. That God is good. IV. The manifestation of it in creation, providence, and redemption. V. The use.

I. What this goodness is. There is a goodness of being, which is the natural perfection of a thing; there is the goodness of will, which is the holiness, and righteousness of a person; there is the goodness of the hand, which we call liberality, or beneficence, a doing good to others.

1. We mean not by this, the goodness of his essence, or the perfection of his nature. God is thus good, because his nature is infinitely perfect; he hath all things requisite to the completing of a most perfect and sovereign Being. All good meets in his essence, as all water meets in the ocean. Under this notion all the attributes of God, which are requisite to so illustrious a Being, are comprehended. All things that are, have a goodness of being in them, derived to them by the power of God, as they are creatures; so the devil is good, as he is a creature of God's making: he hath a natural goodness, but not a moral goodness: when he fell from God, he retained his natural

goodness as a creature; because he did not cease to be, he was not reduced to that nothing, from whence he was drawn; but he ceased to be morally good, being stripped of his righteousness by his apostasy; as a creature, he was God's work; as a creature, he remains still God's work; and, therefore, as a creature, remains still good, in regard of his created being. The more of being anything hath, the more of this sort of natural goodness it hath; and so the devil hath more of this natural goodness than men have; because he hath more marks of the excellency of God upon him, in regard of the greatness of his knowledge, and the extent of his power, the largeness of his capacity, and the acuteness of his understanding, which are natural perfections belonging to the nature of an angel, though he hath lost his moral perfections. God is sovereignly and infinitely good in this sort of goodness. He is unsearchably perfect (Job 11:7); nothing is wanting to his essence, that is necessary to the perfection of it; yet this is not that which the Scripture expresseth under the term of goodness, but a perfection of God's nature as related to us, and which he poureth forth upon all his creatures, as goodness which flows from this natural perfection of the Deity.

2. Nor is it the same with the blessedness of God, but something flowing from his blessedness. Were he not first infinitely blessed, and full in himself, he could not be infinitely good and diffusive to us; had he not an infinite abundance in his own nature, he could not be overflowing to his creatures; had not the sun a fulness of light in itself, and the sea a vastness of water, the one could not enrich the world with its beams, nor the other fill every creek with its waters.

3. Nor is it the same with the holiness of God. The holiness of God is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is pure, and without spot in himself; the goodness of God is the efflux of his will, whereby he is beneficial to his creatures: the holiness of God is manifest in his rational creatures; but the goodness of God extends to all the works of his hands. His holiness beams most in his law; his goodness reacheth to everything that had a being from him (Psalms 145:9): "The Lord is good to all." And though he be said in the same Psalm (Psalms 145:17) to be "holy in all his works," it is to be understood of his bounty, bountiful in all his works; the Hebrew word signifying both holy and liberal, and the margin of the Bible reads it "merciful" or "bountiful."

4. Nor is this goodness of God the same with the mercy of God. Goodness extends to more objects than mercy; goodness stretcheth itself out to all the works of his hands; mercy extends only to a miserable object: for it is joined with a sentiment of pity, occasioned by the calamity of another. The mercy of God is exercised about those that merit punishment; the goodness of God is exercised upon objects that have not merited anything contrary to the acts of his bounty. Creation is an act of goodness, not of mercy; providence in governing some part of the world, is an act of goodness, not of mercy. [Note: Lombard lib. iv. distinct. 46. p. 286.] The heavens, saith Austin, need the goodness of God to govern them, but not the mercy of God to relieve them; the earth is full of the misery of man, and the compassions of God; but the heavens need not the mercy, of God to pity them, because they are not miserable; though they need the goodness and power of God to sustain them; because, as creatures, they are impotent without him. God's goodness extends to the angels, that kept their standing, and to man in innocence, who in that state stood not in need of mercy. Goodness and mercy are distinct, though mercy be a branch of goodness; there may be a manifestation of goodness, though none of mercy. Some think Christ had been incarnate, had not man fallen: had it been so, there had been a manifestation of goodness to our nature, but not of mercy, because sin had not made our natures miserable. The

devils are monuments of God's creating goodness, but not of his pardoning compassions. The grace of God respects the rational creature; merey the miserable creature; goodness all his creatures, brutes, and the senseless plants, as well as reasonable man.

5. By goodness, is meant the bounty of God. This is the notion of goodness in the world; when we say a good man, we mean either a holy man in his life, or a charitable and liberal man in the management of his goods. A righteous man, and a good man, are distinguished (Romans 5:7). "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet for a good man one would even dare to die;" for an innocent man, one as innocent of the crime as himself would scarce venture his life; but for a good man, a liberal, tender-hearted man, that had been a common good in the place where he lived, or had done another as great a benefit as life itself amounts to, a man out of gratitude might dare to die. "The goodness of God is his inclination to deal well and bountifully with his creatures." [Note: Coccei. sum. p. 50.] It is that whereby he wills there should be something besides himself for his own glory. God is good himself, and to himself, i. e. highly amiable to himself; and, therefore, some define it a perfection of God, whereby he loves himself and his own excellency; but as it stands in relation to his creatures, it is that perfection of God whereby he delights in his works, and is beneficial to them. God is the highest goodness, because he doth not act for his own profit, but for his creatures' welfare, and the manifestation of his own goodness. He sends out his beams, without receiving any addition to himself, or substantial advantage from his creatures. It is from this perfection that he loves whatsoever is good, and that is whatsoever he hath made, "for every creature of God is good" (1 Timothy 4:4); every creature hath some communications from him, which cannot be without some affection to them; every creature hath a footstep of Divine goodness upon it; God, therefore, loves that goodness in the creature, else he would not love himself. God hates no creature, no, not the devils and damned, as creatures; he is not an enemy to them, as they are the works of his hands; he is properly an enemy, that doth simply and absolutely wish evil to another; but God doth not absolutely wish evil to the damned; that justice that he inflicts upon them, the deserved punishment of their sin, is part of his goodness, as shall afterwards be shown. [Note: Cajetan in secund. secunda. Qu. 34. Ar. 3.] This is the most pleasant perfection of the Divine nature; his creating power amazes us; his conducting wisdom astonisheth us; his goodness, as furnishing us with all conveniences, delights us; and renders both his amazing power, and astonishing wisdom, delightful to us. As the sun, by effecting things, is an emblem of God's power; by discovering things to us, is an emblem of his wisdom; but by refreshing and comforting us, is an emblem of his goodness; and without this refreshing virtue it communicates to us, we should take no pleasure in the creatures it produceth, nor in the beauties it discovers. As God is great and powerful, he is the object of our understanding; but as good and bountiful, he is the object of our love and desire.

6. The goodness of God comprehends all his attributes. All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the objects it is exercised about. As the sea, though it be one mass of water, yet we distinguish it by several names, according to the shores it washeth, and beats upon; as the British and German Ocean, though all be one sea. When Moses longed. to see his glory, God tells him, he would give him a prospect of his goodness (Exodus 33:19): "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee." His goodness is his glory and Godhead, as much as is delightfully visible to his creatures, and whereby he doth benefit man: "I will cause my goodness," or "comeliness," as Calvin renders it, "to

pass before thee;" what is this, but the train of all his lovely perfections springing from his goodness? the whole catalogue of mercy, grace, long-suffering, abundance of truth, summed up in this one word (Exodus 34:6). All are streams from this fountain; he could be none of this, were he not first good. When it confers happiness without merit, it is grace; when it bestows happiness against merit, it is mercy; when he bears with provoking rebels, it is long-suffering; when he performs his promise, it is truth; when it meets with a person to whom it is not obliged, it is grace; when he meets with a person in the world, to which he hath obliged himself by promise, it is truth; [Note: Herle upon Wisdom, cap. 5. pp. 41, 42.] when it commiserates a distressed person, it is pity; when it supplies an indigent person, it is bounty; when it succors an innocent person, it is righteousness; and when it pardons a penitent person, it is mercy; all summed up in this one name of goodness; and the Psalmist expresseth the same sentiment in the same words (Psalms 145:7-8): "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy; the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over his works." He is first good, and then compassionate. Righteousness is often in Scripture taken, not for justice, but charitableness; this attribute, saith one, [Note: Ingelo Bentivolio, and Uran. Book IV. pp. 260, 261.] is so full of God, that it doth deify all the rest, and verify the adorableness of him. His wisdom might contrive against us, his power bear too hard upon us; one might be too hard for an ignorant, and the other too mighty for an impotent creature; his holiness would scare an impure and guilty creature, but his goodness conducts them all for us, and makes them all amiable to us; whatever comeliness they have in the eye of a creature, whatever comfort they afford to the heart of a creature, we are obliged for all to his goodness. This puts all the rest upon a delightful exercise; this makes his wisdom design for us, and this makes his power to act for us; this veils his holiness from affrighting us, and this spirits his mercy to relieve us: all his acts towards man, are but the workmanship of this. [Note: Daille, Melang. Part II. pp. 704, 705.] What moved him at first to create the world out of nothing, and erect so noble a creature as man, endowed with such excellent gifts; was it not his goodness? what made him separate his Son to be a sacrifice for us, after we had endeavored to rase out the first marks of his favor; was it not a strong bubbling of goodness? What moves him to reduce a fallen creature to the due sense of his duty, and at last bring him to an eternal felicity; is it not, only his goodness? This is the captain attribute that leads the rest to act. This attends them, and spirits them in all his ways of acting. This is the complement and perfection of all his works; had it not been for this, which set all the rest on work, nothing of his wonders had been seen in creation, nothing of his compassions had been seen in redemption, II. The second thing is, some propositions to explain the nature of this goodness.

1. He is good by his own essence. God is not only good in his essence, but good by his essence; the essence of "every created being is good;" so the unerring God pronounced everything which he had made (Genesis 1:31). The essence of the worst creatures, yea, of the impure and savage devils, is good; but they are not good per essentiam, for then they could not be bad, malicious, and oppressive. God is good, as he is God; and therefore good by himself; and from himself, not by participation from another; he made everything good, but none made him good; since his goodness was not received from another, he is good by his own nature. He could not receive it from the things he created, they are later than he; since they received all from him, they could bestow nothing on him; and no God preceded him, in whose inheritance and treasures of goodness, he could be a successor; he is absolutely his own goodness, he needed none to make

him good; but all things needed him, to be good by him. Creatures are good by being made so by him, and cleaving to him; he is good without cleaving to any goodness without him. Goodness is not a quality in him, but a nature; not a habit added to his essence, but his essence itself; he is not first God, and then afterwards good; but he is good as he is God; his essence, being one and the same, is formally and equally God and good. [Note: Ficini. Epist. lib. 11. epist. 30.] Αὐτὸγαθόν, “good of himself,” was one of the names the Platonists gave him. He is essentially good in his own nature, and not by any outward action which follows his essence. He is an independent Being, and hath nothing of goodness or happiness from anything without him, or anything he doth act about. If he were not good by his essence, he could not be eternally good, he could not be the first good; he would have something before him, from whence he derived that goodness wherewith he is possessed; nor could he be perfectly good, for he could not be equally good to that from whom he derived his goodness; no star, no splendid body, that derives light from the sun, doth equal that sun by which it is enlightened. Hence his goodness must be infinite, and circumscribed by no limits; the exercise of his goodness may be limited by himself; but his goodness, the principle, cannot; for since his essence is infinite, and his goodness is not distinguished from his essence, it is infinite also; if it were limited, it were finite; he cannot be bounded by anything without him; if so, then he were not God, because he would have something superior to him, to put bars in his way; if there were anything to fix him, it must be a good or evil being; good it cannot be, for it is the property of goodness to encourage goodness, not to bound it; evil it cannot be, for then it would extinguish goodness, as well as limit it; it would not be content with the circumscribing it, without destroying it; for it is the nature of every contrary, to endeavor the destruction of its opposite. He is essentially good by his own essence; therefore, good of himself; therefore, eternally good; and therefore, abundantly good.

2. God is the prime and chief goodness. Being good per se, and by his own essence, he must needs be the chief goodness, in whom there can be nothing but good, from whom there can proceed nothing but good, to whom all good whatsoever must be referred, as the final cause of all good. As he is the chief Being, so he is the chief good; and as we rise by steps from the existence of created things, to acknowledge one Supreme Being, which is God, so we mount by steps from the consideration of the goodness of created things, to acknowledge one Infinite Ocean of sovereign goodness, whence the streams of created goodness are derived. When we behold things that partake of goodness from another, we must acquiesce in one that hath goodness by participation from no other, but originally from himself, and therefore supremely in himself above all other things: so that, as nothing greater and more majestic can be imagined, so also nothing better and more excellent can be conceived than God. Nothing can add to him, or make him better than he is; nothing can detract from him, to make him worse; nothing can be added to him, nothing can be severed from him; no created good can render him more excellent; no evil, from any creature, can render him less excellent; “our goodness extends not to him” (Psalms 16:2); “wickedness may hurt a man, as we are, and our righteousness may profit the son of man; but, if we be righteous, what give we to Him, or what receives he at our hands” (Job 35:7-8)? as he hath no superior in place above him, so, being chief of all, he cannot be made better by any inferior to him. How can he be made better by any that hath from himself all that he hath? The goodness of a creature may be changed, but the goodness of the Creator is immutable; he is always like himself, so good that he cannot be evil, as he is so blessed that he cannot be miserable. Nothing is good but God, because nothing is of itself but God; as all things, being from nothing, are nothing in

comparison of God, so all things, being from nothing, are scanty and evil in comparison of God. If anything had been, ex Deo, God being the matter of it, it had been as good as God is, but since the principle, whence all things were drawn, was nothing, though the efficient cause by which they were extracted from nothing was God, they are as nothing in goodness, and not estimable in comparison of God (Psalms 73:25): "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c. God is all good; every creature hath a distinct variety of goodness: God distinctly pronounced every day's work in the creation "good." Food communicates the goodness of its nourishing virtue to our bodies; flowers the goodness of their odors to our smell; every creature a goodness of comeliness to our sight; plants the goodness of healing qualities for our cure; and all derive from themselves a goodness of knowledge, objectively to our understandings. The sun, by one sort of goodness, warms us; metals enrich us; living creatures sustain us, and delight us by another; all those have distinct kinds of goodness, which are eminently summed up in God, and are all but parts of his immense goodness. It is he that enlightens us by his sun, nourisheth us by bread (Matthew 4:4): "It is not by bread alone that we live, but by the word of God." It is all but his own supreme goodness, conveyed to us through those varieties of conduit-pipes. "God is all good;" other things are good in their kind; as, a good man, a good angel, a good tree, a good plant; but God hath a good of all kinds eminently in his nature. He is no less all-good, than he is almighty, and all-knowing; as the sun contains in it all the light, and more light than is in all the clearest bodies in the world, so doth God contain in himself all the good, and more good than is in the richest creatures. Nothing is good, but as it resembles him; as nothing is hot, but as it resembles fire, the prime subject of heat. God is omnipotent, therefore no good can be wanting to him. If he were destitute of any which he could not have, he were not almighty: he is so good, that there is no mixture of anything which can be called not good in him; everything besides him wants some good, which others have. Nothing can be so evil as God is good. There can be no evil but there is some mixture of good with it; no nature so evil but there is some spark of goodness in it: but God is a good which hath no taint of evil; nothing can be so supreme an evil as God is supreme goodness. He is only good, without capacity of increase; he is all good, and unmixedly good; none good but God: a goodness, like the sun, that hath all light, and no darkness. That is the second thing; he is the supreme and chief goodness.

3. This goodness is communicative. None so communicatively good as God. As the notion of God includes goodness, so the notion of goodness includes diffusiveness; without goodness he would cease to be a Deity, and without diffusiveness he would cease to be good. The being good is necessary to the being God; for goodness is nothing else, in the notion of it, but a strong inclination to do good; either to find or make an object, wherein to exercise itself, according to the propension of its own nature; and it is an inclination of communicating itself, not for its own interest, but the good of the object it pitcheth upon. Thus God is good by nature; and his nature is not without activity; he acts conveniently to his own nature (Psalms 119:68): "Thou art good, and dost good." And nothing accrues to him, by the communications of himself to others, since his blessedness was as great before the frame of any creature as ever it was since the erecting of the world; so that the goodness of Christ himself increaseth not the lustre of his happiness (Psalms 16:2): "My goodness extends not to thee." He is not of a niggardly and envious nature; he is too rich to have any cause to envy, and too good to have any will to envy; he is as liberal as he is rich, according to the capacity of the object about which his goodness is exercised. The Divine goodness, being the supreme goodness, is goodness in the highest degree of activity; not an idle,

enclosed, pent up goodness, as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, bubbling up within itself, but bubbling out of itself: a fountain of gardens to water every part of his creation; "He is an ointment poured forth" (Song of Solomon 1:3): nothing spreads itself more than oil, and takes up a larger space wheresoever it drops. It may be no less said of the goodness of God, as it is of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 1:23); "He fills all in all:" he fills rational creatures with understanding, sensitive nature with vigor and motion, the whole world with beauty and sweetness. Every taste, every touch of a creature, is a taste and touch of Divine goodness. Divine goodness offers itself in one spark in this creature, in another spark in the other creature, and altogether make up a goodness inconceivable by any creature. The whole mass, and extracted spirit of it, is infinitely short of the goodness of the Divine nature, imperfect shadows of that goodness which is in himself. Indeed, the more excellent anything is, the more nobly it acts; how remotely doth light, that excellent brightness of the creation, disperse itself! How doth that glorious creature, which God hath set in the heavens, spread its wings over heaven and earth, roll itself about the world, cast its beams upward and downward, insinuate into all corners, pierce the depths, and shoot up its rays into the heights, encircle the higher and lower creatures in its arms, reach out its communications to influence everything under the earth, as well as dart its beams of light and heat on things above, or upon the earth! "Nothing is hid from it" (Psalms 19:6); not from its power, nor from its sweetness. How communicative also is water, a necessary and excellent creature! How active is it in a river, to nourish the living creatures engendered in its womb! refresheth every shore it runs by; promotes the propagation of fruits for the nourishment, and bestows a verdure upon the ground, for the delight of man; and where it cannot reach the higher ground in its substance, it doth by its vapors, mounted up and concocted by the sun, and gently distilled upon the earth, for the opening its womb to bring forth its fruits. God is more prone to communicate himself, than the sun to spread its wings, or the earth to mount up its fruits, or the water to multiply living creatures. [Note: Tom. II. p. 926.] Goodness is his nature. Hence were there internal communications of himself from eternity; diffusions of himself, without himself, in time, in the creation of the world, like a full vessel running over. He created the world that he might impart his goodness to something without him, and diffuse larger measures of his goodness, after he had laid the first foundation of it in his being; and therefore he created several sorts of creatures, that they might be capable of various and distinct measures of his liberality, according to the distinct capacities of their nature, but imparted most to the rational creature, because that is only capable of an understanding to know him, and will to embrace him. He is the highest goodness, and therefore a communicative goodness, and acts excellently according to his nature.

4. God is necessarily good. None is necessarily good but God; he is as necessarily good, as he is necessarily God. His goodness is as inseparable from his nature as his holiness. He is good by nature, not only by will; as he is holy by nature, not only by will, he is good in his nature, and good in his actions; and as he cannot be bad in his nature, so he cannot be bad in his communications; he can no more act contrary to this goodness in any of his actions, than he can un-God himself. It is not necessary that God should create a world; he was at his own choice whether he would create or no; but when he resolves to make a world, it is necessary that he should make it good, because he is goodness itself, and cannot act against his own nature. He could not create anything without goodness in the very act; the very act of creation, or communicating being to anything without himself, is in itself an act of goodness, as well as an act of power; had he not been good in himself, nothing could have been endued with any goodness by him. In the act of

giving being, he is liberal; the being he bestows is a displaying his own liberality; he could not confer what he needs not, and which could not be deserved, without being bountiful; since what was nothing, could not merit to be brought into being, the very act of giving to nothing a being, was an act of choice goodness. He could not create anything without goodness as the motive, and the necessary motive; his goodness could not necessitate him to make the world, but his goodness could only move him to resolve to make a world; he was not bound to erect and fashion it because of his goodness, but he could not frame it without his goodness as the moving cause. He could not create anything, but he must create it good. It had been inconsistent with the supreme goodness of his nature, to have created only murderous, ravenous, injurious creatures; to have created a bedlam rather than a world: a mere heap of confusion would have been as inconsistent with his Divine goodness, as with his Divine wisdom. Again, when his goodness had moved him to make a creature, his goodness would necessarily move him to be beneficial to his creature; not that this necessity results from any merit in the creature, which he had framed; but from the excellency and diffusiveness of his own nature, and his own glory; the end for which he formed it, which would have been obscure, yea, nothing, without some degrees of his bounty. What occasion of acknowledgments and praise could the creature have for its being, if God had given him only a miserable being, while it was innocent in action? The goodness of God would not suffer him to make a creature, without providing conveniences for it, so long as he thought good to maintain its being, and furnishing it with that which was necessary to answer that end for which he created it; and his own nature would not suffer him to be unkind to his rational creature, while it was innocent. It had been injustice to inflict evil upon the creature, that had not offended, and had no relation to an offending creature; the nature of God could not have brought forth such an act: and, therefore, some say, that God, after he had created man, could not presently annihilate him, and take away his life and being. [Note: Cocceii sum Theolog. p. 91.] As a sovereign, he might do it; as Almighty, he was able to do it, as well as create him; but in regard of his goodness, he could not morally do it: for had he annihilated man as soon as ever he had made him, he had not made man for himself, and for his own glory; to be loved, worshipped, sought, and acknowledged by him. He would not then have been the end of man; he had created him in vain, and the world in vain, which he assures us he did not (Isaiah 45:18-19). And, certainly, if the gifts of God be without repentance, man could not have been annihilated after his creation, without repentance in God, without any cause, had not sin entered into the world. If God did not say to man, after sin had made its entrance into the world, "Seek ye me in vain," he could not, because of his goodness, have said so to man in his innocence. As God is necessarily mind, so he is necessarily will; as he is necessarily knowing, so he is necessarily loving. He could not be blessed, if he did not know himself, and his own perfection; nor good, if he did not delight in himself, and his own perfections. And this goodness whereby he delights in himself, is the source of his delight in his creatures, wherein he sees the footsteps of himself. If he loves himself, he cannot but love the resemblance of himself, and the image of his own goodness. He loves himself, because he is the highest goodness and excellency; and loves everything as it resembles himself, because it is an efflux of his own goodness; and as he doth necessarily love himself, and his own excellency, so he doth necessarily love anything that resembles that excellency, which is the primary object of his esteem. But,

5. Though he be necessarily good, yet he is also freely good. The necessity of the goodness of his nature hinders not the liberty of his actions; the matter of his acting is not at all necessary, but the

manner of his acting in a good and bountiful way, is necessary, as well as free. [Note: Gilbert de Dei Dominio, p. 6.] He created the world and man freely, because he might choose whether he would create it, but he created them good necessarily, because he was first necessarily good in his nature, before he was freely a Creator. When he created man, he freely gave him a positive law, but necessarily a wise and righteous law; because he was necessarily wise, and righteous, before he was freely a Lawgiver. When he makes a promise, he freely lets the word go out of his lips, but when he hath made it, he is necessarily a faithful performer; because he was necessarily true and righteous in his nature, before he was freely a promiser. God is necessarily good in his nature, but free in his communications of it; to make him necessarily to communicate his goodness in the first creation of the creature, would render him but impotent, good without liberty and without will; if the communications of it be not free, the eternity of the world must necessarily be concluded, which some anciently asserted from the naturalness of God's goodness, making the world flow from God as light from the sun. God, indeed, is necessarily good, affective in regard of his nature, but freely good, affectivé, in regard of the effluxes of it to this or that particular subject he pitcheth on. He is not so necessarily communicative of his goodness as the sun of his light, or a tree of its cooling shade, that chooseth not its objects, but enlightens all indifferently, without any variation or distinction; this were to make God of no more understanding than the sun, to shine not where it pleaseth, but where it must. He is an understanding agent, and hath a sovereign right to choose his own subjects; it would not be a supreme goodness, if it were not a voluntary goodness. It is agreeable to the nature of the highest good, to be absolutely free, to dispense his goodness in what methods and measures he leaseth, according to the free determinations of his own will, guide by the wisdom of his mind, and regulated by the holiness of his nature. He is not to "give an account of any of his matters" (Job 33:13); "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion" (Romans 9:15); and he will be good, to whom he will be good; when he doth act, he cannot but act well, so it is necessary; yet he may act this good or that good, to this or that degree, so it is free. As it is the perfection of his nature, it is necessary; as it is the communication of his bounty, it is voluntary. The eye cannot but see if it be open, yet it may glance upon this or that color, fix upon this or that object, as it is conducted by the will. God necessarily loves himself, because he is good, yet not by constraint, but freedom; because his affection to himself is from a knowledge of himself. He necessarily loves his own image, because it is his image; yet freely, because not blindly, but from motions of understanding and will. What necessity could there be upon him, to resolve to communicate his goodness? It could not be to make himself better by it, for he had a goodness incapable of any addition; he confers a goodness on his creatures, but reaps not a harvest of goodness to his own essence from his creatures. What obligation could there be from the creature, to confer a goodness on him to this or that degree, for this or that duration? If he had not created a man, nor angel, he had done them no wrong; if he had given them only a simple being, he had manifested a part of his goodness, without giving them a right to challenge any more of him; if he had taken away their beings after a time when he had answered his end, he had done them no injury for what law obliged him to enrich them, and leave them in that being wherein he had invested them, but his sole goodness? Whatever sparks of goodness any creature hath, are the free effusions of God's bounty, the offspring of his own inclination to do well, the simple favor of the donor; not purchased, not merited by the creature. God is as unconstrained in his liberty, in all his communications, as infinite in his goodness, the fountain of them.

6. This goodness is communicative with the greatest pleasure. Moses desired to see his glory, God assures him he should see his goodness (Exodus 33:18-19); intimating that his goodness is his glory, and his glory his delight also. He sends not forth his blessings with an ill will; he doth not stay till they are squeezed from him; he prevents men with his blessings of goodness (Psalms 21:3); he is most delighted when he is most diffusive; and his pleasure in bestowing, is larger than his creature's in possessing. He is not covetous of his own treasures. He lays up his goodness in order to laying it out with a complacency wholly divine. The jealousy princes have of their subjects makes them sparing of their gifts, for fear of giving them materials for rebellion: God's foresight of the ill use men would make of his benefits damped him not in bestowing his largesses. He is incapable of envy; his own happiness can no more be diminished, than it can be increased. None can over-top him in goodness, because nothing hath any good but what is derived from him; his gifts are without repentance: sorrow hath no footing in him, who is infinitely happy, as well as infinitely good. Goodness and envy are inconsistent. How unjustly, then, did the devil accuse God! What God gives out of goodness, he gives with joy and gladness. He did not only will that we should be, but rejoice that he had brought us into being; he rejoiced in his works (Psalms 104:31), and his wisdom stood by him, "delighting in the habitable parts of the earth" (Proverbs 8:31). He beheld the world after its creation with a complacency, and still governs it with the same pleasure wherewith he reviewed it. Infinite cheerfulness attends infinite goodness. He would not give, if he had not a pleasure that others should enjoy his goodness; since he is better than anything, and more communicative than anything; he is more joyful in giving out, than the sun can be to run its race, in pouring forth light. He is said only to repent, and grieve, when men answer not the obligations and ends of his goodness; which would be their own felicity, as well as his glory. Though he doth not force greater degrees of his goodness upon those that neglect it, yet he denies them not to those that solicit him for it: it is always greater pleasure to him to impart upon the importunities of the creatures, than it is to a mother to reach out her breast to her crying and longing infant. He is not wearied by the solicitations of men; he is pleased with their prayers, because he is pleased with the imparting of his own goodness: he seems to be in travail with it, longing to be delivered of it into the lap of his creature. He is as much delighted with petitions for his liberality in bestowing his best goodness, as princes are weary of the craving of their subjects. None can be so desirous to squeeze those that are under them, as God is delighted to enlarge his hand towards them. It is the nature of his goodness to be glad of men's solicitations for it, because they are significant valuations of it, and therefore fit occasions for him to bestow it. Since he doth not delight in the unhappiness of any of his creatures, he certainly delights in what may conduce unto their felicity. He doth with the same delight multiply the effects of his goodness where his wisdom sees it convenient, as he beheld the first-fruits of his goodness with a complacency upon laying the top-stone of the creation.

7. The displaying of this goodness was the motive and end of all his works of creation and providence. [Note: Amyr. Moral. Tom. I. p. 260.] God being infinitely wise, would not act without the highest reason, and for the highest end. The reason that induced him to create, must be of as great an eminency as himself: the motive could not be taken without him, because there was nothing but himself in being; it must be taken, therefore, from within himself, and from some one of those most excellent perfections whereby we conceive him. But, upon the exact consideration of all of them, none can seem to challenge that honor of being the motive of them, to resolve the setting forth any work, but his own goodness; this being the first thing manifest in his creation,

seems to be the first thing moving him to a resolution to create. Wisdom may be considered as directing, power considered as acting, but it is natural to reflect upon goodness as moving the one to direct, and the other to act. Power was the principle of his action, wisdom the rule of his action, goodness the motive of his action; principle and rule are awakened by the motive, and subservient to the end. That which is the most amiable perfection in the Divine nature, and that which he first took notice of, as the footsteps of them, in the distinct view of every day's work, and the general view of the whole frame, seems to claim the best right to be entitled the motive and end of his creation of things. God could have no end but himself, because there was nothing besides himself. Again, the end of every agent is that which he esteems good, and the best good for that kind of action: since nothing is to be esteemed good but God, nothing can be the ultimate end of God but himself, and his own goodness. What a man wills chiefly is his end; but God cannot will any other thing but himself as his end, because there is nothing superior to himself in goodness. He cannot will anything that supremely serves himself and his own goodness as his end; for, if he did, that which he wills must be superior to himself in goodness, and then he is not God; or inferior to him in goodness, and then he would not be righteous, in willing that which is a lower good before a higher. God cannot will anything as his end of acting, but him self, without undeifying himself. God's will being infinitely good, cannot move for anything but what is infinitely good; and, therefore, whatsoever God made, he made for himself (Proverbs 16:4), that whatsoever he made might bear a badge of this perfection upon it, and be a discovery of his wonderful goodness: for the making things for himself doth not signify any indigence in God, that he made anything to increase his excellency (for that is capable of no addition), but to manifest his excellency. God possessing everything eminently in himself, did not create the world for any need he had of it; finite things were unable to make any accession to that which is infinite. Man, indeed, builds a house to be a shelter to him against wind and weather, and makes clothes to secure him from cold, and plants gardens for his recreation and health. God is above all those little helps; he did not make the world for himself in such a kind, but for himself, i. e. the manifestation of himself and the riches of his nature; not to make himself blessed, but to discover his own blessedness to his creatures, and to communicate something of it to them. He did not garnish the world with so much bounty, that he might live more happily than he did before, but that his rational creatures might have fit conveniences. As the end for which God demands the performance of our duty is not for his own advantage, but for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13), so the end why he conferred upon us the excellency of such a being was for our good, and the discovery of his goodness to us; for had not God created the world, he had been wholly unknown to any but himself; he produced creatures, that he might be known: as the sun shines not only to discover other things, but to be seen itself in its beauty and brightness. God would create things, because he would be known in his glory and liberality; hence is it that he created intellectual creatures, because without them the rest of the creation could not be taken notice of: it had been in some sort in vain; for no nature lower than an understanding nature, was able to know the marks of God in the creation, and acknowledge him as God. In this regard, God is good above all creatures, because he intends only to communicate his goodness in creation, not to acquire any goodness, or excellency from them, as men do in their framing of things. God is all, and is destitute of nothing, and, therefore, nothing accrues to him by the creation, but the acknowledgment of his goodness. This goodness, therefore, must be the motive and end of all his works.

III. The third thing, that God is good.

1. The more excellent anything is in nature, the more of goodness and kindness it hath. For we see more of love and kindness in creatures that are endued with sense, to their descendants, than in plants, that have only a principle of growth. Plants preserve their seeds whole that are enclosed in them; animals look to their young only after they are dropped from them; yet, after some time, take no more notice of them than of a stranger that never had any birth from them. But man, that hath a higher principle of reason, cherisheth his offspring, and gives them marks of his goodness while he lives, and leaves not the world at the time of his death without some testimonies of it: much more must God, who is a higher principle than sense or reason, be "good" and bountiful to all his offspring. The more perfect anything is, the more it doth communicate itself. The sun is more excellent than the stars, and, therefore, doth more sensibly, more extensively, disperse its liberal beams than the stars do. And the better any man is, the more charitable he is; God being the most excellent nature, having nothing more excellent than himself, because nothing more ancient than himself, who is the Ancient of Days: there is nothing, therefore, better and more bountiful than himself.

2. He is the cause of all created goodness; he must therefore himself be the Supreme Good. What good is in the heavens, is the product of some Being above the earth; and those varieties of goodness in the earth, and several creatures, are somewhere in their fulness and union: that, therefore, which possesses all those scattered goodnesses in their fulness, must be all good, all that good which is displayed in creatures; therefore sovereignly best. Whatsoever natural or moral goodness there is in the world, in angels, or men, or inferior creatures, is a line drawn from that centre, the bubblings of that fountain. God cannot but be better than all, since the goodness that is in creatures is the fruit of his own. If he were not good, he could produce no good: he could not bestow what he had not. If the creature be "good," as the apostle says "every creature is" (1 Timothy 4:4), he must needs be better than all, because they have nothing but what is derived to them from him; and much more goodness than all, because finite beings are not capable of receiving into them, and containing in themselves, all that goodness which is in an Infinite Being; when we search for good in creatures, they come short of that satisfaction which is in God (Psalms 4:6). As the certainty of a first principle of all things, is necessarily concluded from the being of creatures, and the upholding and sustaining power and virtue of God is concluded from the mutability of those things in the world; whence we infer, that there must be some stable foundation of those tottering things, some firm hinge upon which those changeable things do move, without which there would be no stability in the kinds of things, no order, no agreement, or union among them: so from the goodness of everything, and their usefulness to us, we must conclude him good, who made all those things. And since we find distinct goodnesses in the creature, we must conclude that one principle whence they did flow, excels in the glory of goodness: all those little glimmerings of goodness which are scattered in the creatures, as the image in the glass, represent the face, posture, motion of him whose image it is, but not in the fulness of life and spirit, as in the original; it is but a shadow at the best, and speaks something more excellent in the copy. As God hath an infiniteness of being above them, so he hath a supremacy of goodness beyond them: what they have, is but a participation from him; what he hath, must be infinitely supereminent above them. If anything be good by itself, it must be infinitely good, it would set itself no bounds; we must make as many gods, as particulars of goodness in the world: but being good by the bounty of another, that from whence they flow must be the chief goodness. It is God's excellency and goodness, which, like a beam, pierceth all things: he decks spirits with reason, endues matter with

form, furnisheth everything with useful qualities. [Note: Ficinus in Con. Amor. Orat. 2. cap. p. 1326.] As one beam of the sun illustrates fire, water, earth; so one beam of God enlightens and endows minds, souls, and universal nature nothing in the world had its goodness from itself, any more than it had its being from itself: The cause must be richer than the effect. But that which I intend is the defence of this goodness.

First, The goodness of God is not impaired by suffering sin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. It is rather a testimony of God's goodness, that he gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge against his goodness, that he settled man in a capacity to be evil. God was first a benefactor to man, before man could be a rebel against God. May it not be inquired, whether it had not been against the wisdom of God, to have made a rational creature with liberty, and not suffer him to act according to the nature he was endowed with, and to follow his own choice for some time? Had it been wisdom to frame a free creature, and totally to restrain that creature from following its liberty? Had it been goodness, as it were, to force the creature to be happy against its will? God's goodness furnished Adam with a power to stand; was it contrary to his goodness, to leave Adam to a free use of that power? To make a creature, and not let that creature act according to the freedom of his nature, might have been thought to have been a blot upon his wisdom, and a constraint upon the creature, not to make use of that freedom of his nature, which the Divine goodness had bestowed upon him. To what purpose did God make a law, to govern his rational creature, and yet resolve that creature should not have his choice, whether he would obey it or no? Had he been really constrained to observe it, his observation of it could no more have been called obedience, than the acts of brutes that have a kind of natural constraint upon them by the instinct of their nature, can be called obedience: in vain had God endowed a creature with so great and noble a principle as liberty. Had it been goodness in God, after he had made a reasonable creature, to govern him in the same manner as he does brutes by a necessary instinct? It was the goodness of God to the nature of men and angels, to leave them in such a condition, to be able to give him a voluntary obedience, a nobler offering than the whole creation could present him with; and shall this goodness be undervalued, and accounted mean, because man made an ill use of it, and turned it into wantonness? As the unbelief of man doth not diminish the redeeming grace of God (Romans 3:3), so neither doth the fall of man lessen the creating goodness of God. Besides, why should the permission of sin be thought more a blemish to his goodness, than the providing a way of redemption for the destroying the works of sin and the devil, be judged the glory of it, whereby he discovered a goodness of grace that surpassed the bounds of nature? If this were a thing that might seem to obscure or deface the goodness of God, in the permission of the fall of angels and Adam, it was in order to bring forth a greater goodness in a more illustrious pomp, to the view of the world (Romans 11:32): "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." But if nothing could be alleged for the defence of his goodness in this, it were most comely for an ignorant creature not to impeach his goodness, but adore him in his proceedings, in the same language the apostle doth (ver. 33): "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Secondly, Nor is his goodness prejudiced, by not making all things the equal subjects of it.

1. It is true all things are not subjects of an equal goodness. The goodness of God is not so illustriously manifested in one thing as another. In the creation he hath dropped goodness upon

some, in giving them beings and sense, and poured it upon others in endowing them with understanding and reason. The sun is full of light, but it hath a want of sense; brutes excel in the vigor of sense, but they are destitute of the light of reason; man hath a mind and reason conferred on him, but he hath neither the acuteness of mind, nor the quickness of motion equal with an angel. In providence also he doth give abundance, and opens his hand to some; to others he is more sparing: he gives greater gifts of knowledge to some, while he lets others remain in ignorance; he strikes down some, and raiseth others; he afflicts some with a continual pain, while he blesseth others with an uninterrupted health; he hath chosen one nation wherein to set up his gospel sun, and leaves another benighted in their own ignorance. "Known was God in Judea; they were a peculiar people alone of all the nations of the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2). He was not equally good to the angels: he held forth his hand to support some in their happy habitation, while he suffered others to sink in irreparable ruin; and he is not so diffusive here of his goodness to his own as he will be in heaven. Here their sun is sometimes clouded, but there all clouds and shades will be blown away, and melted into nothing: instead of drops here, there will be above rivers of life. Is any creature destitute of the open marks of his goodness, though all are not enriched with those signal characters which he vouchsafes to others? He that is unerring, pronounced everything good distinctly in its production, and the whole good in its universal perfection (Genesis 1:4; Genesis 1:10; Genesis 1:12; Genesis 1:18; Genesis 1:21; Genesis 1:25; Genesis 1:31). Though he made not all things equally good, yet he made nothing evil; and though one creature in regard of its nature may be better than another, yet an inferior creature, in regard of its usefulness in the order of the creation, may be better than a superior. The earth hath a goodness in bringing forth fruits, and the waters in the sea a goodness in multiplying food. That any of us have a being is goodness; that we have not so healthful a being as others is unequal, but not unjust goodness. He is good to all, though not in the same degree: "The whole earth is full of his mercy" (Psalms 119:64). A good man is good to his cattle, to his servants; he makes a provision for all, but he bestows not those floods of bounty upon them that he doth upon his children. As there are various gifts, but one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4), so there are various distributions, but from one goodness; the drops, as well as the fuller streams, are of the same fountain, and relish of the nature of it; and though he do not make all men partake of the riches of his grace after the corruption of their nature, is his goodness disgraced hereby? or doth he merit the title of cruelty? Will any diminish the goodness of a father for his not setting up his son after he hath foolishly and wilfully proved bankrupt; or not rather admire his liberality in giving him so large a stock to trade with when he first set him up in the world?

2. The goodness of God to creatures, is to be measured by their distinct usefulness to the common end. It were better for a toad or serpent to be a man, i. e. better for the creature itself, as it were advanced to a higher degree of being, but not better for the universe: he could have made every pebble a living creature, and every living creature a rational one; but that he made everything as we see, it was a goodness to the creature itself; but that he did not make it of a higher elevation in nature, was a part of his goodness to the rational creature. If all were rational creatures, there would have been wanting creatures of an inferior nature for their conveniency; there would have wanted the manifestation of the variety and "fulness of his goodness." Had all things in the world been rational creatures, much of that goodness which he hath communicated to rational creatures would not have appeared: how could man have showed his skill in taming and managing creatures more mighty than himself? What materials would there have been to manifest

the goodness of God, bestowed upon the reasonable creatures for framing excellent works and inventions? Much of the goodness of God had lain wrapt up from sense and understanding. All other things partake not of so great a goodness as man; yet they are so subservient to that goodness poured forth on man, that little of it could have been seen without them. Consider man, every member in his body hath a goodness in itself; but a greater goodness as referred to the whole, without which the goodness of the more noble part would not be manifested. The head is the most excellent member, and hath greater impressions of Divine goodness upon it, in regard that it is the organ of understanding: were every member of the body a head, what a deformed monster would man be! If he were all head, where would be feet for motion, and arms for action? Man would be fit only for thought, and not for exercise. The goodness of God in giving man so noble a part as the head, could not be known without a tongue, whereby to express the conception of his mind; and without feet and hands whereby to act much of what he conceives, and determines, and execute the resolves of his will; all those have a goodness in themselves, an honor, a comeliness from the goodness of God (1 Corinthians 12:22-23), but not so great a goodness as the nobler part: yet, if you consider them in their functions, and refer them to that excellent member which they serve, their inferior goodness is absolutely necessary to the goodness of the other; without which, the goodness of the head and understanding would be in obscurity, be insignificant to the whole world, and, in a great measure, to the person himself that wants such members.

3. "The goodness of God is more seen in this inequality." If God were equally good to all, it would destroy commerce, unity, the links of human society, damp charity, and render that useless which is one of the noblest and delightfulest duties to be exercised here; it would cool prayer, which is excited by wants, and is a necessary demonstration of the creature's dependence on God. But in this inequality every man hath enough in his enjoyments for praise, and in his wants, matter for his prayer. Besides the inequality of the creature is the ornament of the world; what pleasure could a garden afford if there were but one sort of flowers, or one sort of plants? far less than when there is variety to please the sight, and every other sense. Again, the freedom of Divine goodness, which is the glory of it, is evident hereby; had he been alike good to all, it would have looked like a necessary, not a free act; but by the inequality, it is manifest that he doth not do it by a natural necessity as the sun shines, but by a voluntary liberty, as being the entire Lord, and free disposer of his own goods; and that is the gift of the pleasure of his will, as well as the efflux of his nature, that he hath not a goodness without wisdom, but a wisdom as rich as his bounty.

4. The goodness of God could not be equally communicated to all, after their settlement in their several beings,—because they have not a capacity in their natures for it: he doth bestow the marks of his goodness according to that natural capacity of fitness he perceives in his creatures; as the water of the sea fills every creek and gulf with different measures, according to the compass each have to contain it; and as the sun doth disperse light to the stars above, and the places below, to some more, to some less, according to the measures of their reception. God doth not do good to all creatures according to the greatness of his own power, and the extent of his own wealth, but according to the capacity of the subject; not so much good as he can do, but so much good as the creature can receive. The creature would sink, if God would pour out all his goodness upon it; as Moses would have perished, if God should have shown him all his glory (Exodus 33:18; Exodus 33:20). He doth manifest more good to his reasonable creatures, because they are more

capable of acknowledging, and setting forth his goodness.

5. God ought to be allowed the free disposal of his own goodness. Is not God the Lord of his own gifts; and will you not allow him the privilege of having some more peculiar objects of his love and pleasure, which you allow without blame to man, and use yourself without any sense of a crime? Is a prince esteemed good, though he be not equally bountiful to all his servants, nor equally gracious in pardoning all his rebels; and shall the goodness of the great Sovereign of the world be impeached, notwithstanding those mighty distributions of it, because he will act according to his own wisdom and pleasure, and not according to men's fancies and humors? Must purblind reason be the judge and director how God shall dispose of his own, rather than his own infinite wisdom and sovereign will? Is God less good, because there are numberless nothings, which he is able to bring into being? He could create a world of more creatures than he hath done: doth he, therefore, wish evil to them, by letting them remain in that nothing from whence he could draw them? No; but he denies that good to them, which he is able, if he pleased, to confer upon them. If God doth not give that good to a creature which it wants by its own demerit, can he be said to wish evil to it; or, only to deny that goodness which the creature hath forfeited, and which is at God's liberty to retain or disperse? [Note: Camero, p. 30.] Though God cannot but love his own image where he finds it, yet when this image is lost, and the devil's image voluntary received, he may choose whether he will manifest his goodness to such a one or no. Will you not account that man liberal, that distributes his alms to a great company, though he rejects some? Much more will you account him good, if he rejects none that implore him, but dispenseth his doles to every one upon their petition: and is he not good, because he will not bestow a farthing upon those that address not themselves to him? God is so good, that he denies not the best good to those that seek him: he hath promised life and happiness to them that do so. Is he less good, because he will not distribute his goodness to those that despise him? Though he be good, yet his wisdom is the rule of dispensing his goodness.

6. The severe punishment of offenders, and the afflictions he inflicts upon his servants, are no violations of his goodness. The notion of God's vindictive justice is as naturally inbred, and implanted in the mind of man, as that of his goodness, and those two sentiments never shocked one another. The heathen never thought him bad, because he was just; nor unrighteous, because he was good. God being infinitely good, cannot possibly intend or act anything but what is good: "Thou art good, and thou doest good;" i. e. whatsoever thou dost is good, whatsoever it be, pleasant or painful to the creature (Psalms 119:68): punishments themselves are not a moral evil in the person that inflicts, though they are a natural evil in the person that suffers them. [Note: Boetius.] In ordering punishment to the wicked, good is added to evil; in ordering impunity to the wicked, evil is added to evil. To punish wickedness is right, therefore good: to leave men uncontrolled in their wickedness, is unrighteous, and therefore bad. But again shall his justice in some few judgments in the world, impeach his goodness, more than his wonderful patience to sinners is able to silence the calumnies against him? Is not his hand fuller of gracious doles, than of dreadful thunderbolts? Doth he not oftener seem forgetful of his justice, when he pours out upon the guilty the streams of his mercy, than to be forgetful of his goodness, when he sprinkles in the world some drops of his wrath?

First, God's judgments in the world, do not infringe his goodness; for,

1. The justice of God is a part of the goodness of his nature. God himself thought so, when he told Moses he would make all his goodness pass before him (Exodus 33:19): he leaves not out in that enumeration of the parts of it, his resolution, by no means to clear the guilty, but to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children (Exodus 34:7). It is a property of goodness to hate evil, and, therefore, a property of goodness to punish it: it is no less righteousness to give according to the deserts of a person in a way of punishment, than to reward a person that obeys his precepts in a way of recompense. Whatsoever is righteous is good; sin is evil; and, therefore, whatsoever doth witness against it, is good; his goodness, therefore, shines in his justice, for without being just he could not be good. Sin is a moral disorder in the world: every sin is injustice: injustice breaks God's order in the world; there is a necessity therefore of justice to put the world in order. Punishment orders the person committing the injury, who, when he will not be in the order of obedience, must be in the order of suffering for God's honor. The goodness of all things which God pronounced so, consisted in their order and beneficial helpfulness to one another: when this order is inverted, the goodness of the creature ceaseth: if it be a bad thing to spoil this order, is it not a part of Divine goodness to reduce them into order, that they may be reduced in some measure to their goodness? Do we ever account a governor less in goodness, because he is exact in justice, and punisheth that which makes a disorder in his government? and is it a diminution of the Divine goodness, to punish that which makes a disorder in the world? As wisdom without goodness would be a serpentine craft, and issue in destruction; so goodness without justice would be impotent indulgence, and cast things into confusion. When Abel's blood cried out for vengeance against Cain, it spake a good thing; Christ's blood speaking better things than the blood of Abel, implies that Abel's blood spake a good thing; the comparative implies a positive (Hebrews 12:24). If it were the goodness of that innocent blood to demand justice, it could not be a badness in the Sovereign of the world to execute it. How can God sustain the part of a good and righteous judge, if he did not preserve human society? and how would it be preserved, without manifesting himself by public judgments against public wrongs? Is there not as great a necessity that goodness should have instruments of judgment, as that there should be prisons, bridewells, and gibbets, in a good commonwealth? Did not the thunderbolts of God sometimes roar in the ears of men, they would sin with a higher hand than they do, fly more in the face of God, make the world as much a moral, as it was at first a natural chaos: the ingenuity of men would be damped, if there were not something to work upon their fears, to keep them in their due order. Impunity of the innocent person is worse than any punishment. It is a misery to want medicines for the cure of a sharp disease; and a mark of goodness in a prince to consult for the security of the political body, by cutting off a gangrened and corrupting member: and what prince would deserve the noble title of good, if he did not restrain, by punishment, those evils which impair the public welfare? Is it not necessary that the examples of sin, whereby others have been encouraged to wickedness, should be made examples of justice, whereby the same persons and others may be discouraged from what before they were greedily inclined unto? Is not a hatred of what is bad and unworthy, as much a part of Divine goodness, as a love to what is excellent, and bears a resemblance to himself? Could he possibly be accounted good, that should bear the same degree of affection to a prodigious vice, as to a sublime virtue? and should behave himself in the same manner of carriage to the innocent and culpable? could you account him good, if he did always with pleasure behold evil, and perpetually suffer the oppressions of the innocent under unpunished wickedness? How should we know the goodness of the Divine nature, and his affection to the goodness of his

creature, if he did not by some acts of severity witness his implacable aversion against sin, and his care to preserve the good government of the world? If corrupted creatures should always be exempt from the effects of his indignation, he would declare himself not to be infinitely good, because he would not be really righteous. No man thinks it a natural vice in the sun, by the power of its scorching heat, to dry up and consume the unwholesome vapors of the air; nor are the demonstrations of Divine justice any blots upon his goodness, since they are both for the defence and glory of his holiness, and for the preservation of the beauty and order of the world.

2. Is it not part of the goodness of God to make laws, and annex threatenings; and shall it be an impeachment of his goodness to support them? The more severe laws are made for deterring evil, the better is that prince accounted in making such provision for the welfare of the community. The design of laws, and the design of upholding the honor of those laws by the punishment of offenders, is to promote goodness and restrain evil; the execution of those laws must be therefore pursuant to the same design of goodness which first settled them. Would it not be contrary to goodness, to suffer that which was designed for the support of goodness, to be scorned and slighted? It would neither be prudence nor goodness, but folly and vice, to let laws, which were made to promote virtue, be broken with impunity. Would not this be to weaken virtue, and give a new life and vigor to vice? Not only the righteousness of the law itself, but the wisdom of the Lawgiver would be exposed to contempt, if the violations of it remained uncontrolled, and the violence offered by men passed unpunished. None but will acknowledge the Divine precepts to be the image of the righteousness of God, and beneficial for the common good of the world (Romans 7:12): "The law is holy, just, and good," and so is every precept of it; the law is for no other end, but to keep the creature in subjection to, and dependence on God; this dependence could not be preserved without a law, nor that law be kept in reputation, without a penalty; nor would that penalty be significant without an execution. Every law loseth the nature of a law, without a penalty; and the penalty loseth its vigor, without the infliction of it: how can those laws attain their end, if the transgressions of them be not punished? Would not the wickedness of the men's hearts be encouraged by such a kind of uncomely goodness? and all the threatenings be to no other end, than to engender vain and fruitless fears in the minds of men? Is it good for the majesty of God to suffer himself to be trampled on by his vassals? to suffer men, by their rebellion, to level his law with the wickedness of their own hearts; and by impunity slight his own glory, and encourage their disobedience? Who would give any man, any prince, any father, that should do so, the name of a good governor? If it were a fruit of Divine goodness to make laws, is it contrary to goodness to support the honor of them? It is every whit as rational and as good to vindicate the honor of his laws by justice, as at first to settle them by authority; as much goodness to vindicate it from contempt, as at first to enact it; as it is as much wisdom to preserve a law, as at first to frame it: shall his precepts be thought by him unworthy of a support, that were not thought by him unworthy to be made? The same reason of goodness that led him to enjoin them, will lead him to revenge them. Did evil appear odious to him, while he enacted this law; and would not his goodness, as well as his wisdom, appear odious to him, if he did never execute it? Would it not be a denial of his own goodness, to be led by the foolish and corrupt judgment of his creatures, and slight his own law, because his rebels spurn at it? Since he valued it before they could actually contemn it, would he not misjudge his own law and his own wisdom, discount from the true value of them, condemn his own acts, censure his precepts as unrighteous, and therefore evil and injurious? remove the differences between good and evil, look upon vice as virtue, and wickedness as righteousness, if

he thought his commands unworthy a vindication? How can there be any support to the honor of his precepts, without sometimes executing the severity of his threatenings? And as to his threatenings of punishment for the breach of his laws, are they not designed to discourage wickedness, as the promises of reward were designed to encourage goodness? Hath he not multiplied the one, to scare men from sin, as well as the other, to allure men to obedience? Is not the same truth engaged to support the one, as well as the other; and how could he be abundant in goodness, if he were not abundant in truth (Exodus 34:6)? both are linked together; if he neglected his truth, he would be out of love with his own goodness; since it cannot be manifested in performing the promises to the obedient, if it be not also manifested in executing his threatenings upon the rebellious. Had not God annexed threatenings to his laws, he would have had no care of his own goodness. The order between God and the creature, wherein the declaration of his goodness consisted, might have been easily broken by his creature; man would have freed himself from subjection to God; been unaccountable to him, had this consisted with that infinite goodness whereby he loves himself, and loves his creatures. As therefore the annexing threatenings to his law, was a part of his goodness; the execution of them is so far from being a blemish, that it is the honor of his goodness. The rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience, refer to the same end, viz. the due manifestation of the valuation of his own law, the glorifying his own goodness, which enjoined so beneficial a law for man, and the support of that goodness in the creatures, which by that law he demands righteously and kindly of them.

3. Hence it follows, That not to punish evil, would be a want of goodness to himself. The goodness of God is an indulgent goodness, in a way of wisdom and reason; not a fond goodness, in a way of weakness and folly: would it not be a weakness, always to bear with the impenitent? a want of expressing a goodness to goodness itself? Would not goodness have more reason to complain, for a want of justice to rescue it, than men have reason to complain, for the exercise of justice in the vindication of it? If God established all things in order, with infinite wisdom and goodness, and God silently beheld, forever, this order broken, would he not either charge himself with a want of power, or a want of will, to preserve the marks of his own goodness? Would it be a kindness to himself to be careless of the breaches of his own orders? His throne would shake, yea, sink from under him, if justice, whereby he sentenceth, and judgment, whereby he executes his sentence, were not the supports of it (Psalms 89:14). "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne," ■■■■, the stability or foundation of thy throne. So, Psalms 92:2. Man would forget his relation to God; God would be unknown to be sovereign of the world, were he careless of the breaches of his own order (Psalms 9:16). "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes;" is it not a part of his goodness, to preserve the indispensable order between himself and his creatures? His own sovereignty, which is good, and the subjection of the creature to him as sovereign, which is also good; the one would not be maintained in its due place, nor the other restrained in due limits, without punishment. Would it be a goodness in him to see goodness itself trampled upon constantly, without some time or other appearing for the relief of it? Is it not a goodness to secure his own honor, to prevent further evil? Is it not a goodness to discourage men by judgments, sometimes, from a contempt and ill use of his bounty; as well as sometimes patiently to bear with them, and wait upon them for a reformation? Must God be bad to himself, to be kind to his enemies? And shall it be accounted an unkindness, and a mark of evil in him, not to suffer himself to be always outraged and defied? The world is wronged by sin, as well as God is injured by it. How could God be good to himself, if he righted not his own honor? or be a good governor of the

world, if he did not sometimes witness against the injuries it receives sometimes from the works of his hands? Would he be good to himself, as a God, to be careless of his own honor? or good, as the Rector of the world, and be regardless of the world's confusion? That God should give an eternal good to that creature that declines its duty, and despiseth his sovereignty, is not agreeable to the goodness of his wisdom, or that of his righteousness. It is a part of God's goodness to love himself. Would he love his sovereignty, if he saw it daily slighted, without sometimes discovering how much he values the honor of it? Would he have any esteem for his own goodness, if he beheld it trampled upon, without, any will to vindicate it? Doth mercy deserve the name of cruelty, because it pleads against a creature that hath so often abused it, and hath refused to have any pity exercised towards it in a righteous and regular way? Is sovereignty destitute of goodness, because it preserves its honor against one that would not have it reign over him? Would he not seem, by such a regardlessness, to renounce his own essence, undervalue and undermine his own goodness, if he had not an implacable aversion to whatsoever is contrary to it? If men turn grace into wantonness, is it not more reasonable he should turn his grace into justice? All his attributes, which are parts of his goodness, engage him to punish sin; without it, his authority would be vilified, his purity stained, his power derided, his truth disgraced, his justice scorned, his wisdom slighted; he would be thought to have dissembled in his laws; and be judged, according to the rules of reason, to be void of true goodness.

4. Punishment is not the primary intention of God. It is his goodness that he hath no mind to punish; and therefore he hath put a bar to evil, by his prohibitions and threatenings, that he might prevent sin, and, consequently, any occasions of severity against his creature. [Note: Zarnovecius, de Satisfact. Part I. cap. i. pp. 3, 4.] The principal intention of God, in his law, was to encourage goodness, that he might reward it; and when, by the commission of evil, God is provoked to punish, and takes the sword into his hand, he doth not act against the nature of his goodness, but against the first intention of his goodness in his precepts, which was to reward; as a good judge principally intends, in the exercise of his office, to protect good men from violence, and maintain the honor of the laws, yet, consequently, to punish bad men, without which the protection of the good would not be secured, nor the honor of the law be supported; and a good judge, in the exercise of his office, doth principally intend the encouragement of the good, and wisheth there were no wickedness that might occasion punishment; and, when he doth sentence a malefactor, in order to the execution of him, he doth not act against the goodness of his nature, but pursuant to the duty of his place, but wisheth he had no occasion for such severity. Thus God seems to speak of himself (Isaiah 28:21); he calls the act of his wrath his "strange work, his strange act;" a work, not against his nature, as the Governor of the world, but against his first intention, as Creator, which was to manifest his goodness; therefore he moves with a slow pace in those acts, brings out his judgments with relentings of heart, and seems to cast out his thunderbolts with a trembling hand: "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33); and therefore he "delights not in the death of a sinner" (Ezekiel 33:11); not in death, as death; in punishment, as punishment; but as it reduceth the suffering creature to the order of his precept, or reduceth him into order under his power, or reforms others who are spectators of the punishment upon a criminal of their own nature; God only hates the sin, not the sinner; he desires only the destruction of the one, not the misery of the other; the nature of a man doth not displease him, because it is a work of his own goodness, but the nature of the sinner displeaseth him, because it is a work of the sinner's own extravagance. [Note: Saurez, Vol. I. de Deo, lib. iii. cap. 7. p. 146.]

Divine goodness pitcheth not its hatred primarily upon the sinner, but upon the sin: but since he cannot punish the sin without punishing the subject to which it cleaves, the sinner falls under his lash. Whoever regards a good judge as an enemy to the malefactor, but as an enemy to his crime, when he doth sentence and execute him?

5. Judgments in the world have a goodness in them, therefore they are no impeachments of the goodness of God.

(1.) A goodness in their preparations. He sends not judgments without giving warnings; his justice is so far from extinguishing his goodness, that his goodness rather shines out in the preparations of his justice; he gives men time, and sends them messengers, to persuade them to another temper of mind, that he may change his hand, and exercise his liberality where he threatened his severity. When the heathen had presages of some evil upon their persons or countries, they took them for invitations to repentance, excited themselves to many acts of devotion, implored his favor, and often experimented it. The Ninevites, upon the proclamation of the destruction of their city by Jonah, fell to petitioning him, whereby they signified, that they thought him good, though he were just, and more prone to pity than severity; and their humble carriage caused the arrows he had ready against them to drop out of his hands (Jonah 3:9-10). When he brandisheth his sword, he wishes for some to stand in that gap, to mollify his anger, that he might not strike the fatal blow (Ezekiel 32:30); "I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me in the land, that I should not destroy it." He was desirous that his creatures might be in a capacity to receive the marks of his bounty. [Note: Cressel. Anthol. Decad. II. p. 162.] This he signified, not obscurely, to Moses (Exodus 32:10), when he spoke to him to let him alone, that his anger might wax hot against the people, after they had made a golden calf and worshipped it. "Let me alone," said God: not that Moses restrained him, saith Chrysostom, who spake nothing to him, but stood silent before him, and knew nothing of the people's idolatry; but God would give him an occasion of praying for them, that he might exercise his mercy towards them; yet in such a manner, that the people, being struck with a sense of their crime, and the horror of Divine justice, they might be amended for the future, when they should understand that their death was riot averted by their own merit or intercession, but by Moses, his patronage of them, and pleading for them; as we see sometimes masters and fathers angry with their servants and children, and preparing themselves to punish them, but secretly wish some friend to intercede for them, and take them out of their hands: there is a goodness shining in the preparations of his judgments.

2. A goodness in the execution of them. They are good, as they chew God disaffected to evil, and conduce to the glory of his holiness, and deter others from presumptuous sins (Leviticus 10:3) [Note: The Baker hard copy text cites Deuteronomy 10:3 but this is obviously wrong.] : "I will be glorified in all that draw near unto me;"—in his judgment upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for offering strange fire. By them God preserves the excellent footsteps of his own goodness in his creation and his law, and curbs the licentiousness of men, and contains them within the bounds of their duty. "Thy judgments are good," saith the Psalmist (Psalms 119:39); i. e. thy judicial proceedings upon the wicked; for he desires God there to turn away, by some signal act, the reproach the wicked cast upon him. Can there be any thing more miserable than to live in a world full of wickedness, and void of the marks of Divine goodness and justice to repress it? Were there not judgments in the world, men would forget God, be insensible of his government of the world, neglect the exercises of natural and christian duties; religion would be at its last gasp,

and expire among them, and men would pretend to break God's precepts by God's authority. Are they not good, then, as they restrain the creature from further evils; affright others from the same crimes which they were inclinable to commit? He strikes some, to reform others that are spectators; as Apollonius tamed pigeons by beating dogs before them. Punishments are God's gracious warnings to others, not to venture upon the crimes which they see attended with such judgments. The censers of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, were to be wrought into plates for a covering of the altar, to abide there as a memento to others, not to approach to the exercise of the priestly office without an authoritative call from God (Numbers 16:38; Numbers 16:40); and those judgments exercised in the former ages of the world, were intended by Divine goodness for warnings, even in evangelical times. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, to prevent men from apostasy; that use Christ himself makes of it, in the exhortation against "turning back" (Luke 17:32-33). And (Psalms 58:10): "The righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." When God shall drench his sword in the blood of the wicked, the righteous shall take occasion from thence, to purify themselves, and reform their ways, and look to the paths of their feet. Would not impunity be hurtful to the world, and men receive encouragement to sin, if severities sometimes did not bridle them from the practice of their inclinations? Sometimes the sinner himself is reformed, and sometimes removed from being an example to others. Though thunder be an affrightening noise, and lightning a scaring flash, yet they have a liberal goodness in them in shattering and consuming those contagious vapors which burden and infect the air, and thereby render it more clear and healthful. Again, there are few acts of Divine justice upon a people, but are in the very execution of them attended with demonstrations of his goodness to others; he is a protector of his own, while he is a revenger on his enemies; when he rides upon his horses in anger against some, his chariots are "chariots of salvation" to others (Habakkuk 3:8). Terror makes way for salvation; the overthrow of Pharaoh and the strength of his nation, completed the deliverance of the Israelites. Had not the Egyptians met with their destruction, the Israelites had unavoidably met with their ruin, against all the promises God had made to them, and to the defamation of his former justice, in the former plagues upon their oppressors. The death of Herod was the security of Peter, and the rest of the maliced christians. The gracious deliverance of good men is often occasioned by some severe stroke upon some eminent persecutor; the destruction of the oppressor is the rescue of the innocent. Again, where is there a judgment but leaves more criminals behind than it sweeps away, that deserved to be involved in the same fate with the rest? More Egyptians were left behind to possess and enjoy the goodness of their fruitful land, than they were that were hurried into another world by the overflowing waves; is not this a mark of goodness as well as severity? Again, is it not a goodness in Him not to pour out judgments according to the greatness of his power? to go gradually to work with those whom he might in a moment blow to destruction with one breath of his mouth? Again, he sometimes exerciseth judgments upon some, to form a new generation for himself; he destroyed an old world, to raise a new one more righteous, as a man pulls down his old buildings to erect a sounder and more stately fabric. To sum up what hath been said in this particular; how could God be a friend to goodness, if he were not an enemy to evil? how could he shew his enmity to evil, without revenging the abuse and contempt of his goodness? God would rather have the repentance of a sinner than his punishment; but the sinner would rather expose himself to the severest frowns of God, than pursue those methods wherein he hath settled the conveyances of his kindness; "You will not come to me that you might have life," saith Christ. How is eternity of punishment inconsistent with

the goodness of God? nay, how can God be good without it? If wickedness always remain in the nature of man, is it not fit the rod should always remain on the back of men? Is it a want of goodness that keeps an incorrigible offender in chains in a bridewell? While sin remains, it is fit it should be punished; would not God else be an enemy to his own goodness, and shew favor to that which doth abuse it, and is contrary to it? He hath threatened eternal flames to sinners, that he might the more strongly excite them to a reformation of their ways, and a practice of his precepts. In those threatenings he hath manifested his goodness; and can it be bad in him to defend what his goodness hath commanded, and execute what his goodness hath threatened? His truth is also a part of his goodness; for it is nothing but his goodness performing that which it obliged him to do. That is the first thing; severe judgments in the world are no impeachments of his goodness.

Secondly, The afflictions God inflicts upon his servants, are no violations of his goodness. Sometimes God afflicts men for their temporal and eternal good; for the good of their grace, in order to the good of their glory; which is a more excellent good, than afflictions can be an evil. The heathens reflected upon Ulysses' hardship, as a mark of Jupiter's goodness and love to him, that his virtue might be more conspicuous. By strong persecutions brought upon the church, her lethargy is cured, her chaff purged, the glorious fruit of the gospel brought forth in the lives of her children; the number of her proselytes multiply, and the strength of her weak ones is increased, by the testimonies of courage and constancy which the stronger present to them in their sufferings. Do these good effects speak a want of goodness in God, who brings them into this condition? By those he cures his people of their corruptions, and promotes their glory, by giving them the honor of suffering for the truth, and raiseth their spirits to a divine pitch. The epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, wrote by him while he was in Nero's chains, seem to have a higher strain than some of those he wrote when he was at liberty. As for afflictions, they are marks of a greater measure of fatherly goodness than he discovers to those that live in an uninterrupted prosperity, who are not dignified with that glorious title of sons, as those are that "he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6-7). Can any question the goodness of the father that corrects his child to prevent his vice and ruin, and breed him up to virtue and honor? It would be a cruelty in a father leaving his child without chastisement, to leave him to that misery an ill education would reduce him to: "God judges us that we might not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32). Is it not a greater goodness to separate us from the world to happiness by his scourge, than to leave us to the condemnation of the world for our sins? Is it not a greater goodness to make us smart here, than to see us scorched hereafter? As he is our Shepherd, it is no part of his enmity or ill-will to us, to make us feel sometimes the weight of his shepherd's crook, to reduce us from our struggling. The visiting our transgressions with rods, and our iniquities with stripes, is one of the articles of the covenant of grace, wherein the greatest lustre of his goodness appears (Psalms 89:33). The advantage and gain of our afflictions is a greater testimony of his goodness to us, than the pain can be of his unkindness; the smart is well recompensed by the accession of clearer graces. It is rather a high mark of goodness, than an argument for the want of it, that he treats us as his children, and will not suffer us to run into that destruction we are more ambitious of, than the happiness he hath prepared for us, and by afflictions he fits us for the partaking of, by "imparting his holiness," together with the inflicting his rod (Hebrews 12:10). That is the third thing, God is good.

IV. The fourth thing is the manifestation of this goodness in Creation, Redemption, and Providence.

First, In Creation. This is apparent from what hath been said before, that no other attribute could be the motive of his creating, bitt his goodness; his goodness was the cause that he made any thing, and his wisdom was the cause that he made every thing in order and harmony. He pronounced "every thing good," i. e. such as became his goodness to bring forth into being, and rested in them more, as they were stamps of his goodness, than as they were marks of his power, or beams of his wisdom. And if all creatures were able to answer to this question, What that was which created them? the answer would be, Almighty power, but employed by the motion of infinite goodness. [Note: Cusan. p. 228.] All the varieties of creatures are so many apparitions of this goodness. Though God be one, yet he cannot appear as a God but in variety. As the greatness of power is not manifest but in variety of works, and an acute understanding not discovered but in variety of reasonings, so an infinite goodness is not so apparent as in variety of communications.

1. The creation proceeds from goodness. It is the goodness of God to extract such multitudes of things from the depths of nothing. Because God is good, things have a being; if he had not been good, nothing could have been good: nothing could leave imparted that which it possessed not; nothing but goodness could have communicated to things an excellency, which before they wanted. Being is much more excellent than nothing. By this goodness, therefore, the whole creation was brought out of the dark womb of nothing; this formed their natures, this beautified them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby everything was enabled to act for the good of the common world. God did not create things because he was a living Being, but because he was a good Being. No creature brought forth anything in the world merely because it is, but because it is good, and by a communicated goodness fitted for such a production. If God had been the creating principle of things only as he was a living Being, or as he was an understanding Being, then all things should have partaken of life and understanding, because all things were to bear some characters of the Deity upon them. If by understanding, solely, God were the Creator of all things, all things should have borne the mark of the Deity upon them, and should have been more or less understanding; but he created things as he was good, and by goodness he renders all things more or less like himself: hence everything is accounted more noble, not in regard of its being, but in regard of the beneficialness of its nature. The being of things was not the end of God in creating, but the goodness of their being. God did not rest from his works because they were his works, i. e. because they had a being; but because they had a good being (Genesis 1:1-31.); because they were naturally useful to the universe: nothing was more pleasing to him, than to behold those shadows and copies of his own goodness in his works.

2. Creation was the first act of goodness without himself. When he was alone from eternity, he contented himself with himself, abounding in his own blessedness, delighting in that abundance; he was incomprehensively rich in the possession of an unstained felicity. [Note: Petav. Theolog. Dogmat. Tom. i. p. 402.] This creation was the first efflux of his goodness without himself for the work of creation cannot be called a work of mercy. [Note: Lessius, de Perfect. Div, p. 100.] Mercy supposeth a creature miserable, but that which hath no being is subject to no misery; for to be miserable supposeth a nature in being, and deprived of that good which belongs to the pleasure and felicity of nature; but since there was no being, there could be no misery. The creation, therefore, was not an act of mercy, but an act of sole goodness; and, therefore, it was the speech

of an heathen, that when God first set upon the creation of the world, he transformed himself into love and goodness, Εἰς ἄρματα μεταβλήθαι τὴν θεὸν μάλιστα δημιουργεῖν. [Note: Pherecydes.] This led forth, and animated his power, the first moment it drew the universe out of the womb of nothing. And,

3. There is not one creature but hath a character of his goodness. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim this perfection. It is as difficult not to see something of it in every creature with the eye of our minds, as it is not to see the beams of the shining sun with those off our bodies. "He is good to all" (Psalms 145:9); he is, therefore, good in all; not a drop of the creation, but is a drop of his goodness. These are the colors worn upon the heads of every creature. As in every spark the light of the fire is manifested, so doth every grain of the creation wear the visible badges of this perfection. In all the lights, the Father of Lights hath made the riches of goodness apparent; no creature is silent in it; it is legible to all nations in every work of his hands. That, as it is said of Christ (Psalms 40:7), "In the volume of thy book it is written of me:" In the volume of the book of the Scripture it is written of me, and my goodness in redemption: so it may be said of God, In the volume of the book of the creature it is written of me, and my goodness in creation. Every creature is a page in this book, whose "line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalms 19:4); though, indeed, the less goodness in some is obscured by the more resplendent goodness he hath imparted unto others. What an admirable piece of goodness is it to communicate life to a fly! How should we stand gazing upon it, till we turn our eye inwards, and view our own frame, which is much more ravishing! But let us see the goodness of God in the creation of man,—in the being and nature of man. God hath, with a liberal hand, conferred upon every creature the best being it was capable of in that station and order, and conducing to that end and use in the world he intended it for. But when you have run over all the measures of goodness God hath poured forth upon other creatures, you will find a greater fulness of it in the nature of man, whom he hath placed in a more sublime condition, and endued with choicer prerogatives, than other creatures: he was made but little lower than the angels, and much more loftily crowned with glory and honor than other creatures (Psalms 8:5). Had it not been for Divine goodness, that excellent creature had lain wrapt up in the abyss of nothing; or if he had called it out of nothing, there might have been less of skill and less of goodness displayed in the forming of it, and a lesser kind of being imparted to it, than what he hath conferred.

1. How much of goodness is visible in his body! God drew out some part of the dust of the ground, and copied out this perfection, as well as that of his power, on that mean matter, by erecting it into the form of a man, quickening that earth by the inspiration of a "living soul" (Genesis 2:7): of this matter he composed an excellent body, in regard of the majesty of the face, erectness of its stature, and grace of every part. How neatly hath he wrought this "tabernacle of clay, this earthly house," as the apostle calls it (2 Corinthians 5:1)! a curious wrought piece of needle-work, a comely artifice (Psalms 139:10), an embroidered case for an harmonious lute. What variety of members, with a due proportion, without confusion, beautiful to sight, excellent for use, powerful for strength! It hath eyes to conduct its motion, to serve in matter for the food, and delight of the understanding; ears to let in the pleasure of sound, to convey intelligence of the affairs of the world, and the counsels of heaven, to a more noble mind. It hath a tongue to express and sound forth what the learned inhabitant in it thinks; and hands to act what the inward counsellor directs; and feet to support the fabric. It is tempered with a kindly heat, and an oily moisture for motion,

and endued with conveyances for air, to qualify the fury of the heat, and nourishment to supply the decays of moisture. It is a cabinet fitted by Divine goodness for the enclosing a rich jewel; a palace made of dust, to lodge in it the viceroy of the world; an instrument disposed for the operations of the nobler soul which he intended to unite to that refined matter. What is there in the situation of every part, in the proportion of every member, in the usefulness of every limb and string to the offices of the body, and service of the soul; what is there in the whole structure that doth not inform us of the goodness of God?

2. But what is this to that goodness which shines in the nature of the soul? Who can express the wonders of that comeliness that is wrapped up in this mask of clay? A soul endued with a clearness of understanding and freedom of will: faculties no sooner framed, but they were able to produce the operation they were intended for; a soul that excelled the whole world, that comprehended the whole creation; a soul that evidenced the extent of its skill in giving names to all that variety of creatures which had issued out of the hand of Divine Power (Genesis 2:19); a soul able to discover the nature of other creatures, and manage and conduct their motions. In the ruins of a palace we may see the curiosity displayed, and the cost expended in the building of it; in the ruins of this fallen structure, we still find it capable of a mighty knowledge; a reason able to regulate affairs, govern states, order more mighty and massy creatures, find out witty inventions; there is still an understanding to irradiate the other faculties, a mind to contemplate its own Creator, a judgment to discern the differences between good and evil, vice and virtue, which the goodness of God hath not granted to any lower creature. These excellent faculties, together with the power of self-reflection, and the swiftness of the mind in running over the things of the creation, are astonishing gleams of the vast goodness of that Divine Hand which ennobled this frame. To the other creatures of this world, God had given out some small mites from his treasury; but in the perfections of man, he hath opened the more secret parts of his exchequer, and liberally bestowed those doles, which he hath not expended upon the other creatures on earth.

3. Besides this, he did not only make man so noble a creature in his frame, but “he made him after his own image in holiness.” He imparted to him a spark of his own comeliness, in order to a communion with himself in happiness, had man stood his ground in his trial, and used those faculties well, which had been the gift of his Bountiful Creator: he “made man after his image,” after his own image (Genesis 1:26-27); that as a coin bears the image of the prince, so did the soul of man the “image of God:” not the image of angels, though the speech be in the plural number: “Let us make man.” It is not to a creature, but to a Creator; let “us,” that are his makers, make him in the image of his makers. God created man, angels did not create him; God created man in his “own” image, not, therefore, in the image of angels: the nature of God, and the nature of angels, are not the same. Where, in the whole Scripture, is man said to be made after the image of angels? God made man not in the image of angels, to be conformed to them as his prototype, but in the image of the blessed God, to be conformed to the Divine nature: that as he, was conformed to the image of his holiness, he might also partake of the image of his blessedness, which, without it, could not be attained: for as the felicity of God could not be clear without an unspotted holiness, so neither can there be a glorious happiness without purity in the creature; this God provided for in his creation of man, giving him such accomplishments in those two excellent pieces of soul and body, that nothing was wanting to him but his own will, to instate him in an invariable felicity. He was possessed with such a nature by the hand of Divine Goodness, such a loftiness of

understanding, and purity of faculties, that he might have been for ever happy as well as the standing angels: and he was placed in such a condition, that moved the envy of fallen spirits; he had as much grace bestowed upon him, as was proportionable to that covenant God then made with him: the tenor of which was, that his life should continue so long as his obedience, and his happiness endure so long as his integrity: and as God, by creation, had given him an integrity of nature, so he had given him a power to persist in it, if he would. Herein is the goodness of God displayed, that he made man after his own image.

4. As to the life of man in this world, God, by an immense goodness, copied out in him the whole creation, and made him an abridgment of the higher and lower world,—a little world in a greater one. The link of the two worlds, of heaven and earth, as the spiritual and corporeal natures are united in him, the earth in the dust of his body, and the heavens in the crystal of his soul: he hath the upper springs of the life of angels in his reason, and the nether springs of the life of animals in his sense. God displayed those virtues in man, which he had discovered in the rest of the lower creation; but, besides the communication which he had with earth in his nature, God gave him a participation with heaven in his spirit. A mere bodily being he hath given to the heavens, earth, elements; a vegetative life, or a life of growth, he hath vouchsafed to the plants of the ground: he hath stretched out his liberality more to animals and beasts, by giving them sense. All these hath his goodness linked in man, being, life, sense, with a richer dole than any of those creatures have received in a rational, intellectual life, whereby he approacheth to the nature of angels. This some of the Jews understood (Genesis 2:7): “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,” ■■■■■, breath of lives, in the Hebrew; not one sort of life, but that variety of lives which he had imparted to other creatures: all the perfections scattered in other creatures do unitedly meet in man: so that Philo might well call him “every creature, the model of the whole creation:” his soul is heaven, and his body is earth. [Note: Eugubin, lib. v. cap. 9] So that the immensity of his goodness to man, is as great as all that goodness you behold in sensitive and intelligible things.

5. All this was free goodness. God eternally possessed his own felicity in himself, and had no need of the existence of anything without himself for his satisfaction. Man, before his being, could have no good qualities to invite God to make him so excellent a fabric: for, being nothing, he was as unable to allure and merit, as to bring himself into being; nay, he created a multitude of men, who, he foresaw would behave themselves in as ungrateful a manner, as if they had not been his creatures, but had bestowed that rich variety upon themselves without the hand of a superior Benefactor. How great is this goodness, that hath made us models of the whole creation, tied together heaven and earth in our nature, when he might have ranked us among the lower creatures of the earth, made us mere bodies as the stones, or mere animals as the brutes, and denied us those capacious souls, whereby we might both know him and enjoy him! What could man have been more, unless he had been the original, which was impossible? He could not be greater than to be an image of the Deity, an epitome of the whole. Well may we cry out with the Psalmist (Psalms 8:1; Psalms 8:4), “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name,” the name of thy goodness, “in all the earth!” How, more particularly in man! “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” What is a little God of earth and dust, that thou shouldst ennoble him with so rich a nature, and engrave upon him such characters of thy immense Being?

6. The goodness of God appears in the conveniences he provided for, and gave to man. As God gave him a being morally perfect in regard of righteousness, so he gave him a being naturally perfect in regard of delightful conveniences, which was the fruit of excellent goodness; since there was no quality in man, to invite God to provide him so rich a world, nor to bestow upon him so comely a being.

(1). The world was made for man. Since angels have not need of anything in this world, and are above the conveniences of earth and air, it will follow, that man, being the noblest creature on the earth, was the more immediate end of the visible creation. All inferior things are made to be subservient to those that have a more excellent prerogative of nature; and, therefore, all things for man, who exceeds all the rest in dignity: as man was made for the honor of God, so the world was made for the support and delight of man, in order to his performing the service due from him to God. The empire God settled man in as his lieutenant over the works of his lands, when he gave him possession of paradise, is a clear manifestation of it: God put all things under his feet, and gave him a deputed dominion over the rest of the creatures under himself, as the absolute sovereign (Psalms 8:6-8); "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea; yea, and whatsoever passeth over the paths of the sea." What less is witnessed to by the calamity all creatures were subjected to by the corruption of man's nature? Then was the earth cursed, and a black cloud flung upon the beauty of the creation, and the strength and vigor of it languisheth to this day under the curse of God (Genesis 2:17-18), and groans under that vanity the sin of man subjected it to (Romans 8:20; Romans 8:22). The treasons of man against God brought misery upon that which was framed for the use of man: as when the majesty of a prince is violated by the treason and rebellion of his subjects, all that which belongs to them, and was, before the free gift of the prince to them, is forfeit; their habitations, palaces, cattle, all that belongs to them bear the marks of his sovereign fury: had not the delicacies of the earth been made for the use of man, they had not fallen under the indignation of God upon the sin of man. God crowned the earth with his goodness to gratify man; gave man a right to serve himself of the delightful creatures he had provided (Genesis 1:28-30); yea, and after man had forfeited all by sin, and God had washed again the creature in a deluge, he renews the creation, and delivers it again into the hand of man, binding all creatures to pay a respect to him, and recognise him as their Lord, either spontaneously, or by force; and commissions them all to fill the heart of man with "food and gladness" (Genesis 9:2-3): and he loves all creatures as they conduce to the good of, and are serviceable to, his prime creature, which he set up for his own glory: and therefore, when he loves a person, he loves what belongs to him: he takes care of Jacob and his cattle: of penitent Nineveh and their cattle (Jonah 4:11): as when he sends judgments upon men he destroys their goods.

2. God richly furnished the world for man. He did not only erect a stately palace for his habitation, but provided all kind of furniture as a mark of his goodness, for the entertainment of his creature, man he arched over his habitation with a bespangled heaven, and floored it with a solid earth, and spread a curious wrought tapestry upon the ground where he was to tread, and seemed to sweep all the rubbish of the chaos to the two uninhabitable poles. When at the first creation of the matter the waters covered the earth, and rendered it uninhabitable for man, God drained them into the proper channels he had founded for them, and set a bound that they might not pass over, that they

turn not again to “cover the earth” (Genesis 1:9.) They fled and hasted away to their proper stations (Psalms 104:7-9), as if they were ambitious to deny their own nature, and content themselves with an imprisonment for the convenient habitation of Him who was to be appointed Lord of the world. He hath set up standing lights in the heaven, to direct our motion, and to regulate the seasons: the sun was created, that man might see to “go forth to his labor” (Psalms 104:22-23): both sun and moon, though set in the heaven, were formed to “give light” on the earth (Genesis 1:1; Genesis 1:17). The air is his aviary, the sea and rivers his fish-ponds, the valleys his granary, the mountains his magazine; the first afford man creatures for nourishment, the other metals for perfection: the animals were created for the support of the life of man; the herbs of the ground were provided for the maintenance of their lives; and gentle dews, and moistening showers, and, in some places, slimy floods appointed to render the earth fruitful, and capable to offer man and beast what was fit for their nourishment. He hath peopled every element with a variety of creatures both for necessity and delight; all furnished with useful qualities for the service of man. There is not the most despicable thing in the whole creation but it is endued with a nature to contribute something for our welfare: either as food to nourish us when we are healthful; or as medicine to cure us when we are distempered; or as a garment to clothe us when we are naked, and arm us against the cold of the season; or as a refreshment when we are weary; or as a delight when we are sad: all serve for necessity or ornament, either to spread our table, beautify our dwellings, furnish our closets, or store our wardrobes (Psalms 104:24): “The whole earth is full of his riches.” Nothing but by the rich goodness of God is exquisitely accommodated, in the numerous brood of things, immediately or mediately for the use of man; all, in the issue, conspire together to render the world a delightful residence for man; and, therefore, all the living creatures were brought by God to attend upon man after his creation, to receive a mark of his dominion over them, by the “imposition of their names” (Genesis 2:19-20). He did not only give variety of senses to man, but provided variety of delightful objects in the world for every sense; the beauties of light and colors for our eye, the harmony of sounds for our ear, the fragrancy of odors for our nostrils, and a delicious sweetness for our palates: some have qualities to pleasure; all, everything, a quality to pleasure, one or other: he doth not only present those things to our view, as rich men do in ostentation their goods, he makes us the enjoyers as well as the spectators, and gives us the use as well as the sight; and, therefore, he hath not only given us the sight, but the knowledge of them: he hath set up a sun in the heavens, to expose their outward beauty and conveniences to our sight; and the candle of the Lord is in us, to expose their inward qualities and conveniences to our knowledge, that we might serve ourselves of, and rejoice in, all this furniture wherewith he hath garnished the world, and have wherewithal to employ the inquisitiveness of our reason, as well as gratify the pleasures of our sense; and, particularly, God provided for innocent man a delightful mansion-house, a place of more special beauty and curiosity, the garden of Eden, a delightful paradise, a model of the beauties and pleasures of another world, wherein he had placed whatsoever might contribute to the felicity of a rational and animal life, the life of a creature composed of mire and dust, of sense and reason (Genesis 2:9). Besides the other delicacies consigned, in that place, to the use of man, there was a tree of life provided to maintain his being, and nothing denied, in the whole compass of that territory, but one tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil, which was no mark of an ill-will in his Creator to him, but a reserve of God’s absolute sovereignty, and a trial of man’s voluntary obedience. What blur was it to the goodness of God, to reserve one tree for his own propriety, when he had given to man, in all the rest, such

numerous marks of his rich bounty and goodness? What Israel, after man's fall, enjoyed sensibly, Nehemiah calls "great goodness" (Nehemiah 9:25). How inexpressible, then, was that goodness manifested to innocent man, when so small a part of it, indulged to the Israelites after the curse upon the ground, is called, as truly it merits, such great goodness! How can we pass through any part of this great city, and cast our eyes upon the well-furnished shops, stored with all kinds of commodities, without reflections upon this goodness of God starting up before our eyes in such varieties, and plainly telling us that he hath accommodated all things for our use, suited things, both to supply our need, content a reasonable curiosity, and delight us in our aims at, and passage to, our supreme end!

(3.) The goodness of God appears in the laws he hath given to man, the covenant he hath made with him. It had not been agreeable to the goodness of God to let a creature, governable by a law, be without a law to regulate him; his goodness then which had broke forth in the creation, had suffered an eclipse and obscurity in his government. As infinite goodness was the motive to create, so infinite goodness was the motive of his government. And this appears,

[1.] In the fitting the law to the nature of man. It was rather below than above his strength; he had an integrity in his nature to answer the righteousness of the precept. God created "man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29); his nature was suited to the law, and the law to his nature; it was not above his understanding to know it, nor his will to embrace it, nor his passions to be regulated by it. The law and his nature were like to exact straight lines, touching one another in every part when joined together. God exacted no more by his law than what was written by nature in his heart: he had a knowledge by creation to observe the law of his creation, and he fell not for want of a righteousness in his nature: he was enabled for more than was commanded him, but wilfully indisposed to less than he was able to perform. The precepts were easy, not only becoming the authority of a sovereign to exact, but the goodness of a father to demand, and the ingenuity of a creature and a son to pay. "His commands are not grievous" (1 John 5:3); the observance of them had filled the spirit of man with an extraordinary contentment. It had been no less a pleasure and a delightful satisfaction to have kept the law in a created state, than it is to keep it in some measure in a renewed state. The renewed nature finds a suitableness in the law to kindle a "delight" (Psalms 1:2): it could not then have anywise shook the nature of an upright creature, nor have been a burden too heavy for his shoulders to bear. Though he had not a grace given him above nature, yet he had not a law given him that surmounted his nature: it did not exceed his created strength, and was suited to the dignity and nobility of a rational nature. It was a "just law" (Romans 7:12), and, therefore, not above the nature of the subject that was bound to obey it. And had it been impossible to be observed, it had been unrighteous to be enacted: it had not been a matter of Divine praise, and that seven times a day; as it is, "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments" (Psalms 119:164). The law was so righteous, that Adam had every whit as much reason to bless God in his innocence for the righteousness of it, as David had with the relics of enmity against it: his goodness shines so much in his law, as merits our praise of him, as he is a sovereign Lawgiver, as well as a gracious Benefactor, in the imparting to us a being.

[2.] In fitting it for the happiness of man. For the satisfaction of his soul, which finds a reward in the very act of keeping it, (Psalms 119:160), "Great peace in the loving it;" for the preservation of human society, wherein consists the external felicity of man. It had been inconsistent with the Divine goodness to enjoin man anything that should be oppressive and uncomfortable. Bitterness

cannot come from that which is altogether sweet: goodness would not have obliged the creature to anything, but what is not only free from damaging him, but wholly conducing to his welfare, and perfective of his nature. Infinite wisdom could not order anything but what was agreeable to infinite goodness. As his laws are the most rational as being the contrivance of infinite wisdom; so they are the best, as being the fruit of infinite goodness. His laws are not only the acts of his sovereign authority, but the effluxes of his loving-kindness, and the conductors of man to an enjoyment of a greater bounty he minds as well the promotion of his creatures' felicity, as the asserting his own authority; as good princes make laws for their subjects' benefit as well as their own honor. What was said of a more difficult and burdensome law long after man's fall, may much more be said of the easy law of nature in the state of man's innocence, that it was 'for our good' (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). He never pleaded with the Israelites for the observation of his commands upon the account of his authority, so much as upon the score of their benefit by them (Deuteronomy 4:40; Deuteronomy 12:28). And when his precepts were broken, he seems sometimes to be more grieved for men's impairing their own felicity by it, than for their violating his authority: "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river!" (Isaiah 48:18). Goodness cannot prescribe a thing prejudicial: whatsoever it enjoins, is beneficial to the spiritual and eternal happiness of the rational creature: this was both the design of the law given, and the end of the law. Christ, in his answer to the young man's question, refers him to the moral law, which was the law of nature in Adam, as that whereby eternal life was to be gained: which evidenceth, that when the law was first given as the covenant of works, it was for the happiness of man; and the end of giving it was, that man might have eternal life by it: there would else be no strength or truth in that answer of Christ to that Ruler. And, therefore, Stephen calls the law given by Moses, which was the same with the law of nature in Adam, "the living oracles" (Acts 7:38). He enjoined men's services to them not simply for his own glory, but his glory in men's welfare: as if there were any being better than himself, his goodness and righteousness would guide him to love that better than himself; because it is good and righteous to love that best which is most amiable: so, if there were any that could do us more good, and shower down more happiness upon us than himself, he would be content we should obey that as sovereign, and steer our course according to his laws: "If God be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). If the observance of the precepts of Baal be more beneficial to you; if you can advance your nature by his service, and gain a more mighty crown of happiness than by mine, follow him with all my heart: I never intended to enjoin you anything to impair, but increase your happiness. The chief design of God in his law is the happiness of the subject; and obedience is intended by him as a means for the attaining of happiness, as well as preserving his own sovereignty: this is the reason why he wished that Israel had walked in his ways, "that their time might have endured forever" (Psalms 81:13; Psalms 81:15-16). And by the same reason, this was his intendment in his law given to man, and his covenant made with man at the creation, that he might be fed with the finest part of his bounty, and be satisfied with honey out of the eternal Rock of Ages. To paraphrase his expression there:—The goodness of God appears further,

[3.] In engaging man to obedience by promises and threatenings. A threatening is only mentioned (Genesis 2:17), but a promise is implied: if eternal death were fixed for transgression, eternal life was thereby designed for obedience: and that it was so, the answer of Christ to the Ruler evidenceth, that the first intendment of the precept was the eternal life of the subject, ordered to obey it.

1st. God might have acted, in settling his law, only as a sovereign. Though he might have dealt with man upon the score of his absolute dominion over him as his creature, and signified his pleasure upon the right of his sovereignty, threatening only a penalty if man transgressed, without the promising a bountiful acknowledgment of his obedience by a reward as a benefactor: yet he would treat with man in gentle methods, and rule him in a track of sweetness as well as sovereignty: he would preserve the rights of his dominion in the authority of his commands, and honor the condescensions of his goodness in the allurements of a promise. He that might have solely demanded a compliance with his will, would kindly article with him, to oblige him to observe him out of love to himself as well as duty to his Creator; that he might have both the interest of avoiding the threatened evil to affright him, and the interest of attaining the promised good to allure him to obedience. How doth he value the title of Benefactor above that of a Lord, when he so kindly solicits, as well as commands; and engageth to reward that obedience which he might have absolutely claimed as his due, by enforcing fears of the severest penalty! His sovereignty seems to stoop below itself for the elevation of his goodness; and he is pleased to have his kindness more taken notice of than his authority. Nothing imported more condescension than his bringing forth his law in the nature of a covenant, whereby he seems to humble himself, and veil his superiority to treat with man as his equal, that the very manner of his treatment might oblige him in the richest promises he made to draw him, and the startling threatenings he pronounced to link him to his obedience: and, therefore, is it observable, that when after the transgression of Adam God comes to deal with him, he doth not do it in that thundering rigor, which might have been expected from an enraged sovereign, but in a gentle examination (Genesis 3:11; Genesis 3:13): "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" To the woman, he said no more than, "What is this that thou hast done?" And in the Scripture we find, when he cites the Israelites before him for their sin, he expostulates with them not so much upon the absolute right he had to challenge their obedience, as upon the equity and reasonableness of his law which they had transgressed; that by the same argument of sweetness, wherewith he would attract them to their duty, he might shame them after their offence (Isaiah 1:2; Ezekiel 18:25).

2d. By the threatenings he manifests his goodness as well as by his promises. He promises that he might be a rewarder, and threatens that he might not be a punisher; the one is to elevate our hope, and the other to excite our fear, the two passions whereby the nature of man is managed in the world. He imprints upon man sentiments of a misery by sin, in his thundering commination, that he might engage him the more to embrace and be guided by the motives of sweetness in his gracious promises. The design of them was to preserve man in his due bounds, that God might not have occasion to blow upon him the flames of his justice; to suppress those irregular passions, which the nature of man (though created without any disorder) was capable of entertaining upon the appearance of suitable objects; and to keep the waves from swelling upon any turning wind, that so man, being modest in the use of the goodness God had allowed him, might still be capable of fresh streams of Divine bounty, without ever falling under his righteous wrath for any transgression. What a prospect of goodness is in this proceeding, to disclose man's happiness to be as durable as his innocence; and set before a rational creature the extremest misery due to his crime, to affright him from neglecting his Creator, and making unworthy returns to his goodness! What could be done more by goodness to suit that passion of fear which was implanted in the nature of man, than to assure him he should not degenerate from the righteousness of his nature, and violate the authority of his Creator, without falling from his own happiness, and sinking into the

most deplorable calamity!

3d. The reward he promised manifests yet further his goodness to man. It was his goodness to intend a reward to man; no necessity could oblige God to reward man, had he continued obedient in his created state: for in all rewards which are truly merited, beside some kind of equality to be considered between the person doing service and the person rewarding, and also between the act performed and the reward bestowed, there must also be considered the condition of the person doing the service, that he is not obliged to do it as a duty, but is at his own choice whether to offer it or no. But man, being wholly dependent on God in his being and preservation, having nothing of his own, but what he had received from the hands of Divine bounty, his service was due by the strongest obligation to God (1 Corinthians 4:7). But there was no natural engagement on God to return a reward to him; for man could return nothing of his own but that only which he had received from his Creator. It must be pure goodness that gives a gracious reward for a due debt, to receive his own from man, and return more than he had received. A Divine reward doth far surmount the value of a rational service. It was, therefore, a mighty goodness to stipulate with man, that upon his obedience he should enjoy an immortality in that nature. The article on man's part was obedience, which was necessarily just, and founded in the nature of man; he had been unjust, ungrateful, and violated all laws of righteousness, had he committed any act unworthy of one that had been so great a subject of Divine liberality. [Note: Amyral. Dissertat. pp. 637, 638.] But the article on God's part, of giving a perpetual blessedness to innocent man, was not founded upon rules of strict justice and righteousness, for that would have argued God to be a debtor to man; but that God cannot be to the work of his hands, that had received the materials of his being and acting from hire, as the vessel doth from the potter. But this was founded only on the goodness of the Divine nature, whereby he cannot but be kind to an innocent and holy creature. The nature of God inclined him to it by the rules of goodness, but the service of man could not claim it by the rules of justice without a stipulation; so that the covenant whereby God obliged himself to continue the happiness of man upon the continuance of his obedience, in the original of it, springs from pure goodness; though the performance of it, upon the fulfilling condition required in the creature, was founded upon the rules of righteousness and truth, after Divine goodness had brought it forth. God did create man for a reward and happiness; now God's implanting in the nature of man a desire after happiness, and some higher happiness than he had in creation invested him in, doth evidence that God did not create man only for his own service, but for his attaining a greater happiness. All rational creatures are possessed with a principle of seeking after good, the highest good, and God did not plant in man this principle in vain; it had not been goodness to put this principle in man, if he had designed never to bestow a happiness on man for his obedience: this had been repugnant to the goodness and wisdom of God; and the Scripture doth very emphatically express the felicity of man to be the design of God in the first forming him and moulding him a creature, as well as working him a new creature; "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God" (2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:5): he framed this earthly tabernacle for a residence in an eternal habitation, and a better habitation than an earthly paradise. What we expect in the resurrection, that very same thing God did in creation intend us for; but since the corruption of our natures, we must undergo a dissolution of our bodies, and may have just reason of a despondency, since sin hath seemed to change the course of God's bounty, and brought us under a curse. He hath given us the earnest of his Spirit, as an assurance that he will perform that very self-same thing, the conferring that happiness upon renewed creatures for which he first formed

man in creation, when he compacted his earthly tabernacle of the dust of the ground, and reared it up before him.

4th. It was a mighty goodness that God should give man an eternal reward. That an eternity of reward was promised, is implied in the death that was threatened upon transgression: whatsoever you conceive the threatened death to be, either for nature, or duration upon transgression; of the same nature and duration you must suppose the life to be, which is implied upon his constancy in his integrity. As sin would render him an eternal object of God's hatred, so his obedience would render him an eternally amiable object to his Creator, as the standing angels are preserved and confirmed in an entire felicity and glory. Though the threatening be only expressed by God (Genesis 2:17), yet the other is implied, and might easily be concluded from it by Adam. And one reason why God only expressed the threatening, and not the promise, was, because man might collect some hopes and expectations of a perpetual happiness from that image of God which he beheld in himself, and from the large provision he had made for him in the world, and the commission given him to increase and multiply, and to rule as a lord over his other works; whereas he could not so easily have imagined himself capable of being exposed to such an extraordinary calamity as an eternal death, without some signification of it from God. It is easily concludable, that eternal life was supposed to be promised, to be conferred upon him if he stood, as well as eternal death to be inflicted on him if he rebelled. [Note: Suarez. de Gratia, Vol. I. pp. 126, 127.] Now this eternal life was not due to his nature, but it was a pure beam, and gift of Divine goodness; for there was no proportion between man's service in his innocent estate, and a reward so great both for nature and duration: it was a higher reward than can be imagined either due to the nature of man, or upon any natural right claimable by his obedience. All that could be expected by him was but a natural happiness, not a supernatural: as there was no necessity upon the account of natural righteousness, so there was no necessity upon the account of the goodness of God to elevate the nature of man to a supernatural happiness, merely because he created him: for though it be necessary for God, when he would create, in regard of his wisdom, to create for some end, yet it was not necessary that end should be a supernatural end and happiness, since a natural blessedness had been sufficient for man. And though God, in creating angels and men intellectual and rational creatures, did make them necessary for himself and his own glory, yet it was not necessarily for him to order either angels or men to such a felicity as consists in a clear vision, and so high a fruition, of himself: for all other things are made by him for himself, and yet not for the vision of himself; God might have created man only for a natural happiness, according to the perfection of his natural faculties, and had dealt bountifully with him, if he had never intended him a supernatural blessedness and an eternal recompense: but what a largeness of goodness is here, to design man, in his creation, for so rich a blessedness as an eternal life, with the fruition of himself! He hath not only given to man all things which are necessary, but designed for man that which the poor creature could not imagine: he garnished the earth for him, and garnished him for an eternal felicity, had he not, by slighting the goodness of God, stripped himself of the present, and forfeited his future blessedness.

Secondly, The manifestation of this goodness in Redemption. The whole gospel is nothing but one entire mirror of Divine goodness the whole of redemption is wrapped up in that one expression of the angels' song (Luke 2:14), "Good-will towards men." The angels sang but one song before, which is upon record, but the matter of it seems to be the wisdom of God chiefly in creation (Job

38:7; compare Job 9:5-6, Job 9:8-9). The angels are there meant by the “morning stars;” the visible stars of heaven were not distinctly formed when the foundations of the earth were laid: and the title of the sons of God verifies it, since none but creatures of understanding are dignified in Scripture with that title. There they celebrate his wisdom in creation; here his goodness in redemption, which is the entire matter of the song. i. Goodness was the spring of redemption. All and every part of it owes only to this perfection the appearance of it in the world. This only excited wisdom to bring forth from so great an evil as the apostacy of man, so great a good as the recovery of him. When man fell from his created goodness, God would evidence that he could not fall from his infinite goodness: that the greatest evil could not surmount the ability of his wisdom to contrive, nor the riches of his bounty to present us a remedy for it. Divine Goodness would not stand by a spectator, without being reliever of that misery man had plunged himself into; but by astonishing methods it would recover him to happiness, who had wrested himself out of his hands, to fling himself into the most deplorable calamity: and it was the greater, since it surmounted those natural inclinations, and those strong provocations which he had to shower down the power of his wrath. What could be the source of such a procedure, but this excellency of Divine nature, since no violence could force him, nor was there any merit to persuade to such a restoration? This, under the name of his “love,” is rendered the sole cause of the redeeming death of the Son: it was to commend his love with the highest gloss, and in so singular a manner that had not its parallel in nature, nor in all his other works, and reaches in the brightness of it beyond the manifested extent of any other attribute (Romans 5:8). It must be only a miraculous goodness that induced him to expose the life of his Son to those difficulties in the world, and death upon the cross, for the freedom of sordid rebels: his great end was to give such a demonstration of the liberality of his nature, as might be attractive to his creature, remove its shakings and tremblings, and encourage its approaches to him. It is in this he would not only manifest his love, but assume the name of “Love.” By this name the Holy Ghost calls him, in relation to this good will manifested in his Son (1 John 4:8-9), “God is love.” In this is manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might “live through him.” He would take the name he never expressed himself in before. He was Jehovah, in regard of the truth of his promise; so he would be known of old: he is Goodness, in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the mission of his Son: and, therefore, he would be known by the name of Love now, in the days of the gospel. ii. It was a pure goodness. He was under no obligation to pity our misery, and repair our ruins: he might have stood to the terms of the first covenant, and exacted our eternal death, since we had committed an infinite transgression: he was under no tie to put off the robes of a judge for the bowels of a father, and erect a mercyseat above his tribunal of justice. [Note: Rada. Controvers. Part III. p. 363.] The reparation of man had no necessary connexion with his creation; it follows not, that because Goodness had extracted us from nothing by a mighty power, that it must lift us out of wilful misery by a mighty grace. Certainly that God who had no need of creating us, had far less need of redeeming us: for, since he created one world, he could have as easily destroyed it, and reared another. It had not been unbecoming the Divine Goodness or Wisdom, to have let man perpetually wallow in that sink wherein he had plunged himself, since he was criminal by his own will, and, therefore, miserable by his own fault: nothing could necessitate this reparation. If Divine Goodness could not be obliged by the angelical dignity to repair that nature, he is further from any obligation by the meanness of man to repair human nature. There was less necessity to restore man than to restore the fallen angels. What could man do to oblige God to a reparation of him,

since he could not render him a recompense for his goodness manifested in his creation? He must be much more impotent to render him a debtor for the redemption of him from misery. Could it be a salary for anything we had done? Alas! we are so far from meriting it, that by our daily demerits, we seem ambitious to put a stop to any further effusions of it: we could not have complained of him, if he had left us in the misery we had courted, since he was bound by no law to bestow upon us the recovery we wanted. When the apostle speaks of the gospel of “redemption,” he giveth it the title of the “gospel of the blessed God” (2 Timothy 1:11). It was the gospel of a God abounding in his own blessedness, which received no addition by man’s redemption; if he had been blessed by it, it had been a goodness to himself, as well as to the creature: it was not an indigent goodness needing the receiving anything from us; but it was a pure goodness, streaming out of itself, without bringing anything into itself for the perfection of it: there was no goodness in us to be the motive of his love, but his goodness was the fountain of our benefit. iii. It was a distinct goodness of the whole Trinity. In the creation of man we find a general consultation (Genesis 1:26), without those distinct labors and offices of each person, and without those raised expressions and marks of joy and triumph as at man’s restoration. In this there are distinct functions; the grace of the Father, the merit of the Son, and the efficacy of the Spirit. The Father makes the promise of redemption, the Son seals it with his blood, and the Spirit applies it. The Father adopts us to be his children, the Son redeems us to be his members, and the Spirit renews us to be his temples. In this the Father testifies himself well-pleased in a voice; the Son proclaims his own delight to do the will of God, and the Spirit hastens, with the wing of a dove, to fit him for his work, and afterwards, in his apparition in the likeness of fiery tongues, manifests his zeal for the propagation of the redeeming gospel. iv. The effects of it proclaim His great goodness. It is by this we are delivered from the corruption of our nature, the ruin of our happiness, the deformity of our sins, and the punishment of our transgressions; he frees us from the ignorance wherewith we were darkened and from the slavery wherein we were fettered. When he came to make Adam’s process after his crime, instead of pronouncing the sentence of death he had merited, he utters a promise that man could not have expected; his kindness swells above his provoked justice, and, while he chaseth him out of paradise, he gives him hopes of regaining the same, or a better habitation; and is, in the whole, more ready to prevent him with the blessings of his goodness, than charge him with the horror of his crimes (Genesis 3:15). It is a goodness that pardons us more transgressions than there are moments in our lives, and overlooks as many follies as there are thoughts in our heart: he doth not only relieve our wants, but restores us to our dignity. It is a greater testimony of goodness to instate a person in the highest honors, than barely to supply his resent necessity: it is an admirable pity whereby he was incline to redeem us, and an incomparable affection whereby he was resolved to exalt us. What can be desired more of him than his goodness hath granted? He hath sought us out when we were lost, and ransomed us when we were captives; he hath pardoned us when we were condemned, and raised us when we were dead. In creation he reared us from nothing, in redemption he delivers our understanding from ignorance and vanity, and our wills from impotence and obstinacy, and our whole man from a death worse than that nothing he drew us from by creation. v. Hence we may consider the height of this goodness in redemption to exceed that in creation. He gave man a being in creation, but did not draw him from inexpressible misery by that act. His liberality in the gospel doth infinitely surpass what we admire in the works of nature; his goodness in the latter is more astonishing to our belief, than his goodness in creation is visible to our eye. There is more of his bounty expressed in that one verse, “So God loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), than there is in the whole volume of the world: it is an incomprehensible so; a so that all the angels in heaven cannot analyse; and few comment upon, or understand, the dimensions of this so. In creation he formed an innocent creature of the dust of the ground; in redemption he restores a rebellious creature by the blood of his Son: it is greater than that goodness manifested in creation.

1st. In regard of the difficulty in effecting it. In creation, mere nothing was vanquished to bring us into being; in redemption, sullen enmity was conquered for the enjoyment of our restoration; in creation, he subdued a nullity to make us creatures; in redemption, his goodness overcomes his omnipotent justice to restore us to felicity. A word from the mouth of Goodness inspired the dust of men's bodies with a living soul; but the blood of his Son must be shed, and the laws of natural affection seems to be overturned, to lay the foundation of our renewed happiness. In the first, heaven did but speak, and the earth was formed; in the second, heaven itself must sink to earth, and be clothed with dusty earth, to reduce man's dust to its original state.

2d. This goodness is greater than that manifested in creation, in regard of its cost. This was a more expensive goodness than what was laid out in creation. "The redemption of one soul is precious" (Psalms 49:8), much more costly than the whole fabric of the world, or as many worlds as the understandings of angels in their utmost extent can conceive to be created. For the effecting of this, God parts with his dearest treasure, and his Son eclipses his choicest glory. For this, God must be made man, Eternity must suffer death, the Lord of angels must weep in a cradle, and the Creator of the world must hang like a slave; he must be in a manger in Bethlehem, and die upon a cross on Calvary; unspotted righteousness must be made sin, and unblemished blessedness be made a curse. He was at no other expense than the breath of his mouth to form man; the fruits of the earth could have maintained innocent man without any other cost; but his broken nature cannot be healed without the invaluable medicine of the blood of God. View Christ in the womb and in the manger, in his weary steps and hungry bowels, in his prostrations in the garden, and in his clodded drops of bloody sweat; view his head pierced with a crown of thorns, and his face besmeared with the soldiers' slabber; view him in his march to Calvary, and his elevation on the painful cross, with his head hanged down, and his side streaming blood; view him pelted with the scoffs of the governors, and the derisions of the rabble; and see, in all this, what cost Goodness was at for man's redemption! In creation, his power made the sun to shine upon us, and, in redemption, his bowels sent a Son to die for us.

3d. This goodness of God in redemption is greater than that manifested in creation, in regard of man's desert of the contrary. In the creation, as there was nothing without him to allure him to the expressions of his bounty, so there was nothing that did damp the inclinations of his goodness: the nothing from whence the world was drawn, could never merit, nor demerit a being, because it was nothing; as there was nothing to engage him, so there was nothing to disoblige him; as his favor could not be merited, so neither could his anger be deserved. But in this he finds ingratitude against the former marks of his goodness, and rebellion against the sweetness of his sovereignty,—crimes unworthy of the dews of goodness, and worthy of the sharpest strokes of vengeance; and therefore the Scripture advanceth the honor of it above the title of mere goodness, to that of "grace" (Romans 1:2; Titus 2:11); because men were not only unworthy of a blessing, but worthy of a curse. An innocent nothing more deserves creation, than a culpable creature deserves an exemption from destruction. When man fell, and gave occasion to God to

repent of his created work, his ravishing goodness surmounted the occasions he had of repenting, and the provocations he had to the destruction of his frame.

4th. It was a greater goodness than was expressed towards the angels.

1. A greater goodness than was expressed towards the standing angels. The Son of God did no more expose his life for the confirmation of those that stood, than for the restoration of those that fell; the death of Christ was not for the holy angels, but for simple man; they needed the grace of God to confirm them, but not the death of Christ to restore or preserve them; they had a beloved holiness to be established by the powerful grace of God, but not any abominable sin to be blotted out by the blood of God; they had no debt to pay but that of obedience; but we had both a debt of obedience to the precepts, and a debt of suffering to the penalty, after the fall. Whether the holy angels were confirmed by Christ, or no, is a question: some think they were, from Colossians 1:20, where "things in heaven" are said to be "reconciled;" but some think, that place signifies no more than the reconciliation of things in heaven, if meant of the angels, to things on earth, with whom they were at enmity in the cause of their Sovereign; or the reconciliation of things in heaven to God, is meant the glorified saints, who were once in a state of sin, and whom the death of Christ upon the cross reached, though dead long before. But if angels were confirmed by Christ, it was by him not as a slain sacrifice, but as a sovereign Head of the whole creation, appointed by God to gather all things into one; which some think to be the intendment of Ephesians 1:10, where all things, as well those in heaven, as those in earth, are said to be "gathered together in one, in Christ." Where is a syllable in Scripture of his being crucified for angels, but only for sinners! Not for the confirmation of the one, but the reconciliation of the other; so that the goodness whereby God continued those blessed spirits in heaven, through the effusions of his grace, is a small thing to the restoring us to our forfeited happiness, through the streams of Divine blood. The preserving a man in life is a little thing, and a smaller benefit than the raising a man from death. The rescuing a man from an ignominious punishment, lays a greater obligation than barely to prevent him from committing a capital crime. The preserving a man standing upon the top of a steep hill, is more easy than to bring a crippled and phthisical man, from the bottom to the top. The continuance God gave to the angels, is not so signal a mark of his goodness as the deliverance he gave to us; since they were not sunk into sin, nor by any crime fallen into misery.

2. His goodness in redemption is greater than any goodness expressed to the fallen angels. It is the wonder of his goodness to us, that he was mindful of fallen man, and careless of fallen angels; that he should visit man, wallowing in death and blood, with the dayspring from on high, and never turn the Egyptian darkness of devils into cheerful day; when they sinned, Divine thunder dashed them into hell; when man sinned, Divine blood wafts the fallen creature from his misery: the angels wallow in their own blood forever, while Christ is made partaker of our blood, and wallows in his blood, that we might not forever corrupt in ours; they tumbled down from heaven, and Divine goodness would not vouchsafe to catch them; man tumbles down, and Divine goodness holds out a hand drenched in the blood of Him, that was from the foundations of the world, to lift us up (Hebrews 2:16). He spared not those dignified spirits, when they revolted; and spared not punishing his Son for dusty man, when he offended; when he might as well forever have let man be in the chains wherein he had entangled himself, as them. We were as fit objects of justice as they, and they as fit objects of goodness as we; they were not more wretched by their fall than we; and the poverty of our nature rendered us more unable to recover ourselves, than the dignity of

theirs did them; they were his Reuben, his first-born; they were his might, and the beginning of his strength; yet those elder sons he neglected, to prefer the younger; they were the prime and golden pieces of creation, not laden with gross matter, yet they lie under the ruins of their fall, while man, lead in comparison of them, is refined for another world. They seemed to be fitter objects of Divine goodness, in regard of the eminency of their nature above the human; one angel excelled in endowments of mind and spirit, vastness of understanding, greatness of power, all the sons of men; they were more capable to praise him, more capable to serve him; and because of the acuteness of their comprehension, more able to have a due estimate of such a redemption, had it been afforded them; yet that goodness which had created them so comely, would not lay itself out in restoring the beauty they had defaced. The promise was of bruising the serpent's head for us, not of lifting up the serpent's head with us; their nature was not assumed, nor any command given them to believe or repent; not one devil spared, not one apostate spirit recovered, not one of those eminent creatures restored; every one of them hath only a prospect of misery, without any glimpse of recovery; they were ruined under one sin, and we repaired under many. All His redeeming goodness was laid out upon man (Psalms 144:3); "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him; and the Son of man, that thou makest account of him?" Making account of him above angels; as they fell without any tempting them, so God would leave them to rise, without any assisting them. I know the schools trouble themselves to find out the reasons of this peculiarity of grace to man, and not to them; because the whole human nature fell, but only a part of the angelical; the one sinned by a seduction, and the other by a sullenness, without any tempter; every angel sinned by his own proper will, whereas Adam's posterity sinned by the will of the first man, the common root of all. God would deprive the devil of any glory in the satisfaction of his envious desire to hinder man from attainment and possession of that happiness which himself had lost. The weakness of man below the angelical nature might excite the Divine mercy; and since all the things of the lower world were created for man, God would not lose the honor of his works, by losing the immediate end for which he framed them. And finally, because in the restoration of angels, there would have been only a restoration of one nature, that was not comprehensive of the nature of inferior things; but after all such conjectures, man must sit down, and acknowledge Divine goodness to be the only spring, without any other motive. Since Infinite Wisdom could have contrived a way for redemption for fallen angels, as well as for fallen man, and restored both the one and the other; why might not Christ have assumed their nature as well as ours, into the unity of the Divine person, and suffered the wrath of God in their nature for them, as well as in his human soul for us? It is as conceivable that two natures might have been assumed by the Son of God, as well as three souls be in man distinct, as some think there are.

3. To enhance this goodness yet higher; it was a greater goodness to us, than was for a time manifested to Christ himself. To demonstrate his goodness to man, in preventing his eternal ruin, he would for a while withhold his goodness from his Son, by exposing his life as the price of our ransom; not only subjecting him to the derisions of enemies, desertions of friends, and malice of devils, but to the inexpressible bitterness of his own wrath in his soul, as made an offering for sin. The particle so (John 3:16), seems to intimate this supremacy of goodness; He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." He so loved the world, that he seemed for a time not to love his Son in comparison of it, or equal with it. The person to whom a gift is given is, in that regard, accounted more valuable than the gift or present made to him: thus God valued our redemption above the worldly happiness of the Redeemer, and sentenceth him to an humiliation

on earth, in order to our exaltation in heaven; he was desirous to hear him groaning, and see him bleeding, that we might not groan under his frowns, and bleed under his wrath; he spared not him, that he might spare us; refused not to strike him, that he might be well pleased with us; drenched his sword in the blood of his Son, that it might not forever be wet with ours, but that his goodness might forever triumph in our salvation; he was willing to have his Son made man, and die, rather than man should perish, who had delighted to ruin himself; he seemed to degrade him for a time from what he was. [Note: Lingend de Eueharist, pp. 84, 85.] But since he could not be united to any but to an intellectual creature, he could not be united to any viler and more sordid creature than the earthly nature of man: and when this Son, in our nature, prayed that the cup might pass from him, Goodness would not suffer it, to show how it valued the manifestation of itself, in the salvation of man, above the preservation of the life of so dear a person. In particular, wherein this goodness appears:—

1st. The first resolution to redeem, and the means appointed for redemption, could have no other inducement but Divine goodness. We cannot too highly value the merit of Christ; but we must not so much extend the merit of Christ, as to draw a value to eclipse the goodness of God; though we owe our redemption and the fruits of it to the death of Christ, yet we owe not the first resolutions of redemption, and assumption of our nature, the means of redemption, to the merit of Christ. Divine goodness only, without the association of any merit, not only of man, but of the Redeemer himself, beat the first purpose of our recovery; he was singled out, and predestinated to be our Redeemer, before he took our nature to merit our redemption. “God sent his Son,” is a frequent expression in the Gospel of St. John (John 3:34; John 5:24; John 17:3). To what end did God send Christ, but to redeem? The purpose of redemption, therefore, preceded the pitching upon Christ as the means and procuring cause of it, i. e. of our actual redemption, but not of the redeeming purpose; the end is always in intention before the means. [Note: Lessius.] “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;” the love of God to the world was first in intention, and the order of nature, before the will of giving his Son to the world. His intention of saving was before the mission of a Saviour; so that this affection rose, not from the merit of Christ, but the merit of Christ was directed by this affection. It was the effect of it, not the cause. Nor was the union of our nature with his merited by him; all his meritorious acts were performed in our nature; the nature, therefore, wherein he performed it, was not merited; that grace which was not, could not merit what it was; he could not merit that humanity, which must be assumed before he could merit anything for us, because all merit for us must be offered in the nature which had offended. It is true “Christ gave himself,” but by the order of Divine goodness; he that begat him, pitched upon him, and called him to this great work (Hebrews 5:5); he is therefore called “the Lamb of God,” as being set apart by God to be a propitiating and appeasing sacrifice. He is the “Wisdom of God,” since from the Father he reveals the counsel and order of redemption. In this regard he calls God “his God” in the prophet (Isaiah 49:4), and in the evangelist (John 20:17); though he was big with affection for the accomplishment, yet he came not to do his “own will,” but the will of Divine goodness; his own will it was, too, but not principally, as being the first wheel in motion, but subordinate to the eternal will of Divine bounty. It was by the will of God that he came, and by his will he drank the dreggy cup of bitterness. Divine justice laid “upon him the iniquity of us all,” but Divine goodness intended it for our rescue; Divine goodness singled him out, and set him apart; Divine goodness invited him to it; Divine goodness commanded him to effect it, and put a law into his heart, to bias him in the performing of it; Divine goodness sent him, and Divine goodness moved justice to bruise him; and,

after his sacrifice, Divine goodness accepted him, and caressed him for it. So earnest was it for our redemption, as to give out special and irreversible orders: death was commanded to be endured by him for us, and life commanded to be imparted by him to us (John 10:16; John 10:18). If God had not been the mover, but had received the proposal from another, he might have heard it, but was not bound to grant it; his sovereign authority, was not under any obligation to receive another's sponson for the miserable criminal. As Christ is the head of man, so "God is the head of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3); he did nothing but by his directions, as he was not a Mediator, but by the constitution of Divine goodness. As a "liberal man deviseth liberal things" (Isaiah 2:8), so did a bountiful God devise a bountiful act, wherein his kindness and love as a Saviour appeared: he was possessed with the resolutions to manifest his goodness in Christ, "in the beginning of his way" (Proverbs 8:22-23), before he descended to the act of creation. This intention of goodness preceded his making that creature man, who, he foresaw, would fall, and, by his fall, disjoint and entangle the whole frame of the world, without such a provision.

2d. In God's giving Christ to be our Redeemer, he gave the highest gift that it was possible for Divine goodness to bestow. As there is not a greater God than himself to be conceived, so there is not a greater gift for this great God to present to his creatures: never did God go farther, in any of his excellent perfections, than this. It is such a dole that cannot be transcended with a choicer; he is, as it were, come to the last mite of his treasure; and though he could create millions of worlds for us, he cannot give a greater Son to us. He could abound in the expressions of his power, in new creations of worlds, which have not yet been seen, and in the lustre of his wisdom in more stately structures; but if he should frame as many worlds as there are mites of dust and matter in this, and make every one of them as bright and glorious as the sun, though his power and wisdom would be more signalized, yet his goodness could not, since he hath not a choicer gift to bless those brighter worlds withal, than he hath conferred upon this: nor can immense goodness contrive a richer means to conduct those worlds to happiness, than he hath both invented for this world, and presented it with. It cannot be imagined, that it can extend itself farther than to give a gift equal with himself; a gift as dear to him as himself. His wisdom, had it studied millions of eternities (excuse the expression, since eternity admits of no millions, it being an interminable duration), it could have found out no more to give; this goodness could have bestowed no more, and our necessity could not have required a greater offering for our relief. When God intended, in redemption, the manifestation of his highest goodness, it could not be without the donation of the choicest gift; as, when he would insure our comfort, he swears "by himself," because he cannot swear "by a greater" (Hebrews 6:13): so, when we would insure our happiness, he gives us his Son, because he cannot give a greater, being equal with himself. Had the Father given himself in person, he had given one first in order, but not greater in essence and glorious perfections: it could have been no more than the life of God, and should then have been laid down for us; and so it was now, since the human nature did not subsist but in his Divine person.

1. It is a greater gift than worlds, or all things purchased by him. What was this gift but "the image of his person, and the brightness of his glory" (Hebrews 1:3)? What was this gift but one as rich as eternal blessedness could make him? What was this gift, but one that possessed the fulness of earth, and the more immense riches of heaven? It is a more valuable present, than if he presented us with thousands of worlds of angels and inferior creatures, because his person is incomparably greater, not only than all conceivable, but inconceivable, creations; we are more obliged to him for

it, than if he had made us angels of the highest rank in heaven, because it is a gift of more value than the whole angelical nature, because he is an infinite person, and therefore infinitely transcends whatsoever is finite, though of the highest dignity. The wounds of an Almighty God for us are a greater testimony of goodness, than if we had all the other riches of heaven and earth. This perfection had not appeared in such an astonishing grandeur, had it pardoned us without so rich a satisfaction; that had been pardon to our sin, not a God of our nature. "God so loved the world" that he pardoned it, had not sounded so great and so good, as God so love the world, that he "gave his only-begotten Son." Est aliquid in Christo formosius Servatore. There is something in Christ more excellent and comely than the office of a Saviour; the greatness of his person is more excellent, than the salvation procured by his death: it was a greater gift than was bestowed upon innocent Adam, or the holy angels. In the creation, his goodness gave us creatures for our use: in our redemption, his goodness gives us what was dearest to him for our service, our Sovereign in office to benefit us, as well as in a royalty to govern us.

2. It was a greater gift, because it was his own Son, not an angel. It had been a mighty goodness to have given one of the lofty seraphims; a greater goodness to have given the whole corporation of those glorious spirits for us, those children of the Most High: but he gave that Son, whom he commands "all the angels to worship" (Hebrews 1:6), and all men to adore, and pay the "lowest homage to" (Psalms 2:12); that Son that is to be honored by us, as we "honor the Father" (John 5:23); that Son which was his "delight" (Proverbs 8:30); his delights in the Hebrew, wherein all the delights of the Father were gathered in one, as well as of the whole creation; and not simply a Son, but an only-begotten Son, upon which Christ lays the stress with an emphasis (1 John 3:16). He had but one Son in heaven or earth, one Son from an unviewable eternity, and that one Son he gave for a degenerate world; this son he consecrated for "evermore a Priest" (Hebrews 7:28). "The word of the oath makes the Son;" the peculiarity of his Sonship heightens the goodness of the Donor. It was no meaner a person that he gave to empty himself of his glory, to fulfil an obedience for us, that we might be rendered happy partakers of the Divine nature. Those that know the natural affection of a father to a son, must judge the affection of God the Father to the Son infinitely greater, than the affection of an earthly father to the son of his bowels. It must be an unparalleled goodness, to give up a Son that he loved with so ardent an affection, for the redemption of rebels: abandon a glorious Son to a dishonorable death, for the security of those that had violated the laws of righteousness, and endeavored to pull the sovereign crown from his head. Besides, being an only Son, all those affections centered in him, which in parents would have been divided among a multitude of children: so, then, as it was a testimony of the highest faith and obedience in "Abraham to offer up his only-begotten son to God" (Hebrews 11:17); so it was the triumph of Divine goodness, to give so great, so dear a person, for so little a thing as man; and for such a piece of nothing and vanity, as a sinful world.

3. And this Son given to rescue us by his death. It was a gift to us; for our sakes he descended from his throne, and dwelt on earth; for our sakes he was "made flesh," and infirm flesh; for our sakes he was "made a curse," and scorched in the furnace of his Father's wrath; for our sakes he went naked, armed only with his own strength, into the lists of that combat with the devils, that led us captive. Had he given him to be a leader for the conquest of some earthly enemies, it had been a great goodness to display his banners, and bring us under his conduct; but he sent him to lay down his life in the bitterest and most inglorious manner, and exposed him to a cursed death for

our redemption from that dreadful curse, which would have broken us to pieces, and irreparably have crushed us. He gave him to us, to suffer for us as a man, and redeem us as a God; to be a sacrifice to expiate our sin by translating the punishment upon himself, which was merited by us. Thus was he made low to exalt us, and debased to advance us, “made poor to enrich us” (2 Corinthians 8:9); and eclipsed to brighten our sullied natures, and wounded, that he might be a physician for our languishments. He was ordered to taste the bitter cup of death, that we might drink of the rivers of immortal life and pleasures: to submit to the frailties of the human nature, that we might possess the glories of the divine: he was ordered to be a sufferer, that we might be no longer captives; and to pass through the fire of Divine wrath, that he might purge our nature from the dross it had contracted. Thus was the righteous given for sin, the innocent for criminals, the glory of heaven for the dregs of earth, and the immense riches of a Deity expended to restock man.

4. And a Son that was exalted for what he had done for us by the order of Divine goodness. The exaltation of Christ was no less a signal mark of his miraculous goodness to us, than of his affection to him: since he was obedient by Divine goodness to die for us, his advancement was for his obedience to those orders. The name given to him “above every name” (Php 2:8-9), was a repeated triumph of this perfection; since his passion was not for himself, he was wholly innocent, but for us who were criminal. His advancement was not only for himself as Redeemer, but for us as redeemed: Divine goodness centered in him, both in his cross and in his crown; for it was for the “purging our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3): and the whole blessed society of principalities and powers in heaven admire this goodness of God, and ascribe to him “honor, glory, and power” for advancing the “Lamb slain” (Revelation 5:11-13). Divine goodness did not only give him to us, but gave him power, riches, strength, and honor, for manifesting this goodness to us, and opening the passages for its fuller conveyances to the sons of men. Had not God had thoughts of a perpetual goodness, he would not have settled him so near him, to manage our cause, and testified so much affection to him on our behalf. This goodness gave him to be debased for us, and ordered him to be enthroned for us: as it gave him to us bleeding, so it would give him to us triumphing; that as we have a share by grace in the merits of his humiliation, We might partake also of the glories of his coronation; that, from first to last, we may behold nothing but the triumphs of Divine goodness to fallen man.

5. In bestowing this gift on us, Divine goodness gives whole God to us. Whatsoever is great and excellent in the Godhead, the Father gives us, by giving us his Son: the Creator gives himself to us in his Son Christ. In giving creatures to us, he gives the riches of earth; in giving himself to us, he gives the riches of heaven, which surmount all understanding: it is in this gift he becomes our God, and passeth over the title of all that he is for our use and benefit, that every attribute in the Divine nature may be claimed by us; not to be imparted to us whereby we may be deified, but employed for our welfare, whereby we may be blessed. He gave himself in creation to us in the image of his holiness; but, in redemption, he gave himself in the image of his person: he would not only communicate the goodness without him, but bestow upon us the infinite goodness of his own nature; that that which was his own end and happiness might be our end and happiness, viz. himself. By giving his Son, he hath given himself; and in both gifts he hath given all things to us. The Creator of all things is eminently all things: “He hath given all things into the hands of his Son” (John 3:35); and, by consequence, given all things into the hands of his redeemed creatures, by

giving them Him to whom he gave all things; whatsoever we were invested in by creation, whatsoever we were deprived of by corruption, and more, he hath deposited in safe hands for our enjoyment: and what can Divine goodness do more for us? What further can it give unto us, than what it hath given, and in that gift designed for us?

3d. This goodness is enhanced by considering the state of man in the first transgression, and since.

1. Man's first transgression. If we should rip up every vein of that first sin, should we find any want of wickedness to excite a just indignation? What was there but ingratitude to Divine bounty, and rebellion against Divine sovereignty? The royalty of God was attempted; the supremacy of Divine knowledge above man's own knowledge envied; the riches of goodness, whereby he lived and breathed, slighted. There is a discontent with God upon an unreasonable sentiment, that God had denied a knowledge to him which was his right and due, when there should have been an humble acknowledgment of that unmerited goodness, which had not only given him a being above other creatures, but placed him the governor and lord of those that were inferior to him. What alienation of his understanding was there from knowing God, and of his will from loving him! A debauch of all his faculties; a spiritual adultery, in preferring, not only one of God's creatures, but one of his desperate enemies, before him; thinking him a wiser counsellor than Infinite Wisdom, and imagining him possessed with kinder affections to him than that God who had newly created him. Thus he joins in league with hell against heaven, with a fallen spirit against his bountiful Benefactor, and enters into society with rebels that just before commenced a war against his and their common Sovereign: he did not only falter in, but cast off, the obedience due to his Creator; endeavored to purloin his glory, and actually murdered all those that were virtually in his loins. "Sin entered into the world" by him, "and death by sin, and passed upon all men" (Romans 5:12), taking them off from their subjection to God, to be slaves to the damned spirits, and heirs of their misery: and, after all this, he adds a foul imputation on God, taxing him as the author of his sin, and thereby stains the beauty of his holiness. But, notwithstanding all this, God stops not up the flood-gates of his goodness, nor doth he entertain fiery resolutions against man, but brings forth a healing promise; and sends not an angel upon commission to reveal it to him, but preaches it himself to this forlorn and rebellious creature (Genesis 3:15).

2. Could there be anything in this fallen creature to allure God to the expression of his goodness? Was there any good action in all his carriage that could plead for a re-admission of him to his former state? Was there one good quality left, that could be an orator to persuade Divine goodness to such a gracious procedure? Was there any moral goodness in man, after this debauch, that might be an object of Divine love? What was there in him, that was not rather a provocation than an allurement? Could you expect that any perfection in God should find a motive in this ungrateful apostate to open a mouth for him, and be an advocate to support him, and bring him off from a just tribunal? or, after Divine goodness had begun to pity and plead for man, is it not wonderful that it should not discontinue the plea, after it found man's excuse to be as black as his crime (Genesis 3:12), and his carriage, upon his examination, to be as disobliging as his first revolt? It might well be expected, that all the perfections in the Divine nature would have entered into an association eternally to treat this rebel according to his deserts. What attractives were there in a silly worm, much less in such complete wickedness, inexcusable enmity, infamous rebellion, to design a Redeemer for him, and such a person as the Son of God to a fleshy body, an eclipse

of glory, and an ignominious cross? The meanness of man was further from alluring God to it, than the dignity of angels.

3. Was there not a world of demerit in man, to animate grace as well as wrath against him? We were so far from deserving the opening any streams of goodness, that we had merited floods of devouring wrath. What were all men but enemies to God in a high manner? Every offence was infinite, as being committed against a being of infinite dignity; it was a stroke at the very being of God, a resistance of all his attributes; it would degrade him from the height and perfection of his nature; it would not, by its good will, suffer God to be God. If he that hates his brother is a murderer of his brother (1 John 3:15), he that hates his Creator is a murderer of the Deity, and every “carnal mind is enmity to God” (Romans 8:7): every sin envies him his authority, by breaking his precept; and envies him his goodness, by defacing the marks of it: every sin comprehends in it more than men or angels can conceive: that God who only hath the clear apprehensions of his own dignity, hath the sole clear apprehensions of sin’s malignity. All men were thus by nature: those that sinned before the coming of the Redeemer had been in a state of sin; those that were to come after him would be in a state of sin by their birth, and be criminals as soon as ever they were creatures. All men, as well the glorified, as those in the flesh at the coming of the Redeemer, and those that were to be born after, were considered in a state of sin by God, when he bruised the Redeemer for them; all were filthy and unworthy of the eye of God; all had employed the faculties of their souls, and the members of their bodies, which they enjoyed by his goodness, against the interest of his glory. Every rational creature had made himself a slave to those creatures over whom he had been appointed a lord, subjected himself as a servant to his inferior, and strutted as a superior against his liberal Sovereign, and by every sin rendered himself more a child of Satan, and enemy of God, and more worthy of the curses of the law, and the torments of hell. Was it not, now, a mighty goodness that would surmount those high mountains of demerit, and elevate such creatures by the depression of his Son? Had we been possessed of the highest holiness, a reward had been the natural effect of goodness. It was not possible that God should be unkind to a righteous and innocent creature; his grace would have crowned that which had been so agreeable to him. He had been a denier of himself, had he numbered innocent creatures in the rank of the miserable; but to be kind to an enemy, to run counter to the vastness of demerit in man, was a superlative goodness, a goodness triumphing above all the provocations of men, and pleas of justice: it was an abounding goodness of grace; “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20), **■περεπερ■σσευσεν**; it swelled above the heights of sin, and triumphed more than all his other attributes.

4. Man was reduced to the lowest condition. Our crimes had brought us to the lowest calamity; we were brought to the dust, and prepared for hell. Adam had not the boldness to request, and therefore we may judge he had not the least hopes of pardon; he was sunk under wrath, and could have expected no better an entertainment than the tempter, whose solicitations he submitted to. We had cast the diadem from our heads, and lost all our original excellency; we were lost to our own happiness, and lost to our Creator’s service, when he was so kind as to send his Son to seek us (Matthew 18:11), and so liberal as to expend his blood for our cure and preservation. How great was that goodness that would not abandon us in our miscry, but remit our crimes, and rescue our persons, and ransom our souls by so great a price from the rights of justice, and horrors of hell, we were so fitted for?

5. Every age multiplied provocations; every age of the world proved more degenerate. The traditions, which were purer and more lively among Adam's immediate posterity, were more dark among his further descendants; idolatry, whereof we have no marks in the old world before the deluge, was frequent afterwards in every nation: not only the knowledge of the true God was lost, but the natural reverential thoughts of a Deity were expelled. Hence gods were dubbed according to men's humors; and not only human passions, but brutish vices, ascribed to them: as by the fall we were become less than men, so we would fancy God no better than a beast, since beasts were worshipped as gods (Romans 1:21); yea, fancied God no better than a devil, since that destroyer was worshipped instead of the Creator, and a homage paid to the powers of hell that had ruined them, which was due to the goodness of that Benefactor, who had made them and preserved them in the world. The vilest creatures were deified; reason was debased below common sense; and men adored one end of a "log," while they "warmed themselves with the other" (Isaiah 44:14; Isaiah 44:16-17); as if that which was ordained for the kitchen were a fit representation for God in the temple. Thus were the natural notions of a Deity depraved; the whole world drenched in idolatry; and though the Jews were free from that gross abuse of God, yet they were sunk also into loathsome superstitions, when the goodness of God brought in his designed Redeemer and redemption into the world.

6. The impotence of man enhanceth this goodness. Our own eye did scarce pity us, and it was impossible for our own hands to relieve us; we were insensible of our misery, in love with our death; we courted our chains, and the noise of our fettering lusts were our music, "serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3). Our lusts were our pleasures; Satan's yoke was as delightful to us to bear, as to him to impose: instead of being his opposers in his attempts against us, we were his voluntary seconds, and every whit as willing to embrace, as he was to propose, his ruining temptations. As no man can recover himself from death, so no man can recover himself from wrath; he is as unable to redeem, as to create himself; he might as soon have stripped himself of his being, as put an end to his misery; his captivity would have been endless, and his chains remediless, for anything he could do to knock them off; and deliver himself; he was too much in love with the sink of sin, to leave wallowing in it, and under too powerful a hand, to cease frying in the flames of wrath. As the law could not be obeyed by man, after a corrupt principle had entered into him, so neither could justice be satisfied by him after his transgression. The sinner was indebted, but bankrupt; as he was unable to pay a mite of that obedience he owed to the precept, because of his enmity, so he was unable to satisfy what he owed to the penalty, because of his feebleness: he was as much without love to observe the one, as "without strength" to bear the other: he could not, because of his "enmity, be subject to the law" (Romans 8:7), or compensate for his sin, because he was "without strength" (Romans 5:6). His strength to offend was great; but to deliver himself a mere nothing. Repentance was not a thing known by man after the fall, till he had hopes of redemption; and if he had known and exercised it, what compensation are the tears of a malefactor for an injury done to the crown, and attempting the life of his prince? How great was Divine goodness, not only to pity men in this state, but to provide a strong Redeemer for them! "O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer!" said the Psalmist (Psalms 19:14): when he found out a Redeemer for our misery, he found out a strength for our impotency. To conclude this: behold the "goodness of God," when we had thus unhandsomely dealt with him; had nothing to allure his goodness, multitudes of provocations to incense him, were reduced to a condition as low as could be, fit to be the matter of his scoffs, and the sport of Divine justice, and so weak that we

could not repair our own ruins; then did he open a fountain of fresh goodness in the death of his Son, and sent forth such delightful streams, as in our original creation we could never have tasted; not only overcame the resentments of a provoked justice, but magnified itself by our lowness, and strengthened itself by our weakness. His goodness had before created an innocent, but here it saves a malefactor; and sends his Son to die for us, as if the Holy of holies were the criminal, and the rebel the innocent. It had been a pompous goodness to have given him as a king; but a goodness of greater grandeur to expose him as a sacrifice for slaves and enemies. Had Adam remained innocent, and proved thankful for what he had received, it had been great goodness to have brought him to glory; but to bring filthy and rebellious Adam to it, surmounts, by inexpressible degrees, that sort of goodness he had experimented before; since it was not from a light evil, a tolerable curse unawares brought upon us, but from the yoke we had willingly submitted to, from the power of darkness we had courted, and the furnace of wrath we had kindled for ourselves. What are we dead dogs, that he should behold us with so gracious an eye? This goodness is thus enhanced, if you consider the state of man in his first transgression, and after.

4th. This goodness further appears in the high advancement of our nature, after it had so highly offended. By creation, we had an affinity with animals in our bodies, with angels in our spirits, with God in his image; but not with God in our nature, till the incarnation of the Redeemer. Adam, by creation, was the son of God (Luke 3:38), but his nature was not one with the person of God: he was his son, as created by him, but had no affinity to him by virtue of union with him: but now man doth not only see his nature in multitudes of men on earth, but, by an astonishing goodness, beholds his nature united to the Deity in heaven: that as he was the son of God by creation, he is now the brother of God by redemption; for with such a title doth that Person, who was the Son of God as well as the Son of man, honor his disciples (John 20:17): and because he is of the same nature with them, he "is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). Our nature, which was infinitely distant from, and below the Deity, now makes one person with the Son of God. What man sinfully aspired to, God hath graciously granted, and more: man aspired to a likeness in knowledge, and God hath granted him an affinity in union. It had been astonishing goodness to angelize our natures; but in redemption Divine goodness hath acted higher, in a sort to deify our natures. In creation, our nature was exalted above other creatures on earth; in our redemption, our nature is exalted above all the host of heaven: we were higher than the beasts, as creatures, but "lower than the angels" (Psalms 8:5); but, by the incarnation of the Son of God, our nature is elevated many steps above them. After it had sunk itself by corruption below the bestial nature, and as low as the diabolical, the "fulness of the Godhead dwells in our nature bodily" (Colossians 2:9), but never in the angels, angelically. The Son of God descended to dignify our nature, by assuming it; and ascended with our nature to have it crowned above those standing monuments of Divine power and goodness (Ephesians 1:20-21). That Person that descended in our nature into the grave, and in the same nature was raised up again, is, in that same nature, set at the right hand of God in heaven, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." Our refined clay, by an indissoluble union with this Divine Person, is honored to sit forever upon a throne above all the tribes of seraphims and cherubims; and the Person that wears it, is the head of the good angels, and the conqueror of the bad; the one are put under his feet, and the other commanded to adore him, "that purged our sins in our nature" (Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 1:6): that Divine Person in our nature receives adoration from the angels; but the nature of man is not ordered to pay any homage and adorations to the angels. How could Divine

goodness, to man, more magnify itself? As we could not have a lower descent than we had by sin, how could we have a higher ascent than by a substantial participation of a divine life, in our nature, in the unity of a Divine Person? Our earthly nature is joined to a heavenly Person; our undone nature united to "one equal with God" (Php 2:6). It may truly be said, that man is God, which is infinitely more glorious for us, than if it could be said, man is an angel. If it were goodness to advance our innocent nature above other creatures, the advancement of our degenerate nature above angels deserves a higher title than mere goodness. It is a more gracious act, than if all men had been transformed into the pure spiritual nature of the loftiest cherubims.

5th. This goodness is manifest in the covenant of grace made with us, whereby we are freed from the rigor of that of works. God might have insisted upon the terms of the old covenant, and required of man the improvement of his original stock; but God hath condescended to lower terms, and offered man more gracious methods, and mitigated the rigor of the first, by the sweetness of the second.

1. It is goodness, that he should condescend to make another covenant with man. To stipulate with innocent and righteous Adam for his obedience, was a stoop of his sovereignty; though he gave the precept as a sovereign Lord, yet in his covenanting, he seems to descend to some kind of equality with that dust and ashes with whom he treated. Absolute sovereigns do not usually covenant with their people, but exact obedience and duty, without binding themselves to bestow a reward; and if they intend any, they reserve the purpose in their own breasts, without treating their subjects with a solemn declaration of it. There was no obligation on God to enter into the first covenant, much less, after the violation of the first, to the settlement of a new. If God seemed in some sort to equal himself to man in the first, he seemed to descend below himself in treating with a rebel upon more condescending terms in the second. If his covenant with innocent Adam was a stoop of his sovereignty, this with rebellious Adam seems to be a stripping himself of his majesty in favor of his goodness; as if his happiness depended upon us, and not ours upon him. It is a humiliation of himself to behold the things in heaven, the glorious angels, as well as things on earth, mortal men (Psalms 113:6); much more to bind himself in gracious bonds to the glorious angels; and much more if to rebel man. In the first covenant there was much of sovereignty as well as goodness; in the second there is less of sovereignty, and more of grace: in the first there was a righteous man for a holy God; in the second a polluted creature for a pure and provoked God: in the first he holds his sceptre in his hand, to rule his subjects; in the second he seems to lay by his sceptre, to court and espouse a beggar (Hosea 2:18-20): in the first he is a Lord; in the second a husband; and binds himself upon gracious conditions to become a debtor. How should this goodness fill us with an humble astonishment, as it did Abraham, when he "fell on his face," when he heard God speaking of making a covenant with him! (Genesis 17:2-3). And if God speaking to Israel out of the fire, and making them to hear his voice out of heaven, that he might instruct them, was a consideration whereby Moses would heighten their admiration of Divine goodness, and engage their affectionate obedience to him (Deuteronomy 4:32; Deuteronomy 4:36; Deuteronomy 4:40), how much more admirable is it for God to speak so kindly to us through the pacifying blood of the covenant, that silenced the terrors of the old, and settled the tenderness of the new!

2. His goodness is seen in the nature and tenor of the new covenant. There are in this richer streams of love and pity. The language of one was, Die, if thou sin; that of the other, Live, if thou believest: [Note: Turreti, Ser. p. 33.] the old covenant was founded upon the obedience of man;

the new one is not founded upon the inconstancy of man's will, but the firmness of Divine love, and the valuable merit of Christ. The head of the first covenant was human and mutable; the Head of the second is divine and immutable. The curse due to us by the breach of the first, is taken off by the indulgence of the second: we are by it snatched from the jaws of the law, to be wrapped up in the bosom of grace (Romans 8:1). "For you are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14); from the curse and condemnation of the law, to the sweetness and forgiveness of grace. Christ bore the one, being "made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13), that we might enjoy the sweetness of the other; by this we are brought from Mount Sinai, the mount of terror, to Mount Sion, the mount of sacrifice, the type of the great Sacrifice (Hebrews 12:18; Hebrews 12:22). That covenant brought in death upon one offence, this covenant offers life after many offences (Romans 5:16-17): that involves us in a curse, and this enricheth us with a blessing; the breaches of that expelled us out of Paradise, and the embracing of this admits us into heaven. This covenant demands, and admits of that repentance whereof there was no mention in the first; that demanded obedience, not repentance upon a failure; and though the exercise of it had been never so deep in the fallen creature, nothing of the law's severity had been remitted by any virtue of it. Again, the first covenant demanded exact righteousness, but conveyed no cleansing virtue, upon the contracting any filth. The first demands a continuance in the righteousness conferred in creation; the second imprints a gracious heart in regeneration. "I will pour clean water upon you; I will put a new spirit within you," was the voice of the second covenant, not of the first. Again, as to pardon Adam's covenant was to punish him, not to pardon him, if he fell; that threatened death upon transgression, this remits it; that was an act of Divine sovereignty, declaring the will of God; this is an act of Divine grace, passing an act of oblivion on the crimes of the creature: that, as it demanded no repentance upon a failure, so it promised no mercy upon guilt; that convene our sin, and condemned us for it; this clears our guilt, and comforts us under it. The first covenant related us to God as a Judge; every transgression against it forfeited his indulgence as a Father: the second delivers us from God as a condemning Judge, to bring us under his wing, as an affectionate Father; in the one there was a dreadful frown to scare us; in the other, a healing wing to cover and relieve us. Again, in regard of righteousness: that demanded our performance of a righteousness in and by ourselves, and our own strength; this demands our acceptance of a righteousness higher than ever the standing angels had; the righteousness of the first covenant was the righteousness of a man, the righteousness of the second is the righteousness of a God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Again, in regard of that obedience it demands: it exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with divine precepts: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1); i. e. sincere. What is hearty in our actions, is accepted; and what is defective, is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our Surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin; the services of a person under the sentence of death, are but dead services: this accepts our imperfect services, after faith in it; that administered no strength to obey, but supposed it; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27). Again, in regard of the promises: the old covenant had good, but the new hath "better promises" (Hebrews 8:6), of justification after guilt and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first, there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it: provision against filth, but

none for the cleansing of it; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that "life and immortality" in heaven, "brought to light by the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Why said to be "brought to light by the gospel?" because it was not only buried, upon the fall of man under the curses of the law, but it was not so obvious to the conceptions of man in his innocent state. Life indeed was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed, to be reserved for him, if he stood: as it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts; comforts more choice, and comforts more durable; an "everlasting consolation, and a good hope" are the fruits of "grace," i. e. the covenant of grace (2 Thessalonians 2:16). In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed; the apostle leaves it to every man's mind to conceive it, if he could, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). It instates us in such a manner of the love of God as he bears to his Son, the image of his person (John 17:23): "That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

3. This goodness appears in the choice gift of himself which he hath made over in this covenant (Genesis 17:7). You know how it runs in Scripture: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 32:38): a propriety in the Deity is made over by it. As he gave the blood of his Son to seal the covenant, so he gave himself as the blessing of the covenant; "He is not ashamed to be called their God" (Hebrews 11:16). Though he be environed with millions of angels, and presides over them in an inexpressible glory, he is not ashamed of his condescensions to man, and to pass over himself as the propriety of his people, as well as to take them to be his. It is a diminution of the sense of the place, to understand it of God, as Creator; what reason was there for God to be ashamed of the expressions of his power, wisdom, goodness, in the works of his hands? But we might have reason to think there might be some ground in God to be ashamed of making himself over in a deed of gift to a mean worm and filthy rebel; this might seem a disparagement to his majesty; but God is not ashamed of a title so mean, as the God of his despised people; a title below those others, of the "Lord of hosts, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, riding on the wings of the wind, walking in the circuits of heaven." He is no more ashamed of this title of being our God, than he is of those other that sound more glorious; he would rather have his greatness veil to his goodness, than his goodness be confined by his majesty; he is not only our God, but our God as he is the God of Christ: he is not ashamed to be our propriety, and Christ is not ashamed to own his people in a partnership with him in this propriety (John 20:17): "I ascend to my God, and your God." This of God's being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises: in this he hath promised whatsoever is infinite in him, whatsoever is the glory and ornament of his nature, for our use; not a part of him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigor and strength of all. As he is not a God without infinite wisdom, and infinite power, and infinite goodness, and infinite blessedness, &c., so he passes over, in this covenant, all that which presents him as the most adorable Being to his creatures; he will be to them as great, as wise, as powerful, as good as he is in himself; and the assuring us, in this covenant, to be our God, imports also that he will do as much for us, as we would do for ourselves, were we furnished with the same goodness, power, and wisdom: in being our God, he testifies it is all one, as if we had the same perfections in our own power to employ for our use; for he being possessed with them, it is as much as if we ourselves were possessed with them, for our own advantage, according to the rules of wisdom, and the several conditions we pass through thr his glory. But this must be taken with a relation to that wisdom, which he observes in his

proceedings with us as creatures, and according to the several conditions we pass through for his glory. Thus God's being ours is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own dispose; it makes "all things that God hath ours" (1 Corinthians 3:22); and therefore, not only all things he hath created, but all things that he can create; not only all things that he hath contrived, but all things that he can contrive: for in being ours, his power is ours, his possible power as well as his active power; his power, whereby he can effect more than he hath done, and his wisdom, whereby he can contrive more than he hath done; so that if there were need of employing his power to create many worlds for our good, he would not stick at it; for if he did, he would not be our God, in the extent of his nature, as the promise intimates. What a rich goodness, and a fulness of bounty, is there in this short expression, as full as the expression of a God can make it, to be intelligible, to such creatures as we are!

4. This goodness is further manifest in the confirmation of the covenant. His goodness did not only condescend to make it for our happiness, after we had made ourselves miserable, but further condescended to ratify it in the solemnest manner for our assurance, to overrule all the despondencies unbelief could raise up in our souls. The reason why he confirmed it by an oath, was to show the immutability of his glorious counsel, not to tie himself to keep it, for his word and promise is in itself as immutable as his oath; they were "two immutable things, his word and his oath," one as unchangeable as the other; but for the strength of our consolation, that it might have no reason to shake and totter (Hebrews 6:17-18): he would condescend as low as was possible for a God to do for the satisfaction of the dejected creature. When the first covenant was broken, and it was impossible for man to fulfil the terms of it, and mount to happiness thereby, he makes another; and, as if we had reason to distrust him in the first, he solemnly ratifies it in a higher manner than he had done the other, and swears by himself that he will be true to it, not so much out of an election of himself, as the object of the oath (Hebrews 6:13): "Because he could not swear by a greater, he swears by himself;" whereby the apostle clearly intimates, that Divine goodness was raised to such a height for us, that if there had been anything else more sacred than himself, or that could have punished him if he had broken it, that he would have sworn by, to silence any diffidence in us, and confirm us in the reality of his intentions. Now if it were a mighty mark of goodness for God to stoop to a covenanting with us, it was more for a sovereign to bind himself so solemnly to be our debtor in a promise, as well as he was our sovereign in the precept, and stoop so low in it to satisfy the distrust of that creature, that deserved for ever to be soaking in his own ruins, for not believing his bare word. What absolute prince would ever stoop so low as to article with rebellious subjects, whom he could in a moment set his foot upon and crush; much less countenance a causeless distrust of his goodness by the addition of his oath, and thereby bind his own hands, which were unconfined before, and free to do what he pleased with them?

5. This goodness of God is remarkable also in the condition of this covenant which is faith. This was the easiest condition, in its own nature, that could be imagined; no difficulty in it but what proceeds from the pride of man's nature, and the obstinacy of his will. It was not impossible in itself; it was not the old condition of perfect obedience. It had been mighty goodness to set us up again upon our old stock, and restore us to the tenor and condition of the covenant of works, or to have required the burdensome ceremonies of the law. Nor is it an exact knowledge he requires of us; all men's understandings being of a different size, they had not been capable of this. It was the most reasonable condition, in regard of the excellency of the things proposed, and the effects

following upon it; nay, it was necessary. It had been a want of goodness to himself and his own honor; he had cast that off, had he not insisted on this condition of faith, it being the lowest he could condescend to with a salvo for his glory. And it was a goodness to us; it is nothing else he requires, but a willingness to accept what he hath contrived and acted for us: and no man can be happy against his will; without this belief, at least, man could never voluntarily have arrived to his happiness. The goodness of God is evidenced in that.

[1st.] It is an easy condition, not impossible. 1. It was not the condition of the old covenant. The condition of that was an entire obedience to every precept with a man's whole strength, and without any flaw or crack. But the condition of the evangelical covenant is a sincere, though weak, faith; He hath suited this covenant to the misery of man's fallen condition; he considers our weakness, and that we are but dust, and therefore exacts not of us an entire, but a sincere, obedience. Had God sent Christ to expiate the crime of Adam, restore him to his paradise estate, and repair in man the ruined image of holiness, and after this to have renewed the covenant of works for the future, and settled the same condition in exacting a complete obedience for the time to come; Divine goodness had been above any accusation, and had deserved our highest admiration in the pardon of former transgressions, and giving out to us our first stock. But Divine goodness took larger strides: he had tried our first condition, and found his mutable creature quickly to violate it: had he demanded the same now, it is likely it had met with the same issue as before, in man's disobedience and fall; we should have been as men, as Adam (Hosea 6:7), "transgressing the covenant;" and then we must have lain groaning under our disease, and wallowing in our blood, unless Christ had come to die for the expiation of our new crimes; for every transgression had been a violation of that covenant, and a forfeiture of our right to the benefits of it. If we had broke it but in one tittle, we had rendered ourselves incapable to fulfil it for the future; that one transgression had stood as a bar against the pleas of after-obedience. But God hath wholly laid that condition aside as to us, and settled that of faith, more easy to be performed, and to be renewed by us. It is infinite grace in him, that he will accept of faith in us, instead of that perfect obedience he required of us in the covenant of works. 2. It is easy, not like the burdensome ceremonies appointed under the law. He exacts not now the legal obedience, expensive sacrifices, troublesome purifications, and abstinences, that "yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1) which they were "not able to bear" (Acts 15:10). He treats us not as servants, or children, in their nonage, under the elements of the world, nor requires those innumerable bodily exercises that he exacted of them: he demands not "a thousand of lambs," and "rivers of oil;" but he requires a sincere confession and repentance, in order to our absolution; an "unfeigned faith," in order to our blessedness, and elevation to a glorious life. He requires only that we should believe what he saith, and have so good an opinion of his goodness and veracity, as to persuade ourselves of the reality of his intentions, confide in his word, and rely upon his promise, cordially embrace his crucified Son, whom he hath set forth as the means of our happiness, and have a sincere respect to all the discoveries of his will. What can be more easy than this? Though some in the days of the apostles, and others since have endeavored to introduce a multitude of legal burdens, as if they envied God the expressions of his goodness, or thought him guilty of too much remissness, in taking off the yoke, and treating man too favorably. 3. Nor is it a clear knowledge of every revelation, that is the condition of this covenant. God in his kindness to man hath made revelations of himself, but his goodness is manifested in obliging us to believe him, not fully to understand him. He hath made them, by sufficient testimonies, as clear to our faith, as they are

incomprehensible to our reason: he hath revealed a Trinity of Persons, in their distinct offices, in the business of redemption, without which revelation of a Trinity we could not have a right notion and scheme of redeeming grace. But since the clearness of men's understanding is sullied by the fall, and hath lost its wings to fly up to a knowledge of such sublime things as that of the Trinity, and other mysteries of the Christian religion, God hath manifested his goodness in not obliging us to understand them but to believe them; and hath given us reason enough to believe it to be his revelation, (both from the nature of the revelation itself, and the way and manner of propagating it, which is wholly divine, exceeding all the methods of human art,) though he hath not extended our understandings to a capacity to know them, and render a reason of every mystery. He did not require of every Israelite, or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand, or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which the serpent upon the pole was made, or what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it: it was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another: if the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is "faith," which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple, as by the strongest and most towering mind: it is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men; he required not that every man should be a philosopher, or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent, to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain, and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest: could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health by the expulsion of the venom.

[2d.] As it is easy, so it is reasonable. Repent and believe, is that which is required by Christ and the apostles for the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. It is very reasonable that things so great and glorious, so beneficial to men, and revealed to them by so sound an authority, and an unerring truth, should be believed. The excellency of the thing disclosed could admit of no lower a condition than to be believed and embraced. There is a sort of faith, that is a natural condition in everything: all religion in the world, though never so false, depends upon a sort of it; for unless there be a belief of future things, there would never be a hope of good, or a fear of evil, the two great hinges upon which religion moves. In all kinds of learning, many things must be believed before a progress can be made. Belief of one another is necessary in all acts of human life; without which human society would be unlinked and dissolved. What is that faith that God requires of us in this covenant, but a willingness of soul to take God for our God, Christ for our Mediator, and the procurer of our happiness (Revelation 22:17)? What prince could require less upon any promise he makes his subjects, than to be believed as true, and depended on as good; that they should accept his pardon, and other gracious offers, and be sincere in their allegiance to him, avoiding all things that may offend him, and pursuing all things that may please him? Thus God, by so small and reasonable a condition as faith, lets in the fruits of Christ's death into our soul, and wraps us up in the fruition of all the privileges purchased by it. So much he hath condescended in his goodness, that upon so slight a condition we may plead his promise, and humbly challenge, by virtue of the covenant, those good things he hath promised in his word. It is so reasonable a

condition, that if God did not require it in the covenant of grace, the creature were obliged to perform it: for the publishing any truth from God, naturally calls for credit to be given it by the creature, and an entertainment of it in practice. Could you offer a more reasonable condition yourselves, had it been left to your choice? Should a prince proclaim a pardon to a profligate wretch, would not all the world cry shame of him, if he did not believe it upon the highest assurances? and if ingenuity did not make him sorry for his crimes, and careful in the duty of a subject, surely the world would cry shame of such a person.

[3d.] It is a necessary condition. 1. Necessary for the honor of God. A prince is disparaged if his authority in his law, and if his graciousness in his promises, be not accepted and believed. What physician would undertake a cure, if his precepts may not be credited? It is the first thing in the order of nature, that the revelation of God should be believed, that the reality of his intentions in inviting man to the acceptance of those methods he hath prescribed for their attaining their chief happiness, should be acknowledged. It is a debasing notion of God, that he should give a happiness, purchased by Divine blood, to a person that hath no value for it, nor any abhorrency of those sins that occasioned so great a suffering, nor any will to avoid them: should he not vilify himself, to bestow a heaven upon that man that will not believe the offers of it, nor walk in those ways that lead to it? that walks so, as if he would declare there was no truth in his word, nor holiness in his nature? Would not God by such an act verify a truth in the language of their practice, viz. that he were both false and impure, careless of his word, and negligent of his holiness? As God was so desirous to ensure the consolation of believers, that if there had been a greater Being than himself to attest, and for him to be responsible to, for the confirmation of his promise, he would willingly have submitted to him, and have made him the umpire, "He swore by himself, because he could not swear by a greater" (Hebrews 6:19); by the same reason, had it stood with the majesty and wisdom of God to stoop to lower conditions in this covenant, for the reducing of man to his duty and happiness, he would have done it; but his goodness could not take lower steps, with the preservation of the rights of his majesty, and the honor of his wisdom. Would you have had him wholly submitted to the obstinate will of a rebellious creature, and be ruled only by his terms? Would you have had him received men to happiness, after they had heightened their crimes by a contempt of his grace, as well as of his creating goodness, and have made them blessed under the guilt of their crimes without an acknowledgment? Should he glorify one that will not believe what he hath revealed, nor repent of what himself hath committed; and so save a man after a repeated unthankfulness to the most immense grace that ever was, or can be, discovered and offered, without a detestation of his ingratitude, and a voluntary acceptance of his offers? It is necessary, for the honor of God, that man should accept of his terms, and not give laws to him to whom he is obnoxious as a guilty person, as well as subject as a creature. Again, it was very equitable and necessary for the honor of God, that since man fell by an unbelief of his precept and threatening, he should not rise again without a belief of his promise, and casting himself upon his truth in that: since he had vilified the honor of his truth in the threatening; since man in his fall would lean to his own understanding against God, it is fit that, in his recovery, the highest powers of his soul, his understanding and will, should be subjected to him in an entire resignation. Now, whereas knowledge seems to have a power over its object, faith is a full submission to that which is the object of it. Since man intended a glorying in himself, the evangelical covenant directs its whole battery against it, that men may "glory in nothing but Divine goodness" (1 Corinthians 1:29-31). Had man performed exact obedience by his own strength, he

had had something in himself as the matter of his glory. And though, after the fall, grace had made itself illustrious in setting him up upon a new stock, yet had the same condition of exact obedience been settled in the same manner, man would have had something to glory in, which is struck off wholly by faith; whereby man in every act must go out of himself for a supply, to that Mediator which Divine goodness and grace hath appointed. 2. It is necessary for the happiness of man. That can be no contenting condition wherein the will of man doth not concur. he that is forced to the most delicious diet, or to wear the bravest apparel, or to be stored with abundance of treasure, cannot be happy in those things without an esteem of them, and delight in them: if they be nauseous to him, the indisposition of his mind is a dead fly in those boxes of precious ointment. Now, faith being a sincere willingness to accept of Christ, and to come to God by him, and repentance being a detestation of that which made man's separation from God, it is impossible he could be voluntarily happy without it: man cannot attain and enjoy a true happiness without an operation of his understanding about the object proposed, and the means appointed to enjoy it. There must be a knowledge of what is offered, and of the way of it, and such a knowledge as may determine the will to affect that end, and embrace those means; which the will can never do, till the understanding be fully persuaded of the truth of the offerer, and the goodness of the proposal itself, and the conveniency of the means for the attaining of it. It is necessary, in the nature of the thing, that what is revealed should be believed to be a Divine revelation. God must be judged true in the promising justification and sanctification, the means of happiness; and if any man desires to be partaker of those promises, he must desire to be sanctified; and how can he desire that which is the matter of those, promises, if he wallow in his own lusts, and desire to do so, a thing repugnant to the promise itself? Would you have God force man to be happy against his will? Is it not very reasonable he should demand the consent of his reasonable creature to that blessedness he offers him? The new covenant is a "marriage covenant" (Hosea 2:16; Hosea 2:19-20), which implies a consent on our parts, as well as a consent on God's part that is no marriage that hath not the consent of both parties. Now faith is our actual consent, and repentance and sincere obedience are the testimonies of the truth and reality of this consent.

6th. Divine goodness is eminent in his methods of treating with men to embrace this covenant. They are methods of gentleness and sweetness: it is a wooing goodness, and a bemoaning goodness; his expressions are with strong motions of affection: he carrieth not on the gospel by force of arms: he doth not solely menace men into it, as worldly conquerors have done; he doth not, as Mahomet, plunder men's estates, and wound their bodies, to imprint a religion on their souls: he doth not erect gibbets, and kindle faggots, to scare men to an entering into covenant with him. What multitudes might he have raised by his power, as well as others! What legions of angels might he have rendezvoused from heaven, to have beaten men into a profession of the gospel! Nor doth he only interpose his sovereign authority in the precept of faith, but useth rational expostulations, to move men voluntarily to comply with his proposals (Isaiah 1:18), "Come now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord. He seems to call heaven and earth to be judge, whether he had been wanting in any reasonable ways of goodness, to overcome the perversity of the creature; (Isaiah 1:2), "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children." What various encouragements doth he use agreeable to the nature of men, endeavoring to persuade them with all tenderness, not to despise their own mercies, and be enemies to their own happiness! He would allure us by his beauty, and win us by his mercy. He uses the arms of his own excellency and our necessity to prevail upon us, and this after the

highest provocations. When Adam had trampled upon his creating goodness, it was not crushed; and when man had cast it from him, it took the higher rebound: when the rebel's provocation was fresh in his mind, he sought him out with a promise in his hand, though Adam fled from him out of enmity as well as fear (Genesis 3:1-24.). And when the Jews had outraged his Son, whom he loved from eternity, and made the Lord of heaven and earth bow down his head like a slave on the cross, yet in that place, where the most horrible wickedness had been committed, must the gospel be preached: the law must go forth out of that Sion, and the apostles must not stir from thence till they had received the promise of the Spirit, and published the word of grace in that ungrateful city, whose inhabitants yet swelled with indignation against the Lord of Life, and the doctrine he had preached among them (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:4-5). He would overlook their indignities out of tenderness to their souls, and expose the apostles to the peril of their lives, rather than expose his enemies to the fury of the devil.

1. How affectionately doth he invite men! What multitudes of alluring promises and pressing exhortations are there everywhere sprinkled in the Scripture, and in such a passionate manner, as if God were solely concerned in our good, without a glance on his own glory! How tenderly doth he woo flinty hearts, and express more pity to them than they do to themselves! With what affection do his bowels rise up to his lips in his speech in the prophet, Isaiah 51:4 : "Hearken to me, O my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation!" "My people," "my nation!"—melting expressions of a tender God soliciting a rebellious people to make their retreat to him. He never emptied his hand of his bounty, nor divested his lips of those charitable expressions. He sent Noah to move the wicked of the old world to an embracing of his goodness, and frequent prophets to the provoking Jews; and as the world continued, and grew up to a taller stature in sin, he stoops more in the manner of his expressions. Never was the world at a higher pitch of idolatry than at the first publishing the gospel; yet, when we should have expected him to be a punishing, he is a beseeching God. The apostle fears not to use the expression for the glory of livine goodness; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). The beseeching voice of God is in the voice of the ministry, as the voice of the prince is in that of the herald: it is as if Divine goodness did kneel down to a sinner with ringed hands and blubbered cheeks, entreating him not to force him to re-assume a tribunal of justice in the nature of a Judge, since he would treat with man upon a throne of grace in the nature of a Father; yea, he seems to put himself into the posture of the criminal, that the offending creature might not feel the punishment due to a rebel. It is not the condescension, but the interest, of a traitor to creep upon his knees in sackcloth to his sovereign, to beg his life; but it is a miraculous goodness in the sovereign to creep in the lowest posture to the rebel, to importune him, not only for an amity to him, but a love for his own life and happiness: this He doth, not only in his general proclamations, but in his particular wooings, those inward courtings of his Spirits, soliciting them with more diligence (if they would observe it) to their happiness, than the devil tempts them to the ways of their misery: as he was first in Christ, reconciling the world, when the world looked not after him, so he is first in his Spirit, wooing the world to accept of that reconciliation, when the world will not listen to him. How often doth he flash up the light of nature and the light of the word in men's hearts, to move them not to he down in sparks of their own kindling, but to aspire to a better happiness, and prepare them to be subject to a higher mercy, if they would improve his present entreaties to such an end! And what are his threatenings designed for, but to move the wheel of our fears, that the wheel of our desire and love might be set on motion for the embracing his promise? They are not so much the thunders of his

justice, as the loud rhetoric of his good will, to prevent men's misery under the vials of wrath: it is his kindness to scare men by threatenings, that justice might not strike them with the sword: it is not the destruction, but the preserving reformation, that he aims at: he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked; this he confirms by his oath. His threatenings are gracious expostulations with them: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezekiel 33:11)? They are like the noise a favorable officer makes in the street, to warn the criminal he comes to seize upon, to make his escape: he never used his justice to crush men, till he had used his kindness to allure them. All the dreadful descriptions of a future wrath, as well as the lively descriptions of the happiness of another world, are designed to persuade men; the honey of his goodness is in the bowels of those roaring lions: such pains doth Goodness take with men, to make them candidates for heaven.

2. How readily doth he receive men when they do return! We have David's experience for it (Psalms 32:5); "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. h!;s,." A sincere look from the creature draws out his arms, and opens his bosom; he is ready with his physic to heal us, upon a resolution to acquaint him with our disease, and by his medicines prevents the putting our resolution into a petition. The Psalmist adds a "h!;s," to it, as a special note of thankfulness for Divine goodness. He doth not only stand ready to receive our petitions while we are speaking, but answers us before we call (Isaiah 65:24); listening to the motions of our heart, as well as to the supplications of our lips. He is the true Father, that hath a quicker pace in meeting, than the prodigal hath in returning; who would not have his embraces and caresses interrupted by his confession (Luke 15:20-22); the confession follows, doth not precede, the Father's compassion. How doth he rejoice in having an opportunity to express his grace, when he hath prevailed with a reel to throw down his arms, and lie at his feet; and this because "he delights in mercy" (Micah 7:18)! He delights in the expressions of it from himself, and the acceptance of it by his creature.

3. How meltingly doth he bewail man's wilful refusal of his goodness! It is a mighty goodness to offer grace to a rebel; a mighty goodness to give it him after he hath a while stood off from the terms; an astonishing goodness to regret and lament his wilful perdition. He seems to utter those words in a sigh, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my way" (Psalms 81:13)! It is true, God hath not human passions, but his affections cannot be expressed otherwise in a way intelligible to us; the excellency of his nature is above the passions of men; but such expressions of himself manifest to us the sincerity of his goodness: and that, were he capable of our passions, he would express himself in such a manner as we do: and we find incarnate Goodness bewailing with tears and sighs the ruin of Jerusalem (Luke 19:42). By the same reason that when a sinner returns there is joy in heaven, upon his obstinacy there is sorrow in earth. The one is, as if a prince should clothe all his court in triumphant scarlet, upon a rebel's repentance; and the other, as if a prince put himself and his court in mourning for a rebel's obstinate refusal of a pardon, when he lies at his mercy. Are not now these affectionate invitations, and deep bewailings of their perversity, high testimonies of Divine goodness? Do not the unwearied repetitions of gracious encouragements deserve a higher name than that of mere goodness? What can be a stronger evidence of the sincerity of it, than the sound of his saving voice in our enjoyments, the motion of his Spirit in our hearts, and his grief for the neglect of all? These are not testimonies of any want of goodness in his nature to answer us, or unwillingness to express it to his creature. Hath he any mind to deceive us, that thus intreats us? The majesty of his

nature is too great for such shifts; or, if it were not, the despicableness of our condition would render him above the using any. Who would charge that physician with want of kindness, that freely offers his sovereign medicine, importunes men, by the love they have to their health, to take it, and is dissolved into tears and sorrow when he finds it rejected by their peevish and conceited humor?

7th. Divine goodness is eminent in the sacraments he hath affixed to this covenant, especially the Lord's supper. As he gave himself in his Son, so he gives his Son in the sacrament; he doth not only give him as a sacrifice upon the cross for the expiation of our crimes, but as a feast upon the table for the nourishment of our souls: in the one he was given to be offered; in this he gives him to be partaken of, with all the fruits of his death; under the image of the sacramental signs, every believer doth eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the great Mediator of the covenant. The words of Christ, "This is my body, and this is my blood," are true to the end of the world (Matthew 26:26; Matthew 26:28). This is the most delicious viand of heaven, the most exquisite dainty food God can feed us with: the delight of the Deity, the admiration of angels; a feast with God is great, but a feast on God is greater. Under those signs that body is presented; that which was conceived by the Spirit, inhabited by the Godhead, bruised by the Father to be our food, as well as our propitiation, is presented to us on the table. That blood which satisfied justice, washed away our guilt on the cross, and pleads for our persons at the throne of grace; that blood which silenced the curse, pacified heaven, and purged earth, is given to us for our refreshment. This is the bread sent from heaven, the true manna; the cup is "the cup of blessing," and, therefore, a cup of goodness (1 Corinthians 10:15). It is true, bread doth not cease to be bread, nor the wine cease to be wine; neither of them lose their substance, but both acquire a sanctification, by the relation they have to that which they represent, and give a nourishment to that faith that receives them. In those God offers us a remedy for the sting of sin, and troubles of conscience; he gives us not the blood of a mere man, or the blood of an incarnate angel, but of God blessed forever; a blood that can secure us against the wrath of heaven, and the tumults of our consciences; a blood that can wash away our sins, and beautify our souls; a blood that hath more strength than our filth, and more prevalency than our accuser; a blood that secures us against the terrors of death, and purifies us for the blessedness of heaven. The goodness of God complies with our senses, and condescends to our weakness; he instructs us by the eye, as well as by the ear; he lets us see, and taste, and feel him, as well as hear him; he veils his glory under earthly elements, and informs our understanding in the mysteries of salvation by signs familiar to our senses; and because we cannot with our bodily eyes behold him in his glory, he presents him to the eyes of our minds in elements, to affect our understandings in the representations of his death. The body of Christ crucified is more visible to our spiritual sense, than the invisible Deity could be visible in his flesh upon earth; and the power of his body and blood is as well experimented in our souls, as the power of his Divinity was seen by the Jews in his miraculous actions in his body in the world. It is the goodness of God, to mind us frequently of the great things Christ hath purchased; that as himself would not let them be out of his mind, to communicate them to us, so he would give us means to preserve them in our minds, to adore him for them, and request them of him; whereby he doth evidence his own solicitousness, that we should not be deprived by our own forgetfulness of that grace Christ hath purchase for us; it was to remember the Redeemer, "and show his death till he came" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

1. His goodness is seen in the end of it, which is a sealing the covenant of grace. The common nature and end of sacraments is to seal the covenant they belong to, and the truths of the promises of it. [Note: Amyral. Irenicum. pp. 16, 17.] The legal sacraments of circumcision and the passover sealed the legal promises and the covenant in the Judicial administration of it; and the evangelical sacraments seal the evangelical promises, as a ring confirms a contract of marriage, and a seal the articles of a compact; by the same reason, circumcision is called a "seal of the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:11); other sacraments may have the same title; God doth attest, that he will remain firm in his promise, and the receiver attests he will remain firm in his faith. In all reciprocal covenants, there are mutual engagements, and that which serves for a seal on the part of the one, serves for a seal also on the part of the other; God obligeth himself to the performance of the promise, and man engageth himself to the performance of his duty. The thing confirmed by this sacrament is the perpetuity of this covenant in the blood of Christ, whence it is called "the New Testament," or covenant "in the blood of Christ" (Luke 22:20). In every repetition of it, God, by presenting, confirms his resolution to us, of sticking to this covenant for the merit of Christ's blood; and the receiver, by eating the body and drinking the blood, engageth himself to keep close to the condition of faith, expecting a full salvation and a blessed immortality upon the merit of the same blood alone. This sacrament could not be called the "New Testament, or Covenant," if it had not some relation to the covenant; and what it can be but this, I do not understand. The covenant itself was confirmed "by the death of Christ" (Hebrews 9:15), and thereby made unchangeable both in the benefits to us, and the condition required of us; but he seals it to our sense in a sacrament, to give us strong consolation; or, rather, the articles of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, agreed on from eternity, were accomplished on Christ's part by his death, on the Father's part by his resurrection; Christ performed what he promised in the one, and God acknowledgeth the validity of it, and performs what he had promised in the other. The covenant of grace, founded upon this covenant of redemption, is sealed in the sacrament; God owns his standing to the terms of it, as sealed by the blood of the Mediator, by presenting him to us under those signs, and gives us a right upon faith to the enjoyment of the fruits of it. As the right of a house is made over by the delivery of the key, and the right of land translated by the delivery of a turf; whereby he gives us assurance of his reality, and a strong support to our confidence in him; not that there is any virtue and power of sealing in the elements themselves, no more than there is in a turf to give an enfeoffment in a parcel of land; but as the power of one is derived from the order of the law, so the confirming power of the sacrament is derived from the institution of God; as the oil wherewith kings were annointed, did not of itself confer upon them that royal dignity, but it was a sign of their investiture into office, ordered by Divine institution. We can with no reason imagine, that God intended them as naked signs or pictures, to please our eyes with the image of them, to represent their own figures to our eyes, but to confirm something to our understanding by the efficacy of the Spirit accompanying them: [Note: Daille, Melang. Part 1, p. 253.] they convey to the believing receiver what they represent, as the great seal of a prince, fixed to the parchment, doth the pardon of a rebel as well as its own figure. Christ's death, and the grace of the covenant is not only signified, but the fruits and merit of that death communicated also. Thus doth Divine goodness evidence itself, not only in making a gracious covenant with us, but fixing seals to it; not to strengthen his own obligation, which stood stronger than the foundations of heaven and earth, upon the credit of his word, but to strengthen our weakness, and support our security, by something which might appear more formal and solemn than a bare word. By this, the Divine

goodness provides against our spiritual faintings, and shows us by real signs as well as verbal declarations, that the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ, is unalterable; and thereby would fortify and mount our hopes to degrees in some measure suitable to the kindness of the covenant, and the dignity of the Redeemer's blood. And it is yet a further degree of this goodness, that he hath appointed us so often to celebrate it, whereby he shows how careful he is to keep up our tottering faith, and preserve us constant in our obedience; obliging himself to the performance of his promise, and obliging us to the payment of our duty.

2. His goodness is seen in the sacrament in giving us in it an union and communion with Christ. There is not only a commemoration of Christ dying, but a communication of Christ living. The apostle strongly asserts it by way of interrogation (1 Corinthians 10:16), "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In the cup there is a communication of the blood of Christ, a conveyance of a right to the merits of his death, and the blessedness of his life: we are not less by this made one body with Christ than we are by baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13): and "put on Christ" living in this, as well as in baptism (Galatians 3:27); that as his taking our infirm flesh was a real incarnation, so the giving us his flesh to eat is a mystical incarnation in believers, whereby they become one body with him as crucified, and one body with him as risen; for if Christ himself be received by faith in the word (Colossians 2:6), he is no less received by faith in the sacrament. When the Holy Ghost is said to be received, the graces or gifts of the Holy Ghost are received; so when Christ is received, the fruits of his death are really partaken of. The Israelites that ate of the sacrifices, did "partake of the altar" (1 Corinthians 10:18), i. e. had a communion with the God of Israel, to whom they had been sacrificed; and those that "ate of the sacrifices" offered to idols, had a "fellowship with devils," to whom those sacrifices were offered (ver. 20). Those that partake of the sacraments in a due manner, have a communion with that God to whom it was sacrificed, and a communion with that body which was sacrificed to God; not that the substance of that body and blood is wrapped up in the elements, or that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but as they represent him, and by virtue of the institution are, in estimation himself, his own body and blood; by the same reason as he is called "Christ our passover," he may be called "Christ our supper" (1 Corinthians 5:7): for as they are so reckoned to an unworthy receiver, as if they were the real body and blood of Christ, because by his not discerning the Lord's body in it, or making light of it as common bread, he is judged "guilty of the body and blood of Christ," guilty of treating him in as base a manner as the Jews did when they crowned him with thorns (1 Corinthians 11:27; 1 Corinthians 11:29): by the same reason they must be reckoned to a worthy receiver, as the very body and blood of Christ so that as the unworthy receiver "eats and drinks damnation," the worthy receiver "eats and drinks" salvation. It would be an empty mystery, and unworthy of an institution by Divine goodness, if there were not some communion with Christ in it: there would be some kind of deceit in the precept, "Take, eat, and drink, this is my body and blood," if there were not a conveyance of spiritual vital influences to our souls: for the natural end of eating and drinking is the nourishment and increase of the body, and preservation of life, by that which we eat and drink. The infinite wise, gracious, and true God, would never give us empty figures without accomplishing that which is signified by them, and suitable to them. How great is this goodness of God! he would have his Son in us, one with us, straitly joined to us, as if we were his proper flesh and blood: in the incarnation Divine goodness united him to our nature; in the sacrament, it doth in a sort unite him with his purchased privileges to our persons; we have not a

communion with a part or a member of his body, or a drop of his blood, but with his whole body and blood, represented in every part of the elements. The angels in the heaven enjoy not so great a privilege; they have the honor to be under him as their Head, but not that of having him for their food; they behold him, but they do not taste him. And, certainly, that goodness that hath condescended so much to our weakness, would impart it to us in a very glorious manner, were we capable of it. But, because a man cannot behold the light of the sun in its full splendor by reason of the infirmities of his eyes, he must behold it by the help of a glass, and such a communication through a colored and opaque glass, is as real from the sun itself, though not so glorious, but more shrouded and obscure; it is the same light that shines through that medium, as spreads itself gloriously in the open air, though the one be masked, and the other open-faced. To conclude this, by the way, we may take notice of the neglect of this ordinance: if it be a token of Divine goodness to appoint it, it is no sign of our estimation of Divine goodness to neglect it. He that values the kindness of his friend, will accept of his invitation, if there be not some strong impediments in the way, or so much familiarity with him that his refusal upon a light occasion would not be unkindly taken. But though God put on the disposition of a friend to us, yet he looseth not the authority of a sovereign; and the humble familiarity he invites us to, doth not diminish the condition and duty of a subject. A sovereign prince would not take it well, if a favorite should refuse the offered honor of his table. The viands of God are not to be slighted. Can we live better upon our poor pittance than upon his dainties? Did not Divine goodness condescend in it to the weakness of our faith, and shall we conceit our faith stronger than God thinks it? If he thought fit by those seals to make a deed of gift to us, shall we be so unmannerly to him, and such enemies to the security he offers us over and above his word, as not to accept it? Are we unwilling to have our souls inflamed with love, our hearts filled with comfort, and armed against the attempts of our enemies? It is true, there is a guilt of the body and blood of Christ contracted by a slightness in the manner of attending; is it not also contracted by a refusal and neglect? What is the language of it? If it speaks not the death of Christ in vain; it speaks the institution of this ordinance as a remembrance of his death, to be a vanity, and no mark of Divine goodness. Let us, therefore, put such a value upon Divine goodness in this affair, as to be willing to receive the conveyances of his love, and fresh engagements of our duty; the one is due from us to the kindness of our friend, and the other belongs to our duty as his subjects. vi. By this redemption God restores us to a more excellent condition than Adam had in innocence. Christ was sent by Divine goodness, not only to restore the life Adam's sin had stripped us of, but to give it more abundantly than Adam's standing could have conveyed it to us (John 10:10), "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." More abundantly for strength, more abundantly for duration, a life abounding with greater felicity and glory: the substance of those better promises of the new covenant than what attended the old. There are fuller streams of grace by Christ than flowed to Adam, or could flow from Adam. As Christ never restored any to health and strength while he was in the world, but he gave them a greater measure of both than they had before; so there is the same kindness, no question, manifested in our spiritual condition. Adam's life might have preserved us, but Adam's death could not have rescued either himself or his posterity; but, in our redemption, we have a Redeemer, who hath "died to expiate our sins," and so crowned with life to save, and forever preserve our persons (Romans 5:10), "Because I live, ye shall live also:" so that by redeeming goodness the life of a believer is as perpetual as the life of the Redeemer Christ (John 14:19). Adam, though innocent, was under the danger of perishing; a believer, though culpable, is above the fears of mutability.

Adam had a holiness in his nature, but capable of being lost; by Christ believers have a holiness bestowed, not capable of being rifled, but which will remain till it be at last fully perfected: though they have a power to change in their nature, yet they are above an actual final change by the indulgence of Divine grace. Adam stood by himself; believers stand in a root, impossible to be shaken or corrupted: by this means the “promise is sure to all the seed” (Romans 4:16). Christ is a stronger person than Adam, who can never break covenant with God, and the truth of God will never break covenant with him. We are united to a more excellent Head than Adam: instead of a root merely human, we have a root Divine as well as human. In him we had the righteousness of a creature merely human; in this we have a righteousness divine, the righteousness of God-man; the stock is no longer in our own hands, but in the hands of One that cannot embezzle it, or forfeit it: Divine goodness hath deposited it strongly for our security. The stamp we receive, by the Divine goodness, from the second Adam, is more noble than that we should have received from the first, had he remained in his created state Adam was formed of the dust of the earth, and the new man is formed by the incorruptible seed of the word; and at the resurrection, the body of man shall be endued with better qualities than Adam had at creation: they shall be like that glorious Body which is in heaven, in union with the person of the “Son of God” (Php 3:21). Adam, at the best, had but an earthly body, but the Lord from heaven hath a “heavenly body,” the image of which shall be borne by the redeemed ones, as they have borne the image of the earthly (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). Adam had the society of beasts; redeemed ones expect, by Divine goodness in redemption, a commerce with angels; as they are reconciled to them by his death, they shall certainly come to converse with them at the consummation of their happiness; as they are made of one family, so they will have a peculiar intimacy: Adam had a paradise, and redeemed ones a heaven provided for them; a happier place with a richer furniture. It is much to give so complete a paradise to innocent Adam; but more to give heaven to an ungrateful Adam, and his rebellious posterity: it had been abundant goodness to have restored us to the same condition in that paradise from whence we were ejected; but a superabundant goodness to bestow upon us a better habitation in heaven, which we could never have expected. How great is that goodness, when by sin we were fallen to be worse than nothing, that He should raise us to be more than what we were; that restored us, not to the first step of our creation; but to many degrees of elevation beyond it! not only restores us, but prefers us; not only striking off our chains, to set us free, but clothing us with a robe of righteousness, to render us honorable; not only quenching our hell, but preparing a heaven; not re-garnishing an earthly, but providing a richer palace: his goodness was so great, that, after it had rescued us, it would not content itself with the old furniture, but makes all new for us in another world; a new wine to drink; a new heaven to dwell in; a more magnificent structure for our habitation: thus hath Goodness prepared for us a straiter union, a stronger life, a purer righteousness, an unshaken standing, and a fuller glory; all more excellent than was within the compass of innocent Adam’s possession. vii. This goodness in redemption extends itself to the lower creation. It takes in, not only man, but the whole creation, except the fallen angels, and gives a participation of it to insensible creatures; upon the account of this redemption the sun, and all kind of creatures, were preserved, which otherwise had sunk into destruction upon the sin of man, and ceased from their being, as man had utterly ceased from his happiness (Colossians 1:17): “By him all things consist.” The fall of man brought, not only a misery upon himself, but a vanity upon the creature; the earth groaned under a curse for his sake. They were all created for the glory of God, and the support of man in the performance of his duty, who was obliged to use them for the

honor of Him that created them both. Had man been true to his obligations, and used the creatures for that end to which they were dedicated by the Creator; as God would have then rejoiced in his works, so his works would have rejoiced in the honor of answering so excellent an end: but when man lost his integrity, the creatures lost their perfection; the honor of them was stained when they were debased to serve the lusts of a traitor, instead of supporting the duty of a subject, and employed in the defence of the vices of men against the precepts and authority of their common Sovereign. This was a vilifying the creature, as it would be a vilifying the sword of a prince, which is, for the maintenance of justice, to be used for the murder of an innocent; and a dishonoring a royal mansion, to make it a storehouse for a dunghill. Had those things the benefit of sense, they would groan under this disgrace, and rise up in indignation against them that offered them this affront, and turned them from their proper end. When sin entered, the heavens that were made to shine upon man, and the earth that was made to bear and nourish an innocent creature, were now subjected to serve a rebellious creature; and as man turned against God, so he made those instruments against God, to serve his enmity, luxury, sensuality. Hence the creatures are said to groan (Romans 8:22); "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." They would really groan, had they understanding to be sensible of the outrage done them. "The whole creation."—It is the pang of universal nature, the agony of the whole creation, to be alienated from the original use for which they were intended, and be disjointed from their end to serve the disloyalty of a rebel. The drunkard's cup, and the glutton's table, the adulterer's bed, and the proud man's purple, would groan against the abuser of them. But when all the fruits of redemption shall be completed, the goodness of God shall pour itself upon the creatures, deliver them from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21); they shall be reduced to their true end, and returned in their original harmony. As the creation doth passionately groan under its vanity, so it doth "earnestly expect and wait for its deliverance at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19). The manifestation of the sons of God is the attainment of the liberty of the creature. They shall be freed from the vanity under which they are enslaved; as it entered by sin, it shall vanish upon the total removal of sin. What use they were designed for in paradise they will have afterwards, except that of the nourishment of men, who shall be as "angels, neither eating nor drinking:" the glory of God shall be seen and contemplated in them. It can hardly be thought that God made the world to be little a moment after he had reared it, sullied by the sin of man, and turned from its original end, without thoughts of a restoration of it to its true end, as well as man to his lost happiness. The world was made for man: man hath not yet enjoyed the creature in the first intention of them; sin made an interruption in that fruition. As redemption restores man to his true end, so it restores the creatures to their true use. The restoration of the world to its beauty and order was the design of the Divine goodness in the coming of Christ, as it is intimated in Isaiah 11:6-9; as he "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," so he came not to destroy the creatures, but to repair them: to restore to God the honor and pleasure of the creation, and restore to the creatures their felicity in restoring their order: the fall corrupted it, and the full redemption of men restores it. The last time is called, not a time of destruction, but a "time of restitution," and that "of all things" (Acts 3:21) of universal nature, the main part of the creation at least. All those things which were the effects of sin will be abolished; the removal of the cause beats down the effect. The disorder and unruliness of the creature, arising from the venom of man's transgression, all the fierceness of one creature against another shall vanish. The world shall be nothing but an universal smile; nature shall put on triumphant

vestments: there shall be no affrighting thunders, choking mists, venomous vapors, or poisonous plants. It would not else be a restitution of all things. They are now subject to be wasted by judgments for the sin of their possessor, but the perfection of man's redemptions shall free them from every misery. They have an advancement at the present, for they are under a more glorious Head, as being the possession of Christ, the heavenly Adam, much superior to the first: as it is the glory of a person to be a servant to a prince, rather than a peasant. And afterwards, they shall be elevated to a better state, sharing in man's happiness, as well as they did in his misery: as servants are interested in the good fortune of their master, and bettered by his advance in his prince's favor. As man in his first creation was mutable and liable to sin, so the creatures were liable to vanity; but as man by grace shall be freed from the mutability, so shall the creatures be freed from the fears of an invasion, by the vanity that sullied them before. The condition of the servants shall be suited to that of their Lord, for whom they were designed: hence, all creatures are called upon to rejoice upon the perfection of salvation, and the appearance of Christ's royal authority in the world. If they were to be destroyed, there would be no ground to invite them to triumph (Psalms 96:11-12; Psalms 118:7-8). Thus doth Divine goodness spread its kind arms over the whole creation.

Thirdly. The third thing is the goodness of God in his Government. That goodness that despised not their creation, doth not despise their conduct. The same goodness that was the head that framed them, is the helm that guides them; his goodness hovers over the whole frame, either to prevent any wild disorders unsuitable to his creating end, or to conduct them to those ends which might illustrate his wisdom and goodness to his creatures. His goodness doth no less incline him to provide for them, than to frame them. It is the natural inclination of man to love what is purely the birth of his own strength or skill. He is fond of preserving his own inventions, as well as laborious in inventing them. It is the glory of a man to preserve them, as well as to produce them. God loves everything which he hath made, which love could not be without a continued diffusiveness to them suitable to the end for which he made them. It would be a vain goodness, if it did not interest itself in managing the world, as well as erecting it: without his government everything in the world would jostle against one another: the beauty of it would be more defaced, it would be an unruly mass, a confused chaos rather than a κόσμος, a comely world. If Divine goodness respected it when it was nothing, it would much more respect it when it was something, by the sole virtue of his power and good-will to it, without any motive from anything else than himself, because there was nothing else but himself. But since he sees his own stamp in things without himself in the creature, which is a kind of motive or moving object to Divine goodness to preserve it, when there was nothing without himself that could be any motive to Him to create it: as when God hath created a creature, and it falls into misery, that misery of the creature, though it doth not necessitate his mercy, yet meeting with such an affection as mercy in his nature, is a moving object to excite it; as the repentance of Nineveh drew forth the exercise of his pity and preserving goodness. Certainly, since God is good, he is bountiful; and if bountiful, he is provident. He would seem to envy and malign his creatures, if he did not provide for them, while he intends to use them: but infinite goodness cannot be effected with envy; for all envy implies a want of that good in ourselves, which we regard with so evil an eye in another. But God, being infinitely blessed, hath not the want of any good that can be a rise to such an uncomely disposition. The Jews thought that Divine goodness extended only to them in an immediate and particular care, and left all other nations and things to the guidance of angels. But the Psalmist (Psalms 107:1-43,

a psalm calculated for the celebration of this perfection, in the continued course of his providence throughout all ages of the world) ascribes to Divine goodness immediately all the advantages men meet with. He helps them in their actions, presides over their motions, inspects their several conditions, labors day and night in a perpetual care of them. The whole life of the world is linked together by Divine goodness. Everything is ordered by him in the place where he hath set it, without which the world would be stripped of that excellency it hath by creation.

1st. This goodness is evident in the care he hath of all creatures. There is a peculiar goodness to his people; but this takes not away his general goodness to the world: though a master of a family hath a choicer affection to those that have an affinity to him in nature, and stand in a nearer relation, as his wife, children, servants; yet he hath a regard to his cattle, and other creatures he nourisheth in his house. All things are not only before his eyes; but in his bosom; he is the nurse of all creatures, supplying their wants, and sustaining them from that nothing they tend to. The "earth is full of his riches" (Psalms 104:24); not a creek or cranny but partakes of it. Abundant goodness daily hovers over it, as well as hatched it. The whole world swims in the rich bounty of the Creator, as the fish do in the largeness of the sea, and birds in the spaciousness of the air. [Note: Gulielmus Parasien. p. 184.] The goodness of God is the river that waters the whole earth. As a lifeless picture casts its eye upon every one in the room, so doth a living God upon everything in the world. And as the sun illuminates all things which are capable of partaking of its light, and diffuseth its beams to all things which are capable of receiving them, so doth God spread his wings over the whole creation, and neglects nothing, wherein he sees a mark of his first creating goodness.

1. His goodness is seen, in preserving all things. "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast" (Psalms 36:6). Not only man, but beasts, and beasts as well as men; man, as the most excellent creature, and beasts as being serviceable to man, and instruments of his worldly happiness. He continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. He visits man every day, and makes him feel the effects of his providence, in giving him "fruitful seasons, and filling his heart with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17), as witnesses of his liberality and kindness to man. "The earth is visited and watered by the river of God. He settles the furrows of the earth, and makes it soft with showers," that the corn may be nourished in its womb, and spring up to maturity. "He crowns the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness. The little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn," as the Psalmist elegantly says (Psalms 65:9-10; Psalms 107:35-36). He waters the ground by his showers, and preserves the little seed from the rapine of animals. "He draws not out the evil arrows of famine," as the expression is (Ezekiel 5:16). Every day shines with new beams of his Divine goodness. The vastness of this city, and the multitudes of living souls in it, is an astonishing argument. What streams of nourishing necessities are daily conveyed to it! Every mouth hath bread to sustain it; and among all the number of poor in the bowels and skirts of it, how rare is it to hear of any starved to death for want of it! Every day he "spreads a table" for us, and that with varieties, and "fills our cups" (Psalms 23:5). He shortens not his hand, nor withdraws his bounty: the increase of one year by his blessing, restores what was spent by the former. He is the "strength of our life" (Psalms 27:1), continuing the vigor of our limbs, and the health of our bodies; secures us from "terrors by night, and the arrows of diseases that fly by day" (Psalms 91:5); "sets a hedge about our estates" (Job 1:10), and defends them against the attempts of violence;

preserves our houses from flames that might consume them, and our persons from the dangers that lie in wait for them; watcheth over us “in our goings out, and our comings in” (Psalms 121:8), and way-lays a thousand dangers we know not of: and employs the most glorious creatures in heaven in the service of mean “men upon earth” (Psalms 91:11): not by a faint order, but a pressing charge over them, to “keep them in all his ways.” Those that are his immediate servants before his throne, he sends to minister to them that were once his rebels. By an angel he conducted the affairs of Abraham (Genesis 24:7): and by an angel secured the life of Ishmael (Genesis 21:17): glorious angels for mean man, holy angels for impure man, powerful angels for weak man. How in the midst of great dangers, doth his sudden light dissipate our great darkness, and create a deliverance out of nothing! How often is he found a present help in time of trouble! When all other assistance seems to stand at a distance, he flies to us beyond our expectations, and raises us up on the sudden from the pit of our dejectedness, as well as that of our danger, exceeding our wishes, and shooting beyond our desires as well as our deserts. How often, in the time of confusion, doth he preserve an indefensible place from the attacks of enemies, like a bark in the midst of a tempestuous sea! the rage falls upon other places round about them, and, by a secret efficacy of Divine goodness, is not able to touch them. He hath peculiar preservations for his Israel in Egypt, and his Lots in Sodom, his Daniels in the lions’ dens, and his children in a fiery furnace. He hath a tenderness for all, but a peculiar affection to those that are in covenant with him.

2. The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the animals and inanimate things. Divine goodness embraceth in its arms the lowest worm as well as the loftiest cherubim: he provides food for the “crying ravens” (Psalms 147:9), and a prey for the appetite of the “hungry lion” (Psalms 104:21): “He opens his hand, and fills with good those innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts; they are all waiters upon him, and all are satisfied by their bountiful Master” (Psalms 104:25-28). They are better provided for by the hand of heaven, than the best favorite is by an earthly prince: for “they are filled with good.” He hath made channels in the wildest deserts, for the watering of beasts, and trees for the nests and “habitation of birds” (Psalms 104:10; Psalms 104:12; Psalms 104:17). As a Lawgiver to the Jews, he took care that the poor beast should not be abused by the cruelty of man: he provided for the ease of the laboring beast in that command of the Sabhath, wherein he provided for his own service: the cattle was to do “no work” on it (Exodus 20:10). He ordered that the mouth of the ox should not be muzzled while it trod out the corn (Deuteronomy 25:4, it being the manner of those countries to separate the corn from the stalk by that means, as we do in this by thrashing), regarding it as a part of cruelty to deprive the poor beast of tasting, and satisfying itself with that which he was so officious by his labor to prepare for the use of man. And when any met with a nest of young birds, though they might take the young to their use, they were forbidden to seize upon the dam, that she might not lose the objects of her affection and her own liberty in one day (Deuteronomy 22:6). And see how God enforceth this precept with a threatening of a shortness of life, if they transgressed it (Deuteronomy 22:7)! “Thou shalt let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.” He would revenge the cruelty to dumb creatures with the shortness of the oppressor’s life: nor would he have cruelty used to creatures that were separated for his worship: he therefore provides that a cow, or an ewe, and their young ones, should “not be killed for sacrifice in one day” (Leviticus 22:28). All which precepts, say the Jews, are to teach men mercifulness to their beasts; so much doth Divine goodness bow down itself, to take notice of those mean creatures, which men have so

little regard to, but for their own advantage; yea, he is so good, that he would have worship declined for a time in favor of a distressed beast; the “helping a sheep, or an ox, or an ass, out of a pit,” was indulged them even “on the Sabhath-day,” a day God had peculiarly sanctified and ordered for his service (Matthew 12:11; Luke 14:5): in this case he seems to remit for a time the rights of the Deity for the rescue of a mere animal. His goodness extends not only to those kind of creatures that have life, but to the insensible ones; he clothes the grass, and “arrays the lilies of the field” with a greater glory than Solomon had upon his throne (Matthew 6:28-29); and such care he had of those trees which bore fruit for the maintenance of man or beast, that he forbids any injury to be offered to them, and bars the rapine and violence, which by soldiers used to be practised (Deuteronomy 20:19), though it were to promote the conquest of their enemy. How much goodness is it, that he should think of so small a thing as man! How much more that he should concern himself in things that seem so petty as beasts and trees! Persons seated in a sovereign throne, think it a debasing of their dignity to regard little things: but God, who is infinitely greater in majesty above the mightiest potentate, and the highest angel, yet is so infinitely good, as to employ his divine thoughts about the meanest things. He who possesses the praises of angels, leaves not off the care of the meanest creatures: and that majesty that dwells in a pure heaven, and an inconceivable light, stoops to provide for the ease of those creatures that he and lodge in the dirt and dung of the earth. How should we be careful not to use those unmercifully, which God takes such care of in his law, and not to distrust that goodness, that opens his hand so liberally to creatures of another rank!

3. The goodness of God is seen in taking care of the meanest rational creatures; as servants and criminals. He provided for the liberty of slaves, and would not have their chains continue longer than the seventh year, unless they would voluntarily continue under the power of their masters; and that upon pain of his displeasure, and the withdrawing his blessing (Deuteronomy 15:18). And though, by the laws of many nations, masters had an absolute power of life and death over their servants, yet God provided that no member should be lamed, not an eye, no, nor a tooth, struck out, but the master was to pay for his folly and fury the price of the “liberty of his servant” (Exodus 21:26-27): he would not suffer the abused servant to be any longer under the power of that man that had not humanity to use him as one of the same kindred and blood with himself. And though those servants might be never so wicked, yet, when unjustly afflicted, God would interest himself as their guardian in their protection and delivery. And when a poor slave had been provoked, by the severity of his master’s fury, to turn fugitive from him, he was, by Divine order, not to be delivered up again to his master’s fury, but dwell in that city, and with that person, to whom he had “fled for refuge” (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). And when public justice was to be administered upon the lesser sort of criminals, the goodness of God ordered the “number of blows” not to exceed forty, and left not the fury of man to measure out the punishment to excess (Deuteronomy 25:3). And in any just quarrel against a provoking and injuring enemy, he ordered them not to ravage with the sword till they had summoned a rendition of the place (Deuteronomy 20:10). And as great a care he took of the poor, that they should have the gleanings both of the vineyard and field (Leviticus 19:10; Leviticus 23:22), and not be forced to pay “usury for the money lent them” (Exodus 22:25).

4. His goodness is seen in taking care of the wickedest persons. “The earth is full of his goodness” (Psalms 37:5). The wicked as well as the good enjoy it; they that dare lift up their hands against

heaven in the posture of rebels, as well as those that lift up their eyes in the condition of suppliants. To do good to a criminal, far surmounts that goodness that flows down upon an innocent object: now God is not only good to those that have some degrees of goodness, but to those that have the greatest degrees of wickedness, to men that turn his liberality into affronts of him, and have scarce an appetite to anything but the violation of his authority and goodness. Though, upon the fall of Adam, we have lost the pleasant habitation of paradise, and the creatures made for our use are fallen from their original excellency and sweetness; yet he hath not left the world utterly incommodious for us, but yet stores it with things not only for the preservation, but delight of those that make their whole lives invectives against this good God. Manna fell from heaven for the rebellious as well as for the obedient Israelites. Cain as well as Abel, and Esau as well as Jacob, had the influences of his sun, and the benefits of his showers. The world is yet a kind of paradise to the veriest beasts among mankind; the earth affords its riches, the heavens its showers, and the sun its light, to those that injure and blaspheme him: "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). The wickedest breathe in his air, walk upon his earth, and drink of his water, as well as the best. The sun looks with as pleasant and bright an eye upon a rebellious Absalom, as a righteous David; the earth yields its plants and medicines to one as well as to the other; it is seldom that He deprives any of the faculties of their souls, or any members of their bodies. God distributes his blessings where he might shoot his thunders; and darts his light on those who deserve an eternal darkness; and presents the good things of the earth to those that merit the miseries of hell; for "the earth, and the fulness thereof, is the Lord's" (Psalms 24:1); everything in it is his in propriety, ours in trust; it is his corn, his wine (Hosea 2:8); he never divested himself of the propriety, though he grants us the use; and by those good things he supports multitudes of wicked men, not one or two, but the whole shoal of them in the world; for he is "the Saviour of all men," i. e. is the preserver of all men (1 Timothy 4:10). And as he created them, when he foresaw they would be wicked; so he provides for them, when he beholds them in their ungodliness. The ingratitude of men stops not the current of his bounty, nor tires his liberal hand; howsoever unprofitable and injurious men are to him, he is liberal to them; and his goodness is the more admirable, by how much the more the unthankfulness of men is provoking: he sometimes affords to the worst a greater portion of these earthly goods; they often swim in wealth, when others pine away, their lives in poverty. And the silk-worm yields its bowels to make purple for tyrants, while the oppressed scarce have from the sheep wool enough to cover their nakedness; and though he furnish men with those good things, upon no other account than what princes do, when they nourish criminals in a prison till the time of their execution, it is a mark of his goodness. Is it not the kindness of a prince to treat his rebels deliciously? to give them the liberty of the prison, and the enjoyments of the delights of the place, rather than to load their legs with fetters, and lodge them in a dark and loathsome dungeon, till he orders them, for their crime, to be conducted to the scaffold or gibbet? Since God is thus kind to the vilest men, whose meanness, by reason of sin, is beyond that of any other creature, as to shoot such rays of goodness upon them; how inexpressible would be the expressions of his goodness, if the Divine image were as pure and bright upon them as it was upon innocent Adam!

2d. His goodness is evident in the preservation of human society. It belongs to his power that he is able to do it, but to his goodness that he is willing to do it.

1. This goodness appears in prescribing rules for it. The moral law consists but of ten precepts, and there are more of them ordered for the support of human society, than for the adoration and honor of himself (Exodus 20:1-2); four for the rights of God, and six for the rights of man, and his security in his authority, relations, life, goods, and reputation; superiors not to be dishonored, life not to be invaded, chastity not to be stained, goods not to be filched, good name not to be cracked by false witness, nor anything belonging to our neighbor to be coveted; and in the whole Scripture, not only that which was calculated for the Jews, but compiled for the whole world; he hath fixed rules for the ordering all relations, magistrates, and subjects; parents and children; husbands and wives; masters and servants; rich and poor, find their distinct qualifications and duties. There would be a paradisiacal state, if men had a goodness to observe what God hath had a goodness to order for the strengthening the sinews of human society; the world would not groan under oppressing tyrants, nor princes tremble under discontented subjects, or mighty rebels; children would not be provoked to anger by the unreasonableness of their parents, nor parents sink under grief by the rebellion of their children; masters would not tyrannize over the meanest of their servants, nor servants invade the authority of their masters.

2. The goodness of God in the preserving human society, is seen in setting a magistracy to preserve it. Magistracy is from God in its original; the charter was drawn up in paradise; civil subordination must have been had man remained in innocence; but the charter was more explicitly renewed and enlarged at the restoration of the world after the deluge, and given out to man under the broad seal of heaven; "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). The command of shedding the blood of a murderer was a part of his goodness, to secure the lives of those that bore his image. Magistrates are "the shields of the earth," but they "belong to God" (Psalms 47:9). They are fruits of his goodness in their original, and authority; were there no magistracy, there would be no government, no security to any man under his own vine and fig tree; the world would be a den of wild beasts preying upon one another; every one would do what seems good in his eyes; the loss of government is a judgment God brings upon a nation when men become "as the fishes of the sea," to devour one another, because they "have no ruler over them" (Habakkuk 1:14). Private dissensions will break out into public disorders and combustions.

3. The goodness of God in the preservation of human society, is seen in the restraints of the passions of men. He sets bounds to the passions of men as well as to the rollings of the sea; "He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people" (Psalms 65:7). Though God hath erected a magistracy to stop the breaking out of those floods of licentiousness, which swell in the hearts of men; yet, if God should not hold stiff reins on the necks of those tumultuous and foaming passions, the world would be a place of unruly confusion, and hell triumph upon earth; a crazy state would be quickly broke in pieces by boisterous nature. The tumults of a people could no more be quelled by the force of man, than the rage of the sea by a puff of breath; without Divine goodness, neither the wisdom nor watchfulness of the magistrates, nor the industry of officers, could preserve a state. The laws of men would be too slight to curb the lusts of men, if the goodness of God did not restrain them by a secret hand, and interweave their temporal security with observance of those laws. The sons of Belial did murmur when Saul was chosen king; and that they did no more was the goodness of God, for the preservation of human society. If God did not restrain the impetuosity of men's lusts, they would be the entire ruin of human society; their lusts would render them as bad as beasts, and change the world into a savage wilderness.

4. The goodness of God is seen in the preservation of human society, in giving various inclinations to men for public advantage. If all men had an inclination to one science or art, they would all stand idle spectators of one another; but God hath bestowed various dispositions and gifts upon men, for the promoting the common good, that they may not only be useful to themselves, but to society. He will have none idle, none unuseful, but every one acting in a due place, according to their measures, for the good of others.

5. The goodness of God is seen in the witness he bears against those sins that disturb human society. In those cases he is pleased to interest himself in a more signal manner, to cool those that make it their business to overturn the order he hath established for the good of the earth. He doth not so often in this world punish those faults committed immediately against his own honor, as those that put the world into a hurry and confusion: as a good governor is more merciful to crimes against himself, than those against his community. It is observed that the most turbulent seditious persons in a state come to most violent ends, as Corah, Adonijah, Zimri: Ahithopel draws Absalom's sword against David and Israel, and the next is, he twists a halter for himself: Absalom heads a party against his father, and God, by a goodness to Israel, hangs him up, and prevents not its safety by David's indulgence, and a future rebellion, had life been spared by the fondness of his father. His providence is more evident in discovering disturbers, and the causes that move them, in defeating their enterprises, and digging the contrivers out of their caverns and lurking holes: in such cases, God doth so act, and use such methods, that he silenceth any creature from challenging any partnership with him in the discovery. He doth more severely in this world correct those actions that unlink the mutual assistance between man and man, and the charitable and kind correspondence he would have kept up. The sins for which the "wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience" (Colossians 3:5-6) in this world are of this sort; and when princes will be oppressing the people, God will be "pouring contempt on the princes, and set the poor on high from affliction" (Psalms 107:40-41). An evidence of God's care and kindness in the preserving human society, is those strange discoveries of murders, though never so clandestine and subtilly committed, more than of any other crime among men: Divine care never appears more than in bringing those hidden and injurious works of darkness to light, and a due punishment.

6. His goodness is seen in ordering mutual offices to one another against the current of men's passions. Upon this account he ordered, in his laws for the government of the Israelites, that a man should reduce the wandering beast of his enemy to the hand of his rightful proprietor, though he were a provoking enemy; and also "help the poor beast that belonged to one that hated him, when he saw him sink under his burden" (Exodus 23:4-5). When mutual assistance was necessary, he would not have men considered as enemies, or considered as wicked, but as of the same blood with ourselves, that we might be serviceable to one another for the preservation of life and goods.

7. His goodness is seen in remitting something of his own right, for the preserving a due dependence and subjection. He declines the right he had to the vows of a minor, or one under the power of another, waving what he might challenge by the voluntary obligation of his creature, to keep up the due order between parents and children, husbands and wives, superiors and inferiors; those that were under the power of another, as a child under his parents, or a wife under her husband, if they had [vowed a vow unto the Lord,] which concerned his honor and worship, it was void without the approbation of that person under whose charge they were (Numbers 30:3-4, &c.).

Though God was the Lord of every man's goods, and men but his stewards; and though he might have taken to himself what another had offered by a vow, since whatsoever could be offered was God's own, though it was not the parties' own who offered it; yet God would not have himself adored by his creature to the prejudice of the necessary ties of human society; he lays aside what he might challenge by his sovereign dominion, that there might not be any breach of that regular order which was necessary for the preservation of the world. If Divine goodness did not thus order things, he would not do the part of a Rector of the world; the beauty of the world would be much defaced, it would be a confused mass of men and women, or rather, beasts and bedlams. Order renders every city, every nation, yea, the whole earth, beautiful: this is an effect of Divine goodness.

3d. His goodness is evident in encouraging anything of moral goodness in the world. Though moral goodness cannot claim an eternal reward, yet it hath been many times rewarded with a temporal happiness; he hath often signally rewarded acts of honesty, justice, and fidelity, and punished the contrary by his judgments, to deter man from such an unworthy practice, and encourage others to what was comely, and of a general good report in the world. Ahab's humiliation put a demurrer to God's judgments intended against him; and some ascribe the great victories and success of the Romans to that justice which was observed among themselves. Baruch was but an amanuensis to the Prophet Jeremy to write his prophecy, and very despondent of his own welfare (Jer. 45:13); God upon that account provides for his safety, and rewards the industry of his service with the security of his person; he was not a statesman, to declare against the corrupt counsels of them that sat at the helm, nor a prophet, to declare against their profane practices, but the prophet's scribe; and as he writes in God's service the prophecies revealed to the prophet, God writes his name in the roll of those that were designed for preservation in that deluge of judgments which were to come upon that nation. Epicurus complained of the administration of God, that the virtuous moralist had not sufficient smiles of Divine favor, nor the swinish sensualist frowns of Divine indignation. But what if they have not always that confluence of outward wealth and pleasures, but remain in the common level? yet they have the happiness and satisfaction of a clear reputation, the esteem of men, and the secret applauses of their very enemies, besides the inward ravishments upon an exercise of virtue, and the commendatory subscription of their own hearts, a dainty the vicious man knows not of; they have an inward applause from God as a reward of Divine goodness, instead of those racks of conscience upon which the profane are sometimes stretched. He will not let the worst men do him any service (though they never intended in the act of service him, but themselves) without giving them their wages: he will not let them hit him in the teeth as if he were beholden to them. If Nebuchadnezzar be the instrument of God's judgments against Tyrus and Israel, he will not only give him that rich city, but a richer country, Egypt, the granary for her neighbors, a wages above his work. In this is Divine goodness eminent, since, in the most moral actions, as there is something beautiful, so there is something mixed, hateful to the infinitely exact holiness of the Divine nature; yet he will not let that which is pleasing to him go unrewarded, and defeat the expectations of men, as men do with those they employ, when, for one flaw in an action, they deny them the reward due for the other part. God encouraged and kept up morality in the cities of the Gentiles for the entertainment of a further goodness in the doctrine of the gospel when it should be published among them.

4th. Divine goodness is eminent in providing a Scripture as a rule to guide us, and continuing it in the world. If man be a rational creature, governable by a law, can it be imagined there should be no revelation of that law to him? Man, by the light of reason, must needs confess himself to be in another condition than he was by creation, when he came first out of the hands of God; and can it be thought, that God should keep up the world under so many sins against the light of nature, and bestow so many providential influences, to invite men to return to him, and acquaint no men in the world with the means of that return? Would he exact an obedience of men, as their consciences witness he doth, and furnish them with no rules to guide them in the darkness they cannot but acknowledge that they have contracted? No; Divine goodness hath otherwise provided: this Bible we have is his word and rule. Had it been a falsity and imposture, would that goodness, that watches over the world, have continued it so long? That goodness that overthrew the burdensome rites of Moses, and expelled the foolish idolatry of the Pagans, would have discovered the imposture of this, had it not been a transcript of his own will. Whatever mistakes he suffers to remain in the world, what goodness had there been to suffer this anciently amongst the Jews, and afterwards to open it to the whole worlds, to abuse men in religion and worship, which so nearly concerned himself and his own honor, that the world should be deceived by the devil without a remedy in the morning of its appearance? It hath been honored and admired by some heathens, when they have cast their eyes upon it, and their natural light made them behold some footsteps of a Divinity in it. If this, therefore, be not a Divine prescript, let any that deny it, bring as good arguments for any book else, as can be brought for this. Now, the publishing this is an argument of Divine goodness: it is designed to win the affections of beggarly man, to be espoused to a God of eternal blessedness and immense riches. It speaks words in season: no doubts but it resolves; no spiritual distemper but it cures; no condition but it hath a comfort to suit it. It is a garden which the hand of Divine bounty hath planted for us; in it he condescends to shadow himself in those expressions that render him in some manner intelligible to us. Had God wrote in a loftiness of style suitable to the greatness of his majesty, his writing had been as little understood by us, as the brightness of his glory can be beheld by us. But he draws phrases from our affairs, to express his mind to us; he incarnates himself in his word to our minds, before his Son was incarnate in the flesh to the eyes of men: he ascribes to himself eyes, ears, hands, that we might have, from the consideration of ourselves, and the whole human nature, a conception of his perfections: he assumes to himself the members of our bodies, to direct our understandings in the knowledge of his Deity; this is his goodness. Again, though the Scripture was written upon several occasions, yet in the dictating of it, the goodness of God cast his eye upon the last ages of the world (1 Corinthians 10:11): "They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." It was given to the Israelites, but Divine goodness intended it for the future Gentiles. The old writings of the prophets were thus designed, much more the later writings of the apostles. Thus did Divine goodness think of us, and prepare his records for us, before we were in the world: these he hath written plain for our instruction, and wrapped up in them what is necessary for our salvation: it is clear to inform our understanding, and rich to comfort us in our misery; it is a light to guide us, and a cordial to refresh us; it is a lamp to our feet, and a medicine for our diseases; a purifier of our filth, and a restorer of us in our faintings. He hath by his goodness sealed the truth of it, by his efficacy on multitudes of men: he hath made it the "word of regeneration" (James 1:18). Men, wilder and more monstrous than beasts, have been tamed and changed by the power of it: it hath raised multitudes of dead men from a grave fuller of horror than any earthly one. Again,

Goodness was in all ages sending his letters of advice and counsel from heaven, till the canon of the Scripture was closed; sometimes he wrote to chide a froward people, sometimes to cheer up an oppressed and disconsolate people, according to the state wherein they were; as we may observe by the several seasons wherein parts of Scripture were written. It was His goodness that he first revealed anything of his will after the fall; it was a further degree of goodness, that he would add more cubits to its stature; before he would lay aside his pencil, it grew up to that bulk wherein we have it. And his goodness is further seen in the preserving it; he hath triumphed over the powers that opposed it, and showed himself good to the instruments that propagated it: he hath maintained it against the blasts of hell, and spread it in all languages against the obstructions of men and devils. The sun of his word is by his kindness preserved in our horizon, as well as the sun in the heavens. How admirable is Divine goodness! He hath sent his Son to die for us, and his written word to instruct us, and his Spirit to edge it for an entrance into our souls: he hath opened the womb of the earth to nourish us, and sent down the records of heaven to direct us in our pilgrimage: he hath provided the earth for our habitation, while we are travellers, and sent his word to acquaint us with a felicity at the end of our journey, and the way to attain in another world what we want in this, viz. a happy immortality.

5th. His goodness in his government is evident, in conversions of men. though this work be wrought by his power, yet his power was first solicited by his goodness. It was his rich goodness that he would employ his power to pierce the scales of a heart as hard as those of the "leviathan." It was this that opened the ears of men to hear him, and draws them from the hurry of worldly cares, and the charms of sensual pleasures, and, which is the top of all, the impostures and cheats of their own hearts. It is this that sends a spark of his wrath into men's consciences, to put them to a stand in sin, that he might not send down a shower of brimstone eternally to consume their persons. This it was that first showed you the excellency of the Redeemer, and brought you to taste the sweetness of his blood, and find your security in the agonies of his death. It is his goodness to call one man and not another, to turn Paul in his course, and lay hold of no other of his companions. It is his goodness to call any, when he is not bound to call one.

1. It is his goodness to pitch upon mean and despicable men in the eye of the world; to call this poor publican, and overlook that proud Pharisee, this man that sits upon a dunghill, and neglect him that glisters in his purple. His majesty is not enticed by the lofty titles of men, nor, which is more worth, by the learning and knowledge of men. "Not many wise, not many mighty," not many doctors, not many lords, though some of them; but his goodness condescends to the "base things" of the world, and things which are "despised" (1 Corinthians 1:26-28). "The poor receive the gospel" (Matthew 11:5), when those that are more acute, and furnished with a more apprehensive reason, are not touched by it.

2. The worst men. He seizeth sometimes upon men most soiled, and neglects others that seem more clean and less polluted. He turns men in their course in sin, that, by their infernal practices, have seemed to have gone to school to hell, and to have sucked in the sole instructions of the devil. He lays hold upon some when they are most under actual demerit, and snatches them as fire-brands out of the fire, as upon Paul when fullest of rage against him; and shoots a beam of grace, where nothing could be justly expected but a thunderbolt of wrath. It is his goodness to visit any, when they be putrefying in their loathsome lusts; to draw near to them who have been guilty of the greatest contempt of God, and the light of nature; the murdering Manassehs, the

persecuting Sauls, the Christ-crucifying Jews,—persons in whom lusts had had a peaceable possession and empire for many years.

3. His goodness appears in converting men possessed with the greatest enmity against him, while he was dealing with them. All were in such a state, and framing contrivances against him, when Divine goodness knocked at the door (Colossians 1:21). He looked after us when our backs were turned upon him, and sought us when we slighted him, and were a “gainsaying people” (Romans 10:21); when we had shaken off his convictions, and contended with our Maker, and mustered up the powers of nature against the alarms of conscience; struggled like wild bulls in a net, and blunted those darts that stuck in our souls. Not a man that is turned to him, but had lifted up the heel against his gospel grace, as well as made light of his creating goodness. Yet it hath employed itself about such ungrateful wretches, to polish those knotty and rugged pieces for heaven; and so invincibly, that he would not have his goodness defeated by the fierceness and rebellion of the flesh. Though the thing was more difficult in itself (if anything may be said to have a difficulty to omnipotency) than to make a stone live, or to turn a straw into a marble pillar. The malice of the flesh makes a man more unfit for the one, than the nature of the straw unfits it for the other.

4. His goodness appears in turning men, when they were pleased with their own misery, and unable to deliver themselves; when they preferred a hell before him, and were in love with their own vileness; when his call was our torment, and his neglect of us had been accounted our felicity. Was it not a mighty goodness to keep the light close to our eyes, when we endeavored to blow it out; and the corrosive near to our hearts, when we endeavored to tear it off, being more fond of our disease than the remedy? We should have been scalded to death with the Sodomite, had not God laid his good hand upon us, and drawn us from the approaching ruin we affected, and were loath to be freed from. And had we been displeased with our state, yet we had been as unable spiritually to raise ourselves from sin to grace, as to raise ourselves naturally from nothing to being. In this state we were when his goodness triumphed over us; when he put a hook into our nostrils, to turn us in order to our salvation; and drew us out of the pit which we had digged, when he might have left us to sink under the rigors of his justice we had merited. Now this goodness in conversion is greater than that in creation; as in creation there is nothing to oppose him, so there was nothing to disoblige him; creation was terminated to the good of a mutable nature, and conversion tends to a supernatural good. God pronounced all creatures good at first, and man among the rest, but did not pronounce any of them, or man himself, his “portion,” his “inheritance,” his “segullah,” his “house,” his “diadem.” He speaks slightly of all those things which he made, the noblest heavens, as well as the lowest earth, in comparison of a true convert: “All those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been: but to this man will I look, to him that is of a contrite spirit” (Isaiah 66:1-2). It is more goodness to give the espousing grace of the covenant, than the completing glory of heaven; as it is more for a prince to marry a beggar, than only to bring her to live deliciously in his courts. All other benefits are of a meaner strain, if compared with this; there is little less of goodness in imparting the holiness of his nature, than imputing the righteousness of his Son.

6th. The Divine goodness doth appear in answering prayers. He delights to be familiarly acquainted with his people, and to hear them call upon him. He indulgeth them a free access to him, and delights in every address of an “upright man” (Proverbs 15:8). The wonderful efficacy of prayer depends not upon the nature of our petitions or the temper of our soul, but the goodness of

God to whom we address. Christ establisheth it upon this bottom: when he exhorts to ask in his name, he tells them the spring of all their grants is the Father's love: "I say not, I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you" (John 16:26-27). And since it is of itself incredible, that a Majesty, exalted above the cherubims, should stoop so low as to give a miserable and rebellious creature admittance to him, and afford him a gracious hearing, and a quick supply, Christ ushers in the promise of answering prayer with a note of great assurance: "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you" (Luke 11:9-10). I, that know the mind of my Father, and his good disposition, assure you your prayer shall not be in vain. Perhaps you will not be so ready of yourselves to imagine so great a liberality; but take it upon my word, it is true, and so you will find it. And his bounty travels, as it were, in birth, to give the greatest blessings, upon our asking, rather than the smallest: "your heavenly Father shall give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (ver. 13): which in Matthew 7:11, is called, "good things." Of all the good and rich things Divine goodness hath in his treasury, he delights to give the best upon asking, because God doth act so as to manifest the greatness of his bounty and magnificence to men; and, therefore, is delighted when men, by their petitioning him, own such a liberal disposition in him, and put him upon the manifesting it. He would rather you should ask the greatest things heaven can afford, than the trifles of this world; because his bounty is not discovered in meaner gifts: he loves to have an opportunity to manifest his affection above the liberality and tenderness of worldly fathers. He doth more wait to give in a way of grace, than we to beg; and, "therefore, will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Isaiah 30:18). He stands expecting your suits, and employs his wisdom in pitching upon the fittest seasons, when the manifestation of his goodness may be most gracious in itself, and the mercy you want most welcome to you; as it follows, "for the Lord is a God of judgment." He chooseth the time wherein his doles may be most acceptable to his suppliants; "In an acceptable time have I heard thee" (Isaiah 49:8). He often opens his hand while we are opening our lips, and his blessings meet our petitions at the first setting out upon their journey to heaven: "While they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). How often do we hear a secret voice within us, while we are praying, saying, "Your prayer is granted;" as well as hear a voice behind us, while we are erring, saying, "This is the way, walk in it!" And his liberality exceeds often our desires, as well as our deserts; and gives out more than we had the wisdom or confidence to ask. The apostle intimates it in that doxology, "Unto Him who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). This power would not have been so strong an argument of comfort, if it were never put in practice: he is more liberal than his creatures are craving. Abraham petitioned for the life of Ishmael, and God promiseth him the "birth of Isaac" (Genesis 17:18-19). Isaac asks for a "child," and God gives him "two" (Genesis 25:21-22). Jacob desires "food" to eat, and "raiment" to put on; God confines not his bounty within the narrow limits of his petition, but instead of a "staff," wherewith he passed Jordan, makes him repass it with "two bands" (Genesis 28:20). David asked life of God, and he gave him "life," and a "crown" to boot (Psalms 21:2-5). The Israelites would have been contented with a free life in Egypt; they only cried to have their chains struck off; God gave them that, and adopts them to be his "peculiar people," and raises them into a famous state. It is a wonder that God should condescend so much, that he should hear prayers so weak, so cold, so wandering, and gather up our sincere petitions from the dung of our distractions and diffidence. David vents his astonishment at it; "Blessed be God, for he hath shown me marvellous kindness. I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplication" (Psalms 31:21-22). How do we wonder at the goodness of a

petty man, in granting our desires; how much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth!

7th. The goodness of God is seen in bearing with the infirmities of his people, and accepting imperfect obedience. Though Asa had many blots in his escutcheon, yet they are overlooked, and this note set upon record by Divine goodness, that his heart was perfect towards the Lord all his days; "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days" (1 Kings 15:14). He takes notice of a sincere, though chequered obedience, to reward it, which could claim nothing but a slight from him, if he were extreme to mark what is done amiss. When there is not an opportunity to work, but only to will, he accepts the will, as if it had passed into work and act. He sees no iniquity in Jacob (Numbers 23:21), i. e. He sees it not so as to cast off a respect to their persons, and the acceptance of their services: his omniscience knows their sins, but his goodness doth not reject their persons. He is of so good a disposition, that he delights in a weak obedience of his servants, not in the imperfection, but in the obedience (Psalms 37:23); "He delights in the way of a good man," though he sometimes slips in it: he accepts a poor man's pigeon, as well as a rich man's ox: he hath a bottle for the tears, and a book for the "services of the upright," as well as for the most perfect obedience of angels (Psalms 56:8): he preserves their tears, as if they were a rich and generous wine, as the vine-dresser doth the expressions of the grape.

8th. The goodness of God is seen in afflictions and persecutions. If it be "good for us to be afflicted," for which we have the psalmist's vote (Psalms 119:71 :), then goodness in God is the principal cause and orderer of the afflictions. It is his goodness to snatch away that whence we fetch supports for our security, and encouragements for our insolence against him: he takes away the thing which we have some value for, but such as his infinite wisdom sees inconsistent with our true happiness. It is no ill-will in the physician to take away the hurtful matter the patient loves, and prescribe bitter potions, to advance that health which the other impaired; nor any mark of unkindness in a friend, to wrest a sword out of a madman's hand, wherewith he was about to stab himself, though it were beset with the most orient pearls. To prevent what is evil, is to do us the greatest good. It is a kindness to prevent a man from falling down a precipice, though it be with a violent blow, that lays him flat upon the ground at some distance from the edge of it. By afflictions he often snaps asunder those chains which fettered us, and quells those passions which ravaged us: he sharpens our faith, and quickens our prayers; he brings us in the secret chamber of our own heart, which we had little mind before to visit by a self-examination. It is such a goodness that he will vouchsafe to correct man in order to his eternal happiness, that Job makes it one part of his astonishment (Job 7:17); "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" His strokes are often the magnifyings and exaltings of man. He sets his heart upon man, while he inflicts the smart of his rod: he shows thereby, what a high account he makes of him, and what a special affection he bears to him. When he might treat us with more severity after the breach of his covenant, and make his jealousy flame out against us in furious methods, he will not destroy his relation to us, and leave us to our own inclinations, but deal with us as a father with his children; and when he takes this course with us, it is when it cannot be avoided without our ruin: his goodness would not suffer him to do it, if our badness did not force him to it (Jeremiah 9:7), "I will melt them and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" What other course can I

take but this, according to the nature of man? The goldsmith hath no other way to separate the dross from the metal, but by melting it down. And when the impurities of his people necessitate him to this proceeding, "he sits as a refiner" (Matthew 3:3): he watches for the purifying the silver, not for his own profit as the goldsmith, but out of a care of them, and good will to them; as himself speaks (Isaiah 48:10), "I have refined thee, but not with silver;" or, as some read it, "not for silver." As when he scatters his people abroad for their sin, he will not leave them without his presence for their "sanctuary" (Ezekiel 11:16): he would by his presence with them supply the place of ordinances, or be an ark to them in the midst of the deluge: his hand that struck them, is never without a goodness to comfort them and pity them. When Jacob was to go into Egypt, which was to prove a furnace of affliction to his offspring, God promises to go down with him, and to "bring him up again" (Genesis 46:4): a promise not only made to Jacob in his person, but to Jacob in his posterity. He returned not out of Egypt in his person, but as the father of a numerous posterity. He that would go down with their root, and afterwards bring up the branches, was certainly with them in all their oppressions: "I will go down with thee." "Down," saith one; what a word is that for a Deity! into Egypt, idolatrous Egypt; what a place is that for his holiness! [Note: Harwood's Sermon at Oxford, p. 5.] Yet O, the goodness of God! He never thinks himself low enough to do his people good, nor any place too bad for his society with them. So when he had sent away into captivity the people of Israel by the hand of the Assyrian, his bowels yearn after them in their affliction (Isaiah 52:4-5); the Assyrian "oppressed them without cause," i. e. without a just cause in the conqueror to inflict so great an evil upon them, but not without cause from God, whom they had provoked. "Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord?" What do I here? I will not stay behind them. What do I longer here? for I will redeem again those jewels the enemy hath carried away. That chapter is a prophecy of redemption: God shows himself so good to his people in their persecutions, that he gives them occasion to glorify him in the very fires, as the Divine order is (Isaiah 24:15), "Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires."

9th. The goodness of God is seen in temptations. In those he takes occasion to show his care and watchfulness, as a father uses the distress of a child as an opportunity for manifesting the tenderness of his affection. God is at the beginning and end of every temptation; he measures out both the quality and quantity: he exposeth them not to temptation beyond the ability he had already granted them, or will at the time, or afterwards multiply in them. He hath promised his people that "the gate of hell shall not prevail against them" (1 Corinthians 10:13): that "in all things" they shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved them." that the most raging malice of hell shall not wrest them out of his hands. His goodness is not less in performing than it was in promising and as the care of his providence extends to the least as well as the greatest, so the watchfulness of his goodness extends to us in the least as well as in the greatest temptations.

1. The goodness of God appears in shortening temptations. None of them can go beyond their "appointed times" (Daniel 11:35): the strong blast Satan breathes cannot blow, nor the waves he raises rage one minute beyond the time God allows them; when they have done their work, and come to the period of their time, God speaks the word, and the wind and sea of hell must obey him, and retire into their dens. The more violent temptations are, the shorter time doth God allot to them. The assaults Christ had at the time of his death were of the most pressing and urging nature: the powers of darkness were all in arms against him; the reproaches and scorns put upon him, questioning his sonship, were very sharp; yet a little before his suffering he calls it but an hour

(Luke 22:53), "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." A short time that men and devils were combined against him; and the time of temptation that is to come upon all the world for their trial, is called but an "hour" (Revelation 3:10). In all such attempts, the greatness of the rage is a certain prognostic of the shortness of the season (Revelation 12:12).

2. The goodness of God appears in strengthening his people under temptations. If he doth not restrain the arm of Satan from striking, he gives us a sword to manage the combat, and a shield to bear off the blow (Ephesians 6:16-17). If he obscures his goodness in one part, he clears and brightens it in another: he either binds the strong man that he shall not stir, or gives us armor to render us victorious. If we fall, it is not for want of provision from him, but for want of our "putting on the armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11; Ephesians 6:13). When we have not a strength by nature, he gives it us by grace: he often quells those passions within which would join hands with, and second the temptation without. He either qualifies the temptation suitably to the force we have, or else supplies us with a new strength to mate the temptation he intends to let loose against us; he knows we are but dust, and his goodness will not have us unequally matched. The Jews that in Antiochus' time were under great temptation to apostasy by reason of the violence of their persecutions, were, "out of weakness, made strong" for the combat (Hebrews 11:34). The Spirit came more strongly upon Sampson when the Philistines most furiously and confidently assaulted him. His Spirit is sent to strengthen his people before the devil is permitted to tempt them (Matthew 4:2; "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit." Then; When? When the Spirit had in an extraordinary manner descended upon him (Matthew 3:16), "then," and not before. As the angels appeared to Christ, after his temptation, to minister to him, so they appeared to him before his passion, the time of the strongest powers of darkness, to strengthen him for it: he is so good, that when he knows our potsherd strength too weak, he furnisheth our recruits from his own omnipotence (Ephesians 6:10); "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He doth, as it were, breathe in something of his own almightiness, to assist us in our wrestling against principalities and powers, and make us capable to sustain the violent storms of the enemies.

3. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in giving great comforts in or after them. The Israelites had a more immediate provision of manna from heaven when they were in the wilderness. We read not that the Father spake audibly to the Son, and gave him so loud a testimony, that he was his "beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased," till he was upon the brink of strong temptations (Matthew 3:17): nor sent angels to minister immediately to his person, till after his success (Matthew 4:11). Job never had such evidences of Divine love till after he had felt the sharp strokes of Satan's malice; he had heard of God before, by the "hearing of the ear," but afterwards is admitted into greater familiarity (Job 42:5): he had more choice appearances, clearer illuminations, and more lively instructions. And, though his people fall into temptation, yet, after their rising, they have more signal marks of his favor than others have, or themselves, before they fell. Peter had been the butt of Satan's rage, in tempting him to deny Christ, and he had shamefully complied with the temptation; yet, to him particularly, must the first news of the Redeemer's resurrection be carried, by God's order, in the mouth of an angel (Mark 16:7); "Go your ways, tell his disciples, and Peter." We have the greatest communion with God after a victory; the most refreshing truths after the devil hath done his worst. God is ready to furnish us with strength in a combat, and cordials after it.

4. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in discovering and advancing inward grace by this means. The issue of a temptation of a Christian is often like that of Christ's, the manifesting a greater vigor of the Divine nature, in affections to God, and enmity to sin. Spices perfume not the air with their scent till they are invaded by the fire: the truth of grace is evidenced by them. The assault of an enemy revives, and actuates that strength and courage which is in a man, perhaps unknown to himself, as well as others, till he meets with an adversary: many seem good, not that they are so in themselves, but for want of a temptation: this many times verifies a virtue, which was owned upon trust before, and discovers that we had more grace than we thought we had. The solicitations of Joseph's mistress cleared up his chastity: we are many times under temptation, as a candle under the snuffer; it seems to be out, but presently burns the clearer. Afflictions are like those clouds which look black, and eclipse the sun from the earth, but yet, when they drop, refresh that ground they seem to threaten, and multiply the grain on the earth, to serve for our food; and so our troubles, while they wet us to the skin, wash much of that dust from our graces which in a clearer day had been blown upon us. Too much rest corrupts; exercise teacheth us to manage our weapons: the spiritual armor would grow rusty, without opportunity to furbish it up; faith receives a new heart by every combat, and by every victory; like a fire, it spreads itself further, and gathers strength by the blowing of the wind. While the gardener commands his servant to shake the tree, he intends to fasten its roots, and settle it firmer in its place; and is this an ill-will to the plant?

5. His goodness is seen in temptations, in preventing sin which we were likely to fall into. Paul's thorn in the flesh was to prevent the pride of his spirit, and let out the windiness of his heart (2 Corinthians 12:7), lest it should be exalted above measure. The goodness of God makes the devil a polisher, while he intends to be a destroyer. The devil never works, but suitably to some corruption lurking in us: Divine goodness makes his fiery darts a means to discover, and so to prevent the treachery of that perfidious inmate in our hearts; humility is a greater benefit than a putrefying pride; if God brings us into a wilderness to be tempted of the evil, it is to bring down our loftiness, to starve our carnal confidence, and expel our rusting "security" (Deuteronomy 8:2); we many times fly under a temptation to God, from whom we sat too loose before. Is it not goodness to use those means that may drive us into his own arms? It is not a want of goodness to soap the garment, in order to take away the spots; we have reason to bless God for the assaults from hell, as well as pure mercies from heaven; and it is a sin to overlook the one as well as the other, since Divine goodness shines in both.

8. The goodness of God is seen in temptations, in fitting us more for his service. Those whom God intends to make choice instruments in his service, are first seasoned with strong temptations, as timber reserved for the strong beams of a building is first exposed to sun and wind, to make it more compact for its proper use. By this men are brought to answer the end of their creation, the service of God, which is their proper goodness. Peter was, after his foil by a temptation, more courageous in his Master's cause than before, and the more fitted to strengthen his brethren.

Thus the goodness of God appears in all parts of his government.

V. I shall now come to the Use. First, Of instruction.

1. If God be so good, how unworthy is the contempt or abuse of his goodness! (1.) The contempt and abuse of Divine goodness is frequent and common; it began in the first ages of the world, and commenced a few moments after the creation; it hath not to this day diminished its affronts; Adam

began the dance, and his posterity have followed him; the injury was directed against this, when he entertained the seducer's notion of God's being an envious Deity, in not indulging such a knowledge as he might have afforded him (Genesis 3:5): "God doth know, that you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The charge of envy is utterly inconsistent with pure goodness. What was the language of this notion, so easily entertained by Adam, but that the tempter was better than God, and the nature of God as base and sordid as the nature of a devil! Satan paints God with his own colors, represents him as envious and malicious as himself; Adam admires, and believes the picture to be true, and hangs it up as a beloved one in the closet of his heart. The devil still drives on the same game, fills men's hearts with the same sentiments, and by the same means he murdered our first parents, he redoubles the stabs to his posterity. Every violation of the Divine law is a contempt of God's goodness, as well as his sovereignty, because his laws are the products both of the one and the other. Goodness animates them, while sovereignty enjoys them: God hath commanded nothing but what doth conduce to our happiness. All disobedience implies, that his law is a snare to entrap us, and make us miserable, and not an act of kindness, to render us happy, which is a disparagement to this perfection, as if he had commanded what would promote our misery, and prohibited what would conduce to our blessedness: to go far from him, and walk after vanity, is to charge him with our iniquity, and unrighteousness, baseness, and cruelty, in his commands: God implies it by his speech (Jeremiah 2:5), "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and walked after vanity?" as if, like a tyrant, he had consulted cruelty in the composure of them, and designed to feast himself with the blood and misery of his creatures. Every sin is, in its own nature, a denial of God to be the chiefest good and happiness, and implies that it is no great matter to lose him: it is a forsaking him as the Fountain of Life, and a preferring a "cracked and empty cistern" as the chief happiness before him (Jeremiah 2:13). Though sin is not so evil as God is good, yet it is the greatest evil, and stands in opposition to God as the greatest good. Sin disorders the frame of the world; it endeavored to frustrate all the communications of Divine goodness in creation, and to stop up the way of any further streams of it to his creatures.

(2.) The abuse and contempt of the Divine goodness is base and disingenious. It is the highest wickedness, because God is the highest goodness, pure goodness that cannot have anything in him worthy of our contempt. Let men injure God under what notion they will, they injure his goodness; because all his attributes are summed up in this one, and all, as it were, deified by it. For whatsoever power or wisdom he might have, if he were destitute of this he were not God: the contempt of his goodness implies him to be the greatest evil, and worst of beings. Badness, not goodness, is the proper object of contempt: as respect is a propension of mind to something that is good, so contempt is an alienation of the mind from something as evil, either simply or supposedly evil in its nature, or base or unworthy in its action towards that person that contemns it. As men desire nothing but what they apprehend to be good, so they slight nothing but what they apprehend to be evil: since nothing, therefore, is more contemned by us than God, nothing more spurned at by us than God, it will follow that we regard him as the most loathsome and despicable being, which is the greatest baseness. And our contempt of him is worse than that of the devils; they injure him under the inevitable strokes of his justice, and we slight him when we are surrounded with the expressions of his bounty; they abuse him under vials of wrath, and we under a plenteous liberality: they malice him, because he inflicts on them what is hurtful; and we despise him, because he commands what is profitable, holy, and honorable, in its own nature, though not

in our esteem. They are not under those high obligations as we; they abuse his creating, and we his redeeming goodness: he never sent his Son to shed a drop of blood for their recovery; they can expect nothing but the torment of their persons, and the destruction of their works; but we abuse that goodness that would rescue us since we are miserable, as well as that righteousness which created us innocent. How base is it to use him so ill, that is not once or twice, but a daily, hourly Benefactor to us; whose rain drops upon the earth for our food, and whose sun shines upon the earth for our pleasure as well as profit such a Benefactor as is the true Proprietor of what we have, and thinks nothing too good for them that think everything too much for his service! How unworthy is it to be guilty of such base carriage towards him, whose benefits we cannot want, nor live without! How disingenuous both to God and ourselves, to “despise the riches of his goodness, that are designed to lead us to repentance” (Romans 2:4), and by that to happiness! And more heinous are the sins of renewed men upon this account, because they are against his “goodness” not only offered to them, but tasted by them; not only against the notion of goodness, but the experience of goodness, and the relished sweetness of choicest bounty.

(3). God takes this contempt of his goodness heinously. He never upbraids men with anything in the Scripture, but with the abuse of the good things he hath vouchsafed them, and the unmindfulness of the obligations arising from them. This he bears with the greatest regret and indignation. Thus he upbraids Eli with the preference of him to the priesthood above other families (1 Samuel 2:28): and David with his exaltation to the crown of Israel (2 Samuel 12:7-9), when they abused those honors to carelessness and licentiousness. All sins offend God, but sins against his goodness do more disparage him; and, therefore, his fury is the greater, by how much the more liberally his benefits have been dispensed. It was for abuse of Divine goodness, as soon as it was tasted, that some angels were hurled from their blessed habitation and more happy nature: it was for this Adam lost his present enjoyments, and future happiness, for the abuse of God's goodness in creation. For the abuse of God's goodness the old world fell under the fury of the flood; and for the contempt of the Divine goodness in redemption, Jerusalem, once the darling city of the infinite Monarch of the world, was made an Aeldema, a field of blood. For this cause it is, that candlesticks have been removed, great lights put out, nations overturned, and ignorance hath triumphed in places bright before with the beams of heaven. God would have little care of his own goodness, if he always prostituted the fruits of it to our contempt. Why should we expect he should always continue that to us which he sees we will never use to his service? When the Israelites would dedicate the gifts of God to the service of Baal, then he would return, and take away his corn, and his wine, and make them know by the loss, that those things were his in dominion, which they abused, as if they had been sovereign lords of them (Hosea 2:8-9). Benefits are entailed upon us no longer than we obey (Joshua 24:20): “If you forsake the Lord, he will do you hurt, after he hath done you good.” While we obey, his bounty shall shower upon us: and when we revolt, his justice shall consume us. Present mercies abused, are no bulwarks against independent judgments. God hath curses as well as blessings; and they shall light more heavy when his blessings have been more weighty: justice is never so severe as when it comes to right goodness, and revenge its quarrel for the injuries received. A convenient inquiry may be here, How God's goodness is contemned or abused?

1st. By a forgetfulness of his benefits. We enjoy the mercies, and forget the Donor; we take what he gives, and pay not the tribute he deserves; the “Israelites forgot God their Saviour, which had

done great things in Egypt" (Psalms 106:21). We send God's mercies where we would have God send our sins, into the land of forgetfulness, and write his benefits where himself will write the names of the wicked, in the dust, which every wind defaceth: the remembrance soon wears out of our minds, and we are so far from remembering what we had before, that we scarce think of that hand that gives, the very instant wherein his benefits drop upon us. Adam basely forgot his Benefactor, presently after he had been made capable to remember him, and reflect upon him; the first remark we hear of him, is of his forgetfulness, not a syllable of his thankfulness. We forget those souls he hath lodged in us, to acknowledge his favors to our bodies; we forget that image wherewith he beautified us, and that Christ he exposed as a criminal to death for our rescue, which is such an act of goodness as cannot be expressed by the eloquence of the tongue, or conceived by the acuteness of the mind. Those things which are so common, that they cannot be invisible to our eyes, are unregarded by our minds; our sense prompts our understanding, and our understanding is deaf to the plain dictates of our sense. We forget his goodness in the sun, while it warms us, and his showers while they enrich us; in the corn, while it nourisheth us, and the wine while it refresheth us; "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil" (Hosea 2:8): she that might have read my hand in every bit of bread, and every drop of drink, did not consider this. It is an injustice to forget the benefits we receive from man; it is a crime of a higher nature to forget those dispensed to us by the hand of God, who gives us those things that all the world cannot furnish us with, without him. The inhabitants of Troas will condemn us, who worshipped mice, in a grateful remembrance of the victory they had made easy for them, by gnawing their enemies' bow-strings. They were mindful of the courtesy of animals, though unintended by those creatures; and we are regardless of the fore-meditated bounty of God. It is in God's judgment a brutishness beyond that of a stupid ox, or a duller ass; "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider" (Isaiah 1:3). The ox knows his owner that pastures him, and the ass his master that feeds him; but man is not so good as to be like to them, but so bad as to be inferior to them: he forgets Him that sustains him, and spurns at him, instead of valuing him for the benefits conferred by him. How horrible is it, that God should lose more by his bounty, than he would do by his parsimony! If we had blessings more sparingly, we should remember him more gratefully. If he had sent us a bit of bread in a distress by a miracle, as he did to Elijah by the ravens, it would have stuck longer in our memories; but the sense of daily favors soonest wears out of our minds, which are as great miracles as any in their own nature, and the products of the same power; but the wonder they should beget in us, is obscured by their frequency.

2d. The goodness of God is contemned by an impatient murmuring. Our repinings proceed from an inconsideration of God's free liberality, and an ungrateful temper of spirit. Most men are guilty of this. It is implied in the commendation of Job under his pressures (Job 1:22): "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly," as if it were a character peculiar to him, whereby he verified the eulogy God had given of him before (Job 1:8), that there was "none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." What is implied by the expression? but that scarce a man is to be found without unjust complaints of God, and charging him under their crosses with cruelty; when in the greatest they have much more reason to bless him for his bounty in the remainder. Good men have not been innocent. Baruch complains of God for adding grief to his sorrow, not furnishing him with those "great things" he expected (Jeremiah 45:3-4); whereas, he had matter of thankfulness in God's gift of his life as a prey. But his master chargeth God in a higher strain: "O

Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: I am in derision daily" (Jeremiah 20:7). When he met with reproach instead of success in the execution of his function, he quarrels with God, as if he had a mind to cheat him into a mischief, when he had more reason to bless him for the honor of being employed in his service. Because we have not what we expect, we slight his goodness in what we enjoy. If he cross us in one thing, he might have made us successful in more: if he take away some things, he might as well have taken away all. The unmerited remainder, though never so little, deserves our acknowledgements more than the deserved loss can justify our repining. And for that which is snatched from us, there is more cause to be thankful, that we have enjoyed it so long, than to murmur that we possess it no longer. Adam's sin implies a repining: he imagined God had been short in his goodness, in not giving him a knowledge he foolishly conceived himself capable of, and would venture a forfeiture of what already had been bountifully bestowed upon him. Man thought God had envied him, and ever since man studies to be even with God; and envies him the free disposal of his own doles: all murmuring, either in our own cause or others, charges God with a want of goodness, because there is a want of that which he foolishly thinks would make himself or others happy. The language of this sin is, that man thinks himself better than God; and if it were in his power, would express a more plentiful goodness than his Maker. As man is apt to think himself "more pure than God" (Job 4:17), so of a kinder nature also than an infinite goodness. The Israelites are a wonderful example of this contempt of Divine goodness; they had been spectators of the greatest miracles, and partakers of the choicest deliverance: he had solicited their redemption from captivity; and when words would not do, he came to blows for them, musters up his judgments against their enemies, and, at last, as the Lord of hosts and God of battles, totally defeats their pursuers, and drowns them and their proud hopes of victory in the Red Sea. Little account was made of all this by the redeemed ones; "they lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation," and launch into greater unworthiness, instead of being thankful for the breaking their yoke: they are angry with him, that he had done so much for them: they repented that ever they had complied with him, for their own deliverance, and had a regret that they had been brought out of Egypt: they were angry that they were freemen, and that their chains had been knocked off: they were more desirous to return to the oppression of their Egyptian tyrants, than have God for their governor and caterer, and be fed with his manna. "It was well with us in Egypt: Why came we forth out of Egypt?" which is called a "despising the Lord" (Numbers 9:18; Numbers 9:20). They were so far from rejoicing in the expectation of the future benefits promised them, that they murmured that they had not enjoyed less; they were so sottish, as to be desirous to put themselves into the irons whence God had delivered them: they would seek a remedy in that Egypt, which had been the prison of their nation, and under the successors of that Pharaoh, who had been the invader of their liberties; they would snatch Moses from the place where the Lord, by an extraordinary providence, hath established him; they would stone those that minded them of the goodness of God to them, and thereupon of their crime and their duty (Numbers 16:3; Numbers 16:9-11); they rose against their benefactors, and "murmured against God," that had strengthened the hands of their deliverers; they "despised the manna" he had sent them, and "despised the pleasant land" he intended them (Psalms 106:24): all which was a high contempt of God and his unparalleled goodness and care of them. All murmuring is an accusation of Divine goodness.

3d. By unbelief and impenitency. What is the reason we come not to Him when he calls us; but some secret imagination that he is of an ill nature, means not as he speaks, but intends to mock

us, instead of welcoming us? When we neglect his call, spurn at his bowels, slight the riches of his grace; as it is a disparagement to his wisdom to despise his counsel, so it is to his goodness to slight his offers, as though you could make better provision for yourselves than he is able or willing to do. It disgraceth that which is designed to the praise of the glory of his grace, and renders God cruel to his own Son, as being an unnecessary shedder of his blood. As the devil by his temptation of Adam, envied God the glory of his creating goodness, so unbelief envies God the glory of his redeeming grace: it is a bidding defiance to him, and challenging him to muster up the legions of his judgments, rather than have sent his Son to suffer for us, or his Spirit to solicit us. Since the sending his Son was the greatest act of goodness that God could express, the refusal of him must be the highest reproach of that liberality God designed to commend to the world in so rare a gift: the ingratitude in this refusal must be as high in the rank of sins, as the person slighted is in the rank of beings, or rank of gifts. Christ is a gift (Romans 5:16), the royalest gift, an unparalleled gift, springing from inconceivable treasures of goodness (John 3:16). What is our turning our backs upon this gift but a low opinion of it? as though the richest jewel of heaven were not so valuable as a swinish pleasure on earth, and deserved to be treated at no other rate than if mere offals had been presented to us. The plain language of it is, that there were no gracious intentions for our welfare in this present; and that he is not as good, in the mission of his Son, as he would induce us to imagine. Impenitence is also an abuse of this goodness, either by presumption, as if God would entertain rebels that bid defiance against him with the same respect that he doth his prostrate and weeping suppliants; that he will have the same regard to the swine as to the children, and lodge them in the same habitation; or it speaks a suspicion of God as a deceitful Master, one of a pretended, not a real goodness, that makes promises to mock men, and invitations to delude them: that he is an implacable tyrant, rather than a good Father; a rigid, not a kind Being, delightful only to mark our faults, and overlook our services.

4th. The goodness of God is contemned by a distrust of his providence. As all trust in him supposeth him good, so all distrust of him supposeth him evil; either without goodness to exert his power, or without power to display his goodness. Job seems to have a spice of this in his complaint (Job 30:20), "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not." It is a fume of the serpent's venom, first breathed into man, to suspect him of cruelty, severity, regardlessness, even under the daily evidences of his good disposition: and it is ordinary not to believe him when he speaks, nor credit him when he acts; to question the goodness of his precepts, and misinterpret the kindness of his providence; as if they were designed for the supports of a tyranny, and the deceit of the miserable. Thus the Israelites thought their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the placing them in security in the wilderness, was intended only to pound them up for a slaughter (Numbers 14:3): thus they defiled the lustre of Divine goodness which they had so highly experimented, and placed not that confidence in him which was due to so frequent a Benefactor, and thereby crucified the rich kindness of God, as Genebrard translates the word "limited" (Psalms 78:41). It is also a jealousy of Divine goodness, when we seek to deliver ourselves from our straits by unlawful ways, as though God had not kindness enough to deliver us without committing evil. What! did God make a world, and all creatures in it, to think of them no more, not to concern himself in their affairs? If he be good, he is diffusive, and delights to communicate himself; and what subjects should there be for it, but those that seek him, and implore his assistance? It is an indignity to Divine bounty to have such mean thoughts of it, that it should be of a nature contrary to that of his works, which, the better they are, the more diffusive

they are. Doth a man distrust that the sun will not shine any more, or the earth not bring forth its fruit? Doth he distrust the goodness of an approved medicine for the expelling his distemper? If we distrust those things, should we not render ourselves ridiculous and sottish? and if we distrust the Creator of those things, do we not make ourselves contemnors of his goodness? If his caring for us be a principal argument to move us to cast our care upon him, as it is 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting your care upon him, for he cares for you;" then, if we cast not our care upon him, it is a denial of his gracious care of us, as if he regarded not what becomes of us.

5th. We do contemn or abuse his goodness by omissions of duty. These sometimes spring from injurious conceits of God, which end in desperate resolutions. It was the crime of a good prophet in his passion (2 Kings 6:33): "This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait on the Lord any longer?" God designs nothing but mischief to us, and we will seek him no longer. And the complaint of those in Malachi (Malachi 3:14) is of the same nature; "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?" We have all this while served a hard Master, not a Benefactor, and have not been answered with advantages proportionable to our services; we have met with a hand too niggardly to dispense that reward which is due to the largeness of our offerings. When men will not lift up their eyes to heaven, and solicit nothing but the contrivance of their own brain, and the industry of their own heads, they disown Divine goodness, and approve themselves as their own gods, and the spring of their own prosperity. Those that run not to God in their necessity, to crave his support, deny either the arm of his power, or the disposition of his will, to sustain and deliver them: they must have very mean sentiments, or none at all, of this perfection, or think him either too empty to fill them, or too churlish to relieve them; that he is of a narrow and contracted temper, and that they may sooner expect to be made better and happier by anything else than by him: and as we contemn his goodness by a total omission of those duties which respect our own advantage and supply, as prayer; so we contemn him as the chiefest good, by an omission of the due manner of any act of worship which is designed purely for the acknowledgment of him. As every omission of the material part of a duty is a denial of his sovereignty as commanding it, so every omission of the manner of it, not performing it with due esteem and valuation of him, a surrender of all the powers of our soul to him, is a denial of him as the most amiable object. But certainly to omit those addresses to God which his precept enjoins, and his excellency deserves, speaks this language, that they can be well enough, and do well enough, without God, and stand in no need of his goodness to maintain them. The neglect or refusal in a malefactor to supplicate for his pardon, is a wrong to, and contempt of, the prince's goodness: either implying that he hath not a goodness in his nature worthy of an address, or that he scorns to be obliged to him for any exercise of it.

6th. The goodness of God is contemned, or abused, in relying upon our services to procure God's good will to us. As, when we stand in need either of some particular mercy, or special assistance; when pressures are heavy, and we have little hopes of ease in an ordinary way; when the devotions in course have not prevailed for what we want; we engage ourselves by extraordinary vows and promises to God, hereby to open that goodness which seems to be locked up from us. [Note: Amyral. Moral. Tom. IV. p. 291.] Sometimes, indeed, vows may proceed from a sole desire to engage ourselves to God, from a sense of the levity and inconstancy of our spirits; binding ourselves to God by something more sacred and inviolable than a common resolution. But many times the vowing the building of a temple, endowing a hospital, giving so much in alms if God will

free them from a fit of sickness, and spin out the thread of their lives a little longer (as hath been frequent among the Romanists), arises from an opinion of laziness and a selfishness in the Divine goodness; that it must be squeezed out by some solemn promises of returns to him, before it will exercise itself to take their parts. Popular vows are often the effects of an ignorance of the free and bubbling nature of this perfection of the generousness and royalty of Divine goodness: as if God were of a mean and mechanic temper, not to part with anything unless he were in some measure paid for it; and of so bad a nature as not to give passage to any kindness to his creature without a bribe. It implies also that he is of an ignorant as well as contracted goodness; that he hath so little understanding, and so much weakness of judgment, as to be taken with such trifles, and ceremonial courtships, and little promises; and meditated only low designs, in imparting his bounty: it is just as if a malefactor should speak to a prince,—Sir, if you will but bestow a pardon upon me, and prevent the death I have merited for this crime, I will give you this rattle. All vows made with such a temper of spirit to God, are as injurious and abusive to his goodness, as any man will judge such an offer to be to a majestic and gracious prince; as if it were a trading, not a free and royal goodness.

7th. The goodness of God is abused when we give up our souls and affections to those benefits we have from God; when we make those things God's rivals, which were sent to woo us for him, and offer those affections to the presents themselves, which they were sent to solicit for the Master. This is done, when either we place our trust in them, or glue our choicest affections to them. This charge God brings against Jerusalem, the trusting in her own beauty, glory, and strength, though it was a comeliness put upon her by God (Ezekiel 16:14-15). When a little sunshine of prosperity breaks out upon us, we are apt to grasp it with so much eagerness and closeness, as if we had no other foundation to settle ourselves upon, no other being that might challenge from us our sole dependence. And the love of ourselves, and of creatures above God, is very natural to us: "Lovers of themselves, and lovers of pleasure more than of God" (2 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:4). Self love is the root, and the love of pleasures the top branch, that mounts its head highest against heaven. It is for the love of the world that the dangers of the sea are passed over, that men descend into the bowels of the earth, pass nights without sleep, undertake suits without intermission, wade through many inconveniences, venture their souls, and contemn God; in those things men glory, and foolishly grow proud by them, and think themselves safe and happy in them. [Note: Cressol. Antholog. Part II. p. 29.] Now to love ourselves above God, is to own ourselves better than God, and that we transcend him in an amiable goodness; or, if we love ourselves equal with God, it at least manifests that we think God no better than ourselves; and think ourselves our own chief good, and deny anything above us to outstrip us in goodness, whereby to deserve to be the centre of our affections and actions, and to love any other creature above him, is to conclude some defect in God; that he hath not so much goodness in his own nature as that creature hath, to complete our felicity; that God is a slighter thing than that creature. It is to account God, what all the things in the world are,—an imaginary happiness, a goodness of clay; and then what God is,—a Supreme Goodness. It is to value the goodness of a drop above that of the spring, and the goodness of the spark above that of the sun. As if the bounty of God were of a less alloy than the advantages we immediately receive from the hands of a silly worm. By how much the better we think a creature to be, and place our affections chiefly upon it, by so much the more deficient and indigent we conclude God; for God wants so much in our conception, as the other thing hath goodness above him in our thoughts. Thus is God lessened below the

creature, as if he had a mixture of evil in him, and were capable of an imperfect goodness. He that esteems the sun that shines upon him, the clothes that warm him, the food that nourisheth him, or any other benefit above the Donor, regards them as more comely and useful than God himself; and behaves himself as if he were more obliged to them than to God, who bestowed those advantageous qualities upon them.

8th. The Divine goodness is contemned, in sinning more freely upon the account of that goodness, and employing God's benefits in a drudgery for our lusts. This is a treachery to his goodness, to make his benefits serve for an end quite contrary to that for which he sent them. As if God had been plentiful in his blessings, to hire them to be more fierce in their rebellions, and fed them to no other purpose, but that they might more strongly kick against him; this is the fruit which corrupt nature produceth. Thus the Egyptians, who had so fertile a country, prove unthankful to the Creator, by adoring the meanest creatures, and putting the sceptre of the Monarch of the world into the hands of the sottishest and cruellest beasts. And the Romans multiply their idols, as God multiplied their victories. This is also the complaint of God concerning Israel: "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal" (Hosea 2:8). They ungratefully employed the blessings of God in the worship of an idol against the will of the Donor. So in Hosea 10:1; "According to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images." They followed their own inventions with the strength of my outward blessings; as their wealth increased, they increased the ornaments of their images; so that what were before of wood and stone, they advanced to gold and silver. And the like complaint you may see Ezekiel 16:1-63; Ezekiel 17:1-24. Thus,

[1.] The benefits of God are abused to pride, when men standing upon a higher ground of outward prosperity, vaunt it loftily above their neighbors; the common fault of those that enjoy a worldly sunshine, which the apostle observes in his direction to Timothy; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded" (1 Timothy 6:17). It is an ill use of Divine blessings to be filled by them with pride and wind. Also,

[2.] When men abuse plenty to ease; because they have abundance, spend their time in idleness, and make no other use of Divine benefits than to trifle away their time, and be utterly useless to the world.

[3.] When they also abuse peace and other blessing to security, as they which would not believe the threatenings of judgment, and the storm coming from a far country, because the Lord was in Sion, and her King in her; "Is not the Lord in Sion, is not her King in her" (Jeremiah 8:19)? thinking they might continue their progress in their sin, because they had the temple, the seat of the Divine glory, Sion, and the promise of an everlasting kingdom to David; abusing the promise of God to presumption and security, and turning the grace of God into wantonness.

[4.] Again, when they abuse the bounty of God to sensuality and luxury, misemploying the provisions God gives them, in resolving to live like beasts, when by a good improvement of them, they might attain the life of angels. Thus is the light of the sun abused to conduct them, and the fruits of the earth abused to enable them to their roidigious debauchery: as we do, saith one, with the Thames, which rings us in provision, and we soil it with our rubbish. [Note: Young, of Affliction, p. 34.] The more God sows his gifts, the more we sow our cockle and darnel. Thus we make our

outward happiness the most unhappy part of our lives, and by the strength of Divine blessings, exceed all laws of reason and religion too. How unworthy a carriage is this, to use the expressions of Divine goodness as occasions of a greater outrage and affront of him; when we stab his honor by those instruments he puts into our hands to glorify him! as if a favorite should turn that sword into the bowels of his prince, wherewith he knighted him; and a servant, enriched by a lord, should hire by that wealth, murderers to take away his life! How brutish is it, the more God courts us with his blessings, the more to spurn at him with our feet; like the mule that lifts up his heel against the dam, as soon as ever it hath sucked her! We never beat God out of our hearts, but by his own gifts; he receives no blows from men, but by those instruments he gave them to promote their happiness. While man is an enjoyer, he makes God a loser, by his own blessings; inflames his rebellion by those benefits which should kindle his love; and runs from him by the strength of those favors which should endear the donor to him: "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?" is the expostulation (Deuteronomy 32:6.) Divine goodness appears in the complaint of the abuse of it, in giving them titles below their crime, and complaining more of their being unfaithful to their own interest, than enemies to his glory: "foolish and unwise" in neglecting their own happiness; a charge below the crime, which deserved to be "abominable, ungrateful people to a prodigy." All this carriage towards God, is as if a man should knock the surgeon on the head, as soon as he hath set and bound up his dislocated members. So God compares the ungrateful behavior of the Israelites against him: "Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me" (Hosea 7:15): a metaphor taken from a surgeon that applies corroborating plasters to a broken limb.

9th. We condemn the goodness of God, in ascribing our benefits to other causes than Divine goodness. Thus Israel ascribed her felicity, plenty, and success, to her idols, as "rewards which her lovers had given her" (Hosea 2:5; Hosea 2:12). And this charge Daniel brought home upon Belshazzar: "Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, and brass, and iron; and the God in whose hand is thy breath, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Daniel 5:23). The God who hath given success to the arms of thy ancestors, and conveyed by their hands so large a dominion to thee, thou hast not honored in the same rank with the sordidest of thy idols. It is the same case, when we own him not as the author of any success in our affairs, but by an overweening conceit of our own sagacity, applaud and admire ourselves, and overlook the hand that conducted us, and brought our endeavors to a good issue. We eclipse the glory of Divine goodness, by setting the crown that is due to it upon the head of our own industry; a sacrilege worse than Belshazzar's drinking of wine with his lords and concubines in the sacred vessels pilfered from the temple; as in that place of Daniel. This was the proud vaunt of the Assyrian conqueror, for which God threatens to punish the fruit of his stout heart: "By the strength of my hand, I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent;" and, "I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures;" and, "I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man" (Isaiah 10:12-14). Not a word of Divine goodness and assistance in all this, but applauding his own courage and conduct. This is a robbing of God, to set up ourselves, and making Divine goodness a footstool, to ascend into his throne. And as it is unjust, so it is ridiculous, to ascribe to ourselves, or instruments, the chief honor of any work; as ridiculous as if a soldier, after a victory, should erect an altar to the honor of his sword; or an artificer offer sacrifices to the tools whereby he completed some excellent and useful invention: a practice that every rational man would disdain, where he should see it. It is a discarding any thoughts of the goodness of God, when we imagine,

that we chiefly owe anything in this world to our own industry or wit, to friends or means, as though Divine goodness did not open its hand to interest itself in our affairs, support our ability, direct our counsels, and mingle itself with anything we do. God is the principal author of any advantage that accrues to us, of any wise resolution we fix upon, or any proper way we take to compass it; no man can be wise in opposition to God, act wisely, or well without him; his goodness inspires men with generous and magnificent counsels, and furnisheth them with fit and proportionable means; when he withdraws his hand, men's heads grow foolish, and their hands feeble; folly and weakness drop upon them, as darkness upon the world upon the removal of the sun; it is an abuse of Divine goodness not to own it, but erect an idol in its place. Ezra was of another mind when he ascribed to the good hand of God the "providing ministers for the temple," and not to his own care and diligence (Ezekiel 8:18); and Nehemiah, the "success he had with the king" in the behalf of his nation, and not solely to his favor with the prince, or the arts he used to please him (Nehemiah 2:8).

2. The second information is this: If God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state. It is the complaint of man, sometimes, that other creatures have more of earthly happiness than men have; live freer from cares and trouble, and are not racked with that solicitousness and anxiety as man is: have not such distempers to embitter their lives. It is a good ground for man to look into himself, and consider whether he hath not, some ways or other, disobliged God more than other creatures can possibly do. We often find that the creatures men have need of in this state, do not answer the expectation of man: "Cursed be the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17). A fruitful land is made barren; thorns and thistles triumph upon the face of the earth, instead of good fruit. Is it likely that that goodness, which is as infinite as his power, and knows no more limits than his Almightyness, should imprint so many scars upon the world, if he had not been heinously provoked by some miscarriage of his creature? Infinite Goodness could never move Infinite Justice to inflict punishment upon creatures, if they had not highly merited it; we cannot think that any creature was blemished with a principle of disturbance, as it came first out of the hand of God. All things were certainly settled in a due order and dependence upon one another; nothing could be ungrateful and unuseful to man by the original law of their creation; if there had, it had not been goodness, but evil and baseness, that had created the world. When we see, therefore, the course of nature overturned, the order Divine goodness had placed, disturbed; and the creatures pronounced good and useful to man, employed as instruments of vengeance against him; we must conclude some horrible blot upon human nature, and very odious to a God of infinite goodness; and that this blot was dashed upon man by himself, and his own fault; for it is repugnant to the infinite goodness of God to put into the creature a sinning nature, to hurry him into sin, and then punish him for that which he had impressed upon him. The goodness of God inclines him to love goodness wherever he finds it; and not to punish any that have not deserved it by their own crimes. The curse we therefore see the creatures groan under, the disorders in nature, the frustrating the expectations of man in the fruits of the earth and plentiful harvests, the trouble he is continually exposed to in the world, which tedders down his spirit from more generous employments, shows that man is not what he was when Divine goodness first erected him; but hath admitted into his nature something more uncomely in the eye of God; and so heinous, that it puts his goodness sometimes to a stand, and makes him lay aside the blessings his hand was filled with, to take up the arms of vengeance, wherewith to fight against the world. Divine goodness would have secured his creatures from any such invasions, and never used those things against

man, which he designed in the first frame for man's service, were there not some detestable disorder risen in the nature of man which makes God withhold his liberality and change the dispensation of his numerous benefits into legions of judgments. The consideration of the Divine goodness, which is a notion that man naturally concludes to be inseparable from the Deity, would, to an unbiassed reason, verify the history of those punishments settled upon man in the third chapter of Genesis, and make the whole seem more probable to reason at the first relation. This instruction naturally flows from the doctrine of Divine goodness: if God be so good, it is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state.

3. The third information is this: If God be infinitely good, there can be no just complaint against God, if men be punished for abusing his goodness. Man had nothing, nay, it was impossible he could have anything, from Infinite Goodness to disoblige him, but to engage him. God never did, nay, never could, draw his sword against man, till man had slighted him and affronted him by the strength of his own bounty. It is by this God doth justify his severest proceedings against men, and very seldom charges them with any else as the matter of their provocations (Hosea 2:9): "Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax." And in Ezekiel 16:1-63., after he had drawn out a bill of complaint against them, and inserted only the abuse of his benefits, as a justification of what he intended to do; he concludes (Ezekiel 16:27), "Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and diminished thy ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee." When men suffer, they suffer justly; they were not constrained by any violence, or forced by any necessity, nor provoked by any ill usage, to turn head against God, but broke the bands of the strongest obligations and most tender allurements. What man, what devil, can justly blame God for punishing them, after they had been so intolerably bold, as to fly in the face of that goodness that had obliged them, by giving them beings of a higher elevation than to inferior creatures, and furnishing them with sufficient strength to continue in their first habitation? Man seems to have less reason to accuse God of rigor than devils; since, after his unreasonable revolt, a more express goodness than that which created him hath solicited him to repentance, courted him by melting promises and exhortations, added undeniable arguments of bounty, and drawn out the choicest treasures of heaven, in the gift of his Son, to prevail over men's perversity. And yet man, after he might arrive to the height and happiness of an angel, will be fond of continuing in the meanness and misery of a devil; and more strongly link himself to the society of the damned spirits, wherein, by his first rebellion, he had incorporated himself. Who can blame God for vindicating his own goodness from such desperate contempts, and the extreme ingratitude of man? If God be good, it is our happiness to adhere to him; if we depart from him, we depart from goodness; and if evil happen to us, we cannot blame God, but ourselves, for our departure. [Note: Petav. Theolog. Dogmat. Vol. I. p. 407.] Why are men happy? because they cleave to God. Why are men miserable? because they recede from God. It is then our own fault that we are miserable; God cannot be charged with any injustice if we be miserable, since his goodness gave means to prevent it, and afterwards added means to recover us from it, but all despised by us. The doctrine of Divine goodness justifies every stone laid in the foundation of hell, and every spark in that burning furnace, since it is for the abuse of infinite goodness that it was kindled.

4. The fourth information: Here is a certain argument, both for God's fitness to govern the world, and his actual government of it.

(1.) This renders him fit for the government of the world, and gives him a full title to it. This perfection doth the Psalmist celebrate throughout Psalms 107:1-43, where he declares God's works of providence (Psalms 107:8, Psalms 107:15, Psalms 107:21, Psalms 107:32). Power without goodness would deface, instead of preserving; ruin is the fruit of rigor without kindness; but God, because of his infinite and immutable goodness, cannot do anything unworthy of himself, and uncomely in itself, or destructive to any moral goodness in the creature. It is impossible he should do anything that is base, or act anything but for the best, because he is essentially and naturally, and, therefore, necessarily good. As a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, so a good God cannot produce evil acts, no more than a pure beam of the sun can engender so much as a mite of darkness, or infinite heat produce any particle of cold. As God is so much light, that he can be no darkness, so he is so much good, that he can have no evil; and because there is no evil in him, nothing simply evil can be produced by him. Since he is good by nature, all evil is against his nature, and God can do nothing against his nature; it would be a part of impotence in him to will that which is evil; and, therefore, the misery man feels, as well as the sin whereby he deserves that misery, are said to be from himself (Hosea 13:9): "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" And though God sends judgments upon the world, we have shown these to be intended for the support and vindication of his goodness. And Hezekiah judged no otherwise, when, after the threatening of the devastation of his house, the plundering his treasures, and captivity of his posterity, he replies, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken" (Isaiah 39:8). God cannot act anything that is base and cruel, because his goodness is as infinite as his power, and his power acts nothing but what his wisdom directs, and his goodness moves him to. Wisdom is the head in government, omniscience the eye, power the arm, and goodness the heart and spirit in them, that animates all.

(2.) As goodness renders Him fit to govern the world, so God doth actually govern the world. Can we understand this perfection aright, and yet imagine that he is of so morose a disposition as to neglect the care of his creatures? that his excellency, which was displayed in framing the world, should withdraw and wrap up itself in his own bosom, without looking out, and darting itself out in the disposal of them? Can that which moved him first to erect a world, suffer him to be unmindful of his own work? Would he design first to display it in creation, and afterwards obscure the honor of it? That cannot be entitled an infinite permanent goodness, which should be so indifferent as to let the creatures tumble together as they please, without any order, after he had moulded them in his hand. If goodness be diffusive and communicative of itself, can it consist with the nature of it, to extend itself to the giving the creatures being, and then withdraw and contract itself, not caring what becomes of them? It is the nature of goodness, after it hath communicated itself, to enlarge its channels; that fountain that springs up in a little hollow part of the earth, doth in a short progress increase its streams, and widen the passages through which it runs; it would be a blemish to Divine goodness, if it did desert what it made, and leave things to wild confusions, which would be, if a good hand did not manage them, and a good mind preside over them. This is the lesson intended to us by all his judgments (Daniel 4:17), "That the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men." If he doth not actually govern the world, he must have devolved it somewhere, either to men or angels; not to men, who naturally want a goodness and wisdom to govern themselves, much more to govern others exactly. And, besides the misinterpretations of actions, they are liable to the want of patience, to bear with the provocations of the world; since some of the best at one time in the world, and, in the greatest example of meekness and sweetness, would have kindled a fire in heaven to have consumed the Samaritans, for no other

affront than a non-entertainment of their Master and themselves (Luke 9:54). Nor hath he committed the disposal of things to angels, either good or bad; though he useth them as instruments in his government, yet they are not the principal pilots to steer the world. Bad angels certainly are not; they would make continual ravages, meditate ruin, never defeat their own counsels, which they manage by the wicked as the instruments in the world, nor fill their spirits with disquiet and restlessness when they are engaged in some ruinous design, as often is experienced: nor hath he committed it to the good angels, who, for aught we know, are not more numerous than the evil ones are; but besides, we can scarcely think their finite nature capable of so much goodness, as to bear the innumerable debaucheries, villanies, blasphemies, vented in one year, one week, one day, one hour, throughout the world; their zeal for their Creator might well be supposed to move them to testify their affection to him in a constant and speedy righting of his injured honor upon the heads of the offenders. The evil angels have too much cruelty, and would have no care of justice, but take pleasure in the blood of the most innocent, as well as the most criminal; and the good angels have too little tenderness to suffer so many crimes: since the world, therefore, continues without those floods of judgments, which it daily merits; since, notwithstanding all the provocations, the order of it is preserved; it is a testimony that an Infinite Goodness holds the helm in his hands, and spreads its warm wings over it.

5. The fifth information is this: Hence we may infer the ground of all religion; it is this perfection of goodness. As the goodness of God is the lustre of all his attributes, so it is the foundation and link of all true religious worship: the natural religion of the heathens was introduced by the consideration of Divine goodness, in the being he had bestowed upon them, and the provisions that were made for them. Divine bounty was the motive to erect altars, and present sacrifices, though they mistook the object of their worship, and offered the dues of the Creator to the instruments whereby he conveyed his benefits to them: and you find, that the religion instituted by him among the Jews, was enforced upon them by the consideration of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the preservation of them in the wilderness, and the enfeoffing them in a land flowing with milk and honey. Every act of bounty and success the heathens received, moved them to appoint new deities, and repeat their adorations of those deities they thought the authors and promoters of their victories and welfare. The devil did not mistake the common sentiment of the world in Divine service, when he alleged to God, that "Job did not fear him for nought," i. e. worship him for nothing (Job 1:9). All acts of devotion take their rise from God's liberality, either from what they have or from what they hope; praise speaks the possession, and prayer the expectation, of some benefit from his hand: though some of the heathens made fear to be the prime cause of the acknowledgment and worship of a deity, yet surely something else besides and beyond this established so great a thing as religion in the world; an ingenuous religion could never have been born into the world without a notion of goodness, and would have gaped its last as soon as this notion should have expired in the minds of men. What encouragement can fear of power give, without sense of goodness? just as much as thunder hath, to invite a man to the lace where it is like to fall, and crush him. The nature of "fear" is to drive from, and the nature of "goodness" to allure to, the object: the Divine thunders, prodigies, and other armies of his justice in the world, which are the marks of his power, could conclude in nothing but a slavish worship: fear alone would have made men blaspheme the Deity; instead of serving him, they would have fretted against him; they might have offered him a trembling worship; but they could never have, in their minds, thought him worthy of an adoration; they would rather have secretly complained of him, and

cursed him in their heart, than inwardly have admired him: the issue would have been the same, which Job's wife advised him to, when God withdrew his protection from his goods and body: "Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). It is certainly the common sentiment of men, that he that acts cruelly and tyrannically, is not worthy of an integrity to be retained towards him in the hearts of his subjects; but Job fortifies himself against this temptation from his bosom friend, by the consideration of the good he had received from God, which did more deserve a worship from him than the present evil had reason to discourage it. Alas! what is only feared, is hated, not adored. Would any seek to an irreconcilable enemy? would any person affectionately list himself in the service of a man void of all good disposition? would any distressed person put up a petition to that prince, who never gave any experiment of the sweetness of his nature, but always satiated himself with the blood of the meanest criminals? All affection to service is rooted up when hopes of receiving good are extinguished: there could not be a spark of that in the world, which is properly called religion, without a notion of goodness; the existence of God is the first pillar, and the goodness of God in rewarding the next, upon which coming to him (which includes all acts of devotion) is established (Hebrews 11:6); "He that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him:" if either of those pillars be not thought to stand firm, all religion falls to the ground. It is this, as the most agreeable motive, that the apostle James uses, to encourage men's approach to God, because "he gives liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5). A man of a kind heart and a bountiful hand shall have his gate thronged with suppliants, who sometimes would be willing to lay down their lives; "for a good man one would even dare to die:" when one of a niggardly or tyrannical temper shall be destitute of all free and affectionate applications. What eyes would be lifted up to heaven? what hands stretched out, if there were not a knowledge of goodness there to enliven their hopes of speeding in their petitions? Therefore Christ orders our prayers to be directed to God as a Father, which is a title of tenderness, as well as a "Father in heaven," a mark of his greatness; the one to support our confidence, as well as the other to preserve our distance. God could not be ingenuously adored and acknowledged, if he were not liberal as well as powerful; the goodness of God is the foundation of all ingenuous religion, devotion and worship.

6. The sixth instruction: The goodness of God renders God amiable. His goodness renders him beautiful, and his beauty renders him lovely; both are linked together (Zechariah 9:17): "How great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty!" This is the most powerful attractive, and masters the affections of the soul: it is goodness only supposed, or real, that is thought worthy to demerit our affections to anything. If there be not a reality of this, or at least an opinion and estimation of it in an object, it would want a force and vigor to allure our will. This perfection of God is the loadstone to draw us, and the centre for our spirits to rest in.

1. This renders God amiable to himself. His goodness is his "Godhead" (Romans 1:20): by his Godhead is meant his goodness; if he loves his Godhead for itself, he loves his goodness for itself; he would not be good, if he did not love himself; and if there were anything more excellent, and had a greater goodness than himself, he would not be good if he did not love that greater goodness above himself; for not only a hatred of goodness is evil, but an indifferent or cold affection to goodness hath a tincture of evil in it. If God were not good, and yet should love himself in the highest manner, he would be the greatest evil, and do the greatest evil in that act; for he would set his love upon that which is not the proper object of such an affection, but the object of

aversion: his own infinite excellency, and goodness of his nature, renders him lovely and delightful to himself; without this he could not love himself in a commendable and worthy way, and becoming the purity of a Deity; and he cannot but love himself for this; for, as creatures, by not loving him as the supreme good, deny him to be the choicest good, so God would deny himself, and his own goodness, if he did not love himself, and that for his goodness. But the apostle tells us, that "God cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Self-love, upon this account, is the only prerogative of God, because there is not anything better than himself that can lay any just claim to his affections: he only ought to love himself, and it would be an injustice in him to himself, if he did not. He only can love himself for this: an infinite goodness ought to be infinitely loved, but he only being infinite, can only love himself according to the due merit of his own goodness. He cannot be so amiable to any man, to any angel, to the highest seraphim, as he is to himself; because he is only capable in regard of his infinite wisdom, to know the infiniteness of his own goodness. And no creature can love him as he ought to be loved, unless it had the same infinite capacity of understanding to know him, and of affection to embrace him. This first renders God amiable to himself.

2. It ought therefore to render him amiable to us. What renders him lovely to his own eye, ought to render him so to ours; and since, by the shortness of our understandings, we cannot love him as he merits, yet we should be induced by the measures of his bounty, to love him as we can. If this do not present him lovely to us, we own him rather a devil than a God: if his goodness moved him to frame creatures, his goodness moved him also to frame creatures for himself and his own glory. It is a mighty wrong to him not to look with a delightful eye upon the marks of it, and return an affection to God in some measure suitable to his liberality to us; we are descended as low as brutes, if we understand him not to be the perfect good; and we are descended as low as devils, if our affections are not attracted by it.

(1.) If God were not infinitely good, he could not be the object of supreme love. If he were finitely good, there might be other things as good as God, and then God in justice could not challenge our choicest affections to him above anything else: it would be a defect of goodness in him to demand it, because he would despoil that which were equally good with him, of its due and right to our affections, which it might claim from us upon the account of its goodness: God would be unjust to challenge more than was due to him; for he would claim that chiefly to himself which another had a lawful share in. Nothing can be supremely loved that hath not a triumphant excellency above all other things; where is an equality of goodness, neither can justly challenge a supremacy, but only an equality of affection.

(2.) This attribute of goodness renders him more lovely than any other attribute. He never requires our adoration of him so much as the strongest or wisest, but as the best of beings: he uses this chiefly to constrain and allure us. Why would he be feared or worshipped, but because "there is forgiveness with him" (Psalms 130:4)? it is for his goodness' sake that he is sued to by his people in distress (Psalms 25:7), "For thy goodness' sake, O Lord." Men may be admired because of their knowledge, but they are affected because of their goodness: the will, in all the variety of objects it pursues, centres in this one thing of good as the term of its appetite. All things are beloved by men, because they have been bettered by them. Severity can never conquer enmity, and kindle love: were there nothing but wrath in the Deity, it would make him be feared, but render him odious, and that to an innocent nature. As the spouse speaks of Christ (Song of Solomon 5:10-11), so we may of God: though she commends him for his head, the excellency of his

wisdom; his eyes, the extent of his omniscience; his hands, the greatness of his power; and his legs, the swiftness of his motions and ways to and for his people; yet the “sweetness of his mouth,” in his gracious words and promises, closes all, and is followed with nothing but an exclamation, that “he is altogether lovely” (Song of Solomon 5:6). His mouth, in pronouncing pardon of sin, and justification of the person, presents him most lovely. His power to do good is admirable, but his will to do good is amiable: this puts a gloss upon all his other attributes. Though he had knowledge to understand the depth of our necessities, and power to prevent them, or rescue us from them, yet his knowledge would be fruitless, and his power useless, if he were of a rigid nature, and not touched with any sentiments of kindness.

(3.) This goodness therefore lays a strong obligation upon us. It is true he is lovely in regard of his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature, but we should hardly be persuaded to return him an affection without his relative goodness, his benefits to his creatures; we are obliged by both to love him.

[1.] By his absolute goodness, or the goodness of his nature. Suppose a creature had drawn its original from something else wherein God had no influx, and had never received the least mite of a benefit from him, but from some other hand, yet the infinite excellency and goodness of his nature would merit the love of that creature, and it would act sordidly and disingenuously if it did not discover a mighty respect for God: for what ingenuity could there be in a rational creature, that were possessed with no esteem for any nature filled with unbounded goodness and excellency, though he had never been obliged to him for any favor? That man is accounted odious, and justly despicable by man, that reproaches and disesteems, nay, that doth not value a person of a high virtue in himself, and an universal goodness and charity to others, though himself never stood in need of his charity, and never had any benefit conveyed from his hands, nor ever saw his face, or had any commerce with him: a value of such a person is but a just due to the natural claim of virtue. And, indeed, the first object of love is God in the excellency of his own nature, as the first object of love in marriage is the person; the portion is a thing consequent upon it. To love God only for his benefits, is to love ourselves first, and him secondarily: to love God for his own goodness and excellency, is a true love of God; a love of him for himself. That flaming fire in his own breast, though we have not a spark of it, hath a right to kindle one in ours to him.

[2.] By his relative goodness, or that of his benefits. Though the excellency of his own nature, wherein there is a combination of goodness, must needs ravish an apprehensive mind; yet a reflection upon his imparted kindness, both in the beings we have from him, and the support we have by him, must enhance his estimation. When the excellency of his nature, and the expressions of his bounty are in conjunction, the excellency of his own nature renders him estimable in a way of justice, and the greatness of his benefits renders him valuable in a way of gratitude: the first ravisheth, and the other allures and melts: he hath enough in his nature to attract, and sufficient in his bounty to engage our affections. The excellency of his nature is strong enough of itself to blow up our affections to him, were there not a malignity in our hearts that represents him under the notion of an enemy; therefore in regard of our corrupt state, the consideration of Divine largesses comes in for a share in the elevation of our affections. For, indeed, it is a very hard thing for a man to love another, though never so well qualified, and of an eminent virtue, while he believes him to be his enemy, and one that will severely handle him, though he hath before received many good turns from him; the virtue, valor, and courtesy of a

prince, will hardly make him affected by those against whom he is in arms, and that are daily pilfered by his soldiers, unless they have hopes of a reparation from him, and future security from injuries. Christ, in the repetition of the command to “love God with all our mind, with all our heart, and with all our soul,” i. e., with such an ardency above all things which glitter in our eye, or can be created by him, considers him as “our God” (Matthew 22:37). And the Psalmist considers him as one that had kindly employed his power for him, in the eruption of his love (Psalms 18:1), “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;” and so in Psalms 116:1, “love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.” An esteem of the benefactor is inseparable from gratitude for the received benefits: and should not then the unparalleled kindness of God advance him in our thoughts, much more than slighter courtesies do a created benefactor in ours? It is an obligation on every man’s nature to answer bounty with gratitude, and goodness with love. Hence you never knew any man, nor can the records of eternity produce any man, or devil, that ever hated any person, or anything as good in itself: it is a thing absolutely repugnant to the nature of any rational creature. The devils hate not God because he is good, but because he is not so good to them as they would have him; because he will not unlock their chains, turn them into liberty, and restore them to happiness; i. e. because he will not desert the rights of abused goodness. But how should we send up flames of love to that God, since we are under his direct beams, and enjoy such plentiful influences! If the sun is comely in itself, yet it is more amiable to us, by the light we see, and the warmth we feel.

1st. The greatness of his benefits have reason to affect us with a love to him. The impress he made upon our souls when he extracted us from the darkness of nothing; the comeliness he hath put upon us by his own breath; the care he took of our recovery, when we had lost ourselves; the expense he was at for our regaining our defaced beauty; the gift he made of his Son; the affectionate calls we have heard to over-master our corrupt appetites, move us to repentance, and make us disaffect our beloved misery; the loud sound of his word in our ears, and the more inward knockings of his Spirit in our heart; the offering us the gift of himself, and the everlasting happiness he courts us to, besides those common favors we enjoy in the world, which are all the streams of his rich bounty: the voice of all is loud enough to solicit our love, and the merit of all ought to be strong enough to engage our love: “there is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky” (Deuteronomy 33:26).

2d. The unmeritedness of them doth enhance this. It is but reason to love him who hath loved us first (1 John 4:19). Hath he placed his delight upon any when they were nothing, and after they were sinful; and shall he set his delight upon such vile persons, and shall not we set our love upon so excellent an object as himself? How base are we, if his goodness doth not constrain us to affect him who hath been so free in his favor to us, who have merited the quite contrary at his hands? If “his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalms 145:9), he ought for it to be esteemed by all his works that are capable of a rational estimation.

3d. Goodness in creatures makes them estimable, much more should the goodness of God render him lovely to us. If we love a little spark of goodness in this or that creature, if a drop be so delicious to us, shall not the immense Sun of goodness, the ever-flowing Fountain of all, be much more delightful? The original excellency always outstrips what is derived from it; if so mean and contracted an object as a little creature deserves estimation for a little mite communicated to it, so great and extended a goodness as is in the Creator much more merits it at our hands: he is good

after the infinite methods of a Deity: a weak resemblance is lovely; much more amiable, then, must be the incomprehensible original of that beauty. We love creatures for what we think to be good in them, though it may be hurtful; and shall we not love God, who is a real and unblemished goodness, and from whose hand are poured out all those blessings that are conveyed to us by second causes? The object that delights us, the capacity we have to delight in it, are both from him; our love, therefore, to him should transcend the affection we bear to any instruments he moves for our welfare. "Among the gods, there is none like thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works" (Psalms 86:8): among the pleasantest creatures there is none like the Creator, nor any goodness like unto his goodness. Shall we love the food that nourisheth us, and the medicine that cures us, and the silver whereby we furnish ourselves with useful commodities? Shall we love a horse, or dog, for the benefits we have by them? and shall not the spring of all those draw our souls after it, and make us aspire to the honor of loving and embracing Him who hath stored every creature with that which may pleasure us? But, instead of endeavoring to parallel our affection with his kindness, we endeavor to make our disingenuity as extensive and towering as his Divine goodness.

4th. This is the true end of the manifestation of his goodness, that he might appear amiable, and have a return of affection. Did God display his goodness only to be thought of, or to be loved? It is the want of such a return, that he hath usually aggravated, from the benefits he hath bestowed upon men. Every thought of him should be attended with a motion suitable to the excellency of his nature and works. Can we think those nobler spirits, the angels, look upon themselves, or those frames of things in the heavens and earth, without starting some practical affection to him for them? Their knowledge of his excellency and works cannot be a lazy contemplation: it is impossible their wills and affections should be a thousand miles distant from their understandings in their operations. It is not the least part of his condescending goodness to court in such methods the affections of us worms, and manifest his desire to be beloved by us. Let us give him, then, that affection he deserves, as well as demands, and which cannot be withheld from him without horrible sacrilege. There is nothing worthy of love besides him; let no fire be kindled in our hearts, but what may ascend directly to him.

7. The seventh instruction is this: This renders God a fit object of trust and confidence. Since none is good but God, none can be a full and satisfactory ground or object of confidence but God: as all things derive their beings, so they derive their helpfulness to us from God; they are not, therefore, the principal objects of trust, but that goodness alone that renders them fit instruments of our support; they can no more challenge from us a stable confidence, than they can a supreme affection. It is by this the Psalmist allures men to a trust in him; "Taste and see how good the Lord is:" what is the consequence? "Blessed is the man that trusts in thee" (Psalms 34:8), The voice of Divine goodness sounds nothing more intelligibly, and a taste of it produceth nothing more effectually, than this. As the vials of his justice are to make us fear him, so the streams of his goodness are to make us rely on him: as his patience is designed to broach our repentance, so his goodness is most proper to strengthen our assurance in him: that goodness which surmounted so many difficulties, and conquered so many motions that might be made against any repeated exercise of it, after it had been abused by the first rebellion of man; that goodness that after so much contempt of it, appeared in such a majestic tenderness, and threw aside those impediments which men had cast in the way of Divine inclinations this goodness is the foundation of all reliance

upon God. Who is better than God? and, therefore, who more to be trusted than God? As his power cannot act anything weakly, so his goodness cannot act anything unbecomingly, and unworthy of his infinite majesty. And here consider,

(1.) Goodness is the first motive of trust. Nothing but this could be the encouragement to man, had he stood in a state of innocence, to present himself before God; the majesty of God would have constrained him to keep his due distance, but the goodness of God could only hearten his confidence: it is nothing else now that can preserve the same temper in us in our lapsed condition. To regard him only as the Judge of our crimes, will drive us from him; but only the regard of him as the Donor of our blessings, will allure us to him. The principal foundation of faith is not the word of God, but God himself, and God as considered in this perfection. As the goodness of God in his invitations and providential blessings “leads us to repentance” (Romans 2:4), so, by the same reason, the goodness of God by his promises leads us to reliance. If God be not first believed to be good, he would not be believed at all in anything that he speaks or swears: if you were not satisfied in the goodness of a man, though he should swear a thousand times, you would value neither his word nor oath as any security. Many times, where we are certain of the goodness of a man, we are willing to trust him without his promise. This Divine perfection gives credit to the Divine promises; they of themselves would not be a sufficient ground of trust, without an apprehension of his truth; nor would his truth be very comfortable without a belief of his good will, whereby we are assured that what he promises to give, he gives liberally, free, and without regret. The truth of the Promiser makes the promise credible, but the goodness of the promiser makes it cheerfully relied on. In Psalms 73:1-28. (Asaph’s penitential psalm for his distrust of God,) he begins the first verse with an assertion of this attribute (Psalms 73:1), “Truly God is good to Israel;” and ends with this fruit of it (Psalms 73:28), “I will put my trust in the Lord God.” It is a mighty ill nature that receives not with assurance the dictates of Infinite Goodness, (that cannot deceive or frustrate the hopes we conceive of him) that is inconceivably more abundant in the breast and inclinations of the promiser, than expressible in the words of his promise, “All true faith works by love” (Galatians 5:6), and, therefore, necessarily includes a particular eyeing of this excellency in the Divine nature, which renders him amiable, and is the motive and encouragement of a love to him. His power indeed is a foundation of trust, but his goodness is the principal motive of it. His power without good-will would be dangerous, and could not allure affection; and his good will without power would be useless; and though it might merit a love, yet could not create a confidence; both in conjunction are strong grounds of hope, especially since his goodness is of the same infinity with his wisdom and power; and that he can be no more wanting in the effusions of this upon them that seek him, than in his wisdom to contrive, or his power to effect, his designs and works.

(2.) This goodness is more the foundation and motive of trust under the gospel, than under the law. They under the law had more evidences of Divine power, and their trust eyed that much; though there was an eminency of goodness in the frequent deliverances they had, yet the power of God had a more glorious dress than his goodness, because of the extraordinary and miraculous ways where by he brought those deliverances about. Therefore, in the catalogue of believers in Hebrews 11:1-40. you shall find the power of God to be the centre of their rest and trust; and their faith was built upon the extraordinary marks of Divine power, which were frequently visible to them. But under the gospel, goodness and love was intended by God to be the chief object of

trust; suitable to the excellency of that dispensation, he would have an exercise of more ingenuity in the creatures: therefore, it is said (Hosea 3:5), a promise of gospel times, "They shall fear God and his goodness in the latter days," when they shall return to "seek the Lord, and David their king." It is not said, they shall fear God, and his power, but the Lord and: his goodness, or the Lord for his goodness: fear is often in the Old Testament taken for faith, or trust. This Divine goodness the object of faith, is that goodness discovered in David their king; the Messiah, our Jesus. God, in this dispensation, recommends his goodness and love, and reveals it more clearly than other attributes, that the soul might have more prevailing and sweeter attractives to confide in him.

(3.) A confidence in him gives him the glory of his goodness. Most nations that had nothing but the light of nature, thought it a great part of the honor that was due to God, to implore his goodness, and cast their cares upon it. To do good, is the most honorable thing in the world, and to acknowledge a goodness in a way of confidence, is as high an honor as we can give to it, and a great part of gratitude for what it hath already expressed. Therefore we find often, that an acknowledgment of one benefit received, was attended with a trust in him for what they should in the future need (Psalms 56:13): "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?" So, 2 Corinthians 1:10 : and they who have been most eminent for their trust in him, have had the greatest eulogies and commendations from him. As a diffidence doth disparage this perfection, thinking it meaner and shallower than it is so confidence highly honors it. We never please him more, than when we trust in him; "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy" (Psalms 147:11). He takes: it for an honor to have this attribute exalted by such a carriage of his creature. He is no less offended when we think his heart straitened, as if he were a parsimonious God; than when we think his arm shortened, as if he were an impotent and feeble God. Let us, therefore, make this use of his goodness, to hearten our faith. When we are scared by the terrors of his justice, when we are dazzled by the arts of his wisdom, and confounded by the splendor of his majesty, we may take refuge in the sanctuary of his goodness; this will encourage us, as well as astonish us; whereas, the consideration of his other attributes would only amaze us, but can never refresh us, but when they are considered marching under the conduct and banners of this. When all the other perfections of the Divine nature are looked upon in conjunction with this excellency, each of them send forth ravishing and benign influences upon the applying creature. It is more advantageous to depend upon Divine bounty, than our own cares; we may have better assurance upon this account in his cares for us, than in ours for ourselves. Our goodness for ourselves is finite; and besides, we are too ignorant: his goodness is infinite, and attended with an infinite wisdom; we have reason to distrust ourselves, not God. We have reason to be at rest, under that kind influence we have so often experimented; he hath so much goodness, that he can have no deceit: his goodness in making the promise, and his goodness in working the heart to a reliance on it, are grounds of trust in him; "Remember thy word to thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" (Psalms 119:49). If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his supplicant, suited to his promise which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature, as wrong himself; and, therefore, can never disappoint that faith which in his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his own workmanship, and calls him Author. That goodness that imparted itself so freely in creation, will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in

him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.

8. The eighth instruction: This renders God worthy to be obeyed and honored. There is an excellency in God to allure, as well as sovereignty to enjoin obedience: the infinite excellency of his nature is so great, that if his goodness had promised us nothing to encourage our obedience, we ought to prefer him before ourselves, devote ourselves to serve him, and make his glory our greatest content; but much more when he hath given such admirable expressions of his liberality, and stored us with hopes of richer and fuller streams of it. When David considered the absolute goodness of his nature, and the relative goodness of his benefits, he presently expresseth an ardent desire to be acquainted with the Divine statutes, that he might make ingenious returns in a dutiful observance; "Thou art good, and thou dost good; teach me thy statutes" (Psalms 119:68). As his goodness is the original, so the acknowledgment of it is the end on all, which cannot be without an observance of his will. His goodness requires of us an ingenuous, not a servile obedience. And this is established upon two foundations.

[1.] Because the bounty of God hath laid upon us the strongest obligations. The strength of an obligation depends upon the greatness and numerousness of the benefits received. The more excellent the favors are which are conferred upon any person, the more right hath the benefactor to claim an observance from the person bettered by him. Much of the rule and empire which hath been in several ages conferred by communities upon princes, hath had its first spring from a sense of the advantages they have received by them, either in protecting them from their enemies, or rescuing them from an ignoble captivity; in enlarging their territories, or increasing their wealth. Conquest hath been the original of a constrained, but beneficence always the original of a voluntary and free subjection. [Note: Amyrald. Dissert. p. 65.] Obedience to parents is founded upon their right, because they are instrumental in bestowing upon us being and life; and because this of life is so great a benefit, the law of nature never dissolves this obligation of obeying and honoring parents; it is as long-lived as the law of nature, and hath an universal practice, by the strength of that law, in all parts of the world: and those rightful chains are not unlocked, but by that which unties the knot between soul and body: much more hath God a right to be obeyed and revered, who is the principal Benefactor, and moved all those second causes to impart to us, what conduced to our advantage. The just authority of God over us results from the superlativeness of his blessings he hath poured down upon us, which cannot be equalled, much less exceeded, by any other. As therefore upon this account he hath a claim to our choicest affections, so he hath also to most exact obedience; and neither one nor other can be denied him, without a sordid and disingenuous ingratitude; God therefore aggravates the rebellion of the Jews from the cares he had in the bringing them up (Isaiah 2:2), and the miraculous deliverance from Egypt (Jeremiah 11:7-8); implying that those benefits were strong obligations to an ingenuous observance of him.

[2.] It is established upon this, that God can enjoin the observance of nothing but what is good. He may by the right of his sovereign dominion, command that which is indifferent in its own nature: as in positive laws, the not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which had not been evil in itself, set aside the command of God to the contrary; and likewise in those ceremonial laws he gave the Jews: but in regard to the transcendent goodness and righteousness of his nature, he will not, he cannot command anything that is evil in itself, or repugnant to the true interest of his creature; and God never obliged the creature to anything but what was so free from

damaging it, that it highly conduced to its good and welfare: and therefore it is said, that “his commands are not grievous” (1 John 5:3): not grievous in their own nature, nor grievous to one possessed with a true reason. The command given to Adam in Paradise was not grievous in itself, nor could he ever have thought it so, but upon a false supposition instilled into him by the tempter. There is a pleasure results from the law of God to a holy rational nature, a sweetness tasted both by the understanding and by the will, for they both “rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes” of the mind (Psalms 19:8). God being essentially wisdom and goodness, cannot deviate from that goodness in any orders he gives the creature; whatsoever he enacts must be agreeable to that rule, and therefore he can will nothing but what is good and excellent, and what is good for the creature; for since he hath put originally into man a natural instinct to desire that which is good, he would never enact any thing for the creature’s observance, [Note: “As a heathen,” Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. 22, p. 220. Ο γὰρ θεμὶς Διὶ βολέσθαι ἄλλο τι τῷ κέλαιστον.] that might control that desire imprinted by himself, but what might countenance that impression of his own hand; for if God did otherwise, he would contradict his own natural law, and be a deluder of his creatures, if he impressed upon them desires one way, and ordered directions another. The truth is, all his moral precepts are comely in themselves, and they receive not their goodness from God’s positive command, but that command supposeth their goodness; if everything were good because God loves it, or because God wills it, i. e. that God’s loving it or willing it made that good which was not good before, then, as Camero well argues somewhere, God’s goodness would depend upon his loving himself; he was good because he loved himself, and was not good till he loved himself; whereas, indeed, God’s loving himself, doth not make him good, but supposeth him good: he was good in the order of nature before he love himself; and his being good was the ground of his loving himself, because, as was said before, if there were anything better than God, God would love that; for it is inconsistent with the nature of God and infinite goodness not to love that which is good, and not to love that supremely which is the supreme good. Further to understand it, you may consider, if the question be asked, why God loves himself? You would think it a reasonable answer to say, because he is good. But if the question be asked, why God is good? you would think that answer, because he loves himself, would be destitute of reason; but the true answer would be, because his nature is so, and he could not be God if he were not good: therefore God’s goodness is in order of our conception before his self-love, and not his self-love before his goodness; so the moral things God commands, are good in themselves before God commands them; and such, that if God should command the contrary, it would openly speak him evil and unrighteous. Abstract from Scripture, and weigh things in your own reason; could you conceive God good, if he should command a creature not to love him? could you preserve the notion of a good nature in him, if he did command murder, adultery, tyranny, and cutting of throats? You would wonder to what purpose he made the world, and framed it for society, if such things were ordered, that should deface all comeliness of society: the moral commands given in the word, appeared of themselves very beautiful to mere reason, that had no knowledge of the written law; they are good, and because they are so, his goodness had moved his sovereign authority strictly to enjoin them. Now this goodness, whereby he cannot oblige a creature to anything that is evil, speaks him highly worthy of our observance, and our disobedience to his law to be full of inconceivable malignity: that is the last thing.

Second Use is of comfort. He is a good without mixture, good without weariness—none good but God, none good purely, none good inexhaustibly, but God; because he is good, we may, upon our

speaking, expect his instruction; “Good is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in his way” (Psalms 25:8). His goodness makes him stoop to be the tutor to those worms that he prostrate before him; and though they are sinners full of filth, he drives them not from his school, nor denies them his medicines, if they apply themselves to him as a physician. He is good in removing the punishment due to our crimes, and good in bestowing benefits not due to our merits; because he is good, penitent believers may expect forgiveness; “Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive” (Psalms 86:5). He acts not according to the rigor of the law, but willingly grants his pardon to those that fly into the arms of the Mediator; his goodness makes him more ready to forgive, than our necessities make us desirous to enjoy; he charged not upon Job his impatient expressions in cursing the day of his birth; his goodness passed that over in silence, and extols him for speaking the thing that is right, right in the main, when he charges his friends for not speaking of him the thing that is right, as his servant Job had done (Job 42:7). He is so good, that if we offer the least thing sincerely, he will graciously receive it; if we have not a lamb to offer, a pigeon or turtle shall be accepted upon his altar; he stands not upon costly presents, but sincerely tendered services. All conditions are sweetened by it; whatsoever any in the world enjoy, is from a redundancy of this goodness; but whatsoever a good man enjoys, is from a propriety in this goodness.

1. Here is comfort in our addresses to him. If he be a fountain and sea of goodness, he cannot be weary of doing good, no more than a fountain or sea are of flowing. All goodness delights to communicate itself; infinite goodness hath then an infinite delight in expressing itself; it is a part of his goodness not to be weary of showing it; he can never, then, be weary of being solicited for the effusions of it; if he rejoices over his people to do them good, he will rejoice in any opportunities offered to him to honor his goodness, and gladly meet with a fit subject for it; he therefore delights in prayer. Never can we so delight in addressing, as he doth in imparting; he delights more in our prayers than we can ourselves; goodness is not pleased with shyness. To what purpose did his immense bounty bestow his Son upon us, but that we should be “accepted” both in our persons and petitions (Ephesians 1:6)? “His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry” (Psalms 34:15); he fixes the eye of his goodness upon them, and opens the ears of his goodness for them; he is pleased to behold them, and pleased to listen to them, as if he had no pleasure in anything else; he loves to be sought to, to give a vent to his bounty; “Acquaint thyself with God, and thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). The word signifies. to accustom ourselves to God; the more we accustom ourselves in speaking, the more he will accustom himself in giving; he loves not to keep his goodness close under lock and key, as men do their treasures. If we knock, he opens his exchequer (Matthew 7:7); his goodness is as flexible to our importunities, as his power is invincible by the arm of a silly worm; he thinks his liberality honored by being applied to, and your address to be a recompense for his expense. There is no reason to fear, since he hath so kindly invited us, but he will as heartily welcome us; the nature of goodness is to compassionate and communicate, to pity and relieve, and that with a heartiness and cheerfulness; man is weary of being often solicited, because he hath a finite, not a bottomless, goodness: he gives sometimes to be rid of his suppliant, not to encourage him to a second approach. But every experience God gives us of his bounty, is a motive to solicit him afresh, and a kind of obligation he hath laid upon himself to “renew it” (1 Samuel 17:37): it is one part of his goodness that it is boundless and bottomless; we need not fear the wasting of it, nor any weariness in him to bestow it. The stock cannot be spent, and infinite kindness can never become niggardly; when we have enjoyed it, there is still an infinite ocean in Him to refresh us, and as full streams as ever to supply

us. What an encouragement have we to draw near to God! We run in our straits to those that we think have most good will, as well as power to relieve and protect us. The oftener we come to him, and the nearer we approach to him, the more of his influences we shall feel: as the nearer the sun, the more of its heat insinuates itself into us. The greatness of God, joined with his goodness, hath more reason to encourage our approach to him, than our flight from him, because his greatness never goes unattended with his goodness; and if we were not so good, he would not be so great in the apprehensions of any creature. How may his goodness, in the great gift of his Son, encourage us to apply to him since he hath set him as a day's man between himself and us, and appointed him an Advocate to present our requests for us, and speed them at the throne of grace; and he never leaves till Divine goodness subscribes a fiat to our believing and just petitions!

2. Here is comfort in afflictions. What can we fear from the conduct of Infinite Goodness? Can his hand be heavy upon those that are humble before him? They are the hands of Infinite Power indeed, but there is not any motion of it upon his people, but is ordered by a goodness as infinite as his power, which will not suffer any affliction to be too sharp or too long. By what ways soever he conveys grace to us here, and prepares us for glory hereafter, they are good, and those are the good things he hath chiefly obliged himself to give (Psalms 84:11): "Grace and glory" will he "give, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." This David comforted himself with, in that which his devout soul accounted the greatest calamity, his absence from the courts and house of God (Psalms 84:2). Not an ill will, but a good will, directs his scourges; he is not an idle spectator of our combats; his thoughts are fuller of kindness than ours, in any case, can be of trouble: and because he is good, he wills the best good in everything he acts; in exercising virtue, or correcting vice. There is no affliction without some apparent mixtures of goodness; when he speaks how he had smitten Israel (Jeremiah 2:30), he presently adds (Jeremiah 2:31), "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?" Though he led them through a desert, yet he was not a desert to them; he was no land of darkness to them; while they marched through a land of barrenness, he was a caterer to provide them "manna," and a place of "broad rivers" and streams. How often hath Divine goodness made our afflictions our consolations; our diseases, our medicines, and his gentle strokes, reviving cordials! How doth he provide for us above our deserts, even while he doth punish us beneath our merits! Divine goodness can no more mean ill, than Divine wisdom can be mistaken in its end, or Divine power overruled in its actions. "Charity thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5); charity in the stream doth not, much less doth charity in the fountain. To be afflicted by a hand of goodness hath something, comfortable in it, when to be afflicted by an evil hand is very odious. Elijah, who was loth to die by the hand of a whorish idolatrous Jezebel, was very desirous to die by the hand of God (1 Kings 19:2-4). He accounted it a misery to have died by her hand, who hated him, and had nothing but cruelty; and, therefore, fled from her, when he wished for death, as a desirable thing by the hand of that God who had been good to him, and could not but be good in whatsoever he acted.

3. The third comfort flowing from this doctrine of the goodness of God, is, it is a ground of assurance of happiness. If God be so good, that nothing is better, and loves himself, as he is good, he cannot be wanting in love to those that resemble his nature, and imitate his goodness: he cannot but love his own image of goodness; wherever he finds it, he cannot but be bountiful to it; for it is impossible there can be any love to any object, without wishing well to it, and doing well for it. If the soul loves God as its chiefest good, God will love the soul as his pious servant: as he hath

offered to them the highest allurements, so he will not withhold the choicest communications. Goodness cannot be a deluding thing: it cannot consist with the nobleness and largeness of this perfection to invite the creature to him, and leave the creature empty of him when it comes. It is inconsistent with this perfection to give the creature a knowledge of himself, and a desire of enjoyment larger than that knowledge; a desire to know, and enjoy him perpetually, yet never intend to bestow an eternal communication of himself upon it. The nature of man was erected by the goodness of God, but with an enlarged desire for the highest good, and a capacity of enjoying it. Can goodness be thought to be deceitful, to frustrate its own work, be tired with its own effusions, to let a gracious soul groan under its burden, and never resolve to ease him of it; to see delightfully the aspirings of the creature to another state, and resolve never to admit him to a happy issue of those desires? It is not agreeable to this inconceivable perfection to be unconcerned in the longings of his creature, since their first longings were placed in them by that goodness which is so free from mocking the creature, or falling short of its well-grounded expectations or desires, that it infinitely exceeds them. If man had continued in innocence, the goodness of God, without question, would have continued him in happiness: and, since he hath had so much goodness to restore man, would it not be dishonorable to that goodness to break his own conditions, and defeat the believing creature of happiness, after it hath complied with his terms? He is a believer's God in covenant, and is a God in the utmost extent of this attribute, as well as of any other; and, therefore, will not communicate mean and shallow benefits, but according to the grandeur of it, sovereign and divine, such as the gift of a happy immortality. Since he had no obligation upon him, to make any promise, but the sweetness of his own nature, the same is as strong upon him to make all the words of his grace good; they cannot be invalid in any one tittle of them as long as his nature remains the same; and his goodness cannot be diminished without the impairing of his Godhead, since it is inseparable from it. Divine goodness will not let any man serve God for nought; he hath promised our weak obedience more than any man in his right wits can say it merits (Matthew 10:42): "A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward." He will manifest our good actions as he gave so high a testimony to Job, in the face of the devil, his accuser: it will not only be the happiness of the soul, but of the body, the whole man, since soul and body were in conjunction in the acts of righteousness; it consists not with the goodness of God to reward the one, and to let the other lie in the ruins of its first nothing: to bestow joy upon the one for its being principal, and leave the other without any sentiments of joy, that was instrumental in those good works, both commanded and approved by God: he that had the goodness to pity our original dust, will not want a goodness to advance it: and if we put off our bodies, it is but afterwards to put them on repaired and fresher. From this goodness, the upright may expect all the happiness their nature is capable of.

4. It is a ground of comfort in the midst of public dangers. This hath more sweetness in it to support us, than the malice of enemies hath to deject us; because he is "good," he is "a stronghold in the day of trouble" (Nahum 1:7). If his goodness extends to all his creatures, it will much more extend to those that honor him: if the earth be full of his goodness, that part of heaven which he hath upon earth shall not be empty of it. He hath a goodness often to deliver the righteous, and a justice to put the wicked in his stead (Proverbs 11:8). When his people have been under the power of their enemies, he hath changed the scene, and put the enemies under the power of his people: he hath clapped upon them the same bolts which they did upon his servants. How comfortable is this goodness that hath yet maintained us in the midst of dangers, preserved us in the mouth of lions,

quenched kindled fire; hitherto rescued us from designed ruin subtilly hatched, and supported us in the midst of men very passionate for our destruction; how hath this watchful goodness been a sanctuary to us in the midst of an upper hell!

Third Use is of exhortation.

1. How should we endeavor after the enjoyment of God as good! How earnestly should we desire him! As there is no other goodness worthy of our supreme love, so there is no other goodness worthy our most ardent thirst. Nothing deserves the name of a desirable good, but as it tends to the attainment of this: here we must pitch our desires, which otherwise will terminate in nullities or inconceivable disturbances.

(1.) Consider, nothing but good can be the object of a rational appetite. The will cannot direct its motion to anything under the notion of evil, evil in itself, or evil to it; whatsoever courts it must present itself in the quality of a good in its own nature, or in its present circumstances to the present state and condition of the desire; it will not else touch or affect the will. This is the language of that faculty: "Who will show me any good?" (Psalms 4:6), and good is as inseparably the object of the will's motion, as truth is of the understanding's inquiry. Whatsoever a man would allure another to comply with, he must propose to the person under the notion of some beneficialness to him in point of honor, profit, or pleasure. To act after this manner is the proper character of a rational creature; and though that which is evil is often embraced instead of that which is good, and what we entertain as conducing to our felicity proves our misfortune, yet that is from our ignorance, and not from a formal choice of it as evil; for what evil is chosen it is not possible to choose under the conception of evil, but under the appearance of a good, though it be not so in reality. It is inseparable from the wills of all men to propose to themselves that which in the opinion and judgment of their understandings or imagination is good, though they often mistake and cheat themselves.

(2.) Since that good is the object of a rational appetite, the purest, best, and most universal good, such as God is, ought to be most sought after. Since good only is the object of a rational appetite, all the motions of our souls should be carried to the first and best good: a real good is most desirable; the greatest excellency of the creatures cannot speak them so, since, by the corruption of man, they are "subjected to vanity" (Romans 8:20). God is the most excellent good without any shadow; a real something without that nothing which every creature hath in its nature (Isaiah 40:17). A perfect good can only give us content: the best goodness in the creature is but slender and imperfect; had not the venom of corruption infused a vanity into it, the make of it speaks it finite, and the best qualities in it are bounded, and cannot give satisfaction to a rational appetite which bears in its nature an imitation of Divine infiniteness, and therefore can never find an eternal rest in mean trifles. God is above the imperfection of all creatures; creatures are but drops of goodness, at best but shallow streams; God is like a teeming ocean, that can fill the largest as well as the narrowest creek. He hath an accumulative goodness; several creatures answer several necessities, but one God can answer all our wants: he hath an universal fulness, to overtop our universal emptiness: he contains in himself the sweetness of all other goods, and holds in his bosom plentifully what creatures have in their natures sparingly. Creatures are uncertain goods; as they begin to exist, so they may cease to be; they may be gone with a breath, they will certainly languish if God owes upon them (Isaiah 40:24): the same breath that raised them can blast them;

but who can rifle God of the least part of his excellency? Mutability is inherent in the nature of every creature, as a creature. All sublunary things are as gourds, that refresh us one moment with their presence, and the next fret us with their absence; like fading flowers, strutting to-day, and drooping to-morrow (Isaiah 40:6): while we possess them, we cannot clip their wings, that may carry them away from us, and may make us vainly seek what we thought we firmly held. But God is as permanent a good as he is a real one: he hath wings to fly to them that seek him, but no wings to fly from them forever, and leave them. God is an universal good; that which is good to one may be evil to another; what is desirable by one may be refused as inconvenient for another: but God being an universal, unstained good, is useful for all, convenient to the natures of all but such as will continue in enmity against him. There is nothing in God can displease a soul that desires to please him; when we are in darkness, he is a light to scatter it; when we are in want, he hath riches to relieve us; when we are in spiritual death, he is a Prince of life to deliver us; when we are defiled, he is holiness to purify us: it is in vain to fix our hearts anywhere but on him, in the desire of whom there is a delight, and in the enjoyment of whom there is an inconceivable pleasure.

(3.) He is most to be sought after, since all things else that are desirable had their goodness from him. If anything be desirable because of its goodness, God is much more desirable because of his, since all things are good by a participation, and nothing good but by his print upon it: as what being creatures have was derived to them by God, so what goodness they are possessed with they were furnished with it by God; all goodness flowed from him, and all created goodness is summed up in him. The streams should not terminate our appetite without aspiring to the fountain. If the waters in the channel, which receive mixture, communicate a plea, sure, the taste of the fountain must be much more delicious; that original Perfection of all things hath an inconceivable beauty above those things it hath framed. Since those things live not by their own strength, nor nourish us by their own liberality, but by the "word of God" (Matthew 4:4), that God that speaks them into life, and speaks them into usefulness, should be most ardently desired as the best. If the sparkling glory of the visible heavens delight us, and the beauty and bounty of the earth please and refresh us, what should be the language of our souls upon those views and tastes but that of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I can desire beside thee" (Psalms 73:25). No greater good can possibly be desired, and no less good should be ardently desired. As he is the supreme good, so we should bear that regard to him as supremely, and above all, to thirst for him: as he is good, he is the object of desire; as the choicest and first goodness, he is desirable with the greatest vehemency. "Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1), was an uncomely speech; the one was granted, and the other inflicted; she had children, but the last cost her her life: but, Give me God, or I will not be content, is a gracious speech, wherein we cannot miscarry; all that God demands of us is, that we should long for him, and look for our happiness only in him. That is the first thing, endeavor after the enjoyment of God as good.

2. Often meditate on the goodness of God. What was man produced for, but to settle his thoughts upon this? What should have been Adam's employment in innocence, but to read over all the lines of nature, and fix his contemplations on that good hand that drew them? What is man endued with reason for, above all other animals, but to take notice of this goodness spread over all the creatures, which they themselves, though they felt it, could not have such a sense of as to make answerable returns to their Benefactor? Can we satisfy ourselves in being spectators of it, and

enjoyers of it, only in such a manner as the brutes are? The beasts behold things as well as we, they feel the warm beams of this goodness as well as we, but without any reflection upon the Author of them. Shall Divine blessings meet with no more from us but a brutish view and beholding of them? What is more just, than to spend a thought upon Him who hath enlarged his hand in so many benefits to us? Are we indebted to any more than we are to him? Why should we send our souls to visit anything more than him in his works? That we are able to meditate on him is a part of his goodness to us, who hath bestowed that capacity upon us; and, if we will not, it is a great part of our ingratitude. Can anything more delightful enter into us, than that of the kind and gracious disposition of that God who first brought us out of the abyss of an unhappy nothing, and hath hitherto spread his wings over us? Where can we meet with a nobler object than Divine goodness? and what nobler work can be practised by us than to consider it? What is more sensible in all the operations of his hands than his skill, as they are considered in themselves, and his goodness, as they are considered in relation to us? It is strange that we should miss the thoughts of it; that we should look upon this earth, and everything in it, and yet overlook that which it is most full of, viz. Divine goodness (Psalms 33:5); it runs through the whole web of the world; all is framed and diversified by goodness; it is one entire single goodness, which appears in various garbs and dresses in every part of the creation. Can we turn our eyes inward, and send our eyes outward, and see nothing of a Divinity in both worthy of our deepest and serious thoughts? Is there anything in the world we can behold, but we see his bounty, since nothing was made but is one way or other beneficial to us? Can we think of our daily food, but we must have some reflecting thoughts on our great Caterer? Can the sweetness of the creature to our palate obscure the sweetness of the Provider to our minds? It is strange that we should be regardless of that wherein every creature without us, and every sense within us and about us, is a tutor to instruct us! Is it not reason we should think of the times wherein we were nothing, and from thence run back to a never-begun eternity, and view ourselves in the thoughts of that goodness, to be in time brought forth upon this stage, as we are at present? Can we consider but one act of our understandings, but one thought, one blossom, one spark of our souls mounting upwards, and not reflect upon the goodness of God to us, who, in that faculty that sparkles out rational thoughts, has advanced us to a nobler state, and endued us with a nobler principle, than all the creatures we see on earth, except those of our own rank and kind? Can we consider but one foolish thought, one sinful act, and reflect upon the guilt and filth of it, and not behold goodness in sparing us, and miracles of goodness in sending his Son to die for us, for the expiation of it? This perfection cannot well be out of our thoughts, or at least it is horrible it should, when it is writ in every line of the creation, and in a legible rubric, in bloody letters, in the cross of his Son. Let us think with ourselves, how often he hath multiplied his blessings, when we did deserve his wrath! how he hath sent one unexpected benefit upon the heel of another, to bring us with a swift pace the tidings of good-will to us! how often hath he delivered us from a disease that had the arrows of death in its hand ready to pierce us! how often hath he turned our fears into joys, and our distempers into promoters of our felicity! how often hath he mated a temptation, sent seasonable supplies in the midst of a sore distress, and prevented many dangers which we could not be so sensible of, because we were, in a great measure, ignorant of them! How should we meditate upon his goodness to our souls, in preventing some sins, in pardoning others, in darting upon us the knowledge of his gospel, and of himself, in the face of his Son Christ! This seems to stick much upon the spirit of Paul, since he doth so often sprinkle his epistles with the titles of the “grace of

God, riches of grace, unsearchable riches of God, riches of glory,” and cannot satisfy himself, with the extolling of it. Certainly, we should bear upon our heart a deep and quick sense of this perfection; as it was the design of God to manifest it, so it would be acceptable to God for us to have a sense of it: a dull receiver of his blessings is no less nauseous to him than a dull dispenser of his alms; he loves a “cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7); he doth himself what he loves in others; he is cheerful in giving, and he loves we should be serious in thinking of him, and have a right apprehension and sense of his goodness.

(1.) A right sense of his goodness would dispose us to an ingenuous worship of God. It would damp our averseness to any act of religion; what made David so resolute and ready to “worship towards his holy temple” but the sense of his “loving kindness?” (Psalms 138:2). This would render him always in our mind a worthy object of our devotion, a stable prop of our confidence. We should then adore him, when we consider him as “our God,” and ourselves as “the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Psalms 95:7): we should send up prayers with strong faith and feeling, and praises with great joy and pleasure. The sense of his goodness would make us love him, and our love to him would quicken our adoration of him; but if we regard not this, we shall have no mind to think of him, no mind to act anything towards him; we may tremble at his presence, but not heartily worship him; we shall rather look upon him as a tyrant, and think no other affection due to him than what we reserve for an oppressor, viz. hatred and ill-will.

(2.) A sense of it will keep us humble. A sense of it would effect that for which itself was intended; viz. bring us to a repentance for our crimes, and not suffer us to harden ourselves against him. When we should deeply consider how he hath made the sun to shine upon us, and his rain to fall upon the earth for our support; the one to supple the earth, and the other to assist the juice of it to bring forth fruits; how would it reflect upon us our ill requitals, and make us hang down our heads before him in a low posture, pleasing to him, and advantageous to ourselves! What would the first charge be upon ourselves, but what Moses brings in his expostulation against the Israelites (Deuteronomy 32:6): “Do I thus requite the Lord?” What is this goodness for me, who am so much below him; for me, who have so much incensed him; for me, who have so much abused what he hath allowed? It would bring to remembrance the horror of our crimes, and set us a blushing before him, when we should consider the multitude of his benefits, and our unworthy behaviour, that hath not constrained him even against the inclination of his goodness, to punish us: how little should we plead for a further liberty in sin, or palliate our former faults! When we set Divine goodness in one column, and our transgressions in another, and compare together their several items, it would fill us with a deep consciousness of our own guilt, and divest us of any worth of our own in our approaches to him; it would humble us, that we cannot love so obliging a God as much as he deserves to be loved by us; it would make us humble before men. Who would be proud of a mere gift which he knows he hath not merited? How ridiculous would that servant be, that should be proud of a rich livery, which is a badge of his service, not a token of his merit, but of his master’s magnificence and bounty, which, though he wear this day, he may be stripped of to-morrow, and be turned out of his master’s family!

(3.) A sense of the Divine goodness would make us faithful to him. The goodness of God obligeth us to serve him, not to offend him; the freeness of his goodness should make us more ready to contribute to the advancement of his glory. When we consider the benefits of a friend proceed out of kindness to us, and not out of self ends and vain applause, it works more upon us, and makes

us more careful of the honor of such a person. It is a pure bounty God hath manifested in creation and providence, which could not be for himself, who, being blessed forever, wanted nothing from us: it was not to draw a profit from us, but to impart an advantage to us; "Our goodness extends not to him" (Psalms 16:2). The service of the benefactor is but a rational return for benefits; whence Nehemiah aggravates the sins of the Jews (Nehemiah 9:35): "They have not served thee in thy great goodness that thou gavest them;" i. e. which thou didst freely bestow upon them. How should we dare to spend upon our lusts that which we possess, if we considered by whose liberality we came by it? how should we dare to be unfaithful in the goods he hath made us trustees of? A deep sense of Divine goodness will ennoble the creature, and make it act for the most glorious and noble end; it would strike Satan's temptation dead at a blow; it would pull off the false mask and vizard from what he presents to us, to draw us from the service of our Benefactor; we could not, with a sense of this, think him kinder to us than God hath, and will be, which is the great motive of men to join hands with him, and turn their backs upon God.

(4.) A sense of the Divine goodness would make us patient under our miseries. A deep sense of this would make us give God the honor of his goodness in whatsoever he doth, though the reason of his actions be not apparent to us, nor the event and issue of his proceedings foreseen by us. It is a stated case, that goodness can never intend ill, but designs good in all its acts "to them that love God" (Romans 8:28): nay, he always designs the best; when he bestows anything upon his people, he sees it best they should have it; and when he removes anything from them, he sees it best they should lose it. When we have lost a thing we loved, and refuse to be comforted, a sense of this perfection, which acts God in all, would keep us from misjudging our sufferings, and measuring the intention of the hand that sent them, by the sharpness of what we feel. What patient, fully persuaded of the affection of the physician, would not value him, though that which is given to purge out the humors, racks his bowels? When we lose what we love, perhaps it was some outward lustre tickled our apprehensions, and we did not see the viper we would have harmed ourselves by; but God seeing it, snatched it from us, and we mutter as if he had been cruel, and deprived us of the good we imagined, when he was kind to us, and freed us from the hurt we should certainly have felt. We should regard that which in goodness he takes from us, at no other rate than some gilded poison and lurking venom; the sufferings of men, though upon high provocations, are often followed with rich mercies, and many times are intended as preparations for greater goodness. When God utters that rhetoric of his bowels, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, I will not execute the fierceness of my anger!" (Hosea 11:8), he intended them mercy in their captivity, and would prepare them by it, to walk after the Lord. And it is likely the posterity of those ten tribes were the first that ran to God, upon the publishing the gospel in the places where they lived; he doth not take away himself when he takes away outward comforts; while he snatcheth away the rattles we play with, he hath a breast in himself for us to suck. The consideration of his goodness would dispose us to a composed frame of spirit. If we are sick, it is goodness, it is a disease, and not a hell. It is goodness, that it is a cloud, and not a total darkness. What if he transfers from us what we have? he takes no more than what his goodness first imparted to us; and never takes so much from his people as his goodness leaves them if he strips them of their lives, he leaves them their souls, with those faculties he furnished them with at first, and removes them from those houses of clay to a richer mansion. The time of our sufferings here, were it the whole course of our life, bears not the proportion of a moment to that endless eternity wherein he hath designed to manifest his goodness to us. The consideration of Divine goodness

would teach us to draw a calm even from storms, and distil balsam from rods. If the reproofs of the righteous be an excellent oil (Psalms 145:5), we should not think the corrections of a good God to have a less virtue.

(5.) A sense of the Divine goodness would mount us above the world. It would damp our appetites after meaner things; we should look upon the world not as a God, but a gift from God, and never think the present better than the Donor. We should never be soaking in muddy puddles were we always filled with a sense of the richness and clearness of this Fountain, wherein we might hate ourselves; little petty particles of good would give us no content, when we were sensible of such an unbounded ocean. Infinite goodness, rightly apprehended, would dull our desires after other things, and sharpen them with a keener edge after that which is best of all. How earnestly do we long for the presence of a friend, of whose good will towards us we have full experience.

(6.) It would check any motions of envy: it would make us joy in the prosperity of good men, and hinder us from envying the outward felicity of the wicked. We should not dare with an evil eye to censure his good hand (Matthew 20:15), but approve of what he thinks fit to do, both in the matter of his liberality and the subjects he chooseth for it. Though if the disposal were in our hands, we should not imitate him, as not thinking them subjects fit for our bounty; yet since it is in his hands, we be to approve of his actions and not have an ill will towards him for his goodness, or towards those he is pleased to make the subject of it. Since all his doles are given to "invite man to repentance" (Romans 2:4), to envy them those goods God hath bestowed upon them, is to envy God the glory of his own goodness, and them the felicity those things might move them to aspire to; it is to wish God more contracted, and thy neighbor more miserable: but a deep sense of his sovereign goodness would make us rejoice in any marks of it upon others, and move us to bless him instead of censuring him.

(7.) It would make us thankful. What can be the most proper, the most natural reflection, when we behold the most magnificent characters he hath imprinted upon our souls; the conveniency of the members he hath compacted in our bodies, but a praise of him? Such motion had David upon the first consideration: "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:14). What could be the most natural reflection, when we behold the rich prerogatives of our natures above other creatures, the provision he hath made for us for our delight in the beauties of heaven, for our support in the creatures on earth? What can reasonably be expected from uncorrupted man, to be the first motion of his soul, but an extolling the bountiful hand of the invisible donor, whoever he be? This would make us venture at some endeavors of a grateful acknowledgment, though we should despair of rendering anything proportionable to the greatness of the benefit; and such an acknowledgment of our own weakness would be an acceptable part of our gratitude. Without a due and deep sense of Divine goodness, our praise of it, and thankfulness for it, will be but cold, formal, and customary; our tongues may bless him, and our heart slight him: and this will lead us to the third exhortation:

3. Which is that of thankfulness for Divine goodness. The absolute goodness of God, as it is the excellency of his nature, is the object of praise: the relative goodness of God, as he is our benefactor, is the object of thankfulness. This was always a debt due from man to God; he had obligations in the time of his integrity, and was then to render it; he is not less, but more obliged to it in the state of corruption; the benefits being the greater, by how much the more unworthy he is of

them by reason of his revolt. The bounty bestowed upon an enemy that merits the contrary, ought to be received with a greater resentment than that bestowed on a friend, who is not unworthy of testimonies of respect. Gratitude to God is the duty of every creature that hath a sense of itself; the more excellent being any enjoy the more devout ought to be the acknowledgment. How often doth David stir up, not only himself, but summon all creatures, even the insensible ones, to join in the concert! He calls to the “deeps, fire, hail, snow, mountains and hills,” to bear a part in this work of praise (Psalms 148:1-14); not that they are able to do it actively, but to show that man is to call in the whole creation to assist him passively, and should have so much charity to all creatures, as to receive what they offer, and so much affection to God, as to present to him what he receives from him. Snow and hail cannot bless and praise God, but man ought to praise God for those things wherein there is a mixture of trouble and inconvenience, something to molest our sense, as well as something that improves the earth for fruit. This God requires of us: for this he instituted several offerings, and required a little portion of fruits to be presented to him, as an acknowledgment they held the whole from his bounty. And the end of the festival days among the Jews was to revive the memory of those signal acts wherein his power for them, and his goodness to them, had been extraordinarily evident; it is no more but our mouths to praise him, and our hand to obey him, that he exacts at our hands. He commands us not to expend what he allows us in the erecting stately temples to his honor; all the coin he requires to be paid with for his expense is the “offering of thanksgiving” (Psalms 50:14): and this we ought to do as much as we can, since we cannot do it as much as he merits, for “who can show forth all his praise?” (Psalms 106:2.) If we have the fruit of his goodness, it is fit he should have the “fruit of our lips” (Hebrews 13:15): the least kindness should inflame our souls with a kindly resentment. Though some of his benefits have a brighter, some a darker, aspect towards us, yet they all come from this common spring; his goodness shines in all; there are the footsteps of goodness in the least, as well as the smiles of goodness in the greatest; the meanest therefore is not to pass without a regard of the Author. As the glory of God is more illustrious in some creatures than in others, yet it glitters in all, and the lowest as well as the highest administers matter of praise; but they are not only little things, but the choicer favors he has bestowed upon us. How much doth it deserve our acknowledgment, that he should contrive our recovery, when we had plotted our ruin! that when he did from eternity behold the crimes wherewith we would incense him, he should not, according to the rights of justice, cast us into hell, but prize us at the rate of the blood and life of his only Son, in value above the blood of men and lives of angels!

How should we bless that God, that we have yet a gospel among us, that we are not driven into the utmost regions, that we can attend upon him in the face of the sun, and not forced to the secret obscurities of the night! Whatsoever we enjoy, whatsoever we receive, we must own him as the Donor, and read his hand in it. Rob him not of any praise to give to an instrument. No man hath wherewithal to do us good, nor a heart to do us good, nor opportunities of benefitting us without him. When the cripple received the soundness of his limbs from Peter, he praised the hand that sent it, not the hand that brought it (Acts 3:6): he “praised God” (Acts 3:8). When we want anything that is good, let the goodness of Divine nature move us to David’s practice, to “thirst after God” (Psalms 42:1): and when we feel the motions of his goodness to us, let us imitate the temper of the same holy man (Psalms 103:2): “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” It is an unworthy carriage to deal with him as a traveller doth with a fountain, kneel down to drink of it when he is thirsty, and turn his back upon it, and perhaps never think of it more after he is

satisfied.

4. And, lastly, Imitate this goodness of God. If his goodness hath such an influence upon us as to make us love him, it will also move us with an ardent zeal to imitate him in it. Christ makes this use from the doctrine of Divine goodness (Matthew 5:44-45): "Do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." As holiness is a resemblance of God's purity, so charity is a resemblance of God's goodness; and this our Saviour calls perfection (Matthew 5:48): "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect." As God would not be a perfect God without goodness, so neither can any be a perfect Christian without kindness; charity and love being the splendor and loveliness of all Christian graces, as goodness is the splendor and loveliness of all Divine attributes. This and holiness are ordered in the Scripture to be the grand patterns of our imitation. Imitate the goodness of God in two things.

(1.) In relieving and assisting others in distress. Let our heart be as large in the capacity of creatures, as God's is in the capacity of a Creator. A large heart from him to us, and a strait heart from us to others, will not suit: let us not think any so far below us as to be unworthy of our care, since God thinks none that are infinitely distant from him too mean for his. His infinite glory mounts him above the creature, but his infinite goodness stoops him to the meanest works of his hands. As he lets not the transgressions of prosperity pass without punishment, so he lets not the distress of his afflicted people pass him without support. Shall God provide for the ease of beasts, and shall not we have some tenderness towards those that are of the same blood with ourselves, and have as good blood to boast of as runs in the veins of the mightiest monarch on earth; and as mean, and as little as they are, can lay claim to as ancient a pedigree as the stateliest prince in the world, who cannot ascend to ancestors beyond Adam? Shall we glut ourselves with Divine beneficence to us, and wear his livery only on our own backs, forgetting the afflictions of some dear Joseph; when God, who hath an unblemished felicity in his own nature, looks out of himself to view and relieve the miseries of poor creatures? Why hath God increased the doles of his treasures to some more than others? Was it merely for themselves, or rather that they might have a bottom to attain the honor of imitating him? Shall we embezzle his goods to our own use, as if we were absolute proprietors, and not stewards entrusted for others? Shall we make a difficulty to part with something to others, out of that abundance he hath bestowed upon any of us? Did not his goodness strip his Son of the glory of heaven for a time to enrich us? and shall we shrug when we are to part with a little to pleasure him? It is not very becoming for any to be backward in supplying the necessities of others with a few morsels, who have had the happiness to have had their greatest necessities supplied with his Son's blood. He demands not that we should strip ourselves of all for others, but of a pittance, something of superfluity, which will turn more to our account than what is vainly and unprofitably consumed on our backs and bellies. If he hath given much to any of us, it is rather to lay aside part of the income for his service; else we would monopolize Divine goodness to ourselves, and seem to distrust under our present experiments his future kindness, as though the last thing he gave us was attended with this language, Hoard up this, and expect no more from me; use it only to the glutting your avarice, and feeding your ambition: which would be against the whole scope of Divine goodness. If we do not endeavor to write after the comely copy he hath set us, we may provoke him to harden himself against us, and in wrath bestow that on the fire, or on our enemies, which his goodness hath imparted to us for his glory, and the supplying the

necessities of poor creatures. And, on the contrary, he is so delighted with this kind of imitation of him, that a cup of cold water, when there is no more to be done, shall not be unrewarded.

(2.) Imitate God in his goodness, in a kindness to our worst enemies. The best man is more unworthy to receive anything from God than the worst can be to receive from us. How kind is God to those that blaspheme him, and gives them the same sun, and the same showers, that he doth to the best men in the world! Is it not more our glory to imitate God in "doing good to those that hate us," than to imitate the men of the world in requiting evil, by a return of a sevenfold mischief? This would be a goodness which would vanquish the hearts of men, and render us greater than Alexanders and Cæsars, who did only triumph over miserable carcasses; yea, it is to triumph over ourselves in being good against the sentiments of corrupt nature. Revenge makes us slaves to our passions, as much as the offenders, and good returns render us victorious over our adversaries (Romans 12:21): "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." When we took up our arms against God, his goodness contrived not our ruin, but our recovery: This is such a goodness of God as could not be discovered in an innocent state; while man had continued in his duty, he could not have been guilty of an enmity; and God could not but affect him, unless he had denied himself: so this of being good to our enemies could never have been practised in a state of rectitude; since, where was a perfect innocence, there could be no spark of enmity to one another. It can be no disparagement to any man's dignity to cast his influences on his greatest opposers, since God, who acts for his own glory, thinks not himself disparaged by sending forth the streams of his bounty on the wickedest persons, who are far meaner to him than those of the same blood can be to us. Who hath the worse thoughts of the sun, for shining upon the earth, that sends up vapors to cloud it? it can be no disgrace to resemble God; if his hand and bowels be open to us, let not ours be shut to any.

On The Holiness of God

ON THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Exodus 15:11.—Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? This verse is one of the loftiest descriptions of the majesty and excellency of God in the whole Scripture. [Note: Trap. in loc.] It is a part of Moses' Επινικιον, or "triumphant song," after a great and real, and a typical victory; in the womb of which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the first song upon holy record, and it consists of gratulatory and prophetic matter; it casts a look backward to what God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and a look forward to what God shall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of something more excellent to be wrought towards the closing up of the world; when his plagues shall be poured out upon the anti-christian powers, which should revive the same song of Moses in the church, as fitted so many ages before for such a scene of affairs (Revelation 15:2-3). It is observed, therefore, that many words in this song are put in the future tense, noting a time to come; and the very first word, ver. 1, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song;" ■■■■■, shall sing; implying, that it was composed and calculated for the celebrating some greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world. [Note: Manass. ben Israel, de Resurr. lib. 1, cap. 1, p. 7.] Upon this account, some of the Jewish rabbins, from the consideration of this remark, asserted the doctrine of the resurrection to be meant in this place; that Moses and those Israelites should rise again to sing the same song, for some greater miracles God should work, and greater triumphs he should bring forth, exceeding those wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

It consists of, 1. A preface (ver. 1); "I will sing unto the Lord." [Note: Pareus in Exodus 15:1-27.] 2. An historical narration of matter of fact (Exodus 15:3-4), "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the Red Sea;" which he solely ascribes to God (Exodus 15:6), "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy;" which he doth prophetically, as respecting something to be done in after-times; or further for the completing of that deliverance; or, as others think, respecting their entering into Canaan; for the words, in these two verses, are put in the future tense. The manner of the deliverance is described (Exodus 15:8); "The floods stood up right as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." In Exodus 15:9, he magnifies the victory from the vain glory and security of the enemy; "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," &c. And Exodus 15:16-17, He prophetically describes the fruit of this victory, in the influence it shall have upon those nations, by whose confines they were to travel to the promised land; "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased." The phrase of this and the 17th and 18th verses, seems to be more magnificent than to design only the bringing the Israelites to the earthly Canaan; but seems to respect the gathering his redeemed ones together, to place them in the spiritual sanctuary' which he had established, wherein the Lord should reign forever and ever, without any enemies to disturb his royalty; "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:18). The prophet, in the midst of his historical

narrative, seems to be in an ecstasy, and breaks out in a stately exaltation of God in the text. Who is thee unto thee, O Lard, among the gods? &c. Interrogations are, in Scripture, the strongest affirmations or negations; it is here a strong affirmation of the incomparableness of God, and a strong denial of the worthiness of all creatures to be partners with him in the degrees of his excellency; it is a preference of God before all creatures in holiness, to which the purity of creatures is but a shadow in desert of reverence and veneration, he being “fearful in praises.” The angels cover their faces when they adore him in his particular perfections.

Amongst the gods. Among the idols of the nations, say some; others say, [Note: Rivet.] it is not to be found that the Heathen idols are ever dignified with the title of “strong or mighty,” as the word translated gods, doth import; and therefore understand it of the angels, or other potentates of the world; or rather inclusively, of all that are noted for, or can lay claim to, the title of strength and might upon the earth or in heaven. God is so great and majestic, that no creature can share with him in his praise.

Fearful in praises. Various are the interpretations of this passage to be “reverenced in praises;” his praise ought to be celebrated with a religious fear. Fear is the product of his mercy as well as his justice; “He hath forgiveness that he may be feared” (Psalms 130:4). Or, “fearful in praises;” whom none can praise without amazement at the considerations of his works. None can truly praise him without being affected with astonishment at his greatness. [Note: Calvin.] Or, “fearful in praises;” whom no mortal can sufficiently praise, since he is above all praise. [Note: Munster.] Whatsoever a human tongue can speak, or an angelical understanding think of the excellency of his nature and the greatness of his works, falls short of the vastness of the Divine perfection. A creature’s praises of God are as much below the transcendent eminency of God, as the meanness of a creature’s being is below the eternal fulness of the Creator. Or, rather, “fearful,” or terrible, “in praises;” that is, in the matter of thy praise: and the learned Rivet concurs with me in this sense. The works of God, celebrated in this song, were terrible; it was the miraculous overthrow of the strength and flower of a mighty nation; his judgments were severe, as well as his mercy was seasonable. The word ■■■■ signifies glorious and illustrious, as well as terrible and fearful. No man can hear the praise of thy name, for those great judicial acts, without some astonishment at thy justice, the stream, and thy holiness, the spring of those mighty works. This seems to be the sense of the following words, “doing wonders:” fearful in the matter of thy praise; they being wonders which thou hast done among us and for us.

Doing wonders. Congealing the waters by a wind, to make them stand like walls for the rescue of the Israelites; and melting them by a wind, for the overthrow of the Egyptians, are prodigies that challenge the greatest adorations of that mercy which delivered the one, and that justice which punished the other; and of the arm of that power whereby he effected both his gracious and righteous purposes.

Whence observe, that the judgments of God upon his enemies, as well as his mercies to his people, are matters of praise. The perfections of God appear in both. Justice and mercy are so linked together in his acts of providence, that the one cannot be forgotten whilst the other is acknowledged. He is never so terrible as in the assemblies of his saints, and the deliverance of them (Psalms 89:7). As the creation was erected by him for his glory; so all the acts of his government are designed for the same end: and his creatures deny him his due, if they

acknowledge not his excellency in whatsoever dreadful, as well as pleasing garbs, it appears in the world. His terror as well as his righteousness appears, when he is a God of salvation (Psalms 65:5). "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." But the expression I pitch upon in the text to handle, is glorious in holiness. He is magnified or honorable in holiness; so the word **ἁγίος** is translated (Isaiah 42:21). "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Thy holiness hath shone forth admirably in this last exploit, against the enemies and oppressors of thy people. The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches: holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure. This is the blessedness and nobleness of his nature; it renders him glorious in himself, and glorious to his creatures, that understand any thing of this lovely perfection. Holiness is a glorious perfection belonging to the nature of God. Hence he is in Scripture styled often the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel; and oftener entitled Holy, than Almighty, and set forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other: you never find it expressed, His mighty name, or his His wise name; but His great name, and most of all, His holy name. This is his greatest title of honor; in this doth the majesty and venerableness of his name appear. When the sinfulness of Sennacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghost takes the rise from this attribute (2 Kings 19:22). "Thou hast lift up thine eyes on high, even against the Holy One of Israel;" not against the wise, mighty, &c., but against the Holy One of Israel, as that wherein the majesty of God was most illustrious. It is upon this account he is called light, as impurity is called darkness; both in this sense are opposed to one another: he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.

1. Heathens have owned it. Proclus calls him, the undefiled Governor of the world. [Note: Ἀχραντος **ἁγίος**] The poetical transformations of their false gods, and the extravagancies committed by them, was—in the account of the wisest of them—an unholy thing to report and hear. [Note: οὐδὲν **κακοῦ** εἶναι **ἁγίου**. Ammon. in Plut. de 'Ei apud Delphos, p. 393.] And some vindicate Epicurus from the atheism wherewith he was commonly charged; that he did not deny the being of God, but those adulterous and contentious deities the people worshipped, which were practices unworthy and unbecoming the nature of God. [Note: Gassend. Tom. I. Phys. § 1, lib. 4, cap. 2, p. 289.] Hence they asserted, that virtue was an imitation of God, and a virtuous man bore a resemblance to God: if virtue were a copy from God, a greater holiness must be owned in the original. And when some of them were at a loss how to free God from being the author of sin in the world, they ascribe the birth of sin to matter, and run into an absurd opinion, fancying it to be uncreated, that thereby they might exempt God from all mixture of evil; so sacred with them was the conception of God, as a Holy God.

2. The absurdest heretics have owned it. The Maniches and Marchionites, that thought evil came by necessity, yet would salve God's being the author of it, by asserting two distinct eternal principles, one the original of evil, as God was the fountain of good: so rooted was the notion of this Divine purity, that none would ever slander goodness itself with that which was so disparaging to it. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. I. lib. 6, cap. 5, p. 415.]

3. The nature of God cannot rationally be conceived without it. Though the power of God be the first rational conclusion, drawn from the sight of his works, wisdom the next, from the order and connexion of his works, purity must result from the beauty of his works: that God cannot be deformed by evil, who hath made every thing so beautiful in its time. The notion of a God cannot

be entertained without separating from him whatsoever is impure and bespotting both in his essence and actions. Though we conceive him infinite in Majesty, infinite in essence, eternal in duration, mighty in power, and wise and immutable in his counsels; merciful in his proceedings with men, and whatsoever other perfections may dignify so sovereign a Being, yet if we conceive him destitute of this excellent perfection, and imagine him possessed with the least contagion of evil, we make him but an infinite monster, and sully all those perfections we ascribed to him before; we rather own him a devil than a God. It is a contradiction to be God and to be darkness, or to have one mote of darkness mixed with his light. It is a less injury to him to deny his being, than to deny the purity of it; the one makes him no god, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable god. Plutarch said not amiss, That he should count himself less injured by that man, that should deny that there was such a man as Plutarch, than by him that should affirm that there was such a one indeed, but he was a debauched fellow, a loose and vicious person. It is a less wrong to God to discard any acknowledgments of his being, and to count him nothing, than to believe him to exist, but imagine a base and unholy Deity. he that with, God is not holy, speaks much worse than he that saith, There is no God at all. Let these two things be considered.

I. If any, this attribute hath an excellency above his other perfections. There are some attributes of God we prefer, because of our interest in them, and the relation they bear to us: as we esteem his goodness before his power, and his mercy whereby he relieves us, before his justice whereby he punisheth us; as there are some we more delight in, because of the goodness we receive by them; so there are some that God delights to honor, because of their excellency.

1. None is sounded out so, loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it, as this (Isaiah 6:3)? "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of is glory;" and (Revelation 4:8), "The four beasts rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," &c. His power or sovereignty, as Lord of hosts, is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear, in any angelical song, any other perfection of the Divine Nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out Eternal, eternal, eternal; or, Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of Hosts? Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven.

2. He singles it out to swear by (Psalms 89:35); "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David:" and (Amos 4:2), "The Lord will swear by his holiness:" he twice swears by his holiness; once by his power (Isaiah 62:8); once by all, when he swears by his name (Jeremiah 44:26). He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it in this concern of an everlasting redemption which is there spoken of: he that swears, swears by a greater than himself; God having no greater than himself, swears by himself: and swearing here by his holiness, seems to equal that single one to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honor of it, than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by, than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.

3. It is his glory and beauty. Holiness is the honor of the creature; sanctification and honor are linked together (1 Thessalonians 4:4); much more is it the honor of God; it is the image of God in the creature (Ephesians 4:24). When we take the picture of a man, we draw the most beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greatest excellency. When God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the spirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the most beautiful perfection of God, and most valuable with him. Power is his hand and arm; omniscience, his eye; mercy, his bowels; eternity, his duration; his holiness is his beauty (2 Chronicles 20:21);—"should praise the beauty of holiness." In Psalms 27:4, David desires "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his holy temple;" that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple (Isaiah 46:11); holy and beautiful house are joined together; much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the sanctuary. This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. A heathen philosopher could call it the beauty of the Divine essence, and say, that God was not so happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue. [Note: Plutarch Eugubin. de Perenni Phil. lib. 6, cap. 6.] And the angels' song intimate it to be his glory (Isaiah 6:3); "The whole earth is full of thy glory;" that is, of his holiness in his laws, and in his judgments against sin, that being the attribute applauded by them before.

4. It is his very life. So it is called (Ephesians 4:18), "Alienated from the life of God," that is, from the holiness of God: speaking of the opposite to it, the uncleanness and profaneness of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection always set out as the pattern of our actions, "Be ye holy, as I am holy;" no other is proposed as our copy; alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were stripped of this, he would be a dead God, more than by the want of any other perfection. His swearing by it intimates as much; he swears often by his own life; "As I live, saith the Lord:" so he swears by his holiness, as if it were his life, and more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His Deity could not outlive the life of his purity.

II. As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest. As it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead. As his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them. As all would be weak, without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honor and their comfortable efficacy: as, at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendor of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice; his wisdom a holy wisdom; his arm of power a holy arm (Psalms 98:1); his truth or promise a holy promise (Psalms 105:42). Holy and true go hand in hand (Revelation 6:10). His name, which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, is holy (Psalms 103:1); yea, he is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalms 145:17): it is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtilty. It is this gives a decorum to all. His mercy is not exercised without it, since he pardons none but those that have an interest, by union, in the

obedience of a Mediator, which was so delightful to his infinite purity. His justice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exercise of it, is not acted out of the compass of this rule. In acts of man's vindictive justice there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the severest acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel, in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, "from his loins downward" there was "the appearance of fire;" but, from the loins upward, "the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber" (Ezekiel 8:2). His heart is clear in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame, wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies: he is holy in the most fiery appearance. This attribute, therefore, is never so much applauded, as when his sword hath been drawn, and he hath manifested the greatest fierceness against his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expression of it in the text, follows just upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army: "The sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters:" then it follows, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?" And when it was so celebrated by the seraphims (Isaiah 6:3), it was when the "posts moved, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:4), which are signs of anger (Psalms 18:7-8). And when he was about to send Isaiah upon a message of spiritual and temporal judgments, that he would make the "heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut; waste their cities without inhabitant, and their houses without man, and make the land desolate" (Psalms 18:9-12): and the angels which here applaud him for his holiness, are the executioners of his justice, and here called seraphims, from burning or fiery spirits, as being the ministers of his wrath. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he doth reduce into order those things that are out of order. When he is consuming men by his fury, he doth not diminish, but manifest purity (Zephaniah 3:5); "The just Lord is in the midst of her; he will do no iniquity." Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is also celebrated with praise, by the four beasts about his throne, when he appears in a covenant garb with a rainbow about his throne, and yet with thunderings and lightnings shot against his enemies (Revelation 4:8, compared with Revelation 4:3, Revelation 4:5), to show that all his acts of mercy, as well as justice, are clear from any stain. This is the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions: nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him, but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honor, of this attribute.

I. The nature of Divine holiness in general. The holiness of God negatively, is a perfect and unpolluted freedom from all evil. As we call gold pure that is not embased by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot, so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion. Positively, It is the rectitude or integrity of the Divine nature, or that conformity of it, in affection and action, to the Divine will, as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingness to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in everything agreeable to his will, and an abhorrency of everything contrary thereunto. As there is no darkness in his understanding, so there is no spot in his will: as his mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodness; he hates all falsity and evil. In regard of his righteousness, he loves righteousness (Psalms 11:7); "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and "hath no pleasure in wickedness" (Psalms 5:4). He values purity in his creatures, and detests all impurity, whether inward or outward. We may, indeed, distinguish the holiness of God from his righteousness in our conceptions: holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection, as referred to others, in his actions towards them and upon them. [Note: Martin. de Deo, p. 86.] In particular, this property of the

Divine nature Isaiah 1:1-31. An essential and necessary perfection: he is essentially and necessarily holy. It is the essential glory of his nature: his holiness is as necessary as his being; as necessary as his omniscience: as he cannot but know what is right, so he cannot but do what is just. His understanding is not as created understanding, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; so his will is not as created wills, capable of unrighteousness, as well as righteousness. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the Divine nature, to know what is right, and to do what is wrong; if so, there would be a diminution of his blessedness, he would not be a God alway blessed, "blessed forever," as he is (Romans 9:5). He is as necessarily holy, as he is necessarily God; as necessarily without sin, as without change. As he was God from eternity, so he was holy from eternity. he was gracious, merciful, just in his own nature, and also holy; though no creature had been framed by him to exercise his grace, mercy, justice, or holiness upon. [Note: Turretin. de Satisfact. p. 28.] If God had not created a world, he had, in his own nature, been Almighty, and able to create a world. If there never had been anything but himself, yet he had been omniscient, knowing everything that was within the verge and compass of his infinite power; so he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifest this purity. These perfections are so necessary, that the nature of God could not subsist without them. And the acts of those, ad intra, or within himself, are necessary; for being omniscient in nature, there must be an act of knowledge of himself and his own nature. Being infinitely holy, an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself, must necessarily flow from this perfection. [Note: Ochino, Predic. Part III. Bodic. 51, pp. 347, 348.] As the Divine will cannot but be perfect, so it cannot be wanting to render the highest love to itself, to its goodness, to the Divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed, the acts of those, ad extra, are not necessary, but upon a condition. To love righteousness, without himself, or to detect sin, or inflict punishment for the committing of it, could not have been, had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no sinning creature for him to loathe, and to exercise his justice upon, as the object of punishment. Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them necessary; as it is at God's liberty, whether he will create a rational creature, or no; but when he decrees to make either angel or man, it is necessary, from the perfection of his nature, to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will speak to man, or no; but if he doth, it is impossible for him to speak that which is false, because of his infinite perfection of veracity. It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to sin; but if he sees good to suffer it, it is impossible, but that he should detest that creature that goes cross to his righteous nature. His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy; he might love iniquity and hate righteousness; he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy; for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the positive law he gave to Adam, of not eating the forbidden fruit, was a pure act of his will, he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleased, as well as prohibited him. But what is moral and good in its own nature, is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendent eminency of his nature, and righteousness of his will. As it is impossible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to dispense with a creature for not loving him,—for this would be to command a thing intrinsically evil, the highest ingratitude, the very spirit of all wickedness, which consists in the hating God,—yet, though God be thus necessarily holy, he is not so by a bare and simple necessity, as the sun shines, or the fire burns; but by a free necessity, not compelled thereunto, but inclined from the fulness of the perfection of his own nature and will;

so as by no means he can be unholy, because he will not be unholy; it is against his nature to be so.

2. God is only absolutely holy; "There is none holy as the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:2); it is the peculiar glory of his nature; as there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy, because mutable; holiness is the substance of God, but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself, creatures are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holiness; holiness in the highest degree, is his sole prerogative. As the highest heaven is called the heaven of heavens, because it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and hath a greater vastness above all that it encloseth, so is God the Holy of holies; he contains the holiness of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wisdom, excellency, and power of the creatures if compared with the wisdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileness, and weakness; so the highest created purity, if set in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanness (Revelation 15:4): "Thou only art holy" It is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun (Job 13:15); "The heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels he charged with folly" (Job 4:18). Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory, yet, as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God; their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence. It is but a weak shadow of that Divine purity, whose light is so glorious, that it makes them cover their faces out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame in themselves. They are not pure in his sight, because, though they love God (which is a principle of holiness) as much as they can, yet, not so much as he deserves; they love him with the intensest degree, according to their power; but not with the intensest degree, according to his own amiableness; for they cannot infinitely love God, unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge. God, having an infinite knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and, consequently, an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can. Therefore, though the angels be exempt from corruption and soil, they cannot enter into comparison with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimness in themselves. Besides, he charges them with folly, and puts no trust in them; because they have the power of sinning, though not the act of sinning; they have a possible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holiness is a quality separable from them, but it is inseparable from God. Had they not at first a mutability in their nature, none of them could have sinned, there had been no devils; but because some of them sinned, the rest might have sinned. And though the standing angels shall never be changed, yet they are still changeable in their own nature, and their standing is due to grace, not to nature; and though they shall be for ever preserved, yet they are not, nor ever can be, immutable by nature, for then they should stand upon the same bottom with God himself; but they are supported by grace against that changeableness of nature which is essential to a creature; the Creator only hath immortality, that is, immutability (1 Timothy 3:16). It is as certain a truth, that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create any anything actually polluted and imperfect. It is as possible that the highest creature may sin, as it is possible that it may be annihilated; it may become not holy, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holiness of a creature may be reduced into nothing, as well as his substance; but the holiness of the Creator cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed (James 1:17): "He is the Father of

lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning." It is as impossible his holiness should be blotted, as that his Deity should be extinguished: for whatsoever creature hath essentially such or such qualities, cannot be stripped of them, without being turned out of its essence. As a man is essentially rational; and if he ceaseth to be rational, he ceaseth to be man. The sun is essentially luminous; if it should become dark in its own body, it would cease to be the sun. In regard to this absolute and only holiness of God, it is thrice repeated by the seraphims (Isaiah 6:3). The three-fold repetition of a word notes the certainty or absoluteness of the thing, or the irreversibleness of the resolve; as (Ezekiel 21:27), "I will overturn, overturn, overturn," notes the certainty of the judgment; also, (Revelation 8:8), "Woe, woe, woe;" three times repeated, signifies the same. The holiness of God is so absolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be expressed in creatures, than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniscience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himself:

3. God is so holy, that he cannot possibly approve of any evil done by another, but doth perfectly abhor it; it would not else be a glorious holiness (Psalms 5:3). "He hath no pleasure in wickedness." He doth not only love that which is just, but abhor, with a perfect hatred, all things contrary to the rule of righteousness. Holiness can no more approve of sin than it can commit it: to be delighted with the evil in another's act, contracts a guilt, as well as the commission of it; for approbation of a thing is a consent to it. Sometimes the approbation of an evil in another is a more grievous crime than the act itself, as appears in Romans 1:32, who knowing the judgment of God, "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do it;" where the "not only" manifests it to be a greater guilt to take pleasure in them. Every sin is aggravated by the delight in it; to take pleasure in the evil of another's action, shows a more ardent affection and love to sin, than the committer himself may have. This, therefore, can as little fall upon God, as to do an evil act himself; yet, as a man may be delighted with the consequences of another's sin, as it may occasion some public good, or private good to the guilty person, as sometimes it may be an occasion of his repentance, when the horridness of a fact stares him in the face, and occasions a self-reflection for that, and other crimes, which is attended with an indignation against them, and sincere remorse for them; so God is pleased with those good things his goodness and wisdom bring forth upon the occasion of sin. But in regard of his holiness, he cannot approve of the evil, whence his infinite wisdom drew forth his own glory, and his creature's good. His pleasure is not in the sinful act of the creature, but in the act of his own goodness and skill, turning it to another end than what the creature aimed at.

(1.) He abhors it necessarily. Holiness is the glory of the Deity, therefore necessary. The nature of God is so holy, that he cannot but hate it (Habakkuk 1:13): "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:" he is more opposite to it than light to darkness, and, therefore, it can expect no countenance from him. A love of holiness cannot be without a hatred of everything that is contrary to it. As God necessarily loves himself, so he must necessarily hate everything that is against himself: and as he loves himself for his own excellency and holiness, he must necessarily detest whatsoever is repugnant to his holiness, because of the evil of it. Since he is infinitely good, he cannot but love goodness, as it is a resemblance to himself, and cannot but abhor unrighteousness, as being most distant from him, and contrary to him. If he have any esteem for his own perfections, he must needs have an implacable aversion to all that is so repugnant to him, that would, if it were possible, destroy him, and is a point directed, not only

against his glory, but against his life. If he did not hate it, he would hate himself: for since righteousness is his image, and sin would deface his image; if he did not love his image, and loathe what is against his image, he would loathe himself, he would be an enemy to his own nature. Nay, if it were possible for him to love it, it were possible for him not to be holy, it were possible then for him to deny himself, and will that he were no God, which is a palpable contradiction. [Note: Turretin. de Satisfact. pp. 35, 36.] Yet this necessity in God of hating sin, is not a brutish necessity, such as is in mere animals, that avoid, by a natural instinct, not of choice, what is prejudicial to them; but most free, as well as necessary, arising from an infinite knowledge of his own nature, and of the evil nature of sin, and the contrariety of it to his own excellency, and the order of his works.

(2.) Therefore intensely. Nothing do men act for more than their glory. As he doth infinitely, and therefore perfectly know himself, so he infinitely, and therefore perfectly knows what is contrary to himself, and, as according to the manner and measure of his knowledge of himself, is his love to himself, as infinite as his knowledge, and therefore inexpressible and unconceivable by us: so, from the perfection of his knowledge of the evil of sin, which is infinitely above what any creature can have, doth arise a displeasure against it suitable to that knowledge. In creatures the degrees of affection to, or aversion from a thing, are suited to the strength of their apprehensions of the good or evil in them. God knows not only the workers of wickedness, but the wickedness of their works (Job 11:11), for “he knows vain men, he sees wickedness also.” The vehemency of this hatred is expressed variously in Scripture; he loathes it so, that he is impatient of beholding it; the very sight of it affects him with detestation (Habakkuk 1:13); he hates the first spark of it in the imagination (Zechariah 8:17); with what variety of expressions doth he repeat his indignation at their polluted services (Amos 5:21-22); “I hate, I detest, I despise, I will not smell, I will not regard; take away from me the noise of thy songs, I will not hear.” So, (Isaiah 1:14), “My soul hates, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.” It is the abominable thing that he hates (Jeremiah 44:4); he is vexed and fretted at it (Isaiah 63:10; Ezekiel 16:33). He abhors it so, that his hatred redounds upon the person that commits it. (Psalms 5:5), “He hates all workers of iniquity.” Sin is the only primary object of his displeasure: he is not displeased with the nature of man as man, for that was derived from him; but with the nature of man as sinful, which is from the sinner himself. When a man hath but one object for the exercise of all his anger, it is stronger than when diverted to many objects: a mighty torrent, when diverted into many streams, is weaker than when it comes in a full body upon one place only. The infinite anger and hatred of God, which is as infinite as his love and mercy, has no other object, against which he directs the mighty force of it, but only unrighteousness. He hates no person for all the penal evils upon him, though they were more by ten thousand times than Job was struck with, but only for his sin. Again, sin being only evil, and an unmixed evil, there is nothing in it that can abate the detestation of God, or balance his hatred of it; there is not the least grain of goodness in it, to incline him to the least affection to any part of it. This hatred cannot but be intense; for as the more any creature is sanctified, the more is he advanced in the abhorrence of that which is contrary to holiness; therefore, God being the highest, most absolute and infinite holiness, doth infinitely, and therefore intensely, hate unholiness; being infinitely righteous, doth infinitely abhor unrighteousness; being infinitely true, doth infinitely abhor falsity, as it is the greatest and most deformed evil. As it is from the righteousness of his nature that he hath a content and satisfaction in righteousness (Psalms 11:7), “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;” so it is from the same righteousness of his nature, that he detests whatsoever is

morally evil: as his nature therefore is infinite, so must his abhorrence be.

(3.) Therefore universally, because necessarily and intensely. He doth not hate it in one, and indulge it in another, but loathes it wherever he finds it; not one worker of iniquity is exempt from it (Psalms 5:5): "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." For it is not sin, as in this or that person, or as great or little; but sin, as sin is the object of his hatred; and, therefore, let the person be never so great, and have particular characters of his image upon him, it secures him not from God's hatred of any evil action he shall commit. He is a jealous God, jealous of his glory (Exodus 20:5); a metaphor, taken from jealous husbands, who will not endure the least adultery in their wives, nor God the least defection of man from his law. Every act of sin is a spiritual adultery, denying God to be the chief good, and giving that prerogative by that act to some vile thing. He loves it no more in his own people than he doth in his enemies; he frees them not from his rod, the testimony of his loathing their crimes: whosoever sows iniquity, shall reap affliction. It might be thought that he affected their dross, if he did not refine them, and loved their filth, if he did not cleanse them; because of his detestation of their sin, he will not spare them from the furnace, though because of love to their persons in Christ, he will exempt them from Tophet. How did the sword ever and anon drop down upon David's family, after his unworthy dealing in Uriah's case, and cut off ever and anon some of the branches of it? He doth sometimes punish it more severely in this life in his own people, than in others. Upon Jonah's disobedience a storm pursues him, and a whale devours him, while the profane world lived in their lusts without control. Moses, for one act of unbelief, is excluded from Canaan, when greater sinners attained that happiness. It is not a light punishment, but a vengeance he takes on their inventions (Psalms 99:8), to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him; but when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain (2 Samuel 6:7). Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz. the death of Christ (Matthew 16:23). He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers. God's hatred is universally fixed against sin, and he hates it as much in those whose persons shall not fall under his eternal anger, as being secured in the arms of a Redeemer, by whom the guilt is wiped off, and the filth shall be totally washed away: though he hates their sin, and cannot but hate it, yet he loves their persons, as being united as members to the Mediator and mystical Head. A man may love a gangrened member, because it is a member of his own body, or a member of a dear relation, but he loathes the gangrene in it more than in those wherein he is not so much concerned. Though God's hatred of believers' persons is removed by faith in the satisfactory death of Jesus Christ, yet his antipathy against sin was not taken away by that blood; nay, it was impossible it should. It was never designed, nor had it any capacity to alter the unchangeable nature of God, but to manifest the unspottedness of his will, and his eternal aversion to anything that was contrary to the purity of his Being, and the righteousness of his laws.

(4.) Perpetually: this must necessarily follow upon the others. He can no more cease to hate impurity than he can cease to love holiness: if he should in the least instant approve of anything that is filthy, in that moment he would disapprove of his own nature and being; there would be an interruption in his love of himself, which is as eternal as it is infinite. How can he love any sin which is contrary to his nature, but for one moment, without hating his own nature, which is essentially contrary to sin? Two contraries cannot be loved at the same time; God must first begin to hate himself before he can approve of any evil which is directly opposite to himself. We, indeed, are changed with a temptation, sometimes bear an affection to it, and sometimes testify an indignation against it; but God is always the same without any shadow of change, and "is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalms 7:11), that is, uninterruptedly in the nature of his anger, though not in the effects of it. God indeed may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin; for then he should renounce himself, deny his own essence and his own divinity, if his inclinations to the love of goodness, and his aversion from evil, could be changed, if he suffered the contempt of the one, and encouraged the practice of the other.

4. God is so holy, that he cannot but love holiness in others. Not that he owes anything to his creature, but from the unspeakable holiness of his nature, whence affections to all things that bear a resemblance of him do flow; as light shoots out from the sun, or any glittering body: it is essential to the infinite righteousness of his nature to love righteousness wherever he beholds it (Psalms 11:7): "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." He cannot, because of his nature, but love that which bears some agreement with his nature, that which is the curious draught of his own wisdom and purity: he cannot but be delighted with a copy of himself: he would not have a holy nature, if he did not love holiness in every nature: his own nature would be denied by him, if he did not affect everything that had a stamp of his own nature upon it. There was indeed nothing without God, that could invite him to manifest such goodness to man, as he did in creation: but after he had stamped that rational nature with a righteousness convenient for it, it was impossible but that he should ardently love that impression of himself, because he loves his own Deity, and consequently all things which are any sparks and images of it: and were the devils capable of an act of righteousness, the holiness of his nature would incline him to love it, even in those dark and revolted spirits.

5. God is so holy, that he cannot positively will or encourage sin in any. How can he give any encouragement to that which he cannot in the least approve of, or look upon without loathing, not only the crime, but the criminal? Light may sooner be the cause of darkness than holiness itself be the cause of unholiness, absolutely contrary to it: it is a contradiction, that he that is the Fountain of good should be the source of evil; as if the same fountain should bubble up both sweet and bitter streams, salt and fresh (James 3:11); since whatsoever good is in man acknowledges God for its author, it follows that men are evil by their own fault. There is no need for men to be incited to that to which the corruption of their own nature doth so powerfully bend them. Water hath a forcible principle in its own nature to carry it downward; it needs no force to hasten the motion: "God tempts no man, but every man is drawn away by his own lust" (James 1:13-14). All the preparations for glory are from God (Romans 9:23); but men are said to "be fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22); but God is not said to fit them; they, by their iniquities, fit themselves for ruin, and he, by his long-suffering, keeps the destruction from them for awhile.

(1.) God cannot command any unrighteousness. As all virtue is summed up in a love to God, so all iniquity is summed up in an enmity to God: every wicked work declares a man an enemy to God (Colossians 1:21): “enemies in your minds by wicked works.” If he could command his creature anything which bears an enmity in its nature to himself, he would then implicitly command the hatred of himself, and he would be, in some measure, a hater of himself: he that commands another to deprive him of his life, cannot be said to bear any love to his own life. God can never hate himself, and therefore cannot command anything that is hateful to him and tends to a hating of him, and driving the creature further from him; in that very moment that God should command such a thing, he would cease to be good. What can be more absurd to imagine, than that Infinite Goodness should enjoin a thing contrary to itself, and contrary to the essential duty of a creature, and order him to do anything that bespeaks an enmity to the nature of the Creator, or a deflouring and disparaging his works? God cannot but love himself, and his own goodness; he were not otherwise good; and, therefore, cannot order the creature to do anything opposite to this goodness, or anything hurtful to the creature itself, as unrighteousness is.

(2.) Nor can God secretly inspire any evil into us. It is as much against his nature to incline the heart to sin as it is to command it as it is impossible but that he should love himself, and therefore impossible to enjoin anything that tends to a hatred of himself; by the same reason it is as impossible that he should infuse such a principle in the heart, that might carry a man out to any act of enmity against him. To enjoin one thing, and incline to another, would be an argument of such insincerity, unfaithfulness, contradiction to itself, that it cannot be conceived to fall within the compass of the Divine nature (Deuteronomy 32:4), who is a “God without iniquity,” because “a God of truth” and sincerity, “just and right is he.” To bestow excellent faculties upon man in creation, and incline him, by a sudden impulsion, to things contrary to the true end of him, and induce an inevitable ruin upon that work which he had composed with so much wisdom and goodness, and pronounced good with so much delight and pleasure, is inconsistent with that love which God bears to the creature of his own framing: to incline his will to that which would render him the object of his hatred, the fuel for his justice, and sink him into deplorable misery, it is most absurd, and unchristian-like to imagine.

(3.) Nor can God necessitate man to sin. Indeed sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary; voluntary in the root, or voluntary in the branch; voluntary by an immediate act of the will, or voluntary by a general or natural inclination of the will. That is not a crime to which a man is violenced, without any concurrence of the faculties of the soul to that act; it is indeed not an act, but a passion; a man that is forced is not an agent, but a patient under the force: but what necessity can there be upon man from God, since he hath implanted such a principle in him, that he cannot desire anything but what is good, either really or apparently; and if a man mistakes the object, it is his own fault; for God hath endowed him with reason to discern, and liberty of will to choose upon that judgment. And though it is to be acknowledged that God hath an absolute sovereign dominion over his creature, without any limitation, and may do what he pleases, and dispose of it according to his own will, as a “potter doth with his vessel” (Romans 9:21); according as the church speaks (Isaiah 64:8), “We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand;” yet he cannot pollute any undefiled creature by virtue of that sovereign power, which he hath to do what he will with it; because such an act would be contrary to the foundation and right of his dominion, which consists in the excellency of his nature, his

immense wisdom, and unspotted purity; if God should therefore do any such act, he would expunge the right of his dominion by blotting out that nature which renders him fit for that dominion, and the exercise of it. [Note: Amyrald. Disert. pp. 103, 104.] Any dominion which is exercised without the rules of goodness, is not a true sovereignty, but an insupportable tyranny. God would cease to be a rightful Sovereign if he ceased to be good; and he would cease to be good, if he did command, necessitate, or by any positive operation, incline inwardly the heart of a creature directly to that which were morally evil, and contrary to the eminency of his own nature. But that we may the better conceive of this, let us trace man in his first fall, whereby he subjected himself and all his posterity to the curse of the law and hatred of God; we shall find no footsteps, either of precept, outward force, or inward impulsion. [Note: Amyrald. Defens. de Calvin. pp. 151, 152.] The plain story of man's apostasy dischargeth God from any interest in the crime as an encouragement, and excuseth him from any appearance of suspicion, when he showed him the tree he had reserved, as a mark of his sovereignty, and forbid him to eat of the fruit of it; he backed the prohibition with the threatening the greatest evil, viz. death; which could be understood to imply nothing less than the loss of all his happiness; and in that couched an assurance of the perpetuity of his felicity, if he did not, rebelliously, reach forth his hand to take and "eat of the fruit" (Genesis 2:16-17). It is true God had given that fruit an excellency, "a goodness for food, and a pleasantness to the eye" (Genesis 3:6). He had given man an appetite, whereby he was capable of desiring so pleasant a fruit; but God had, by creation, arranged it under the command of reason, if man would have kept it in its due obedience; he had fixed a severe threatening to bar the unlawful excursions of it; he had allowed him a multitude of other fruits in the garden, and given him liberty enough to satisfy his curiosity in all, except this only. Could there be anything more obliging to man, to let God have his reserve of that one tree, than the grant of all the rest; and more deterring from any disobedient attempt than so strict a command, spirited with so dreadful a penalty? God did not solicit him to rebel against him; a solicitation to it, and a command against it, were inconsistent. The devil assaults him, and God permitted it, and stands, as it were, a spectator of the issue of the combat. There could be no necessity upon man to listen to, and entertain the suggestions of the serpent; he had a power to resist him, and he had an answer ready for all the devil's arguments, had they been multiplied to more than they were; the opposing the order of God had been a sufficient confutation of all the devil's plausible reasonings; that Creator, who hath given me my being, hath ordered me not to eat of it. Though the pleasure of the fruit might allure him, yet the force of his reason might have quelled the liquorishness of his sense; the perpetual thinking of, and sounding out, the command of God, had silenced both Satan and his own appetite; had disarmed the tempter, and preserved his sensitive part in its due subjection. What inclination can we suppose there could be from the Creator, when, upon the very first offer of the temptation, Eve opposes to the tempter the prohibition and threatening of God, and strains it to a higher peg than we find God had delivered it in? For in Genesis 2:17, it is, "You shall not eat of it;" but she adds (Genesis 3:3), "Neither shall you touch it;" which was a remark that might have had more influence to restrain her. Had our first parents kept this fixed upon their understandings and thoughts, that God had forbidden any such act as the eating of the fruit, and that he was true to execute the threatening he had uttered, of which truth of God they could not but have a natural notion, with what ease might they have withstood the devil's attack, and defeated his design! And it had been easy with them, to have kept their understandings by the force of such a thought, from entertaining any contrary imagination. There is no ground for any jealousy of any

encouragements, inward impulsions, or necessity from God in this affair. A discharge of God from this first sin will easily induce a freedom of him from all other sins which follow upon it. God doth not then encourage, or excite, or incline to sin. How can he excite to that which, when it is done, he will be sure to condemn? How can he be a righteous Judge to sentence a sinner to misery for a crime acted by a secret inspiration from himself? Iniquity would deserve no reproof from him, if he were any way positively the author of it. Were God the author of it in us, what is the reason our own consciences accuse us for it, and convince us of it? that, being God's deputy, would not accuse us of it, if the sovereign power by which it acts, did incline us to it. How can he be thought to excite to that which he hath enacted such severe laws to restrain, or incline man to that which he hath so dreadfully punished in his Son, and which it is impossible but the excellency of his nature must incline him eternally to hate? We may sooner imagine, that a pure flame shall engender cold, and darkness be the offspring of a sunbeam, as imagine such a thing as this. "What shall we say, is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." The apostle execrates such a thought (Romans 9:14.)

6. God cannot act any evil, in or by himself. If he cannot approve of sin in others, nor excite any to iniquity, which is less, he cannot commit evil himself, which is greater; what he cannot positively will in another, can never be willed in himself; he cannot do evil through ignorance, because of his infinite knowledge; nor through weakness, because of his infinite power; nor through malice, because of his infinite rectitude. He cannot will any unjust thing, because, having an infinitely perfect understanding, he cannot judge that to be true which is false; or that to be good which is evil: his will is regulated by his wisdom. If he could will any unjust and irrational thing, his will would be repugnant to his understanding; there would be a disagreement in God, will against mind, and will against wisdom; he being the highest reason, the first truth, cannot do an unreasonable, false, defective action. It is not a defect in God that he cannot do evil, but a fulness and excellency of power; as it is not a weakness in the light, but the perfection of it, that it is unable to produce darkness; "God is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness" (James 1:17). Nothing pleases him, nothing is acted by him, but what is becoming the infinite excellency of his own nature; the voluntary necessity whereby God cannot be unjust, renders him a God blessed forever; he would hate himself for the chief good, if, in any of his actions, he should disagree with his goodness. He cannot do any unworthy thing, not because he wants an infinite power, but because he is possessed of an infinite wisdom, and adorned with an infinite purity; and being infinitely pure, cannot have the least mixture of impurity. As if you can suppose fire infinitely hot, you cannot suppose it to have the least mixture of coldness; the better anything is, the more unable it is to do evil; God being the only goodness, can as little be changed in his goodness as in his essence.

II. The next inquiry is, The proof that God is holy, or the manifestation of it. Purity is as requisite to the blessedness of God, as to the being of God; as he could not be God without being blessed, so he could not be blessed without being holy. He is called by the title of Blessed, as well as by that of holy (Mark 14:61); "Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" Unrighteousness is a misery and turbulence in any spirit wherein it is; for it is a privation of an excellency which ought to be in every intellectual being, and what can follow upon the privation of an excellency but uneasiness and grief, the moth of happiness? An unrighteous man, as an unrighteous man, can never be blessed, though he were in a local heaven. Had God the least spot upon his purity, it would render him as

miserable in the midst of his infinite sufficiency, as iniquity renders a man in the confluence of his earthly enjoyments. The holiness and felicity of God are inseparable in him. The apostle intimates that the heathen made an attempt to sully his blessedness, when they would liken him to corruptible, mutable, impure man (Romans 1:23; Romans 1:25): "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man;" and after, he entitles God a "God blessed forever." The gospel is therefore called, "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Timothy 1:11), in regard of the holiness of the gospel precepts, and in regard of the declaration of the holiness of God in all the streams and branches, wherein his purity, in which his blessedness consists, is as illustrious as any other perfection of the Divine Being. God hath highly manifested this attribute in the state of nature; in the legal administration; in the dispensation of the gospel. His wisdom, goodness, and power, are declared in creation; his sovereign authority in his law; his grace and mercy in the gospel, and his righteousness in all. Suitable to this threefold state, may be that eternal repetition of his holiness in the prophecy (Isaiah 6:3); holy, as Creator and Benefactor; holy, as Lawgiver and Judge; holy, as Restorer and Redeemer.

First, His holiness appears, as he is Creator, in framing man in a perfect uprightness. Angels, as made by God, could not be evil; for God beheld his own works with pleasure, and could not have pronounced them all good, had some been created pure, and others impure; two moral contrarieties could not be good. The angels had a first estate, wherein they were happy (Jude 1:6); and had they not left their own habitation and state, they could not have been miserable. But, because the Scripture speaks only of the creation of man, we will consider, that the human nature was well strung and tuned by God, according to the note of his own holiness (Ecclesiastes 7:29); "God hath made man upright:" he had declared his power in other creatures, but would declare in his rational creature, what he most valued in himself; and, therefore, created him upright, with a wisdom which is the rectitude of the mind, with a purity which is the rectitude of the will and affections. He had declared a purity in other creatures, as much as they were capable of, viz. in the exact tuning them to answer one another. And that God, who so well tuned and composed other creatures, would not make man a jarring instrument, and place a cracked creature to be Lord of the rest of his earthly fabric. God, being holy, could not set his seal upon any rational creature, but the impression would be like himself, pure and holy also; he could not be created with an error in his understanding; that had been inconsistent with the goodness of God to his rational creature; if so, the erroneous motion of the will, which was to follow the dictates of the understanding, could not have been imputed to him as his crime, because it would have been, not a voluntary, but a necessary effect of his nature; had there been an error in the first wheel, the error of the next could not have been imputed to the nature of that, but to the irregular motion of the first wheel in the engine. The sin of men and angels, proceeded not from any natural defect in their understandings, but from inconsideration; he that was the author of harmony in his other creatures, could not be the author of disorder in the chief of his works. Other creatures were his footsteps, but man was his image (Genesis 1:26-27): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" which, though it seems to imply no more in that place, than an image of his dominion over the creatures, yet the apostle raises it a peg higher, and gives us a larger interpretation of it (Colossians 3:10): "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;" making it to consist in a resemblance to his righteousness. Image, say some, notes the form, as man was a spirit in regard of his soul; likeness, notes the quality implanted in his spiritual nature; the image of God was drawn in him, both as he was a rational, and as he was a holy

creature. The creatures manifested the being of a superior power, as their cause, but the righteousness of the first man evidenced, not only a sovereign power, as the donor of his being, but a holy power, as the pattern of his work. God appeared to be a holy God in the righteousness of his creature, as well as an understanding God in the reason of his creature, while he formed him with all necessary knowledge in his mind and all necessary uprightness in his will. The law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally written upon his nature; all the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer this law, and imitate God in his purity, which consists in a love of himself, and his own goodness and excellency. Thus doth the clearness of the stream point us to the purer fountain, and the brightness of the beam evidence a greater splendor in the sun which shot it out. Secondly, His holiness appears in his laws, as he is a Lawgiver and a Judge. Since man was bound to be subject to God, as a creature, and had a capacity to be ruled by the law, as an understanding and willing creature; God gave him a law, taken from the depths of his holy nature, and suited to the original faculties of man. The rules which God hath fixed in the world, are not the resolves of bare will, but result particularly from the goodness of his nature; they are nothing else but the transcripts of his infinite detestation of sin, as he is the unblemished governor of the world. This being the most adorable property of his nature, he hath impressed it upon that law which he would have inviolably observed as a perpetual rule for our actions, that we may every moment think of this beautiful perfection. God can command nothing but what hath some similitude with the rectitude of his own nature; all his laws, every paragraph of them, therefore, scent of this, and glitter with it (Deuteronomy 4:8): “What nation hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law I set before you this day?” and, therefore, they are compared to fine gold, that hath no speck or dross (Psalms 19:10). This purity is evident—1. In the moral law, or law of nature. 2. In the ceremonial law. 3. In the allurements annexed to it, for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it. 4. In the judgments inflicted for the violation of it.

1. In the moral law: which is therefore dignified with the title of Holy, twice in one verse (Romans 7:12): “Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good;” it being the express image of God’s will, as our Saviour was of his person, and bearing a resemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put into the ark, that, as the mercy seat was to represent the grace of God, so the law was to represent the holiness of God (Psalms 19:1). The Psalmist, after he had spoken of the glory of God in the heavens, wherein the power of God is exposed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds (Psalms 19:7-8, &c.): “Perfect, pure, clean, righteous,” are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holiness than the sun is in brightness; and more mighty in itself, to command the conscience, than the sun is to run its race. As the holiness of the Scripture demonstrates the divinity of its Author; so the holiness of the law doth the purity of the Lawgiver.

(1.) The purity of this law is seen in the matter of it. It prescribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is complete in the holiness of the first table, and the righteousness of the second; which is intimated by the apostle (Ephesians 4:24), the one being the rule of what we owe to God, the other being the rule of what we owe to man: there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it disowns. It is not sickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action, but it gives it its due praise; and not an evil action, but it sets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in

Scripture called judgments, because they rightly judge of good and evil; and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the understanding of David enlightened to know every false way, and to “hate it” (Psalms 119:104). There is no case can happen, but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the noblest manner of living a life like God himself; honorably for the Lawgiver, and joyfully for the subject. It directs us to the highest end; sets us at a distance from all base and sordid practices; it proposeth light to the understanding, and goodness to the will. It would tune all the strings, set right all the orders of mankind: it censures the least mote, countenanceth not any stain in the life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any justification from it (Matthew 5:28); not a rash anger but it frowns upon (Matthew 5:22). As the Lawgiver wants nothing as an addition to his blessedness, so his law wants nothing as a supplement to its perfection (Deuteronomy 4:2). What our Saviour seems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects, but a restoration of it from the corrupt glosses, wherewith the Scribes and Pharisees had eclipsed the brightness of it: they had curtailed it, and diminished part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the least evil, and left its power only to check the grosser practices. But Christ restores it to the due extent of its sovereignty, and shows it those dimensions in which the holy men of God considered it as “exceeding broad” (Psalms 119:96), reaching to all actions, all motions, all circumstances attending them; full of inexhaustible treasures of righteousness. And though this law, since the fall, doth irritate sin, it is no disparagement, but a testimony to the righteousness of it; which the apostle manifests by his “Wherefore (Romans 7:8), sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;” and repeating the same sense (Romans 7:11), subjoins a, “Wherefore” (Romans 7:12), “Wherefore the law is holy.” The rising of men’s sinful hearts against the law of God, when it strikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their consciences, evidenceth the holiness of the law and the Lawgiver. In its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of sin is exasperated by it; as an hostile quality in a creature will awaken itself at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this beam, and transcript of God, bears witness to a greater clearness and beauty in the sun and original. Undefined streams manifest an untainted fountain.

(2.) It is seen in the manner of its precepts. As it prescribes all good, and forbids all evil, so it doth enjoin the one, and banish the other as such. The laws of men command virtuous things; not as virtuous in themselves, but as useful for human society; which the magistrate is the conservator of, and the guardian of justice. [Note: Ames de Consec. lib. v. cap. 1. quest. 7.] The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only such as. are accommodated to their customs, and are useful to preserve the ligaments of their government. The design of them is not so much to render the subjects good men, as good citizens: they order the practice of those virtues that may strengthen civil society, and discountenance those vices only which weaken the sinew’s of it: but God, being the guardian of universal righteousness, doth not only enact the observance of all righteousness, but the observance of it as righteousness. He commands that which is just in itself, enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices: as they are profitable or injurious to ourselves, as well as to others. Men command temperance and justice; not as virtues in themselves, but as they prevent disorder and confusion in a commonwealth; and forbid adultery and theft, not as vices in themselves, but as they are intrenchments upon property; not as hurtful to the person that commits them, but as hurtful to the person against whose right they are committed. Upon this account, perhaps, Paul applauds the holiness of the law of God in regard of its own nature, as considered in itself; more than he doth the justice of it in regard of man, and the

goodness and conveniency of it to the world (Romans 7:12); the law is holy twice, and just and good but once.

(3.) In the spiritual extent of it. The most righteous powers of the world do not so much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their subjects are: the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be useful, or discourage them if they be hurtful to the community. And, indeed, they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, since the inward disposition falls not under their censure; and it would be foolish for any legislative power to make such laws, which it is impossible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of sin, the contempt of the world; they cannot prohibit unclean thoughts, and the atheism of the heart. But the law of God surmounts in righteousness all the laws of the best-regulated commonwealths in the world: it restrains the licentious heart, as well as the violent hand; it damps the very first bubblings of corrupt nature, orders a purity in the spring, commands a clean fountain, clean streams, clean vessels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteousness, and make the inside purer than the outside. It forbids the first belchings of a murderous or adulterous intention: it obligeth a man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatsoever is under the command of them. It commands the private closet to be free from the least cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dirt. It frowns upon all stains and pollutions of the most retired thoughts: hence the apostle calls it a "spiritual law" (Romans 7:14), as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man; placing its ensigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its sceptre the inward motions of the spirit, and commanding over the secrets of every man's breast.

(4). In regard of the perpetuity of it. The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the Psalmist (Psalms 19:9): "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;" the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands the fear and worship of God, and is the rule of it. And, indeed, God values it at such a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honor of it be in the dust, he would not only let "heaven and earth pass away," but expose his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had sustained. So holy it is, that the holiness and righteousness of God cannot dispense with it, cannot abrogate it, without despoiling himself of his own being: it is a copy of the eternal law. Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without showing some contempt of his own excellency and very being? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he must make himself unworthy of love, and worthy of hatred; this would be the highest unrighteousness, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our highest affections. So God cannot change the first command, and order us to worship many gods; this would be against the excellency and unity of God: for God cannot constitute another God, or make anything worthy of an honor equal with himself. [Note: Suarez.] Those things that are good, only because they are commanded, are alterable by God those things that are intrinsically and essentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holiness and righteousness of God stand firm. The intrinsic goodness of the moral law, the concern God hath for it; the perpetuity of the precepts of the first table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the second upon the minds and consciences of men, as the Author of nature for the preservation of the world, manifests the holiness of the Lawmaker and Governor.

2. His holiness appears in the ceremonial law: in the variety of sacrifices for sin, wherein he writ his detestation of unrighteousness in bloody characters. His holiness was more constantly expressed in the continual sacrifices, than in those rarer sprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world; which often reached, not the worst, but the most moderate sinners, and were the occasions of the questioning of the righteousness of his providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments his purity was only now and then manifest: by his long patience, he might be imagined by some reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them; but by the morning and evening sacrifice he witnessed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatsoever was evil. Besides those, the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, gave an evidence, that everything that had a resemblance to evil, was loathsome to him. Add, also, the prohibitions of eating such and such creatures that were filthy; as the swine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the profane and brutish sinner; which had a moral signification, both of the loathsomeness of sin to God, and the aversion themselves ought to have to everything that was filthy.

3. This holiness appears in the allurements annexed to the law for keeping it, and the affrightments to restrain from the breaking of it. Both promises and threatenings have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are both branches of this peculiar perfection. As they respect the nature of God, they are declarations of his hatred of sin, and his love of righteousness; the one belong to his threatenings, the other to his promises; both join together to represent this divine perfection to the creature, and to excite to an imitation in the creature. In the one, God would render sin odious, because dangerous, and curb the practice of evil, which would otherwise be licentious; in the other, he would commend righteousness, and excite a love of it, which would otherwise be cold. By there God suits the two great affections of men, fear and hope; both the branches of self-love in man: the promises and threatenings are both the branches of holiness in God. The end of the promises is the same with the exhortation the apostle concludes from them (2 Corinthians 7:1); "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." As the end of precept is to direct, the end of threatenings is to deter from iniquity, so that the promises is to allure to obedience. Thus God breathes out his love to righteousness in every promise; his hatred of sin in every threatening. The rewards offered in the one, are the smiles of pleased holiness; and the curses thundered in the other, are the sparklings of enraged righteousness.

4. His holiness appears in the judgment inflicted for the violation of this law. Divine holiness is the root of Divine justice, and Divine justice is the triumph of Divine holiness. Hence both are expressed in Scripture by one word of righteousness, which sometimes signifies the rectitude of the Divine nature, and sometimes the vindictive stroke of his arm (Psalms 103:6); "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." So (Daniel 9:7) "Righteousness (that is, justice) belongs to thee." The vials of his wrath are filled from his implacable aversion to iniquity. All penal evils shower down upon the heads of wicked men, spread their root in, and branch out from, this perfection. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. Why doth he "rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest!" Because "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness" (Psalms 11:6-7). And, as was observed before, when he was going about the dreadfulest work that ever was in the world, the overturning the Jewish state, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and cashiering a nation, once dear to him, from the honor of

his protection; his holiness, as the spring of all this, is applauded by the seraphims (Isaiah 6:3, compared with ver. 9–11), &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and punishment the abhorrency of it. The greatness of the crime, and the righteousness of the Judge, are the first natural sentiments that arise in the minds of men upon the appearance of Divine judgments in the world, by those that are near them; [Note: Amiran. Moral. Tom. V. p. 388.] as, when men see gibbets erected, scaffolds prepared, instruments of death and torture provided, and grievous punishments inflicted, the first reflection in the spectator is the malignity of the crime, and the detestation the governors are possessed with.

(1). How severely Hath he punished his most noble creatures for it. The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater cost than upon any other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the transgression of his law, are thrown into the furnace of justice, without any mercy to pity them (Jude 1:6). And though there were but one sort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publish and keep up his honor below the heavens, yet, upon their apostasy, though upon a temptation from a subtle and insinuating spirit, the man, with all his posterity, is sentenced to misery in life, and death at last; and the woman, with all her sex, have standing punishments inflicted on them, which, as they begun in their persons, were to reach as far as the last member of their successive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a spot in his choicest work. Men, indeed, when there is a crack in an excellent piece of work, or a stain upon a rich garment, do not cast, it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the contracted spot; but God saw no excellency in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he most esteemed in himself was defaced.

(2). How detestable to him are the very instruments of sin! For the ill use the serpent, an irrational creature, was put to by the devil, as an instrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of those animals are cursed (Genesis 3:14), “cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.” Not only the devil’s head is threatened to be for ever bruised, and, as some think, rendered irrecoverable upon this further testimony of his malice in the seduction of man, who, perhaps, without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithstanding his first sin; “though the Scripture gives us no account of this, only this is the only sentence we read of pronounced against the devil, which puts him into an irrecoverable state by a mortal bruising of his head.” But, I say, he is not only punished, but the organ, whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worse condition than it was before. Thus God hated the sponge, whereby the devil deformed his beautiful image: thus God, to manifest his detestation of sin, ordered the beast, whereby any man was slain, to be slain as well as the malefactor (Leviticus 20:15). The gold and silver that had been abused to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images, though good in themselves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houses, but detested and abhorred by them, because they were cursed, and an abomination to the Lord. See with what loathing expressions this law is enjoined to them (Deuteronomy 7:25-26). So contrary is the holy nature of God to every sin, that it curseth everything that is instrumental in it.

(3.) How detestable is everything to him that is in the sinner’s possession! The very earth, which God had made Adam the proprietor of, was cursed for his sake (Genesis 3:17-18). It lost its beauty, and lies languishing to this day; and, notwithstanding the redemption by Christ, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the completing the fruits of it upon the children of God (Romans 8:20-22). The whole lower creation was made subject to vanity, and put into pangs, upon

the sin of man, by the righteousness of God detesting his offence. How often hath his implacable aversion from sin been shown, not only in his judgments upon the offender's person, but by wrapping up, in the same judgment, those which stood in a near relation to them! Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with stones, and burned together (Joshua 7:24-25). In the destruction of Sodom, not only the grown malefactors, but the young spawn, the infants, at present incapable of the same wickedness, and their cattle, were burned up by the same fire from heaven; and the place where their habitations stood, is, at this day, partly a heap of ashes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fish that swims into it from Jordan, and stifles, as is related, by its vapor, any bird that attempts to fly over it. O, how detestable is sin to God, that causes him to turn a pleasant land, as the "garden of the Lord" (as it is styled Genesis 13:10), into a lake of sulphur; to make it, both in his word and works, as a lasting monument of his abhorrence of evil.

(4.) What design hath God in all these acts of severity and vindictive justice, but to set off the lustre of his holiness? He testifies himself concerned for those laws, which he hath set as hedges and limits to the lusts of men; and, therefore, when he breathes forth his fiery indignation against a people, he is said to get himself honor: as when he intended the Red Sea, should swallow up the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:17-18), which Moses, in his triumphant song, echoes back again (Exodus 15:1): "Thou hast triumphed gloriously;" gloriously in his holiness, which is the glory of his nature, as Moses himself interprets it in the text. When men will not own the holiness of God, in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment. In the destruction of Aaron's sons, that were will-worshippers, and would take strange fire, "sanctified" and "glorified" are coupled (Leviticus 10:3): he glorified himself in that act, in vindicating his holiness before all the people, declaring that he will not endure sin and disobedience. He doth therefore, in this life, more severely punish the sins of his people, when they presume upon any act of disobedience, for a testimony that the nearness and dearness of any person to him shall not make him unconcerned in his holiness, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments is to witness to the world his abominating of sin. To punish and witness against men, are one and the same thing (Micah 1:2): "The Lord shall witness against you;" and it is the witness of God's holiness (Hosea 5:5): "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:" one renders it the excellency of Israel, and understands it of God: the word **גָּדַל**, which is here in our translation, "pride," is rendered "excellency" (Amos 8:7): "The Lord God hath sworn by his excellency," which is interpreted "holiness" (Amos 4:2) "The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness." What is the issue or end of this swearing by "holiness," and of his "excellency" testifying against them? In all those places, you will find them to be sweeping judgments: in one, Israel and Ephraim shall "fall in their iniquity;" in another, he will "take them away with hooks," and "their posterity with fish-hooks;" and in another, he would "never forget any of their works." He that punisheth wickedness in those he before used with the greatest tenderness, furnisheth the world with an undeniable evidence of the detestableness of it to him. Were not judgments sometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed that God were rather an approver than an enemy to sin. To conclude, since God hath made a stricter law to guide men, annexed promises above the merit of obedience to allure them, and threatenings dreadful enough to affright men from disobedience, he cannot be the cause of sin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the author of that which he so severely forbids; or love that which he delights to punish; or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant instruments in the offences of his reasonable creatures?

Thirdly. The holiness of God appears in our restoration. It is in the glass of the gospel we behold the "glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18); that is, the glory of the Lord, into whose image we are changed; but we are changed into nothing, as the image of God, but into holiness: we bore not upon us by creation, nor by regeneration, the image of any other perfection: we cannot be changed into his omnipotence, omniscience, &c., but into the image of his righteousness. This is the pleasing and glorious sight the gospel mirror darts in our eyes. The whole scene of redemption is nothing else but a discovery of judgment and righteousness (Isaiah 1:27): "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

1. This holiness of God appears in the manner of our restoration, viz. by the death of Christ. Not all the vials of judgments, that have, or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon his Son. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely, than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of his dying groans. This himself acknowledges in that prophetic psalm (Psalms 22:1-2), when God had turned his smiling face from him, and thrust his sharp knife into his heart, which forced that terrible cry from him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He adores this perfection of holiness (Psalms 22:3), "But thou art holy;" thy holiness is the spring of all this sharp agony, and for this thou inhabitest, and shalt forever inhabit, the praises of all thy Israel. Holiness drew the veil between God's countenance and our Saviour's soul. Justice indeed gave the stroke, but holiness ordered it. In this his purity did sparkle, and his irreversible justice manifested that all those that commit sin are worthy of death; this was the perfect index of his "righteousness" (Romans 3:25), that is, of his holiness and truth; then it was that God that is holy, was "sanctified in righteousness" (Isaiah 5:16). It appears the more, if you consider,

(1.) The dignity of the Redeemer's person. One that had been from eternity; had laid the foundations of the world; had been the object of the Divine delight: he that was God blessed forever, become a curse; he who was blessed by angels, and by whom God blessed the world, must be seized with horror; the Son of eternity must bleed to death! When did ever sin appear so irreconcilable to God? Where did God ever break out so furiously in his detestation of iniquity? The Father would have the most excellent person, one next in order to himself, and equal to him in all the glorious perfections of his nature (Php 2:6), die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the flames of Divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain forever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) The near relation he stood in to the Father. He was his "own Son that he delivered up" (Romans 8:32); his essential image, as dearly beloved by him as himself; yet he would abate nothing of his hatred of those sins imputed to one so dear to him, and who never had done anything contrary to his will. The strong cries uttered by him could not cause him to cut off the least fringe of this royal garment, nor part with a thread the robe of his holiness was woven with. The torrent of wrath is opened upon him, and the Father's heart beats not in the least notice of tenderness to sin, in the midst of his Son's agonies. God seems to lay aside the bowels of a father, and put on the garb of an irreconcilable enemy, [Note: Lingend. Tom. III. pp. 699, 700.] upon which account, probably, our Saviour in the midst of his passion gives him the title of God; not of Father, the title he usually before addressed to him with, (Matthew 27:46), "My God, my God;" not,

My Father, my Father; “why hast thou forsaken me?” He seems to hang upon the cross like a disinherited son, while he appeared in the garb and rank of a sinner. Then was his head loaded with curses, when he stood under that sentence of “Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree” (Galatians 3:13), and looked as one forlorn and rejected by the Divine purity and tenderness. God dealt not with him as if he had been one in so near a relation to him. He left him not to the will only of the instruments of his death; he would have the chiefest blow himself of bruising of him (Isaiah 53:10): “It pleased the Lord to bruise him:” the Lord, because the power of creatures could not strike a blow strong enough to satisfy and secure the rights of infinite holiness. It was therefore a cup tempered and put into his hands by his Father; a cup given him to drink. In other judgments he lets out his wrath against his creatures; in this he lets out his wrath, as it were, against himself, against his Son, one as dear to him as himself. As in his making creatures, his power over nothing to bring it into being appeared; but in pardoning sin he hath power over himself; so in punishing creatures, his holiness appears in his wrath against creatures, against sinners by inherency; but by punishing sin in his Son, his holiness sharpens his wrath against him who was his equal, and only a reputed sinner; as if his affection to his own holiness surmounted his affection to his Son: for he chose to suspend the breakings out of his affections to his Son, and see him plunged in a sharp and ignominious misery, without giving him any visible token of his love, rather than see his holiness he groaning under the injuries of a transgressing world.

(3.) The value he puts upon his holiness appears further, in the advancement of this redeeming person, after his death. Our Saviour was advanced, not barely for his dying, but for the respect he had in his death to this attribute of God (Hebrews 1:9): “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,” &c. By righteousness is meant this perfection, because of the opposition of it to iniquity. Some think “therefore” to be the final cause; as if this were the sense, “Thou art anointed with the oil of gladness, that thou mightest love righteousness and hate iniquity.” But the Holy Ghost seeming to speak in this chapter not only of the Godhead of Christ but of his exaltation; the doctrine whereof he had begun in Hebrews 1:3, and prosecutes in the following verses, I would rather understand “therefore,” for “this cause, or reason, hath God anointed thee;” not “to this end.” Christ indeed had an unction of grace, whereby he was fitted for his mediatory work; he had also an unction of glory, whereby he was rewarded for it. In the first regard, it was a qualifying him for his office; in the second regard, it was a solemn inaugurating him in his royal authority. And the reason of his being settled upon a “throne for ever and ever,” is, “because he loved righteousness.” He suffered himself to be pierced to death, that sin, the enemy of God’s purity, might be destroyed, and the honor of the law, the image of God’s holiness, might be repaired and fulfilled in the fallen creature. He restored the credit of Divine holiness in the world, in manifesting, by his death, God an irreconcilable enemy to all sin; in abolishing the empire of sin, so hateful to God, and restoring the rectitude of nature, and new framing the image of God in his chosen ones. And God so valued this vindication of his holiness, that he confers upon him, in his human nature, an eternal royalty and empire over angels and men. Holiness was the great attribute respected by Christ in his dying, and manifested in his death; and for his love to this, God would bestow an honor upon his person, in that nature wherein he did vindicate the honor of so dear a perfection. In the death of Christ, he showed his resolution to preserve its rights; in the exaltation of Christ, he evinced his mighty pleasure for the vindication of it; in both, the infinite value he had for it, as dear to him as his life and glory.

(4.) It may be further considered, that in this way of redemption, his holiness in the hatred of sin seems to be valued above any other attribute. He proclaims the value of it above the person of his Son; since the Divine nature of the Redeemer is disguised, obscured, and veiled, in order to the restoring the honor of it. And Christ seems to value it above his own person, since he submitted himself to the reproaches of men, to clear this perfection of the Divine nature, and make it illustrious in the eyes of the world. You heard before, at the beginning of the handling this argument, it was the beauty of the Deity, the lustre of his nature, the link of all his attributes, his very life; he values it equal with himself, since he swears by it, as well as by his life; and none of his attributes would have a due decorum without it; it is the glory of power, mercy, justice, and wisdom, that they are all holy; so that though God had an infinite tenderness and compassion to the fallen creature, yet it should not extend itself in his relief to the prejudice of the rights of his purity: he would have this triumph in the tenderness of his mercy, as well as the severities of his justice. His mercy had not appeared in its true colors, nor attained a regular end, without vengeance on sin. It would have been a compassion that would, in sparing the sinner, have encouraged the sin, and affronted holiness in the issues of it: had he dispersed his compassions about the world, without the regard to his hatred of sin, his mercy had been too cheap, and his holiness had been contemned; his mercy would not have triumphed in his own nature, whilst his holiness had suffered; he had exercised a mercy with the impairing his own glory; but now, in this way of redemption, the rights of both are secured, both have their due lustre: the odiousness of sin is equally discovered with the greatest of his compassions; an infinite abhorrence of sin, and an infinite love to the world, march hand in hand together. Never was so much of the irreconcilableness of sin to him set forth, as in the moment he was opening his bowels in the reconciliation of the sinner. Sin is made the chiefest mark of his displeasure, while the poor creature is made the highest object of Divine pity. There could have been no motion of mercy, with the least injury to purity and holiness. In this way mercy and truth, mercy to the misery of the creature, and truth to the purity of the law, "have met together;" the righteousness of God, and the peace of the sinner, "have kissed each other" (Psalms 85:10).

2. The holiness of God in his hatred of sin appears in our justification, and the conditions he requires of all that would enjoy the benefit of redemption. His wisdom hath so tempered all the conditions of it, that the honor of his holiness is as much preserved, as the sweetness of his mercy is experimented by us; all the conditions are records of his exact purity, as well as of his condescending grace. Our justification is not by the imperfect works of creatures, but by an exact and infinite righteousness, as great as that of the Deity which had been offended: it being the righteousness of a Divine person, upon which account it is called the righteousness of God; not only in regard of God's appointing it, and God's accepting it, but as it is a righteousness of that person that was God, and is God. Faith is the condition God requires to justification; but not a dead, but an active faith, such a "faith as purifies the heart" (James 2:20; Acts 15:9). He calls for repentance, which is a moral retracting our offences, and an approbation of contemned righteousness and a violated law; an endeavor to gain what is lost, and to pluck out the heart of that sin we have committed. He requires mortification, which is called crucifying; whereby a man would strike as full and deadly a blow at his lusts, as was struck at Christ upon the cross, and make them as certainly die, as the Redeemer did. Our own righteousness must be condemned by us, as impure and imperfect: we must disown everything that is our own, as to righteousness, in reverence to the holiness of God, and the valuation of the righteousness of Christ. He hath

resolved not to bestow the inheritance of glory without the root of grace. None are partakers of the Divine blessedness that are not partakers of the Divine nature: there must be a renewing of his image before there be a vision of his face (Hebrews 12:14). He will not have men brought only into a relative state of happiness by justification, without a real state of grace by sanctification; and so resolved he is in it, that there is no admittance into heaven of a starting, but a persevering holiness (Romans 2:7), “a patient continuance in well-doing:” patient, under the sharpness of affliction, and continuing, under the pleasures of prosperity. Hence it is that the gospel, the restoring doctrine, hath not only the motives of rewards to allure to good, and the danger of punishments to scare us from evil, as the law had; but they are set forth in a higher strain, in a way of stronger engagement; the rewards are heavenly, and the punishments eternal: and more powerful motives besides, from the choicer expressions of God’s love in the death of his Son. The whole design of it is to reinstate us in a resemblance to this Divine perfection; whereby he shows what an affection he hath to this excellency of his nature, and what a detestation he hath of evil, which is contrary to it.

3. It appears in the actual regeneration of the redeemed souls, and a carrying it on to a full perfection. As election is the effect of God’s sovereignty, our pardon the fruit of his mercy, our knowledge a stream from his wisdom, our strength an impression of his power; so our purity is a beam from his holiness. The whole work of sanctification, and the preservation of it, our Saviour begs for his disciples of his Father, under this title (John 17:11; John 17:17): “Holy Father, keep them through thy own name,” and “sanctify them through thy truth;” as the proper source whence holiness was to flow to the creature: as the sun is the proper fountain whence light is derived, both to the stars above, and the bodies here below. Whence He is not only called Holy, but the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 43:15), “I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel:” displaying his holiness in them, by a new creation of them as his Israel. As the rectitude of the creature at the first creation was the effect of his holiness, so the purity of the creature, by a new creation, is a draught of the same perfection. He is called the Holy One of Israel more in Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, in erecting Zion, and forming a people for himself; than in the whole Scripture besides. As he sent Jesus Christ to satisfy his justice for the expiation of the guilt of sin, so he sends the Holy Ghost for the cleansing of the filth of sin, and overmastering the power of it: Himself is the fountain, the Son is the pattern, and the Holy Ghost the immediate imprinter of this stamp of holiness upon the creature. God hath such a value for this attribute, that he designs the glory of this in the renewing the creature, more than the happiness of the creature; though the one doth necessarily follow upon the other, yet the one is the principal design, and the other the consequent of the former: whence our salvation is more frequently set forth, in Scripture, by a redemption from sin, and sanctification of the soul, than by a possession of heaven. [Note: Titus 2:11-14, and many other places.] Indeed, as God could not create a rational creature, without interesting this attribute in a special manner, so he cannot restore the fallen creature without it. As in creating a rational creature, there must be holiness to adorn it, as well as wisdom to form the design, and power to effect it; so in the restoration of the creature, as he could not inake a reasonable creature unholy, so he cannot restore a fallen creature, and put him in a meet posture to take pleasure in him, without communicating to him a resemblance of himself. As God cannot be blessed in himself without this perfection of purity, so neither can a creature be blessed without it. As God would be unlovely to himself without this attribute, so would the creature be unlovely to God, without a stamp and mark of it upon his nature. So much is this perfection one with God, valued by hiin, and interested in all his works and ways!

III. The third thing I am to do, is to lay down some proposition in the defence of God's holiness in all his acts, about, or concerning sin. It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too busy and rash in inquiries and conclusions about the reason of God's providence in the matter of sin. The Scripture hath put a bar in the way of such curiosity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wisdom and righteousness in his judgments are "unsearchable" (Romans 11:33): much more the ways of God's holiness, as he stands in relation to sin, as a Governor of the world; we cannot consider those things without danger of slipping: our eyes are too weak to look upon the sun without being dazzled: too much curiosity met with a just check in our first parent. To be desirous to know the reason of all God's proceedings in the matter of sin, is to second the ambition of Adam, to be as wise as God, and know the reason of his actings equally with himself. It is more easy, as the same author saith, to give an account of God's providence since the revolt of man, and the poison that hath universally seized upon human nature, than to make guesses at the manner of the fall of the first man. The Scripture hath given us but a short account of the manner of it, to discourage too curious inquiries into it. It is certain that God made man upright; and when man sinned in paradise, God was active in sustaining the substantial nature and act of the sinner while he was sinning, though not in supporting the sinfulness of the act: he was permissive in suffering it: he was negative in withholding that grace which might certainly have prevented his crime, and consequently his ruin; though he withheld nothing that was sufficient for his resistance of that temptation wherewith he was assaulted. And since the fall of man, God, as a wise governor, is directive of the events of the transgression, and draws the choicest good out of the blackest evil, and limits the sins of men, that they creep not so far as the evil nature of men would urge them to; and as a righteous Judge, he takes away the talent from idle servants, and the light from wicked ones, whereby they stumble and fall into crimes, by the inclinations and proneness of their own corrupt natures, leaves them to the bias of their own vicious habits, denies that grace which they have forfeited, and have no right to challenge, and turns their sinful actions into punishments, both to the committers of them and others.

Prop. I. God's holiness is not chargeable with any blemish for his creating man in a mutable state. It is true, angels and men were created with a changeable nature; as though there was a rich and glorious stamp upon them by the hand of God, yet their natures were not incapable of a base and vile stamp from some other principle: as the silver which bears upon it the image of a great prince, is capable of being melted down, and imprinted with no better an image than that of some vile and monstrous beast. Though God made man upright, yet he was capable of seeking "many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29); yet the hand of God was not defiled by forming man with such a nature. It was suitable to the wisdom of God to give the rational creature, whom he had furnished with a power of acting righteously, the liberty of choice, and not fix him in an unchangeable state without a trial of him in his natural; that if he did obey, his obedience might be the more valuable; and if he did freely offend, his offence might be more inexcusable.

1. No creature can be capable of immutability by nature. Mutability is so essential to a creature, that a creature cannot be supposed without it; you must suppose it a Creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be of an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the Supreme Being. God "only hath immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16); immortality, as opposed not only to a natural, but to a sinful death; the word only appropriates every sort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnership with God in this by nature. Every creature, therefore, is

capable of a death in sin. "None is good but God," and none is naturally free from change but God, which excludes every creature from the same prerogative; and certainly, if one angel sinned, all might have sinned, because there was the same root of mutability in one as well as another: It is as possible for a creature to be a Creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things, whether angels or men, are made of nothing, and therefore, capable of defection; [Note: Suarez, Vol. II. p. 548.] because a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good, *per essentiam*, or essentially good, but by participation from another. Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a superior which created him and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and, consequently, capable of disobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to transgress it, as well as obey it. God cannot sin, because he can have no superior to impose a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of such a mould and temper, but he must be as well capable of choosing wrong, as of choosing right; and, therefore, the standing angels, and glorified saints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature that they are so, but by grace, and the good pleasure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have still in their nature a remote power of sinning, but it shall never be brought into act, because God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act. Since, therefore, mutability is essential to a creature as a creature, this changeableness cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God's creating act, but did necessarily result from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableness doth result from the essence of God. The brittleness of a glass is no blame to the art of him that blew up the glass into such a fashion; that imperfection of brittleness is not from the workman, but the matter; so, though unchangeableness be an imperfection, yet it is so necessary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it; besides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable to exercise their wills, yet they were not necessitated to evil, and this mutability did not infer a necessity that they should fall, because some angels, which had the same root of changeableness in their natures with those that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableness of changing, and necessity of changing, were one and the same thing.

2. Though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. There could be nothing of evil in him that God created after his own image, and pronounced "good" (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 1:31). Man had an ability to stand, as well as a capacity to fall: he was created with a principal of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good, and moving to him as his last end; there was a beam of light in man's understanding to know the rule he was to conform to, a harmony between his reason and his affections, an original righteousness: so that it seemed more easy for him to determine his will to continue in obedience to the precept, than to swerve from it; to adhere to God as his chief good, than to listen to the charms of Satan. God created him with those advantages, that he might with more facility have kept his eyes fixed upon the Divine beauty, than turn his back upon it, and with greater ease have kept the precept God gave him, than have broken it. The very first thought darted, or impression made, by God, upon the angelical or human nature, was the knowledge of himself as their Author, and could be no more than such whereby both angels and men might be excited to a love of that adorable Being, that had framed them so gloriously out of nothing; and if they turned their wills and affections to another object it was not by the direction of God, but contrary to the impression God had made upon them, or the first thought he flashed into them. They turned themselves to the admiring their own excellency, or

affecting an advantage distinct from that which they were to look for only from God (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride was the cause of the condemnation of the devil. Though the wills of angels and men were created mutable, and so were imperfect, yet they were not created evil. Though they might sin, yet they might not sin, and, therefore, were not evil in their own nature. What reflection, then, could this mutability of their nature be upon God? So far is it from any, that he is fully cleared, by storing up in the nature of man sufficient provision against his departure from him. God was so far from creating him evil, that he fortified him with a knowledge in his understanding, and a strength in his nature to withstand any invasion. The knowledge was exercised by Eve, in the very moment of the serpent's assaulting her (Genesis 3:3); Eve said to the serpent, "God hath said, ye shall not eat of it:" and had her thoughts been intent upon this, "God hath said," and not diverted to the motions of the sensitive appetite and liquorish palate, it had been sufficient to put by all the passes the devil did, or could have made at her. So that you see, though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. This clears the holiness of God.

3. Therefore it follows, That though God created man changeable, yet he was not the cause of his change by his fall. Though man was created defectible, yet he was not determined by God influencing his will by any positive act to that change and apostasy. God placed him in a free posture, set life and happiness before him on the one hand, misery and death on the other; as he did not draw him into the arms of perpetual blessedness, so he did not drive him into the gulf of his misery. [Note: Amyr. Moral. Tom. I. pp. 615, 616.] He did not incline him to evil. It was repugnant to the goodness of God to corrupt the righteousness of those faculties he had so lately beautified him with. It was not likely he should deface the beauty of that work he had composed with so much wisdom and skill. Would he, by any act of his own, make that bad, which, but a little before, he had acquiesced in as good? Angels and men were left to their liberty and conduct of their natural faculties; and if God inspired them with any motions, they could not but be motions to good, and suited to that righteous nature he had endued them with. But it is most probable that God did not, in a supernatural way, act inwardly upon the mind of man, but left him wholly to that power, which he had, in creation, furnished him with. The Scripture frees God fully from any blame in this, and lays it wholly upon Satan, as the tempter, and upon man, as the determiner of his own will (Genesis 3:6); Eve "took of the fruit, and did eat;" and Adam took from her of the fruit, "and did eat." And Solomon (Ecclesiastes 7:29) distinguisheth God's work in the creation of man "upright," from man's work in seeking out those ruining inventions. God created man in a righteous state, and man cast himself into a forlorn state. As he was a mutable creature, he was from God; as he was a changed and corrupted creature, it was from the devil seducing, and his own pliability in admitting. As silver, and gold, and other metals, were created by God in such a form and figure, yet capable of receiving other forms by the industrious art of man; when the image of a man is put upon a piece of metal, God is not said to create that image, though he created the substance with such a property, that it was capable of receiving it; this capacity is from the nature of the metal by God's creation of it, but the carving the figure of this or that man is not the act of God, but the act of man. As images, in Scripture, are called the work of men's hands, in regard of the imagery, though the matter, wood or stone, upon which the image was carved, was a work of God's creative power. When an artificer frames an excellent instrument, and a musician exactly tunes it, and it comes out of their hands without a blemish, but capable to be untuned by some rude hand, or receive a crack by a sudden fall, if it meet with a disaster, is either the workman or musician to be blamed? The ruin of a house, caused by the wastefulness or carelessness of the tenant, is not to be imputed to

the workman that built it strong, and left it in a good posture.

Prop. II. God's holiness is not blemished by enjoining man a law, which he knew he would not observe.

1. The law was not above his strength. Had the law been impossible to be observed, no crime could have been imputed to the subject, the fault had lain wholly upon the Governor; the non-observance of it had been from a want of strength, and not from a want of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the sun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too short to perform it. But the law set him for a rule, had nothing of impossibility in it; it was easy to be observed; the command was rather below, than above his strength; and the sanction of it was more apt to restrain and scare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts against it; he had as much power, or rather more, to conform to it, than to warp from it; and greater arguments and interest to be observant of it, than to violate it; his all was secured by the one, and his ruin ascertained by the other. The commands of God are not grievous (1 John 5:3); from the first to the last command, there is nothing impossible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all summed up in a love to God, which was the pleasure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not, by inconsiderateness, neglected the dictates and resolves of his own understanding. The law was suited to the strength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature; in which respect, the apostle calls it "good," as it refers to man, as well as "holy," as it refers to God (Romans 7:12). Now, since God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with understanding and will, not to be governed, according to his nature, without a law; was it congruous to the wisdom of God to respect only the future state of man, which, from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foresee would be miserable, by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wisdom of God, to respect only this future state, and not the present state of the creature; and therefore leave him lawless, because he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wise governor, because he saw that man would cease to act like an obedient subject? Shall a righteous magistrate forbear to make just and good laws, because he foresees, either from the dispositions of his subjects, their ill-humor, or some circumstances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break those laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magistrate who minds the rule of righteousness, and the necessary duty of his government, since he is not the cause of those turbulent affections of men, which he wisely foresees will rise up against his just edicts.

2. Though the law now be above the strength of man, yet is not the holiness of God blemished by keeping it up. It is true, God hath been graciously pleased to mitigate the severity and rigor of the law, by the entrance of the gospel; yet where men refuse the terms of the gospel, they continue themselves under the condemnation of the law, and are justly guilty of the breach of it, though they have no strength to observe it. The law, as I said before, was not above man's strength, when he was possessed of original righteousness, though it be above man's strength, since he was stripped of original righteousness. The command was dated before man had contracted his impotency, when he had a power to keep it as well as to break it. Had it been enjoined to man only after the fall, and not before, he might have had a better pretence to excuse himself, because of the impossibility of it; yet he would not have had sufficient excuse, since the impossibility did not result from the nature of the law, but from the corrupted nature of the creature. It was "weak

through the flesh" (Romans 8:3), but it was promulgated when man had a strength proportioned to the commands of it. And now, since man hath unhappily made himself incapable of obeying it, must God's holiness in his law be blemished for enjoining it? Must he abrogate those commands, and prohibit what before he enjoined, for the satisfaction of the corrupted creature? Would not this be his "ceasing to be holy," that his creature might be unblameably unrighteous? Must God strip himself of his holiness, because man will not discharge his iniquity? He cannot be the cause of sin, by keeping up the law, who would be the cause of all the unrighteousness of men, by removing the authority of it. Some things in the law that are intrinsically good in their own nature, are indispensable, and it is repugnant to the nature of God not to command them. If he were not the guardian of his indispensable law, he would be the cause and countenancer of the creatures' iniquity. So little reason have men to charge God with being the cause of their sin, by not repealing his law to gratify their impotence, that he would be unholy if he did. God must not lose his purity, because man hath lost his, and cast away the right of his sovereignty, because man hath cast away his power of obedience.

3. God's foreknowledge that his law would not be observed, lays no blame upon him. Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not necessitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall, that men would do such and such actions, that Judas would betray our Saviour; God foreknew all those things from eternity; but, it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not necessitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his posterity, in the doing those actions that were so foreseen by God; they voluntarily run into such courses, not by any impulsion. God's knowledge was not suspended between certainty and uncertainty; he certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did necessitate him to it; he could find no cause of his own sin, but the liberty of his own will; he charges the occasion of his sin upon the woman, and consequently upon God in giving the woman to him (Genesis 3:12). He could not be so ignorant of the nature of God, as to imagine him without a foresight of future things: since his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation, was greater than any man's since, in all probability. But, however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's foreknowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any necessity upon him, any kind of constraint of him in his action, that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of so strong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death; especially when he urgeth so weak an argument, to impute his crime to God, as the gift of the woman; as if that which was designed him for a help, were intended for his ruin. If God's prescience takes away the liberty of the creature, there is no such thing as a free action in the world (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, else we render God of a limited understanding), nor ever was, no, not by God himself, *ad extra*; for whatsoever he hath done in creation, whatsoever he hath done since the creation, was foreknown by him: he resolved to do it, and, therefore, foreknew that he would do it. Did God do it, therefore, necessarily, as necessity is opposed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, so he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is so far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it speaks something more, doth not dissolve it; God did not only foreknow, but determine the suffering of Christ (Acts 4:27-28). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should suffer, that God might not be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate

decree; but did this take away the liberty of Christ in suffering? (Ephesians 5:2)

“Who offered himself up to God;” that is, by a voluntary act, as well as designed to do it by a determinate counsel. It did infallibly secure the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Christ’s willingness to suffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him suffer. God’s prescience is God’s provision of things arising from their proper causes; as a gardener foresees in his plants the leaves and the flowers that will arise from them in the spring, because he knows the strength and nature of their several roots which he under ground; but his foresight of these things is not the cause of the rise and appearance of those flowers. If any of us see a ship moving towards such a rock or quicksand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we shall certainly foresee that the ship will be torn in pieces by the rock, or swallowed up by the sands; but is this foresight of ours from the causes, any cause of the effect; or can we from hence be said to be the authors of the miscarriage of the ship, and the loss of the passengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreseen by God to come to pass by the consent of his free will, in the choice of the proposed temptation. God foreknew Adam would sin, and if Adam would not have sinned, God would have foreknown that he would not sin. Adam might easily have detected the serpents fraud, and made a better election; God foresaw that he would not do it; God’s foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent: whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, because God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it, was no more a cause of his action, than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his Master foreknew that he would betray him, for Christ had acquainted him with it (John 13:21; John 13:26); yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Christ with any guilt of his treachery.

Prop. III. The holiness of God is not blemished by decreeing the eternal rejection of some men. Reprobation, in its first notion, is an act of preterition, or passing by man is not made wicked by the act of God; but it supposeth him wicked; and so it is nothing else but God’s leaving a man in that guilt and filth wherein he beholds him. In its second notion, it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a punishment (Jude 1:4): “an ordaining to condemnation.” And though it be an eternal act of God, yet, in order of nature, it follows upon the foresight of the transgression of man, and supposeth the crime. God considers Adam’s revolt, and views the whole mass of his corrupted posterity, and chooses some to reduce to himself by his grace, and leaves others to he sinking in their ruins. Since all mankind fell by the fall of Adam, and have corruption conveyed to them successively by that root, whereof they are branches; all men might justly be left wallowing in that miserable condition to which they are reduced by the apostasy of their common head; and God might have passed by the whole race of man, as well as he did the fallen angels, without any hope of redemption. He was no more bound to restore man, than to restore devils, nor bound to repair the nature of any one son of Adam; and had he dealt with men as he dealt with the devils, they had had, all of them, as little just ground to complain of God; for all men deserved to be left to themselves, for all were concluded under sin; but God calls out some to make monuments of his grace, which is an act of the sovereign mercy of that dominion, whereby “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy” (Romans 9:18); others he passes by, and leaves them remaining in that corruption of nature wherein they were born. If men have a power to dispose of their own goods, without any unrighteousness, why should not God dispose of his own grace, and bestow it upon whom he pleases; since it is a debt to none, but a free gift to any that enjoy it? God is not the

cause of sin in this, because his operation about this is negative; it is not an action, but a denial of action, and therefore cannot be the cause of the evil actions of men. [Note: Amyral. Defence de Calv. p. 145] God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he doth not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills so powerfully, as to expel their darkness, and root out those evil habits which possess them by nature. God could, if he would, savingly enlighten the minds of all men in the world, and quicken their hearts with a new life by an invincible grace; but in not doing it, there is no positive act of God, but a cessation of action. We may with as much reason say, that God is the cause of all the sinful actions that are committed by the corporation of devils, since their first rebellion, because he leaves them to themselves, and bestows not a new grace upon them,—as say, God is the cause of the sins of those that he overlooks and leaves in that state of guilt wherein he found them. God did not pass by any without the consideration of sin; so that this act of God is not repugnant to his holiness, but conformable to his justice.

Prop. IV. The holiness of God is not blemished by his secret will to suffer sin to enter into the world. God never willed sin by his preceptive will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never said, Let there be sin under the heaven, as he said, "Let there be water under the heaven." Nor doth he will it by infusing any habit of it, or stirring up inclinations to it; no, "God tempts no man" (James 1:13). Nor doth he will it by his approving will; it is detestable to him, nor ever can he be otherwise; he cannot approve it either before commission or after.

1. The will of God is in some sort concurrent with sin. He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, to which, by his omnipotence, he could put a bar. If he did positively will it, it might be wrought by himself, and so could not be evil. If he did in no sort will it, it would not be committed by his creature; sin entered into the world, either God willing the permission of it, or not willing the permission of it. The latter cannot be said; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he be pleased, banish all sin in a moment out of the world: he could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man; they did not sin whether he would or no: he might, by his grace, have stepped in the first moment, and made a special impression upon them of the happiness they already possessed, and the misery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of those that continued in their happy state: he might have appeared to man, informed him of the issue of his design, and made secret impressions upon his heart, since he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all sin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing it; he was as well able to bar sin forever out of the world, as to let creatures be in the womb of nothing, wherein they were first wrapped. To say God doth will sin as he doth other things, is to deny his holiness; to say it entered without anything of his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he did necessitate Adam to fall, what shall we think of his purity? If Adam did fall without any concern of God's will in it, what shall we say of his sovereignty? The one taints his holiness, and the other clips his power. If it came without anything of his will in it, and he did not foresee it, where is his omniscience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence (Romans 9:19)? "Who hath resisted his will?" There cannot be a lustful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power (Genesis 20:6); "I withheld thee:" nor a cursing word in Balaam's mouth, unless God give power to speak it (Numbers 22:38): "Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak." As no action could be

sinful, if God had not forbidden it; so no sin could be committed, if God did not will to give way to it.

2. God doth not will directly, and by an efficacious will. He doth not directly will it, because he hath prohibited it by his law, which is a discovery of his will: so that if he should directly will sin, and directly prohibit it, he would will good and evil in the same manner, and there would be contradictions in God's will: to will sin absolutely, is to work it (Psalms 115:3): "God hath done whatsoever hes pleased." God cannot absolutely will it, because he cannot work it. God wills good by a positive decree, because he hath decreed to effect it. [Note: Rispolis.] He wills evil by a private decree, because he hath decreed not to give that grace which would certainly prevent it. God doth not will sin simply, for that were to approve it, but he wills it, in order to that good his wisdom will bring forth from it. [Note: Bradward. lib. i. cap. 34. "God wills it secundum quid."] He wills not sin for itself, but for the event. To will sin as sin, or as purely evil, is not in the capacity of a creature, neither of man nor devil. The will of a rational creature cannot will anything but under the appearance of good, of some good in the sin itself, or some good in the issue of it. Much more is this far from God, who, being infinitely good, cannot will evil as evil; and being infinitely knowing, cannot will that for good which is evil. [Note: Aquin. cont. Gent. lib. i. cap. 95.] Infinite wisdom can be under no error or mistake: to will sin as sin, would be an unanswerable blemish on God; but to will to suffer it in order to good, is the glory of his wisdom; it could never have peeped up its head, unless there had been some decree of God concerning it. And there had been no decree of God concerning it, had he not intended to bring good and glory out of it. If God did directly will the discovery of his grace and mercy to the world, he did in some sort will sin, as that without which there could not have been any appearance of mercy in the world; for an innocent creature is not the object of mercy, but a miserable creature and no rational creature but must be sinful before it be miserable.

3. God wills the permission of sin. He doth not positively will sin, but he positively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of sin, yet he approves of that act of his will, whereby he permits it. For since that sin could not enter into the world without some concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it, could not be displeasing to him: God could never be diseased with his own act: "He is not as man, that he should repent" (1 Samuel 15:29). What God cannot repent of, he cannot but approve of: it is contrary to the blessedness of God to disapprove of; and be displeased with any act of his own will. If he hated any act of his own will, he would hate himself, he would be under a torture every one that hates his own acts, is under some disturbance and torment for them. That which is permitted by him, is in itself, and in regard of the evil of it, hateful to him: but as the prospect of that good which he aims at in the permission of it is pleasing to him, so that act of his will, whereby he permits it, is ushered in by an approving act of his understanding. Either God approved of the permission, or not; if he did not approve his own act of permission, he could not have decreed an act of permission. It is inconceivable that God should decree such an act which he detested, and positively will that which he hated. Though God hated sin, as being against his holiness, yet he did not hate the permission of sin, as being subservient by the immensity of his wisdom to his own glory. He could never be displeased with that which was the result of his eternal counsel, as this decree of permitting sin was, as well as any other decree, resolved upon in his own breast. For as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, so he permits nothing in time but what he decreed from eternity to permit. To speak properly, therefore, God doth not will sin, but he wills the permission of it, and this will to permit is

active and positive in God.

4. This act of permission is not a mere and naked permission, but such an one as is attended with a certainty of the event. The decrees of God to make use of the sin of man for the glory of his grace in the mission and passion of his Son, hung upon this entrance of sin. Would it consist with the wisdom of God to decree such great and stupendous things, the event whereof should depend upon an uncertain foundation which he might be mistaken in? God would have sat in counsel from eternity to no purpose, if he had only permitted those things to be done, without any knowledge of the event of this permission. God would not have made such provision for redemption to no purpose, or an uncertain purpose, which would have been, if man had not fallen; or if it had been an uncertainty with God whether he would fall or no. Though the will of God about sin was permissive, yet the will of God about that glory he would promote by the defect of the creature, was positive; and, therefore, he would not suffer so many positive acts of his will to hang upon an uncertain event; and, therefore, he did wisely and righteously order all things to the accomplishment of his great and gracious purposes.

5. This act of permission doth not taint the holiness of God. That there is such an act as permission, is clear in Scripture (Acts 14:16): "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." But that it doth not blemish the holiness of God, will appear, 1st. From the nature of this permission.

1. It is not a moral permission, a giving liberty of toleration by any law to commit sin with impunity; when, what one law did forbid, another law doth leave indifferent to be done or not, as a man sees good in himself. As when there is a law made among men, that no man shall go out of such a city or country without license, to go out without license is a crime by the law; but when that law is repealed by another, that gives liberty for men to go and come at their pleasure, it doth not make their going or coming necessary, but leaves those which were before bound, to do as they see good in themselves. Such a permission makes a fact lawful, though not necessary; a man is not obliged to do it, but he is left to his own discretion to do as he pleases, without being chargeable with a crime for doing it. Such a permission there was granted by God to Adam of eating of the fruits of the garden, to choose any of them for food, except the tree of "knowledge of good and evil." It was a precept to him, not to "eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" but the other was a permission, whereby it was lawful for him to feed upon any other that was most agreeable to his appetite but there is not such a permission in the case of sin; this had been an indulgence of it, which had freed man from any crime, and, consequently, from punishment; because, by such a permission by law, he would have had authority to sin if he please God did not remove the law, which he had before placed as a bar against evil, nor ceased that moral impediment of his threatening: such a permission as this, to make sin lawful or indifferent, had been a blot upon God's holiness.

2. But this permission of God, in the case of sin, is no more than the not hindering a sinful action, which he could have prevented. It is not so much an action of God, as a suspension of his influence, which might have hindered an evil act, and a forbearing to restrain the faculties of man from sin; it is, properly, the not exerting that efficacy which might change the counsels that are taken, and prevent the action intended; as when one man sees another ready to fall, and can preserve him from falling by reaching out his hand, he permits him to fall, that is, he hinders him

not from falling. So God describes his act about Abimelech (Genesis 20:6); "I withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." If Abimelech had sinned, he had sinned by God's permission; that is, by God's not hindering, or not restraining him by making any impressions upon him. So that permission is only a withholding that help and grace, which, if bestowed, would have been an effectual remedy to prevent a crime; and it is rather a suspension, or cessation, than properly a permission, and sin may be said to be committed, not without God's permission, rather than by his permission. Thus, in the fall of man, God did not hold the reins strict upon Satan, to restrain him from laying the bait, nor restrain Adam from swallowing the bait: he kept to himself that efficacious grace which he might have darted out upon man to prevent his fall. God left Satan to his malice of tempting, and Adam to his liberty of resisting, and his own strength, to use that sufficient grace he had furnished him with, whereby he might have resisted and overcome the temptation. As he did not drive man to it, so he did not secretly restrain him from it. So, in the Jews crucifying our Saviour, God did not imprint upon their minds, by his Spirit, a consideration of the greatness of the crime, and the horror of his justice due to it; and, being without those impediments, they run furiously, of their own accord, to the commission of that evil; as, when a man lets a wolf or dog out upon his prey, he takes off the chain which held them, and they presently act according to their natures. [Note: Lawson. p. 64.] In the fall of angels and men, God's act was leaving them to their own strength; in sins after the fall, it is God's giving them up to their own corruption; the first is a pure suspension of grace; the other hath the nature of a punishment (Psalms 81:12): "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts." The first object of this permissive will of God was to leave angels and men to their liberty, and the use of their free will, which was natural to them, [Note: Suarez. vol. IV. p. 414.] not adding that supernatural grace which was necessary, not that they should not at all sin, but that they should infallibly not sin: they had a strength sufficient to avoid sin, but not sufficient infallibly to avoid sin; a grace sufficient to preserve them, but not sufficient to confirm them.

3. Now this permission is not the cause of sin, nor doth blemish the holiness of God. It doth not intrench upon the freedom of men, but supposeth it, establisheth it, and leaves man to it. God acted nothing, but only ceased to act; and therefore could not be the efficient cause of man's sin. As God is not the author of good, but by willing and effecting it, so he is not the author of evil, but by willing and effecting it, but he doth not positively will evil, nor effect it by any efficacy of his own. Permission is no action, nor the cause of that action which is permitted; but the will of that person who is permitted to do such an action is the cause. [Note: Suarez, de Legib. p. 43.] God can no more be said to be the cause of sin, by suffering a creature to act as it will, than he can be said to be the cause of the not being of any creature, by denying it being, and letting it remain nothing; it is not from God that it is nothing, it is nothing in itself. Though God be said to be the cause of creation, yet he is never by any said to be the cause of that nothing which was before creation. This permission of God is not the cause of sin, but the cause of not hindering sin. Man and angels had a physical power of sinning from God, as they were created with freewill, and supported in their natural strength; but the moral power to sin was not from God; he counselled them not to it, laid no obligation upon them to use their natural power for such an end; he only left them to their freedom, and not hindered them in their acting what he was resolved to permit.

2d. The holiness of God is not tainted by this, because he was under no obligation to hinder their commission of sin. Ceasing to act, whereby to prevent a crime or mischief, brings not a person

permitting it under guilt, unless where he is under an obligation to prevent it; but God, in regard of his absolute dominion, cannot be charged with any such obligation. One man, that doth not hinder the murder of another, when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part; but, it is to be considered, that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the same kind, and being the other's brother, by a communion of blood, also under an obligation of the law of charity, enacted by the common Sovereign of the world: but what he was there upon God, since the infinite transcendancy of his nature, and his sovereign dominion, frees him from any such obligation (Job 9:12)? "If he takes away, who shall say, What dost thou?" God might have prevented the fall of men and angels; he might have confirmed them all in a state of perpetual innocency; but where is the obligation? He had made the creature a debtor to himself, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this case, it must be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound to hinder it. No person can be justly charged with another's fault, merely for not preventing it, unless he be bound to prevent it; else, not only the first sin of angels and man would be imputed to God, as the Author, but all the sins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, because he had no superior to impose any law upon him; and it will be hard to prove that he was obliged, from his own nature, to prevent the entrance of sin, which he would use as an occasion to declare his own holiness, so transcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifested by a total exclusion of it, viz. in the death of Christ. He is no more bound, in his own nature, to preserve, by supernatural grace, his creature from falling, after he had framed him with a sufficient strength to stand, than he was obliged, in his own nature, to bring his creature into being when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much less bound to create him with supernatural gifts; though, since God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural uprightness and rectitude. God did as much for angels and men as became a wise governor: he had published his law, backed it with severe penalties, and the creature wanted not a natural strength to observe and obey it. Had not man power to obey all the precepts of the law, as well as one? How was God bound to give him more grace, since what he had already was enough to shield him, and keep up his resistance against all the power of hell? It had been enough to have pointed his will against the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promise past to Adam of any further grace which he could plead as a tie upon God? No such voluntary limit upon God's supreme dominion appears upon record. Was anything due to man which he had not? anything promised him which was not performed? What action of debt, then, can the creature bring against God? Indeed, when man began to neglect the light of his own reason, and became inconsiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his understanding by a special flash, a supernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular consideration of the necessity of his obedience, the misery he was approaching to by his sin, the folly of any apprehension of an equality in knowledge; he might have convinced him of the falsity of the serpent's arguments, and uncased to him the venom that lay under those baits. But how doth it appear that God was bound to those additional acts when he had already lighted up in him a "spirit, which was the candle of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27), whereby he was able to discern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not necessitate man to sin, did not counsel him to it; that he had given him sufficient warning in the threatening, and sufficient strength in his faculties, to fortify him against temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing; he withdrew no help from him, that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preserving grace of God, and God was not

bound to offer it, when he was not petitioned for it especially: yet if he had begged it, God having before furnished him sufficiently, might, by the right of his sovereign dominion, have denied it without any impeachment of his holiness and righteousness. Though he would not in such a case have dealt so bountifully with his creature as he might have done, yet he could not have been impleaded, as dealing unrighteously with his creature. The single word that God had already uttered, when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppose against all the devil's wiles, which tended to invalidate that word: the understanding of man could not imagine that the word of God was vainly spoken; and the very suggestion of the devil, as if the Creator should envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous, if he had attended to the voice of his own reason. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteously in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature. To conclude, if God's permission of sin were enough to charge it upon God, or if God had been obliged to give Adam supernatural grace, Adam, that had so capacious a brain, could not be without that plea in his mouth, "Lord thou mightest have prevented it; the commission of it by me could not have been without thy permission of it:" or, "Thou hast been wanting to me, as the author of my nature." No such plea is brought by Adam into the court, when God tried and cast him; no such pleas can have any strength in them. Adam had reason enough to know, that there was sufficient reason to overrule such a plea.

Since the permission of sin casts no dirt upon the holiness of God, as I think hath been cleared, we may under this head consider two things more.

1. That God's permission of sin is not so much as his restraint or limitation of it. Since the entrance of the first sin into the world by Adam, God is more a hinderer than a permitter of it. If he hath permitted that which he could have prevented, he prevents a world more, that he might, if he pleased, permit: the hedges about sin are larger than the outlets; they are but a few streams that glide about the world, in comparison of that mighty torrent he dams up both in men and devils. He that understands what a lake of Sodom is in every man's nature, since the universal infection of human nature, as the apostle describes it (Romans 3:9-10, &c.), must acknowledge, that if God should cast the reins upon the necks of sinful men, they would run into thousands of abominable crimes, more than they do the impression of all natural laws would be raced out, the world would be a public stew, and a more bloody slaughter house; human society would sink into a chaos; no starlight of commendable morality would be seen in it; the world would be no longer an earth, but an hell, and have lain deeper in wickedness than it doth. If God did not limit sin, as he doth the sea, and put bars to the waves of the heart, as well as those of the waters, and say of them, "Hitherto you shall go, and no further;" man hath such a furious ocean in him, as would overflow the banks; and where it makes a breach in one place, it would in a thousand, if God should suffer it to act according to its impetuous current. As the devil hath lust enough to destroy all mankind, if God did not bridle him; deal with every man as he did with Job, ruin their comforts, and deform their bodies with scabs; infect religion with a thousand more errors; fling disorders into commonwealths, and make them as a fiery furnace, full of nothing but flame; if he were not chained by that powerful arm, that might let him loose to fulfil his malicious fury; what rapines, murders, thefts, would be committed, if he did not stint him! Abimelech would not only lust after Sarah, but deflower her; Laban not only pursue Jacob, but rifle him; Saul not only hate David, but murder him; David not only threaten Nabal, but root him up, and his family, did not God girdle in the wrath of man: [Note: Psalms 76:10, as the word "restrain" signifies.] a greater remainder of

wrath is pent in, than flames out, which yet swells for an outlet. God may be concluded more holy in preventing men's sins, than the author of sin in permitting some; since, were it not for his restraints by the pull-back of conscience, and infused motions and outward impediments, the world would swarm more with this cursed brood.

2. His permission of sin is in order to his own glory, and a greater good. It is no reflection upon the Divine goodness to leave man to his own conduct, whereby such a deformity as sin sets foot in the world; since he makes his wisdom illustrious in bringing good out of evil, and a good greater than that evil he suffered to spring up. [Note: Majus bonum, saith Bradward.] God did not permit sin, as sin, or permit it barely for itself: As sin is not lovely in its own nature, so neither is the permission of sin intrinsically good or amiable for itself, but for those ends aimed at in the permission of it. God permitted sin, but approved not of the object of that permission, sin; because that, considered in its own nature, is solely evil: nor can we think that God could approve of the act of permission, considered only in itself as an act; but as it respected that event which his wisdom would order by it. We cannot suppose that God should permit sin, but for some great and glorious end: for it is the manifestation of his own glorious perfections he intends in all the acts of his will (Proverbs 16:4), "The Lord hath made all things for himself"—■■■■ hath wrought all things; which is not only his act of creation, but ordination: "for himself;" that is, for the discovery of the excellency of his nature, and the communication of himself to his creature. Sin indeed, in its own nature, hath no tendency to a good end; the womb of it teems with nothing but monsters; it is a spurn at God's sovereignty, and a slight of his goodness: it both deforms and torments the person that acts it; it is black and abominable, and hath not a mite of goodness in the nature of it. If it ends in any good, it is only from that Infinite transcendency of skill, that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Therefore God did not permit it as sin, but as it was an occasion for the manifestation of his own glory. Though the goodness of God would have appeared in the preservation of the world, as well as it did in the creation of it, yet his mercy could not have appeared without the entrance of sin, because the object of mercy is a miserable creature; but man could not be miserable as long as he remained innocent. The reign of sin opened a door for the reign and triumph of grace (Romans 5:21), "As sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life;" without it, the bowels of mercy had never sounded, and the ravishing music of Divine grace could never have been heard by the creature. Mercy, which renders God so amiable, could never else have beamed out to the world. Angels and men upon this occasion beheld the stirrings of Divine grace, and the tenderness of Divine nature, and the glory of the Divine persons in their several functions about the redemption of man, which had else been a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed; the song of glory to God, and good will to men in a way of redemption had never been sung by them. It appears in his dealing with Adam, that he permitted his fall, not only to show his justice in punishing, but principally his mercy in rescuing; since he proclaims to him first the promise of a Redeemer to "bruise the serpent's head," before he settled the punishment he should smart under in the world (Genesis 3:15-17). And what fairer prospect could the creature have of the holiness of God, and his hatred of sin, than in the edge of that sword of justice, which punished it in the sinner; but glittered more in the punishment of a Surety so near allied to him? Had not man been criminal, he could not have been punishable, nor any been punishable for him: and the pulse of Divine holiness could not have eaten so quick, and been so visible, without an exercise of his vindictive justice. He left man's mutable nature, to fall under righteousness, that thereby he might commend the righteousness of his own nature (Romans 3:7). Adam's sin in its nature tended to

the ruin of the world, and God takes an occasion from it for the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world; he brings forth thereby a new scene of wonders from heaven, and a surprising knowledge on earth; as the sun breaks out more strongly after a night of darkness and tempest. As God in creation framed a chaos by his power, to manifest his wisdom in bringing order out of disorder, light out of darkness, beauty out of confusion and deformity, when he was able by a word to have made all creatures stand up in their beauty, without the precedency of a chaos; so God permitted a moral chaos to manifest a greater wisdom in the repairing a broken image, and restoring a deplorable creature, and bringing out those perfections of his nature, which had else been wrapt up in a perpetual silence in his own bosom. It was therefore very congruous to the holiness of God to permit that which he could make subservient for his own glory, and particularly for the manifestation of this attribute of holiness, which seems to be in opposition to such a permission. [Note: But of the wisdom of God in the permitting sin in order to redemption, I have handled in the attribute of "Wisdom."]

Prop. V. The holiness of God is not blemished by his concurrence with the creature in the material part of a sinful act. Some to free God from having any hand in sin, deny his concurrence to the actions of the creature; because, if he concurs to a sinful action, he concurs to the sin also: not understanding how there can be a distinction between the act, and the sinfulness or viciousness of it; and how God can concur to a natural action, without being stained by that moral evil which cleaves to it. For the understanding of this, observe,

1. There is a concurrence of God to all the acts of the creature (Acts 17:28); "in him we live, and move, and have our being." We depend upon God in our acting as well as in our being: there is as much an efficacy of God in our motion as in our production; as none have life without his power in producing it, so none have any operation without his providence concurring with it. In him, or by him, that is, by his virtue preserving and governing our motions, as well as by his power bringing us into being. Hence man is compared to an axe (Isaiah 10:15), an instrument that hath no action, without the co-operation of a superior agent handling it: and the actions of the second causes are ascribed to God; the grass, that is, the product of the sun, rain, and earth, he is said to make to grow upon the mountains (Psalms 147:8); and the skin and flesh, which is by natural generation, he is said to clothe us with (Job 10:5), in regard of his co-working with second causes, according to their natures. As nothing can exist, so nothing can operate without him; let his concurrence be removed, and the being and action of the creature cease; remove the sun from the horizon, or a candle from a room, and the light which flowed from either of them ceaseth. Without God's preserving and concurring power, the course of nature would sink, and the creation be in vain. All created things depend upon God as agents, as well as beings, and are subordinate to him in a way of action, as well as in a way of existing. [Note: Suarez, Metaph. Part I. p. 552.] If God suspend his influence from their action, they would cease to act, as the fire did from burning the three children, as well as if God suspend his influence from their being, they would cease to be. God supports the nature whereby actions are wrought, the mind where actions are consulted, and the will where actions are determined, and the motive-power whereby actions are produced. The mind could not contrive, nor the hand act, a wickedness, if God did not support the power of the one in designing, and the strength of the other in executing a wicked intention. Every faculty in its being, and every faculty in its motion, hath a dependence upon the influence of God. To make the creature independent upon God in anything which speaks perfection, as action considered as

action is, is to make the creature a sovereign being. Indeed, we cannot imagine the concurrence of God to the good actions of men since the fall, without granting a concurrence of God to evil actions; because there is no action so purely good but hath a mixture of evil in it, though it takes its denomination of good from the better part (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "There is no man that doth good, and sins not."

2. Though the natural virtue of doing a sinful action be from God, and supported by him, yet this doth not blemish the holiness of God; while God concurs with them in the act, he instils no evil into men.

(1.) No act, in regard of the substance of it, is evil. Most of the actions of our faculties, as they are actions, might have been in the state of innocency. Eating is an act Adam would have used if he had stood firm, but not eating to excess. Worship was an act that should have been performed to God in innocence, but not hypocritically. Every action is good by a physical goodness, as it is an act of the mind or hand, which have a natural goodness by creation; but every action is not morally good: the physical goodness of the action depends on God, the moral evil on the creature. There is no action, as a corporeal action, is prohibited by the law of God; but as it springs from an evil disposition, and is tainted by a venomous temper of mind. [Note: Amyrald. de Libero arbit. pp. 98, 99.] There is no action so bad, as attended with such objects and circumstances; but if the objects and circumstances were changed, might be a brave and commendable action: so that the moral goodness or badness of an act is not to be esteemed from the substance of the act, which hath always a physical goodness; but from the objects, circumstances, and constitution of the mind in the doing of it. Worship is an act good in itself; but the worship of an image is bad in regard of the object. Were that act of worship directed to God that is paid to a statue, and offered up to him with a sincere frame of mind, it would be morally good. The act, in regard of its substance, is the same in both, and considered as separated from the object to which the worship is directed, hath the same real goodness in regard of the substance; but when you consider this action in relation to the different objects, the one hath a moral goodness, and the other a moral evil. So in speaking: speaking being a motion of the tongue in the forming of words, is an excellency belonging to a reasonable creature; an endowment bestowed, continued, and supported by God. Now, if the same tongue forms words whereby it curseth God this minute, and forms words whereby it blesses and praises God the next minute, the faculty of speaking is the same, the motion of the tongue is the same in pronouncing the name of God either in a way of cursing or blessing (James 3:9-10); it is the "same mouth that blesseth and curseth;" and the motion of it is naturally good in regard of the substance of the act in both; it is the use of an excellent power God hath given, and which God preserves, in the use of it. But the estimation of the moral goodness or evil is not from the act itself, but from the disposition of the mind. Once more: killing, as an act is good; nor is it unlawful as an act; for if so, God would never have commanded his people Israel to wage any war, and justice could not be done upon malefactors by the magistrate. A man were bound to sacrifice his life to the fury of an invader, rather than secure it by dispatching that of an enemy; but killing an innocent, or killing without authority, or out of revenge, is bad. It is not the material part of the act, but the object, manner, and circumstance, that makes it good or evil. It is no blemish to God's holiness to concur to the substance of an action, without having any hand in the immorality of it; because, whatsoever is real in the substance of the action might be done without evil. It is not evil as it is an act, as it is a motion of the tongue or hand, for then every motion of the tongue or hand

would be evil.

(2.) Hence it follows, that an act, as an act, is one thing, and the viciousness another. The action is the efficacy of the faculty, extending itself to some outward object; but the sinfulness of an act consists in a privation of that comeliness and righteousness which ought to be in an action; in a want of conformity of the act with the law of God, either written in nature, or revealed in the Word. [Note: Amyrald. pp. 321, 322.] Now, the sinfulness of an action is not the act itself, but is considered in it as it is related to the law, and is a deviation from it; and so it is something cleaving to the action, and therefore to be distinguished from the act itself, which is the subject of the sinfulness. When we say such an action is sinful, the action is the subject, and the sinfulness of the action is that which adheres to it. The action is not the sinfulness, nor the sinfulness the action; they are distinguished as the member, and a disease in the member, the arm and the palsy in it: the arm is not the palsy, nor is the palsy the arm; but the palsy is a disease that cleaves to the arm: so sinfulness is a deformity that cleaves to an action. The evil of an action is not the effect of an action, nor attends it as it is an action, but as it is an action so circumstantiated, and conversant about this or that object; for the same action done by two several persons, may be good in one, and bad in the other; as when two judges are in joint commission for the trial of a malefactor, both upon the appearance of his guilt condemn him. This action in both, considered as an action, is good; for it is an adjudging a man to death, whose crime deserves such a punishment. But this same act, which is but one joint act of both, may be morally good in one judge, and morally evil in the other: morally good in him that condemns him out of an unbiassed consideration of the demerit of his fact, obedience to the law, and conscious of the duty of his place; and morally evil in the other, who hath no respect to those considerations, but joins in the act of condemnation, principally moved by some private animosity against the prisoner, and desire of revenge for some injury he hath really received, or imagines that he hath received from him. The act in itself is the same materially in both; but in one it is an act of justice, and in the other an act of murder, as it respects the principles and motives of it in the two judges; take away the respect of private revenge, and the action in the ill judge had been as laudable as the action of the other. The substance of an act, and the sinfulness of an act, are separable and distinguishable; and God may concur with the substance of an act, without concurring with the sinfulness of the act: as the good judge, that condemned the prisoner out of conscience, concurred with the evil judge, who condemned the prisoner out of private revenge; not in the principle and motive of condemnation, but in the material part of condemnation. So God assists in that action of a man wherein sin is placed, but not in that which is the formal reason of sin, which is a privation of some perfection the action ought morally to have.

(3.) It will appear further in this, that hence it follows that the action, and the viciousness of the action, may have two distinct causes. That may be a cause of the one that is not the cause of the other, and hath no hand in the producing of it. God concurs to the act of the mind as it counsels, and to the external action upon that counsel, as he preserves the faculty, and gives strength to the mind to consult, and the other parts to execute; yet he is not in the least tainted with the viciousness of the action. Though the action be from God as a concurrent cause, yet the ill quality of the action is solely from the creature with whom God concurs. The sun and the earth concur to the production of all the plants that are formed in the womb of the one, and midwived by the other. The sun distributes heat, and the earth communicates sap; it is the same heat dispersed by the

one, and the same juice bestowed by the other: it hath not a sweet juice for one, and a sour juice for another. This general influx of the sun and earth is not the immediate cause that one plant is poisonous, and another wholesome; but the sap of the earth is turned by the nature and quality of each plant: if there were not such an influx of the sun and earth, no plant could exert that poison which is in its nature; but yet the sun and earth are not the cause of that poison which is in the nature of the plant. If God did not concur to the motions of men, there could be no sinful action, because there could be no action at all; yet this concurrence is not the cause of that venom that is in the action, which ariseth from the corrupt nature of the creature, no more than the sun and earth are the cause of the poison of the plant, which is purely the effect of its own nature upon that general influx of the sun and earth. The influence of God pierceth through all subjects; but the action of man done by that influence is vitiated according to the nature of its own corruption. As the sun equally shines through all the quarrels in the window; if the glass be bright and clear, there is a pure splendor; if it be red or green, the splendor is from the sun; but the discoloring of that light upon the wall, is from the quality of the glass. But to be yet plainer: the soul is the image of God, and by the acts of the soul, we may come to the knowledge of the acts of God; the soul gives motion to the body and every member of it, and no member could move without a concurrent virtue of the soul; if a member be paralytic or gouty, whatsoever motion that gouty member hath, is derived to it from the soul; but the goutiness of the member was not the act of the soul, but the fruit of ill humors in the body; the lameness of the member, and the motion of the member, have two distinct causes; the motion is from one cause, and ill motion from another. [Note: Zanch. Tom. II. lib. iii. cap. 4, quest. iv. p. 226.] As the member could not move irregularly without some ill humor or cause of that distemper, so it could not move at all without the activity of the soul: so, though God concur to the act of understanding, willing, and execution, why can he not be as free from the irregularity in all those, as the soul is free from the irregularity of the motion of the body, while it is the cause of the motion itself? There are two illustrations generally used in this case, that are not unfit; the motion of the pen in writing is from the hand that holds it, but the blurs by the pen are from some fault in the pen itself: and the music of the instrument is from the hand that touches it, but the jarring from the faultiness of the strings; both are the causes of the motion of the pen and strings, but not the blurs or jarrings.

(4). It is very congruous to the wisdom of God, to move his creatures according to their particular natures; but this motion makes him not the cause of sin. Had our innocent nature continued, God had moved us according to that innocent nature; but when the state was changed for a corrupt one, God must either forbear all concurrence, and so annihilate the world, or move us according to that nature he finds in us. If he had overthrown the world upon the entrance of sin, and created another upon the same terms, sin might have as soon defaced his second work, as it did the first; and then it would follow, that God would have been alway building and demolishing. It was not fit for God to cease from acting as a wise governor of his creature, because man did cease from his loyalty as a subject. Is it not more agreeable to God's wisdom as a governor, to concur with his creature according to his nature, than to deny his concurrence upon every evil determination of the creature? God concurred with Adam's mutable nature in his first act of sin; he concurred to the act, and left him to his mutability. If Adam had put out his hand to eat of any other unforbidden fruit, God would have supported his natural faculty then, and concurred with him in his motion. When Adam would put out his hand to take the forbidden fruit, God concurred to that natural action, but left him to the choice of the object, and to the use of his mutable nature and when man became

apostate, God concurs with him according to that condition wherein he found him, and cannot move him otherwise, unless he should alter that nature man had contracted. God moving the creature as he found him, is no cause of the ill motion of the creature: as when a wheel is broken the space of a foot, it cannot but move ill in that part till it be mended. He that moves it, uses the same motion (as it is his act) which he would have done had the wheel been sound; the motion is good in the mover, but bad in the subject: it is not the fault of him that moves it, but the fault of that wheel that is moved, whose breaches came by some other cause. A man doth not use to lay aside his watch for some irregularity, as long as it is capable of motion, but winds it up: why should God cease from concurring with his creature in its vital operations and other actions of his will, because there was a flaw contracted in that nature, that came right and true out of his hand? And as he that winds up his disordered watch, is in the same manner the cause of its motion then, as he was when it was regular, yet, by that act of his, he is not the cause of the false motion of it. but that is from the deficiency of some part of the watch itself: so, though God concurs to that action of the creature, whereby the wickedness of the heart is drawn out, yet is not God therefore as unholy as the heart.

(5.) God hath one end in his concurrence, and man another in his action: so that there is a righteous, and often a gracious end in God, when there is a base and unworthy end in man. God concurs to the substance of the act; man produceth the circumstance of the act, whereby it is evil. God orders both the action wherein he concurs, and the sinfulness over which he presides, as a governor, to his own ends. In Joseph's case, man was sinful, and God merciful; his brethren acted "envy," and God designed "mercy" (Genesis 45:4-5). They would be rid of him as an eye-sore, and God concurred with their action to make him their preserver (Genesis 1:20), "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." God concurred to Judas his action of betraying our Saviour; he supported his nature while he contracted with the priests, and supported his members while he was their guide to apprehend him; God's end was the manifestation of his choicest love to man, and Judas' end was the gratification of his own covetousness. The Assyrian did a divine work against Jerusalem, but not with a Divine end (Isaiah 10:5-7). He had a mind to enlarge his empire, enrich his coffers with the spoil, and gain the title of a conqueror; he is desirous to invade his neighbors, and God employs him to punish his rebels; but he means not so, nor doth his heart think so; he intended not as God intended. The axe doth not think what the carpenter intends to do with it. But God used the rapine of ambitious nature as an instrument of his justice; as the exposing malefactors to wild beasts was an ancient punishment, whereby the magistrates intended the execution of justice, and to that purpose used the natural fierceness of the beasts to an end different from what those ravaging creatures aimed at. God concurred with Satan in spoiling Job of his goods, and scarifying his body; God gave Satan licence to do it, and Job acknowledges it to be God's act (Job 1:12-21); but their ends were different; God concurred with Satan for the clearing the integrity of his servant, when Satan aimed at nothing but the provoking him to curse his Creator. The physician applies leeches to suck the superfluous blood, but the leeches suck to glut themselves, without any regard to the intention of the physician, and the welfare of the patient. In the same act where men intend to hurt, God intends to correct; so that his concurrence is in a holy manner, while men commit unrighteous actions. A judge commands the executioner to execute the sentence of death, which he hath justly pronounced against a malefactor, and admomsheth him to do it out of love to justice; the executioner hath the authority of the judge for his commission, and the protection of the judge for his security; the judge stands

by to countenance and secure him in the doing of it; but if the executioner hath not the same intention as the judge, viz. a love to justice in the performance of his office, but a private hatred to the offender, the judge, though he commanded the fact of the executioner, yet did not command this error of his in it; and though he protects him in the fact, yet he owns not this corrupt disposition in him in the doing what was enjoined him, as any act of his own. To conclude this. Since the creature cannot act without God, cannot lift up a hand, or move his tongue, without God's preserving and upholding the faculty, and preserving the power of action, and preserving every member of the body in its actual motion, and in every circumstance of its motion, we must necessarily suppose God to have such a way of concurrence as doth not intrench upon his holiness. We must not equal the creature to God, by denying his dependence on him; nor must we imagine such a concurrence to the sinfulness of an act, as stains the Divine purity, which is, I think, sufficiently salved by distinguishing the matter of the act from the evil adhering to it; for since all evil is founded in some good, the evil is distinguishable from the good, and the deformity of the action from the action itself; which, as it is a created act, hath a dependence on the will and influence of God; and as it is a sinful act, is the product of the will of the creature.

Prop. VI. The holiness of God is not blemished by proposing objects to a man, which he makes use of to sin. There is no object proposed to man, but is directed by the providence of God, which influenceth all the motions in the world; and there is no object proposed to man, but his active nature may, according to the goodness or badness of his disposition, make a good or an ill use of: That two men, one of a charitable, the other of a hard-hearted disposition, meet with an indigent and necessitous object, is from the providence of God; yet this indigent person is relieved by the one, and neglected by the other. There could be no action in the world, but about some object; there could be no object offered to us but by Divine Providence; the active nature of man would be in vain, if there were not objects about which it might be exercised. Nothing could present itself to man as an object, either to excite his grace, or awaken his corruption, but by the conduct of the Governor of the world. That David should walk upon the battlements of his palace, and Bathsheba be in the bath at the same time, was from the Divine Providence which orders all the affairs of the world (2 Samuel 11:7); and so some understand (Jeremiah 6:21): "Thus saith the Lord, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and sons together shall fall upon them." Since they have offered sacrifices without those due qualifications in their hearts, which were necessary to render them acceptable to me, I will lay in their way such objects, which their corruption will use ill to their farther sin and ruin; so (Psalms 105:25), "He turned their heart to hate his people;" that is, by the multiplying his people, he gave occasion to the Egyptians of hating them, instead of caressing them, as they had formerly done. But God's holiness is not blemished by this; for,

1. This proposing or presenting of objects invades not the liberty of any man. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, set in the midst of the garden of Eden,—had no violent influence on man to force him to eat of it; his liberty to eat of it, or not, was reserved entire to himself; no such charge can be brought against any object whatsoever. If a man meet accidentally at a table with meat that is grateful to his palate, but hurtful to the present temper of his body, doth the presenting this sort of food to him strip him of his liberty to decline it, as well as to feed of it? Can the food have any internal influence upon his will, and lay the freedom of it asleep whether he will or no? Is there any charm in that, more than in other sorts of diet? No; but it is the habit of love which he hath to that particular dish, the curiosity of his fancy, and the strength of his own appetite, whereby

he is brought into a kind of slavery to that particular meat, and not anything in the food itself. When the word is proposed to two persons, it is embraced by the one, rejected by the other; is it from the word itself, which is the object, that these two persons perform different acts? The object is the same to both, but the manner of acting about the object is not the same; is there any invasion of their liberty by it? Is the one forced by the word to receive it, and the other forced by the word to reject it? Two such contrary effects cannot proceed from one and the same cause; outward things have only an objective influence, not an inward; if the mere proposal of things did suspend or strike down the liberty of man, no angels in heaven, no man upon earth, no, not our Saviour himself; could do anything freely, but by force; objects that are ill used are of God's creation, and though they have allurements in them, yet they have no compulsive power over the will. [Note: Amyral. de Libero arbit. p. 224.] The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was pleasing to the sight; it had a quality to allure; there had not else needed a prohibition to bar the eating of it; but it could not have so much power to allure, as the Divine threatening to deter.

2. The objects are good in themselves, but the ill use of them is from man's corruption. Bathsheba was, by God's providence, presented to David's sight, but it was David's disposition moved him to so evil an act; what if God knew that he would use that object ill? yet he knew he had given him a power to refrain from any ill use of it; the objects are innocent, but our corruption poisons them. The same object hath been used by one to holy purposes and holy improvements, that hath been used by another to sinful ends; when a charitable object is presented to a good man, and a cruel man, one relieves him, the other reviles him; the object was rather an occasion to draw out the charity of one, as well as the other; but the refusing to reach out a helping hand, was not from the person in calamity, but the disposition of the refuser to whom he was presented; it is not from the nature of the object that men do good or evil, but from the disposition of the person; what is good in itself, is made bad by our corruption. As the same meat which nourishes and strengthens a sound constitution, cherisheth the disease of another that eats at the same table, not from any unwholesome quality in the food, but the vicious quality of the humors lodging in the stomach, which turn the diet into fuel for themselves, which in its own nature was apt to engender a wholesome juice. Some are perfected by the same things whereby others are ruined. Riches are used by some, not only for their own, but the advantage of others in the world; by others only for themselves, and scarcely so much as their necessities require. Is this the fault of the wealth, or the dispositions of the persons, who are covetous instead of being generous? It is a calumny, therefore, upon God to charge him with the sin of man upon this account. The rain that drops from the clouds upon the plants is sweet in itself, but when it moistens the root of any venomous plant, it is turned into the juice of the plant, and becomes venomous with it. The miracles that our Saviour wrought, were applauded by some, and envied by the Pharisees; the sin arose not from the nature of the miracles, but the malice of their spirits. The miracles were fitter in their own nature to have induced them to an adoration of our Saviour, than to excite so vile a passion against one that had so many marks from heaven to dignify him, and proclaim him worthy of their respect. The person of Christ was an object proposed to the Jews; some worship him, others condemn and crucify him, and according to their several vices and base ends they use this object. Judas to content his covetousness, the Pharisees to glut their revenge, Pilate for his ambition, to preserve himself in his government, and avoid the articles the people might charge him with of countenancing an enemy to Caesar. God at that time put into their minds a rational and true proposition which they apply to ill purposes. [Note: Amyrald, Ironie. p. 337.] Caiaphas said, that "it was expedient for one man to

die for the people," which "he spake not of himself" (John 11:50-51). God put it into his mind; but he might have applied it better than he did, and considered, though the maxim was commendable, whether it might justly be applied to Christ, or whether there was such a necessity that he must die, or the nation be destroyed by the Romans. The maxim was sound. and holy, decreed by God; but what an ill use did the high-priest make of it to put Christ to death as a seditious person, to save the nation from the Roman fury!

3. Since the natural corruption of men will use such objects ill, may not God, without tainting himself, resent such objects to them in subserviency to his gracious decrees? Whatsoever God should present to men in that state, they would make an ill use of; hath not God, then, the sovereign prerogative to present what he pleases, and suppress others? To offer that to them which may serve his holy purpose, and hide other things from them which are not so conducing to his gracious ends, which would be as much the occasions of exciting their sin, as the others which he doth bring forth to their view? The Jews, at the time of Christ, were of a turbulent and seditious humor; they expected a Messiah, a temporal king, and would readily have embraced any occasion to have been up in arms to have delivered themselves from the Roman yoke; to this purpose the people attempted once to make him king: and probably the expectation they had that he had such a design to head them, might be one reason of their "hosannas;" because without some such conceit it was not probable they should so soon change their note, and vote him to the cross in so short a time, after they had applauded him as if he had been upon a throne; but their being defeated of strong expectations, usually ended in a more ardent fury. This turbulent and seditious humor God directs in another channel, suppresseth all occurrences that might excite them to a rebellion against the Romans, which, if he had given way to, the crucifying Christ, which was God's design to bring about at that time, had not probably been effected, and the salvation of mankind been hindered or stood at a stay for a time. God, therefore, orders such objects and occasions, that might direct this seditious humor to another channel, which would else have run out in other actions, which had not been conducing to the great design he had then in the world. Is it not the right of God, and without any blemish to his holiness, to use those corruptions which he finds sown in the nature of his creature by the hand of Satan, and to propose such objects as may excite the exercise of them for his own service? Sure God hath as much right to serve himself of the creature of his own framing, and what natures soever they are possessed with, and to present objects to that purpose, as a falconer hath to offer this or that bird to his hawk to exercise his courage, and excite his ravenousness, without being termed the author of that ravenousness in the creature. God planted not those corruptions in the Jews, but finds them in those persons over whom he hath an absolute sovereignty in the right of a Creator, and that of a Judge for their sins: and by the right of that sovereignty may offer such objects and occasions, which, though innocent in themselves, he knows they will make use of to ill purposes, but which by the same decree that he resolves to present such occasions to them, he also resolves to make use of them for his own glory. It is not conceivable by us what way that death of Christ, which was necessary for the satisfaction of Divine justice, could be brought about without ordering the evil of some men's hearts by special occasions to effect his purpose; we cannot suppose that Christ can be guilty of any crime that deserved death by the Jewish law; had he been so a criminal, he could not have been a Redeemer: a perfect innocence was necessary to the design of his coming. [Note: This I have spoken of before, but it is necessary now.] Had God himself put him to that death, without using instruments of wickedness in it, by some remarkable hand from heaven, the innocence of his

nature had been forever eclipsed, and the voluntariness of his sacrifice had been obscured: the strangeness of such a judgment would have made his innocence incredible; he could not reasonably have been proposed as an object of faith. What, to believe in one that was struck dead by a hand from heaven? The propagation of the doctrine of redemption had wanted a foundation; and though God might have raised him again, the certainty of his death had been as questionable as his innocence in dying, had he not been raised. But God orders everything so as to answer his own most wise and holy ends, and maintain his truth, and the fulfilling the predictions of the minutest concerns about them, and all this by presenting occasions innocent in themselves, which the corruptions of the Jews took hold of, and whereby God, unknown to them, brought about his own decrees: and may not this be conceived without any taint upon God's holiness? for when there are seeds of all sin in man's nature, why may not God hinder the sprouting up of this or that kind of seed, and leave liberty to the growth of the other, and shut up other ways of sinning, and restrain men from them, and let them loose to that temptation which he intends to serve himself of, hiding from them those objects which were not so serviceable to his purpose, wherein they would have sinned, and offer others, which he knew their corruption would use ill, and were serviceable to his ends; since the depravation of their natures would necessarily hurry them to evil without restraining grace, as a scale will necessarily rise up when the weight in it, which kept it down, is taken away?

Prop. VII. The holiness of God is not blemished by withdrawing his grace from a sinful creature, whereby he falls into more sin. That God withdraws his grace from men, and gives them up sometimes to the fury of their lusts, is as clear in Scripture, as anything (Deuteronomy 29:4): "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear," &c. Judas was delivered to Satan after the sop, and put into his power, for despising former admonitions. He often leaves the reins to the devil, that he may use what efficacy he can in those that have offended the Majesty of God; he withholds further influences of grace, or withdraws what before he had granted them. Thus he withheld that grace from the sons of Eli, that might have made their father's pious admonitions effectual to them (1 Samuel 2:25): "They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." He gave grace to Eli to reprove them, and withheld that grace from them, which might have enabled them against their natural corruption and obstinacy to receive that reproof. But the holiness of God is not blemished by this.

1. Because the act of God in this is only negative. [Note: Testard, de Natur, et Grat. Thes. 150, 151. Amy on Divers Texts, p. 311] Thus God is said to "harden" men: not by positive hardening, or working anything in the creature, but by not working, not softening, leaving a man to the hardness of his own heart, whereby it is unavoidable by the depravation of man's nature, and the fury of his passions, but that he should be further hardened, and "increase unto more ungodliness," as the expression is (2 Timothy 2:19). As a man is said to give another his life, when he doth not take it away when it lay at his mercy; so God is said to "harden" a man, when he doth not mollify him when it was in his power, and inwardly quicken him with that grace whereby he might infallibly avoid any further provoking of him. God is said to harden men when he removes not from them the incentives to sin, curbs not those principles which are ready to comply with those incentives, withdraws the common assistances of his grace, concurs not with counsels and admonitions to make them effectual; flasheth not in the convincing light which he darted upon them before. If hardness follows upon God's withholding his softening grace, it is not by any positive act of God,

but from the natural hardness of man. If you put fire near to wax or rosin, both will melt; but when that fire is removed, they return to their natural quality of hardness and brittleness; the positive act of the fire is to melt and soften, and the softness of the rosin is to be ascribed to that; but the hardness is from the rosin itself, wherein the fire hath no influence, but only a negative act by a removal of it: so, when God hardens a man, he only leaves him to that stony heart which he derived from Adam, and brought with him into the world. All men's understandings being blinded, and their wills perverted in Adam, God's withdrawing his grace is but a leaving them to their natural pravity, which is the cause of their further sinning, and not God's removal of that special light he before afforded them, or restraint he held over them. As when God withdraws his preserving power from the creature, he is not the efficient, but deficient cause of the creature's destruction; so, in this case, God only ceaseth to bind and darn up that sin which else would break out.

2. The whole positive cause of his hardness is from man's corruption. God infuseth not any sin into his creatures, but forbears to infuse his grace, and restrain their lusts, which, upon the removal of his grace, work impetuously: God only gives them up to that which he knows will work strongly in their hearts. And, therefore, the apostle wipes off from God any positive act in that uncleanness the heathens were given up to (Romans 1:24, "Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts." And, Romans 1:26, God gave them up to "vile affections;" but they were their own affections, none of God's inspiring,) by adding, "through the lusts of their own hearts." God's giving them up was the logical cause, or a cause by way of argument; their own lusts were the true and natural cause; their own they were, before they were given up to them, and belonging to none, as the author, but themselves, after they were given up to them. The lust in the heart, and the temptation without, easily close and mix interests with one another: as the fire in a coal pit will with the fuel, if the streams derived into it for the quenching it be dammed up: the natural passions will run to a temptation, as the waters of a river tumble towards the sea. When a man that haul bridled in a high-mettled horse from running out, gives him the reins; or a huntsman takes off the string that held the dog, and lets him run after the hare,—are they the immediate cause of the motion of the one, or the other?—no, but the mettle and strength of the horse, and the natural inclination of the hound, both which are left to their own motions to pursue their own natural instincts. Man doth as naturally tend to sin as a stone to the centre, or as a weighty thing inclines to a motion to the earth it is from the propension of man's nature that he "drinks up iniquity like water:" and God doth no more when he leaves a man to sin, by taking away the hedge which stopped him, but leave him to his natural inclination. As a man that breaks up a dam he hath placed, leaves the stream to run in their natural channel; or one that takes away a prop from a stone to let it fall, leaves it only to that nature which inclines it to a descent; both have their motion from their own nature, and man is sin from his own corruption. The withdrawing the sunbeams is not the cause of darkness, but the shadiness of the earth; nor is the departure of the sun the cause of winter, but the coldness of the air and earth, which was tempered and beaten back into the bowels of the earth by the vigor of the sun, upon whose departure they return to their natural state: the sun only leaves the earth and air as it found them at the beginning of the spring or the beginning of the day. [Note: Amyrald, de Prodest. p. 107.] If God do not give a man grace to melt him, yet he cannot be said to communicate to him that nature which hardens him, which man hath from himself. As God was not the cause of the first sin of Adam, which was the root of all other, so he is not the cause of the following sins, which, as branches, spring from that root; man's

free-will was the cause of the first sin, and the corruption of his nature by it the cause of all succeeding sins. God doth not immediately harden any man, but doth propose those things, from whence the natural vice of man takes an occasion to strengthen and nourish itself. Hence, God is said to “harden Pharaoh’s heart” (Exodus 7:13), by concurring with the magicians in turning their rods into serpents, which stiffened his heart against Moses, conceiving him by reason of that, to have no more power than other men, and was an occasion of his father hardening: and Pharaoh is said to “harden himself” (Exodus 8:32); that is, in regard of his own natural passion.

3. God is holy and righteous, because he doth not withdraw from man, till man deserts him. To say, that God withdrew that grace from Adam, which he had afforded him in creation, or anything that was due to him, till he had abused the gifts of God, and turned them to an end contrary to that of creation, would be a reflection upon the Divine holiness. God was first deserted by man before man was deserted by God; and man doth first condemn and abuse the common grace of God, and those relics of natural light, that “enlighten every man that comes into the world” (John 1:9); before God leaves him to the hurry of his own passions. Ephraim was first joined to idols, before God pronounced the fatal sentence, “Let him alone” (Hosea 4:17): and the heathens first changed the glory of the incorruptible God, before God withdrew his common grace from the corrupted creature (Romans 1:23-24); and they first “served the creature more than the Creator,” before the Creator gave them up to the slavish chains of their vile affections (Romans 1:25-26). Israel first cast off God before God cast off them; but then “he gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts, and they walked in their own counsels” (Psalms 81:11-12). Since sin entered into the world by the fall of Adam, and the blood of all his posterity was tainted, man cannot do anything that is formally good; not for want of faculties, but for the want of a righteous habit in those faculties, especially in the will; yet God discovers himself to man in the works of his hands; he hath left in him footsteps of natural reason; he doth attend him with common motions of his Spirit; corrects him for his faults with gentle chastisements. He is near unto all in some kind of instructions: he puts many times providential bars in their way of sinning; but when they will rush into it as the horse into the battle, when they will rebel against the light, God doth often leave them to their own course, sentence him that is “filthy to be filthy still” (Revelation 22:11), which is a righteous act of God, as he is rector and governor of the world. Man’s not receiving, or not improving what God gives, is the cause of God’s not giving further, or taking away his own, which before he had bestowed; this is so far from being repugnant to the holiness and righteousness of God, that it is rather a commendable act of his holiness and righteousness, as the rector of the world, not to let those gifts continue in the hand of a man who abuses them contrary to his glory. Who will blame a father, that, after all the good counsels he hath given to his son to reclaim him, all the corrections he hath inflicted on him for his irregular practice, leaves him to his own courses, and withdraws those assistances which he scoffed at, and turned the deaf ear unto? Or, who will blame the physician for deserting the patient, who rejects his counsel, will not follow his prescriptions, but dasheth his physic against the wall? No man will blame him, no man will say that he is the cause of the patient’s death, but the true cause is the fury of the distemper, and the obstinacy of the diseased person, to which the physician left him. And who can justly blame God in this case, who yet never denied supplies of grace to any that sincerely sought it at his hands; and what man is there that lies under a hardness, but first was guilty of very provoking sins? What unholiness is it to deprive men of those assistances, because of their sin, and afterwards to direct those counsels and practices of theirs, which he hath justly given them up unto, to serve the ends of his own glory in his own methods?

4. Which will appear further by considering, that God is not obliged to continue his grace to them. It was at his liberty whether he could give any renewing grace to Adam after his fall, or to any of his posterity: he was at his own liberty to withhold it or communicate it: but, if he were under any obligation then, surely he must be under less now, since the multiplication of sin by his creatures: but, if the obligation were none just after the fall, there is no pretence now to fasten any such obligation on God. That God had no obligation at first, hath been spoken to before; he is less obliged to continue his grace after a repeated refusal, and a peremptory abuse, than he was bound to proffer it after the first apostasy. God cannot be charged with unholiness in withdrawing his grace after we have received it, unless we can make it appear that his grace was a thing due to us, as we are his creatures, and as he is governor of the world. What prince looks upon himself as obliged to reside in any particular place of his kingdom? But suppose he be bound to inhabit in one particular city, yet after the city rebels against him, is he bound to continue his court there, spend his revenue among rebels, endanger his own honor and security, enlarge their charter, or maintain their ancient privileges? Is it not most just and righteous for him to withdraw himself, and leave them to their own tumultuousness and sedition, whereby they should eat the fruit of their own doings? If there be an obligation on God as a governor, it would rather lie on the side of justice to leave man to the power of the devil whom he courted, and the prevalency of those lusts he hath so often caressed; and wrap up in a cloud all his common illuminations, and leave him destitute of all common workings of his Spirit.

Prop. VIII. God's holiness is not blemished by his commanding those things sometimes which seem to be against nature, or thwart some other of his precepts; as when God commanded Abraham with his own hand to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:2), there was nothing of unrighteousness in it. God hath a sovereign dominion over the lives and beings of his creatures, whereby as he creates one day, he might annihilate the next; and by the same right that he might demand the life of Isaac, as being his creature, he might demand the obedience of Abraham, in a ready return of that to him, which he had so long enjoyed by his grant. It is true, killing is unjust when it is done without cause, and by a private authority; but the authority of God surmounts all private and public authority whatsoever. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them; and they are more than once forfeit to him by reason of transgression. But, howsoever the case is, God commanded him to do it for the trial of his grace, but suffered him not to do it in favor to his ready obedience; but had Isaac been actually slain and offered, how had it been unrighteous in God, who enacts laws for the regulation of his creature, but never intended them to the prejudice of the rights of his sovereignty? Another case is that of the Israelites borrowing jewels of the Egyptians, by the order of God (Exodus 11:2-3; Exodus 12:36). Is not God Lord of men's goods, as well as their lives? What have any, they have not received? and that not as proprietors independent on God, but his stewards; and may not he demand a portion of his steward to bestow upon his favorite? He that had power to dispose of the Egyptians' goods, had power to order the Israelites to ask them. Besides, God acted the part of a just judge in ordering them their wages for their service in this method, and making their task-masters give them some recompense for their unjust oppression so many years; it was a command from God, therefore, rather for the preservation of justice (the basis of all those laws which link human society), than any infringement of it. It was a material recompense in part, though not a formal one in the intention of the Egyptians; it was but in part a recompense; it must needs come short of the damage the poor captives had sustained by the tyranny of their masters, who had enslaved them contrary to the rules of hospitality; and could

not make amends for the lives of the poor infants of Israel, whom they had drowned in the river. He that might for the unjust oppression of his people have taken away all their lives, destroyed the whole nation, and put the Israelites into the possession of their lands, could, without any unrighteousness, dispose of part of their goods; and it was rather an act of clemency to leave them some part, who had doubly forfeited all. Again, the Egyptians were as ready to lend by God's influence, as the Israelites were to ask by God's order: and though it was a loan, God, as Sovereign of the world, and Lord of the earth, and the fulness thereof, alienated the property by assuming them to the use of the tabernacle, to which service, most, if not all of them, were afterwards dedicated. God, who is lawgiver, hath power to dispense with his own law, and make use of his own goods, and dispose of them as he pleases; it is no unholiness in God to dispose of that which he hath a right unto. Indeed, God cannot command that which is in its own nature intrinsically evil; as to command a rational creature not to love him, not to worship him, to call God to witness to a lie; these are intrinsically evil; but for the disposing of the lives and goods of his creatures, which they have from him in right, and not in absolute propriety, is not evil in him, because there is no repugnancy in his own nature to such acts, nor is it anything inconsistent with the natural duty of a creature, and in such cases he may use what instruments he please. The point was; that holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God. We have showed the nature of this holiness in God; what it is; and we have demonstrated it, and proved that God is holy, and must needs be so; and also the purity of his nature in all his acts about sin: let us now improve it byway of use.

IV. Is holiness a transcendent perfection belonging to the nature of God? The first use shall be of instruction and information.

Inform. 1. How great and how frequent is the contempt of this eminent perfection in the Deity! Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God most amiable in himself, renders him most hateful to his apostate creature. It is impossible that he that loves iniquity, can affect that which is irreconcilably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing so contrary to the sinfulness of man as the holiness of God, and nothing is thought of by the sinner with so much detestation. How do men account that which is the most glorious perfection of the Divinity, unworthy to be regarded as an accomplishment of their own souls! and when they are pressed to an imitation of it, and a detestation of what is contrary to it, have the same sentiment in their heart which the devil had in his language to Christ, Why art thou come to torment us before our time? What an enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is visible in the practice of the heathen, who among all their heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came nearest to it, but for their valor or some usefulness in the concerns of this life. Aesculapius was deified for his skill in the cure of diseases; Bacchus, for the use of the grape; Vulcan, for his operations by fire; Hercules, for his destroying of tyrants and monsters; but none for their mere virtue; as if anything of purity were unworthy their consideration in the frame of a Deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections; so essential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himself, though they own all the other attributes of his nature (Psalms 81:11): "Israel would none of me:" why? because "they walked not in his ways" (Psalms 81:13); those ways wherein the purity of the Divine nature was most conspicuous; they would own him in his power, when they stood in need of a deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress; but they would not imitate him in his holiness. This

being the lustre of the Divine nature, the contempt of it is an obscuring all his other perfections, and a dashing a blot upon his whole escutcheon. To own all the rest, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monster,—a deformed power. Indeed, all sin is against this attribute; all sin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his Being. All sin is a violence to this perfection; there is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting against the Divine purity; some sins are directed against his omniscience, as secret wickedness; some against his providence, as distrust; some against his mercy, as unbelief; some against his wisdom, as neglecting the means instituted by him, censuring his ways and actings; some against his power, as trusting in means more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; some against his truth, as distrusting his promise, or not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity against this, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity: every one of them is a receding from the Divine image; and the blackness of every one is the deeper, by how much the distance of it from the holiness of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holiness of God, is the cause of all the absolute atheism (if there be any such) in the world; what was the reason “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” but because the fool is “corrupt, and hath done abominable work” (Psalms 14:1)? If they believe the being of a God, their own reason will enforce them to imagine him holy; therefore, rather than fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.—In particular,

1. The holiness of God is injured, in unworthy representations of God, and imaginations of him in our own minds. The heathen fell under this guilt, and ascribed to their idols those vices which their own sensuality inclined them to, unworthy of a man, much more unworthy of a God, that they might find a protection of their crimes in the practice of their idols. But is this only the notion of the heathens? may there not be many among us whose love to their lusts, and desires of sinning without control, move them to slander God in their thoughts, rather than reform their lives, and are ready to frame, by the power of their imaginative faculty, a God, not only winking, but smiling, at their impurities? I am sure God charges the impieties of men upon this score, in that Psalm (Psalms 50:21) which seems to be a representation of the day of judgment, as some gather from Psalms 50:6, when God sums up all together: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;” not a detester, but approver of thy crimes: and the Psalmist seems to express God’s loathing of sin in such a manner, as intimates it to be contrary to the ideas and resemblances men make of him in their minds (Psalms 5:4); “For thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness;” as we say, in vindication of a man, he is not such a man as you imagine him to be; thou art not such a God as the world commonly imagines thee to be, a God taking pleasure in iniquity. It is too common for men to fancy God not as he is, but as they would have him; strip him of his excellency for their own security. As God made man after his image, man would dress God after his own modes, as may best suit the content of his lusts, and encourage him in a course of sinning; for, when they can frame such a notion of God, as if he were a countenancer of sin, they will derive from thence a reputation to their crimes, commit wickedness with an unbounded licentiousness, and crown their vices with the name of virtues, because they are so like to the sentiments of that God they fancy: from hence (as the Psalmist, in the Psalm before mentioned) ariseth that mass of vice in the world; such conceptions are the mother and nurse of all impiety. I question not but the first spring is some wrong notion of God, in regard of his holiness: we are as apt to imagine God as we would have him, as the black Ethiopians were to draw the image of their gods after their own dark hue, and paint him with their

own color: as a philosopher in Theodoret speaks; If oxen and lions had hands, and could paint as men do, they would frame the images of their gods according to their own likeness and complexion. Such notions of God render him a swinish being, and worse than the vilest idols adored by the Egyptians, when men fancy a God indulgent to their appetites and most sordid lusts.

2. In defacing the image of God in our own souls. God, in the first draught of man, conformed him to his own image, or made him an image of himself; because we find that in regeneration this image is renewed (Ephesians 4:24); "The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." He did not take angels for his pattern, in the first polishing the soul, but himself. In defacing this image we cast dirt upon the holiness of God, which was his pattern in the framing of us, and rather choose to be conformed to Satan, who is God's grand enemy, to have God's image wiped out of us, and the devil's pictured in us: therefore, natural men, in an unregenerate state, may justly be called devils, since our Saviour called the worst man, Judas, so (John 6:1), and Peter, one of the best (Matthew 16:23): and if this title be given, by an infallible Judge, to one of the worst, and one of the best, it may, without wrong to any, be ascribed to all men that wallow in their sin, which is directly contrary to that illustrious image God did imprint upon them. How often is it seen that men control the light of their own nature, and stain the clearest beams of that candle of the Lord in their own spirits, that fly in the face of their own consciences, and say to them, as Ahab to Micaiah, Thou didst "never prophesy good to me;" thou didst never encourage me in those things that are pleasing to the flesh; and use it at the same rate as the wicked king did the prophet, "imprison it in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18), because it starts up in them sometimes sentiments of the holiness of God, which it represents in the soul of man! How jolly are many men when the exhalations of their sensitive part rise up to cloud the exactest principle of moral nature in their minds, and render the monstrous principles of the law of corruption more lively! Whence ariseth the wickedness which hath been committed with an open face in the world, and the applause that hath been often given to the worst of villanies? Have we not known, among ourselves, men to glory in their shame, and esteem that a most gentle accomplishment of man, which is the greatest blot upon his nature, and which, if it were upon God, would render him no God, but an impure devil so that to be a gentleman among us hath been the same as to be an incarnate devil; and to be a man, was to be no better, but worse, than a brute? Vile wretches! is not this a contempt of Divine holiness, to kill that Divine seed which lies languishing in the midst of corrupted nature; to cut up any sprouts of it as weeds unworthy to grow in their gardens, and cultivate what is the seed of hell; prefer the rotten fruits of Sodom, marked with a Divine curse, before those relics of the fruits of Eden, of God's own planting?

3. The holiness of God is injured in charging our sin upon God. Nothing is more natural to men, than to seek excuses for their sin, and transfer it from themselves to the next at hand, and rather than fail, shift it upon God himself; and if they can bring God into a society with them in sin, they will hug themselves in a security that God cannot punish that guilt wherein he is a partner. Adam's children are not of a different disposition from Adam himself, who, after he was arraigned and brought to his trial, boggles not at flinging his dirt in the face of God, his Creator, and accuseth him as if he had given him the woman, not to be his help, but his ruin (Genesis 3:12); "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He never supplicates for pardon, nor seeks a remedy, but reflects his crime upon God: Had I been alone, as I was first created, I had not eaten; but the woman, whom I received as a special gift

from thee, hath proved my tempter and my bane. When man could not be like God in knowledge, he endeavored to make God like him in his crime; and when his ambition failed of equalizing himself with God, he did, with an insolence too common to corrupted nature, attempt, by the imputation of his sin, to equal the Divinity with himself. Some think Cain had the same sentiment in his answer to God's demand where his brother was (Genesis 2:9); "Am I my brother's keeper?" Art not thou the Keeper and Governor of the world? why didst not thou take care of him, and hinder my killing him, and drawing this guilt upon myself, and terror upon my conscience? David was not behind, when, after the murder of Uriah, he sweeps the dirt from his own door to God's (2 Samuel 11:25); "The sword devoureth one as well as another;" fathering that solely upon Divine Providence which was his own wicked contrivance: though afterwards he is more ingenuous in clearing God, and charging himself (Psalms 51:4): "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" and he clears God in his judgment too. It is too common for the "foolishness of man to pervert his way;" and then "his heart frets against the Lord" (Proverbs 19:3). He studies mischief, runs in a way of sin, and when he hath conjured up troubles to himself, by his own folly, he excuseth himself, and, with indignation, charges God as the author both of his sin and misery, and sets his mouth against the heavens. It is a more horrible thing to accuse God as a principal or accessory in our guilt, than to conceive him to be a favorer of our iniquity; yet both are bad enough.

4. The holiness of God is injured when men will study arguments from the holy word of God to color and shelter their crimes. When men will seek for a shelter for their lies, in that of the midwives to preserve the children, or in that of Rahab to save the spies, as if, because God rewarded their fidelity, he countenanced their sin. How often is Scripture wrested to be a plea for unbecoming practices, that God, in his word, may be imagined a patron for their iniquity? It is not unknown that some have maintained their quaffing and carousing (from Ecclesiastes 8:11), "That a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry:" and their gluttony (from Matthew 5:11), "That which goes into the belly defiles not a man." The Jesuits' morals are a transcript of this. How often hath the Passion of our Saviour, the highest expression of God's holiness, been employed to stain it, and encourage the most debauched practices! Grace hath been turned into wantonness, and the abundance of grace been used as a blast to increase the flames of sin, as if God had no other aim in that work of redemption, but to discover himself more indulgent to our sensual appetites, and by his severity with his Son, become more gracious to our lusts; this is to feed the roots of hell with the dews of heaven, to make grace a pander for the abuse of it, and to employ the expressions of his holiness in his word to be a sword against the essential holiness of his nature: as if a man should draw an apology for his treason out of that law that was made to forbid, not to protect, his rebellion. Not the meanest instrument in the temple was to be alienated from the use it was by Divine order appointed to, nor was it to be employed in any common use; and shall the word of God, which is the image of his holiness, be transferred by base interpretations to be an advocate for iniquity? Such an ill use of his word reflects upon that hand which imprinted those characters of purity and righteousness upon it: as the misinterpretation of the wholesome laws of a prince, made to discourage debauchery, reflects upon his righteousness and sincerity in enacting them.

5. The holiness of God is injured, when men will put up petitions to God to favor them in a wicked design. Such there are, and taxed by the apostle (James 4:3), "Ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts," who desired mercies from God, with an intent to make them

instruments of sin, and weapons of unrighteousness; as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the success of his robbery. It hath not been rare in the world to appoint fasts and prayers for success in wars manifestly unjust, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to prosper them in their unjust gain; as if the blessed God sat in his pure majesty upon a throne of grace, to espouse unjust practices, and make iniquity prosperous. There are such as “offer sacrifice with an evil mind” (Proverbs 21:27), to barter with God for a divine blessing to spirit a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holiness of God is this! How inexcusable would it be for a favorite to address himself to a just prince with this language: Sir, I desire a boon of such lands that he near me, for an addition to my estate, that I may have supports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbors! Hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to such crimes and wickedness he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men’s hearts in the immediate presence of God? The order of prayer runs thus, “Hallowed be thy name;” first to have a deep sense of the holiness of the Divine nature, and an ardent desire for the glory of it. This order is inverted by asking those things which are not agreeable to the will of God, not meet for us to ask, and not meet for God to give; or asking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention. This is, in effect, to desire God to strip himself of his holiness, and commit sacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our lusts.

6. The purity of God is contemned, in hating and scoffing at the holiness which is in a creature. Whoever looks upon the holiness of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableness of Divine purity. Whosoever hates those qualities and graces that resemble God in any person, must needs condemn the original pattern, which is more eminent in God. If there be no comeliness in a creature’s holiness, to render it grateful to us, we should say of God himself, were he visible among us, with those in the prophet (Isaiah 53:1-12.), “There is no beauty in him, that we should desire him.” Holiness is beautiful in itself. If God be the most lovely Being, that which is a likeness to him, so far as it doth resemble him, must needs be amiable, because it partakes of God; and, therefore, those that see no beauty in an inferior holiness, but condemn it because it is a purity above them, condemn God much more. He that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect, without any mixture or stain. Holiness being the glory of God, the peculiar title of the Deity, and from him derived unto the nature of a creature, he that mocks this in a person, derides God himself; and, when he cannot abuse the purity in the Deity, he will do it in his image; as rebels that cannot wrong the king in his person, will do it in his picture, and his subjects that are loyal to him. He that hates the picture of a man, hates the person represented by it much more; he that hates the beams, hates the sun; the holiness of a creature is but a beam from that infinite Sun, a stream from that eternal Fountain. Where there is a derision of the purity of any creature, there is a greater reflection upon God in that derision, as he is the Author of it. If a mixed and stained holiness be more the subject of any man’s scoffs than a great deal of sin, that person hath a disposition more roundly to scoff at God himself, should he appear in that unblemished and unspotted purity which infinitely shines in his nature. O! it is a dangerous thing to scoff and deride holiness in any person, though never so mean; such do deride and scoff at the most holy God.

7. The holiness of God is injured by our unprepared addresses to him, when, like swine, we come into the presence of God with all our mire reeking and steaming upon us. A holy God requires a holy worship; and if our best duties, having filth in every part, as performed by us, are unmeet for

God, how much more unsuitable are dead and dirty duties to a living and immense holiness! Slight approaches and drossy frames speak us to have imaginations of God as of a slight and sottish being. This is worse than the heathens practised, who would purge their flesh before they sacrificed, and make some preparations in a seeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is so holy, that were our services as refined as those of angels, we could not present him with a service meet for his holy nature (Joshua 24:19). We condemn, then, this perfection, when we come before him without due preparation; as if God himself were of an impure nature, and did not deserve our purest thoughts in our applications to him; as if any blemished and polluted sacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deserved no better. When we excite not those elevated frames of spirit which are due to such a being, when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect service, we worship him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a slight upon his majestic sanctity. When we nourish in our duties those foolish imaginations which creep upon us; when we bring into, and continue our worldly, carnal, debauched fancies in his presence, worse than the nasty servants, or bemired dogs, a man would blush to be attended with in his visits to a neat person. To be conversing with sordid sensualities, when we are at the feet of an infinite God, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a vessel full of nasty dung with us, when we come to present a petition to him in his royal robes; or as it would have been to God, if the high priest should have swept all the blood and excrements of the sacrifices from the foot of the altar into the Holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy-seat, where the presence of God dwelt between the cherubims, and afterwards shovelled it up into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

8. God's holiness is slighted in depending upon our imperfect services to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary. The Jews were often infected with it (Romans 3:10), who, not well understanding the enormity of their transgressions, the interweaving of sin with their services, and the unspottedness of the Divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their sacrifices, and thought, by the cutting the throat of a beast, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a sufficient compensation to that holiness they had offended. Not to speak of many among the Romanists who have the same notion, thinking to make satisfaction to God by erecting an hospital, or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purses, and the offering of an unjust mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they have done him, than contribute to the appeasing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miserable men, whose consciences accuse them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumbling of a few formal prayers, and in the strength of them, to think to stand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a discharge upon this account from any accusation this Divine perfection can present against them? Nay, do not the best Christians sometimes find a principle in them, that makes them stumble in their goings forth to Christ, and glorifying the holiness of God in that method which he hath appointed? Sometimes casting an eye at their grace, and sticking awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple-building, while they should more admire the glorious Presence that fills it. What is all this but a villifying of the holiness of the Divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, because they look like a righteousness in our estimation as though dross and dung, which are the titles the apostles gives to all the righteousness of a fallen creature (Php 3:8), were valuable in the sight of God, and sufficient to render us comely before him. It is a blasphemy against this attribute, to pretend that anything so imperfect, so daubed, as the best of our services are, can answer to that which is

infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life: it is at best, to set up a gilded Dagon, as a fit companion for the ark of his Holiness; our own righteousness as a suitable mate for the righteousness of God: as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holiness of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature. Rude and foolish notions of the Divine purity are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteousness of our own, though never so splendid. It is a rendering the righteousness of God as dull and obscure as that of men; a mere outside, as their own; as blind as the heathens pictured their Fortune, that knew as little how to discern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to distribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them, to have a dog or a lamb presented in sacrifice. As if God did not well understand his own nature, when he enacted so holy a law, and strengthened it with so severe a threatening; which must follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his own nature, and that of his law; and that he could easily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit service. What are the services of the generality of men, but suppositions, that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their sins, and by an oral sacrifice, cause him to divest himself of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practises. As the harlot, that would return fresh to her uncleanness, upon the confidence that her peace offering had contented the righteousness of God (Proverbs 7:14): as though a small service could make him wink at our sins, and lay aside the glory of his nature; when, alas! the best duties in the most gracious persons in this life, are but as the steams of a spiced dung-hill, a composition of myrrh and froth, since there are swarms of corruptions in their nature, and secret sins that they need a cleansing from.

9. It is a contemning the holiness of God, when we charge the law of God with rigidness. We cast dirt upon the holiness of God when we blame the law of God, because it shackles us, and prohibit our desired pleasures; and hate the law of God, as they did the prophets, because they did not prophesy smooth things; but called to them, to “get” them “out of the way, and turn aside out of the path, and cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them” (Isaiah 30:10-11). Put us no more in mind of the holiness of God, and the holiness of his law; it is a troublesome thing for us to hear of it: let him be gone from us, since he will not countenance our vices, and indulge our crimes; we would rather hear there is a God, than you would tell us of a holy one. We are contrary to the law, when we wish it were not so exact; and, therefore, contrary to the holiness of God, which set the stamp of exactness and righteousness upon it. We think him injurious to our liberty, when, by his precept he thwarts our pleasure; we wish it of another frame, more mild, more suitable to our minds: it is the same, as if we should openly blame God for consulting with his own righteousness, and not with our humors, before he settled his law; that he should not have drawn from the depths of his righteous nature, but squared it to accommodate our corruption. This being the language of such complaints, is a reproving God, because he would not be unholy, that we might be unrighteous with impunity. Had the Divine law been suited to our corrupt state, God must have been unholy to have complied with his rebellious creature. To charge the law with rigidness, either in language or practice, is the highest contempt of God's holiness; for it is an implicit wish, that God were as defiled, polluted, disorderly, as our corrupted selves.

10. The holiness of God is injured opinionatively. (1). In the opinion of venial sins. The Romanists divide sins into venial and mortal: mortal, are those which deserve eternal death; venial, the lighter sort of sins, which rather deserve to be pardoned than punished; or if punished, not with an

eternal, but temporal punishment. This opinion hath no foundation in, but is contrary to, Scripture. How can any sin be in its own nature venial, when the due “wages of every sin is death” (Romans 6:23)? and he who “continues not in every thing that the law commands,” falls under a “curse” (Galatians 3:10). It is a mean thought of the holiness and majesty of God to imagine, that any sin which is against an infinite majesty, and as infinite a purity both in the nature of God and the law of God, should not be considered as infinitely heinous. All sins are transgressions of the eternal law, and in every one the infinite holiness of God is some way slighted. (2). In the opinion of works of supererogation. That is, such works as are not commanded by God, which yet have such a dignity and worth in their own nature, that the performers of them do not only merit at God’s hands for themselves, but fill up a treasure of merits for others, that come short of fulfilling the precepts God hath enjoined. It is such a mean thought of God’s holiness, that the Jews, in all the charges brought against them in Scripture, were never guilty of. And if you consider what pitiful things they are, which are within the compass of such works, you have sufficient reason to bewail the ignorance of man, and the low esteem he hath of so glorious a perfection. The whipping themselves often in a week, extraordinary watchings, fastings, macerating their bodies, wearing a capuchin’s habit, &c. are pitiful things to give content to an Infinite Purity. As if the precept of God required only the inferior degrees of virtue, and the counsels the more high and excellent; as if the law of God, which the Psalmist counts “perfect” (Psalms 19:7), did not command all good, and forbid all evil; as if the holiness of God had forgotten itself in the framing the law, and made it a scanty and defective rule; and the righteousness of a creature were not only able to make an eternal righteousness, but surmount it. As man would be at first as knowing as God, so some of his posterity would be more holy than God; set up a wisdom against the wisdom of God, and a purity above the Divine purity. Adam was not so presumptuous; he intended no more than an equalling God in knowledge; but those would exceed him in righteousness, and not only presume to render a satisfaction for themselves to the holiness they have injured, but to make a purse for the supply of others that are indigent, that they may stand before the tribunal of God with a confidence in the imaginary righteousness of a creature. How horrible is it for those that come short of the law of God themselves, to think that they can have enough for a loan to their neighbors! An unworthy opinion.

Inform. 2. It may inform us, how great is our fall from God, and how distant we are from him. View the holiness of God, and take a prospect of the nature of man, and be astonished to see a person created in the Divine image, degenerated into the image of the devil. We are as far fallen from the holiness of God, which consists in a hatred of sin, as the lowest point of the earth is from the highest point of the heavens. The devil is not more fallen from the rectitude of his nature and likeness to God, than we are; and that we are not in the same condition with those apostate spirits, is not from anything in our nature, but from the mediation of Christ, upon which account God hath indulged in us a continuance of some remainders of that which Satan is wholly deprived of. We are departed from our original pattern; we were created to live the “life of God,” that that is, a life of “holiness;” but now we are “alienated from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18), and of a beautiful piece we are become deformed, daubed over with the most defiling mud: we “work uncleanness with greediness,” according to our ability, as creatures; as God doth work “holiness” with affection and ardency, according to his infiniteness, as Creator. More distant we are from God by reason of sin, than the vilest creature, the most deformed toad, or poisonous serpent, is from the highest and most glorious angel. By forsaking our innocence, we departed from God as our original copy. The

apostle might well say (Romans 3:23), that by sin “we are come short of the glory of God.” Interpreters trouble themselves much about that place, “Man is come short of the glory of God,” that is, of the holiness of God, which is the glory of the Divine nature, and was pictured in the rational, innocent creature. By the “glory of God,” is meant the holiness of God; (as 1 Corinthians 3:18), “Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” that is the glory of God in the text, into the image of which we are changed; but the Scripture speaks of no other image of God, but that of holiness; “we are come short of the glory of God;” of the holiness of God, which is the glory of God; and the image of it, which was the glory of man. By sin, which is particular in opposition to the purity of God, man was left many leagues behind any resemblance to God; he stripped off that which was the glory of his nature, and was the only means of glorifying God as his Creator. The word στερονωται, the apostle uses, is very significant,—postponed by sin an infinite distance from any imitation of God’s holiness, or any appearance before him in a garb of nature pleasing to him. Let us lament our fall and distance from God.

Inform. 3. All unholiness is vile, and opposite to the nature of God. It is such a loathsome thing, that the “purity of God’s eye is averse from beholding” (Habakkuk 1:3). It is not said there, that he will not, but he cannot, look on evil; there cannot be any amicableness between God and sin, the natures of both are so directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holiness is the life of God; it endures as long as his life; he must be eternally averse from sin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should for one instant cease to hate it, he would cease to live. To be a holy God, is as essential to him, as to be a living God; and he would not be a living God, but a dead God, if he were in the least point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on sin without loathing it; he cannot look on sin but his heart riseth against it; it must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the glory of his nature, and directly opposite to that which is the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. It is the “abominable thing which his soul hates” (Jeremiah 44:4); the vilest terms imaginable are used to signify it. Do you understand the loathsomeness of a miry swine, or the nauseousness of the vomit of a dog? these are emblems of sin (2 Peter 2:22). Can you endure the steams of putrefied carcasses from an open sepulchre (Romans 3:23)? is the smell of the stinking sweat or excrements of a body delightful? the word ὑπαρᾶν in James 1:21, signifies as much. Or is the sight of a body overgrown with scabs and leprosy grateful to you? So vile, so odious is sin, in the sight of God. It is no light thing, then, to fly in the face of God; to break his eternal law; to dash both the tables in pieces: to trample the transcript of God’s own nature under our feet; to cherish that which was inconsistent with his honor; to lift up our heels against the glory of his nature; to join issue with the devil in stab in his heart, and depriving him of his life. Sin, in every part of it, is an opposition to the holiness of God, and consequently an envying him a being and life, as well as a glory. If sine such a thing, “ye that love the Lord, hate evil”

Inform. 4. Sin cannot escape a due punishment. A hatred of unrighteousness, and consequently a will to punish it, is as essential to God as a love of righteousness. Since he is not as an heathen idol, but hath eyes to see, and purity to hate every iniquity, he will have an infinite justice to punish whatsoever is against infinite holiness. As he loves everything that is amiable, so he loathes everything that is filthy, and that constantly, without any change; his whole nature is set, against it; he abhors nothing but this. It is not the devil’s knowledge or activity that his hatred is terminated in,

but the malice and unholiness of his nature; it is this only is the object of his severity; it is in the recompense of this only that there can be a manifestation of his justice. Sin must be punished; for,

1. This detestation of sin must be manifested. How should we certainly know his loathing of it, if he did not manifest, by some act, how ungrateful it is to him? As his love to righteousness would not appear, without rewarding it; so his hatred of iniquity would be as little evidenced, without punishing it; his justice is the great witness to his purity. The punishment, therefore, inflicted on the wicked, shall be, in some respect, as great as the rewards bestowed upon the righteous. Since the hatred of sin is natural to God, it is as natural to him to show, one time or other, his hatred of it. And since men have a conceit that God is like them in impurity, there is a necessity of some manifestation of himself to be infinitely distant from those conceits they have of him (Psalms 50:21); "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." He would else encourage the injuries done to his holiness, favor the extravagances of the creature, and condemn, or at least slight, the righteousness both of his own nature, and his sovereign law. What way is there for God to manifest his hatred, but by threatening the sinner? and what would this be but a vain affrightment, and ridiculous to the sinner, if it were never to be put in execution? There is an indissoluble connection between his hatred of sin, and punishment of the offender (Psalms 11:5-6); "The wicked, his soul hates. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone," &c. He cannot approve of it without denying himself; and a total impunity would be a degree of approbation. The displeasure of God is eternal and irreconcilable against sin; for sin being absolutely contrary to his holy nature, he is eternally contrary to it; if there be not, therefore, a way to separate the sin from the sinner, the sinner must lie under the displeasure of God; no displeasure can be manifested without some marks of it upon the person that lies under the displeasure. The holiness of God will right itself of the wrongs done to it, and scatter the profaners of it at the greatest distance from him, which is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted; to be removed far from the Fountain of Life is the worst of deaths; God can so soon lay aside his purity, as always forbear his displeasure against an impure person; it is all one not to hate it, and not to manifest his hatred of it.

2. As his holiness is natural and necessary, so is the punishment of unholiness necessary to him. It is necessary that he should abominate sin, and therefore necessary he should discountenance it. The severities of God against sin are not vain scare-crows; they have their foundation in the righteousness of his nature; it is because he is a righteous and holy God, that he "will not forgive our transgressions and sins" (Joshua 24:19), that is, that he will punish them. The throne of his "holiness is a fiery flame" (Daniel 7:9); there is both a pure light and a scorching heat. Whatsoever is contrary to the nature of God, will fall under the justice of God; he would else violate his own nature, deny his own perfection, seem to be out of love with his own glory and life. He doth not hate it out of choice, but from the immutable propension of his nature; it is not so free an act of his will, as the creation of man and angels, which he might have forborne as well as effected. As the detestation of sin results from the universal rectitude of his nature, so the punishment of sin follows upon that, as he is the righteous Governor of the world: it is as much against his nature not to punish it, as it is against his nature not to loathe it; he would cease to be holy if he ceased to hate it, and he would cease to hate it if he ceased to punish it. Neither the obedience of our Saviour's life, nor the strength of his cries, could put a bar to the cup of his passion; God so hated sin, that when it was but imputed to his Son, without any commission of it, he would bring a hell upon his

soul. Certainly if God could have hated sin without punishing it, his Son had never felt the smart of his wrath; his love to his Son had been strong enough to have caused him to forbear, had not the holiness of his nature been stronger to move him to inflict a punishment according to the demerit of his sin. God cannot but be holy, and therefore cannot but be just, because injustice is a part of unholiness.

3. Therefore there can be no communion between God and unholy spirits. How is it conceivable, that God should hate the sin, and cherish the sinner, with all his filth in his bosom? that he should eternally detest the crime, and eternally fold the sinner in his arms? Can less be expected from the purity of his nature, than to separate an impure soul, as long as it remains so? Can there be any delightful communion between those whose natures are contrary? Darkness and light may as soon kiss each other, and become one nature: God and the devil may as soon enter into an eternal league and covenant together. For God to have pleasure in wickedness, and to admit evil to dwell with him, are equally impossible to his nature (Psalms 5:4): while he hates impurity, he cannot have communion with an impure person. It may as soon be expected, that God should hate himself, offer violence to his own nature, lay aside his purity as an abominable thing, and blot his own glory, as love an impure person, entertain him as his delight, and set him in the same heaven and happiness with himself, and his holy angels. He must needs loathe him, he must needs banish him from his presence, which is the greatest punishment. God's holiness and hatred of sin necessarily infer the punishment of it.

Inform. 5. There is, therefore, a necessity of the satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient mediator. The Divine purity could not meet with any acquiescence in all mankind after the fall sin was hated; the sinner would be ruined, unless some way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holiness of God; either the sinner must be condemned for ever, or some satisfaction must be made, that the holiness of the Divine nature might eternally appear in its full lustre. That it is essential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteousness, as that which is absolutely repugnant to his nature, none do question. That the justice of God is so essential to him, as that sin could not be pardoned without satisfaction, some do question; though this latter seems rationally to follow upon the former. [Note: Turretin. de Satisfac. p. 8.] That holiness is essential to the nature of God, is evident; because, else, God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating the sun or stars. No man can, in his right wits, frame a right notion of a Deity without purity. It would be less blasphemy against the excellency of God, to conceit him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy: and, for the essentialness of his justice, Joshua joins both his holiness and his jealousy as going hand in hand together (Joshua 24:19); "He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your sin." But consider only the purity of God, since it is contrary to sin, and, consequently, hating the sinner; the guilty person cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holiness of God have any complacency in a filthy person, but as fire hath in stubble, to consume it. How the holy God should be brought to delight in man without a salvo for the rights of his holiness, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be abolished; that would reflect, indeed, upon the righteousness of the Lawgiver: to abolish it, because of sin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature. Must he change his holiness for the sake of that which was against his holiness, in a compliance with a profane and unrighteous creature? This should engage him rather to maintain his law, than to null it; and to abrogate his law as soon as he had enacted it, since sin

stepped into the world presently after it, would be no credit to his wisdom. There must be a reparation made of the honor of God's holiness; by ourselves it could not be without condemnation; by another it could not be without a sufficiency in the person: no creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compensation for the disparagements of Infinite Holiness. He must have despicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and the glavering fawnings at the death of a creature, can be sufficient to repair the wrongs, and restore the rights of this attribute. It must, therefore, be such a compensation as might be commensurate to the holiness of the Divine nature and the Divine law, which could not be wrought by any, but Him that was possessed of a Godhead to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The Person designed and appointed by God for so great an affair, was "one in the form of God, one equal with God," (Php 2:6), who could not be termed by such a title of dignity, if he had not been equal to God in the universal rectitude of the Divine nature, and therefore in his holiness. The punishment due to sin is translated to that person for the righting Divine holiness, and the righteousness of that Person is communicated to the sinner for the pardon of the offending creature. If the sinner had been eternally damned, God's hatred of sin had been evidenced by the strokes of his justice; but his mercy to a sinner had lain in obscurity. If the sinner had been pardoned and saved without such a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holiness had hid its head for ever in his own bosom. There was therefore a necessity of such a way to manifest his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy: that mercy might not alway sigh for the destruction of the creature, and that holiness might not mourn for the neglect of its honor.

Inform. 6. Hence it will follow, there is no justification of a sinner by any thing in himself. After sin had set foot in the world, man could present nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holiness of his law, till God set forth a Person, upon whose account the acceptation of our persons and services is founded (Ephesians 1:6), "Who hath made us accepted in the Beloved." The Infinite purity of God is so glorious, that it shames the holiness of angels, as the light of the sun dims the light of the fire; much more will the righteousness of fallen man, who is vile, and "drinks up iniquity like water," vanish into nothing in his presence. With what self-abasement and abhorrence ought he to be possessed that comes as short of the angels in purity, as a dunghill doth of a star! The highest obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, since lapsed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or stand before so exact an inquisition. What person hath such a clear innocence, and unspotted obedience in such a perfection, as in any degree to suit the holiness of the Divine nature? (Psalms 143:2): "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." If God should debate the case simply with a man in his own person, without respecting the Mediator, he were not able to "answer one of a thousand." Though we are his servants, as David was, and perform a sincere service, yet there are many little motes and dust of sin in the best works, that cannot he undiscovered from the eye of his holiness; and if we come short in the least of what the law requires, we are "guilty of all" (James 2:10). So that "In thy sight shall no man living be justified;" in the sight of thy infinite holiness, which hates the least spot; in the sight of thy infinite justice, which punishes the least transgression. God would descend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and his purity, should he accept that for a righteousness and holiness which is not so in itself; and nothing is so, which hath the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The most holy saints in Scripture, upon a prospect of his purity, have cast away all confidence in themselves; every flash of the Divine purity has struck them into a deep sense of their own

impurity and shame for it (Job 42:6), "Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." What can the language of any man be that lies under a sense of infinite holiness and his own defilement in the least, but that of the prophet (Isaiah 6:5), "Woe is me, I am undone?" And what is there in the world can administer any other thought than this, unless God be considered in Christ, "reconciling the world to himself?" As a holy God, so righted, as that he can dispense with the condemnation of a sinner, without dispensing with his hatred of sin; pardoning the sin in the criminal, because it hath been punished in the Surety. That righteousness which God hath "set forth" for justification, is not our own, but a "righteousness which is of God" (Php 3:9-10), of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father; a righteousness surmounting that of all the glorious angels, since it is an immutable one which can never fail, an "everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24); a righteousness wherein the holiness of God can acquiesce, as considered in itself, because it is a righteousness of one equal with God. As we therefore dishonor the Divine Majesty when we insist upon our own bemired righteousness for our justification (as if a "mortal man were as just as God," and a "man as pure as his Maker" (Job 4:17), so we highly honor the purity of his nature, when we charge ourselves with folly, acknowledge ourselves unclean, and accept of that righteousness which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no justification of a sinner by anything in himself.

Inform. 7. If holiness be a glorious perfection of the Divine nature, then the Deity of Christ might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of the "Holy One" (Acts 3:14; Acts 3:16), a title often given to God in the Old Testament; and he is called the "Holy of holies" (Daniel 9:24); but because the angels seemed to be termed "Holy ones" (Daniel 4:13; Daniel 4:17), and the most sacred place in the temple was also called the "Holy of holies," I shall not insist upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as "holy," when this perfection of the Divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together, and ascribed to him (Isaiah 6:3): "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; and the whole earth is full of his glory;" which the apostle interprets of "Christ" (John 12:39; John 12:41). Isaiah, again: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. He that Isaiah saw environed with the seraphims, in a reverential posture before his face, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; such acclamations belong to none but the great Jehovah, God, blessed forever; but, saith John, it was the "glory of Christ" that Isaiah saw in this vision; Christ, therefore, is "God blessed forever," of whom it was said, "Holy, holy, holy Lord of Hosts." [Note: Placeus, de Deitat. Christi, in loc.] The evangelist had been speaking of Christ, the miracles which he wrought, the obstinacy of the Jews against believing on him; his glory, therefore, is to be referred to the subject he had been speaking of. The evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites those words out of Isaiah; not to teach anything of the Father, but to show that the Jews could not believe in Christ. He speaks of him that had wrought so many miracles; but Christ wrought those miracles: he speaks of him whom the Jews refused to believe on; but Christ was the person they would not believe on, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of this person Isaiah saw, and this person Isaiah spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

Inform. 8. God is fully fit for the government of the world. The righteousness of God's nature qualifies him to be Judge of the world; if he were not perfectly righteous and holy, he were incapable to govern and judge the world (Romans 3:5): "If there be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world?" "God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). How despicable is a judge that wants innocence! As omniscience fits God to be a judge, so holiness fits him to be a righteous judge (Psalms 1:6): "The Lord knows," that is, loves, "the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Inform. 9. If holiness be an eminent perfection of the Divine nature, the Christian religion is of a Divine extraction: it discovers the holiness of God, and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a prospect of his nature, represents him in the "beauty of holiness" (Psalms 110:3), more than the whole glass of the creation. It is in this evangelical glass the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is a doctrine "according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3), directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our first creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourselves, fixeth us upon a noble end, points our actions, and the scope of our lives to God. It quells the monsters of sin, discountenanceth the moles of wickedness; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it sets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holiness of the Divine Majesty. God is exalted upon the throne of his holiness in it, and the creature advanced to an image and resemblance of it (1 Peter 1:16): "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Use 2. The second use is for comfort. This attribute frowns upon lapsed nature, but smiles in the restorations made by the gospel. God's holiness, in conjunction with his justice, is terrible to a guilty sinner; but now, in conjunction with his mercy, by the satisfaction of Christ, it is sweet to a believing penitent. In the "first covenant," the purity of his nature was joined with the rigors of his justice; in the "second covenant," the purity of his nature is joined with the sweetness and tenderness of his mercy. In the one, justice flames against the sinner in the right of injured holiness; in the other, mercy yearns towards a believer, with the consent of righted holiness. To rejoice in the holiness of God is the true and genuine spirit of a renewed man: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord;"—what follows?—"There is none holy as the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:1-2). Some perfections of the Divine nature are astonishing, some affrighting; but this may fill us both with astonishment at it, and a joy in it.

1. By covenant, we have an interest in this attribute, as well as any other. In that clause of "God's being our God," entire God with all his glory, all his perfections are passed over as a portion, and a gracious soul is brought into union with God, as his God; not with a part of God, but with God in the simplicity, extent, integrity of his nature; and therefore in this attribute. And, upon some account, it may seem more in this attribute than in any other; for if he be our God, he is our God in his life and glory, and therefore in his purity especially, without which he could not live; he could not be happy and blessed. Little comfort will it be to have a dead God, or a vile God, made over to us; and as, by this covenant, he is our Father, so he gives us his nature, and communicates his holiness in all his dispensations; and in those that are severest, as well as those that are sweetest (Hebrews 12:10): "But he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Not simply "partakers of holiness," but of "his holiness;" to have a portraiture of it in our nature, a medal of it in our hearts, a spark of the same nature with that immense splendor and flame in himself. The holiness of a covenant soul is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it; as the

picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of his beams, and an image of its author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God, as the fulness of the light doth in the sun; yet there are transmissions of light from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature is nothing else but a reflection of the Divine holiness upon it; and to make the creature capable of it, God takes various methods, according to his covenant grace.

2. This attribute renders God a fit object for trust and dependence. The notion of an unholy and unrighteous God, is an uncomfortable idea of him, and beats off our hands from laying any hold of him. It is upon this attribute the reputation and honor of God in the world is built; what encouragement can we have to believe him, or what incentives could we have to serve him, without the lustre of this in his nature? The very thought of an unrighteous God is enough to drive men at the greatest distance from him; as the honesty of a man gives a reputation to his word, so doth the holiness of God give credit to his promise. It is by this he would have us stifle our fears and fortify our trust (Isaiah 41:14): "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:" he will be in his actions what he is in his nature. Nothing shall make him defile his own excellency; unrighteousness is the ground of mutability; but the promise of God doth never fail, because the rectitude of his nature doth never languish: were his attributes without the conduct of this, they would be altogether formidable. As this is the glory of all his other perfections, so this only renders him comfortable to a believing soul. Might we not fear his power to crush us, his mercy to overlook us, his wisdom to design against us, if this did not influence them? What an oppression is power without righteousness in the hand of a creature; destructive, instead of protecting! The devil is a mighty spirit, but not fit to be trusted, because he is an impure spirit. When God would give us the highest security of the sincerity of his intentions, he swears by this attribute (Psalms 89:35): his holiness, as well as his truth, is laid to pawn for the security of his promise. As we make God the judge between us and others, when we swear by him, so he makes his holiness the judge between himself and his people, when he swears by it.

(1.) It is this renders him fit to be confided in for the answer of our prayers. This is the ground of his readiness to give. "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him" (Matthew 7:11)! Though the holiness of God be not mentioned, yet it is to be understood; the emphasis lies on these words, "if you, being evil:" God is then considered in a disposition contrary to this, which can be nothing but his righteousness. If you that are unholy, and have so much corruption in you, to render you cruel, can bestow upon your children the good things they want, how much more shall God, who is holy, and hath nothing in him to check his mercifulness to his creatures, grant the petitions of his supplicants! It was this attribute edged the fiduciary importunity of the souls under the altar, for the revenging their blood unjustly shed upon the earth "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 6:10)? Let not thy holiness stand with folded arms, as careless of the eminent sufferings of those that fear thee; we implore thee by the holiness of thy nature, and the truth of thy word.

(2.) This renders him fit to be confided in for the comfort of our souls in a broken condition. The reviving the hearts of the spirit ually afflicted, is a part of the holiness of his nature; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place,

with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble” (Isaiah 57:15). He acknowledgeth himself the lofty One; they might therefore fear he would not revive them; but he is also the holy One, and therefore he will refresh them; he is not more lofty than he is holy; besides, the argument of the immutability of his promise, and the might of his power, here is the holiness of his nature moving him to pity his drooping creature: his promise is ushered in with the name of power, “high and lofty One,” to bar their distrust of his strength, and with a declaration of his holiness, to check any despair of his will: there is no ground to think I should be false to my word, or misemploy my power, since that cannot be, because of the holiness of my name and nature.

(3.) This renders him fit to be confided in for the maintenance of grace, and protection of us against our spiritual enemies. What our Saviour thought an argument in prayer, we may well take as a ground of our confidence. In the strength of this he puts up his suit, when in his mediatory capacity he intercedes for the preservation of his people (John 17:11); “Holy Father, keep through thy own name those that thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.” “Holy Father,” not merciful Father; or powerful, or wise Father, but “holy;” and (John 17:25), “righteous Father.” Christ pleads that attribute for the performance of God’s word, which was laid to pawn when he passed his word: for it was by his holiness that he swore, that “his seed should endure forever, and his throne as the sun before him” (Psalms 89:36); which is meant of the perpetuity of the covenant which he made with Christ, and is also meant of the preservation of the mystical seed of David, and the perpetuating his loving-kindness to them (Psalms 89:32-33). Grace is an image of God’s holiness, and, therefore, the holiness of God is most proper to be used as an argument to interest and engage him in the preservation of it. In the midst of church-provocations, he will not utterly extinguish, because he is the “Holy One” in the midst of her (Hosea 11:9): nor in the midst of judgments will he condemn his people to death, because he is “their Holy One” (Habakkuk 1:12); but their enemies shall be ordained for judgment, and established for correction. One prophet assures them in the name of the Lord, upon the strength of this perfection; and the other, upon the same ground, is confident of the protection of the church, because of God’s holiness engaged in an inviolable covenant.

3. Comfort. Since holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God, “he will certainly value every holy soul.” It is of a greater value with him than the souls of all men in the world, that are destitute of it: “wicked men are the worst of vilenesses,” mere dross and dunghill. [Note: Psalms 12:8. The vilest men.] Purity, then, which is contrary to wickedness, must be the most precious thing in his esteem; he must needs love that quality which he is most pleased with in himself, as a father looks with most delight upon the child which is possessed with those dispositions he most values in his own nature. “His countenance doth behold the upright” (Psalms 11:7). He looks upon them with a full and open face of favor, with a countenance clear, unmasked, and smiling with a face full of delight. Heaven itself is not such a pleasing object to him as the image of his own uncreated holiness in the created holiness of men and angels: as a man esteems that most which is most like him, of his own generation, more than a piece of art, which is merely the product of his wit or strength. And he must love holiness in the creature, he would not else love his own image, and, consequently, would undervalue himself. He despiseth the image the wicked bears (Psalms 73:20), but he cannot disesteem his own stamp on the godly; he cannot but delight in his own work, his choice work, the master-piece of all his works, the new creation of things; that which is

next to himself, as being a Divine nature like himself (2 Peter 1:4). When he overlooks strength, parts, knowledge, he cannot overlook this: he “sets apart him that is godly for himself” (Psalms 4:3), as a peculiar object to take pleasure in; he reserves such for his own complacency, when he leaves the rest of the world to the devil's power; he is choice of them above all his other works, and will not let any have so great a propriety in them as himself. If it be so dear to him here in its imperfect and mixed condition, that he appropriates it as a peculiar object for his own delight, how much more will the unspotted purity of glorified saints be infinitely pleasing to him! so, that he will take less pleasure in the material heavens than in such a soul. Sin only is detestable to God; and when this is done away, the soul becomes as lovely in his account, as before it was loathsome.

4. It is comfort, upon this account, that “God will perfect holiness in every upright soul.” We many times distrust God, and despond in ourselves, because of the infinite holiness of the Divine nature, and the dunghill corruption in our own; but the holiness of God engageth him to the preservation of it, and, consequently, to the perfection of it, as appears by our Saviour's argument (John 17:11), “Holy Father, keep through thy own name, those whom thou hast given me;”—to what end?—“that they may be one as we are;” one with us, in the resemblances of purity. And the holiness of the soul is used as an argument by the Psalmist (Psalms 86:2), “Preserve my soul, for I am holy;” that is, I have an ardent desire to holiness: thou hast separated me from the mass of the corrupted world, preserve and perfect me with the assembly of the glorified choir. The more holy any are, the more communicative they are; God being most holy, is most communicative of that which he most esteems in himself, and delights to see in his creature: he is, therefore, more ready to impart his holiness to them that beg for it, than to communicate his knowledge or his power. Though he were holy, yet he let Adam fall, who never petitioned his holiness to preserve him; he let him fall, to declare the holiness of his own nature, which had wanted its due manifestation without it: but since that cannot be declared in a higher manner than it hath been already in the death of the Surety, that bore our guilt, there is no fear he should cast the work out of his hands, since the design of the permission of man's apostasy, in the discovery of the perfections of his nature, has been fully answered. The “finishing the good work he hath begun,” hath a relation to the glory of Christ; and his own glory in Christ to be manifested in the day of his appearing (Php 1:6), wherein the glory, both of his own holiness, and the holiness of the Mediator, are to receive their full manifestation. As it is a part of the holiness of Christ to “sanctify his church” (Ephesians 5:26-27) till not a wrinkle or spot be left, so it is the part of God not to leave that work imperfect which his holiness hath attempted a second time to beautify his creature with. He will not cease exalting this attribute, which is the believers, by the new covenant, till he utters that applauding speech of his own work (Song of Solomon 4:7), “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”

Use 3, is for Exhortation. Is holiness an eminent perfection of the Divine nature? Then—

Exhort. 1. Let us get and preserve right and strong apprehensions of this Divine perfection. Without a due sense of it, we can never exalt God in our hearts; and the more distinct conceptions we have of this, and the rest of his attributes, the more we glorify him. When Moses considered God as “his strength and salvation,” he would exalt him (Exodus 15:2); and he could never break out in so admirable a doxology as that in the text, without a deep sense of the glory of his purity, which he speaks of with so much admiration. Such a sense will be of use to us.

1. In promoting genuine convictions. A deep consideration of the holiness of God cannot but be followed with a deep consideration of our impure and miserable condition by reason of sin: we cannot glance upon it without reflections upon our own vileness. Adam no sooner heard the voice of a holy God in the garden, but he considered his own nakedness with shame and fear (Genesis 3:10); much less can we fix our minds upon it, but we must be touched with a sense of our own uncleanness. The clear beams of the sun discover that filthiness in our garments and members, which was not visible in the darkness of the night. Impure metals are discerned by comparing them with that which is pure and perfect in its kind. The sense of guilt is the first natural result upon a sense of this excellent perfection; and the sense of the imperfection of our own righteousness is the next. Who can think of it, and reflect upon himself as an object fit for Divine love? Who can have a due thought of it, without regarding himself as stubble before a consuming fire? Who can, without a confusion of heart and face, glance upon that pure eye which beholds with detestation the foul moles, as well as the filthier and bigger spots? When Isaiah saw his glory, and heard how highly the angels exalted God for this perfection, he was in a cold sweat, ready to swoon, till a seraphim, with a coal from the altar, both purged and revived him (Isaiah 6:5; Isaiah 6:7). They are sound and genuine convictions, which have the prospect of Divine purity for their immediate spring, and not a foresight of our own misery; when it is not the punishment we have deserved, but the holiness we have offended, most grates our hearts. Such convictions are the first rude draughts of the Divine image in our spirits, and grateful to God, because they are an acknowledgment of the glory of this attribute, and the first mark of honor given to it by the creature. Those that never had a sense of their own vileness, were always destitute of a sense of God's holiness. And, by the way, we may observe, that those that scoff at any for hanging down the head under the consideration and conviction of sin (as is too usual with the world), scoff at them for having deeper apprehensions of the purity of God than themselves, and consequently make a mock of the holiness of God which is the ground of those convictions; a sense of this would prevent such a damnable reproaching.

2. A sense of this will render us humble in the possession of the greatest holiness a creature were capable of. We are apt to be proud, with the Pharisee, when we look upon others wallowing in the mire of base and unnatural lusts: but let any clap their wings, if they can, in a vain boasting and exaltation, when they view the holiness of God. What torch, if it had reason, would be proud, and swagger in its own light, if it compared itself with the sun? "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" is the just reflection of the holiest person, as it was of those (1 Samuel 6:20) that had felt the marks of his jealousy after their looking into the ark, though likely out of affection to it, and triumphant joy at its return. When did the angels testify, by the covering of their faces, their weakness to bear the lustre of his majesty, but when they beheld his glory? When did they signify, by their covering their feet, the shame of their own vileness, but when their hearts were fullest of the applaudings of this perfection (Isaiah 6:2-3)? Though they found themselves without spot, yet not with such a holiness that they could appear either with their faces or feet unvailed and unmasked in the presence of God. Doth the immense splendor of this attribute engender shaming reflections in those pure spirits? What will it, what should it, do in us, that dwell in houses of clay, and creep up and down with that clay upon our backs, and too much of it in our hearts? The stars themselves, which appear beautiful in the night, are masked at the awaking of the sun. What a dim light is that of a glow-worm to that of the sun! The apprehensions of this made the elders humble themselves in the midst of their glory, by "casting down their crowns before his throne" (Revelation

4:8; Revelation 4:10); a metaphor taken from the triumphing generals among the Romans, who hung up their victorious laurels in the Capitol, dedicating them to their gods, acknowledging them their superiors in strength, and authors of their victory. This self-emptiness at the consideration of Divine purity, is the note of the true church, represented by the twenty-four elders, and a note of a true member of the church; whereas boasting of perfection and merit is the property of the anti-christian tribe, that have mean thoughts of this adorable perfection, and think themselves more righteous than the unspotted angels. What a self-annihilation is there in a good man, when the sense of Divine purity is most lively in him! yea, how detestable is he to himself! There is as little proportion between the holiness of the Divine Majesty, and that of the most righteous creature, as there is between a nearness of a person that stands upon a mountain, to the sun, and of him that beholds him in a vale; one is nearer than the other, but it is an advantage not to be boasted of, in regard of the vast distance that is between the sun and the elevated spectator.

3. This would make us full of an affectionate reverence in all our approaches to God. By this perfection God is rendered venerable, and fit to be revered by his creature; and magnificent thoughts of it in the creature would awaken him to an actual reverence of the Divine majesty (Psalms 111:9): "Holy and reverend is his name;" a good opinion of this would engender in us a sincere respect towards him; we should then "serve the Lord with fear," as the expression is (Psalms 2:11), that is, be afraid to cast anything before him that may offend the eyes of his purity. Who would venture rashly and garishly into the presence of an eminent moralist, or of a righteous king upon his throne? The fixedness of the angels arose from the continual prospect of this. What if we had been with Isaiah when he saw the vision, and beheld him in the same glory, and the heavenly choir in their reverential posture in the service of God; would it not have barred our wanderings, and staked us down to our duty? Would not the fortifying an idea of it in our minds produce the same effect? It is for want of this we carry ourselves so loosely and unbecomingly in the Divine presence, with the same, or meaner, affections than those wherewith we stand before some vile creature that is our superior in the world; as though a piece of filthy flesh were more valuable than this perfection of the Divinity. How doth the Psalmist double his exhortation to men to sing praise to God (Psalms 47:6): "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing raises;" because of his majesty, and the purity of his dominion! and (Psalms 47:8), "God reigneth over the heathen, God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." How would this elevate us in praise, and prostrate us in prayer, when we praise and pray with an understanding and insight of that nature we bless or implore; as he speaks (Psalms 47:7), "Sing ye praises with understanding." The holiness of God in his government and dominion, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his precepts, should beget in us an humble respect in our approaches. The more we grow in a sense of this, the more shall we advance in the true performance of all our duties. Those nations which adored the sun, had they at first seen his brightness wrapped and masked in a cloud, and paid a veneration to it, how would their adorations have mounted to a greater point, after they had seen it in its full brightness, shaking off those veils, and chasing away the mists before it! what a profound reverence would they have paid it, when they beheld it in its glory and meridian brightness! [Note: Amyrald. Moral. Tom. V. p. 462.] Our reverence to God in all our addresses to him will arrive to greater degrees, if every act of duty be ushered in, and seasoned with the thoughts of God as sitting upon a throne of holiness; we shall have a more becoming sense of our own vileness, a greater ardor to his service, a deeper respect in his presence, if our understanding be more cleared, and possessed with notions of this perfection.

Thus take a view of God in this part of his glory, before you fall down before his throne, and assure yourselves you will find your hearts and services quickened with a new and lively spirit.

4. A due sense of this perfection in God would produce in us a fear of God, and arm us against temptation and sin. What made the heathen so wanton and loose, but the representations of their gods as vicious? Who would stick at adulteries, and more prodigious lusts, that can take a pattern for them from the person he adores for a deity? Upon which account Plato would have poets banished from his commonwealth, because, by dressing up their gods in wanton garbs in their poems, they encouraged wickedness in the people. But if the thoughts of God's holiness were impressed upon us, we should regard sin with the same eye, mark it with the same detestation in our measures, as God himself doth. So far as we are sensible of the Divine purity, we should account sin vile as it deserves; we should hate it entirely, without a grain of love to it, and hate it perpetually (Psalms 119:104): "Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." He looks into God's statute-book, and thereby arrives to an understanding of the purity of his nature, whence his hatred of iniquity commenced. This would govern our motion, check our vices; it would make us tremble at the hissing of a temptation: when a corruption did but peep out, and put forth its head, a look to the Divine Purity would be attended with a fresh convoy of strength to resist it. There is no such fortification, as to be wrapped up in the sense of this: this would fill us with an awe of God; we should be ashamed to admit any filthy thing into us, which we know is detestable to his pure eye. As the approach of a grave and serious man makes children hasten their trifles out of the way; so would a consideration of this attribute make us cast away our idols, and fling away our ridiculous thoughts and designs.

5. A due sense of this perfection would inflame us with a vehement desire to be conformed to Him. All our desires would be ardent to regulate ourselves according to this pattern of holiness and goodness, which is not to be equalled; the contemplating it as it shines forth in the face of Christ, will "transform us into the same image" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Since our lapsed state, we cannot behold the holiness of God in itself without affrightment; nor is it an object of imitation, but as tempered in Christ to our view. When we cannot, without blinding ourselves, look upon the sun in its brightness, we may behold it through a colored glass, whereby the lustre of it is moderated, without dazzling our eyes. The sense of it will furnish us with a greatness of mind, that little things will be contemned by us; motives of a greater alloy would have little influence upon us: we should have the highest motives to every duty, and motives of the same strain which influence the angels above. It would change us, not only into an angelical nature, but a divine nature: we should act like men of another sphere; as if we had received our original in another world, and seen with angels the ravishing beauties of heaven. How little would the mean employments of the world sink us into dirt and mud! How often hath the meditation of the courage of a valiant man, or acuteness and industry of a learned person, spurred on some men to an imitation of them, and transformed them into the same nature! as the looking upon the sun imprints an image of the sun upon our eye, that we seem to behold nothing but the sun a while after. The view of the Divine purity would fill us with a holy generosity to imitate him, more than the examples of the best men upon earth. It was a saying of a heathen, that "if virtue were visible, it would kindle a noble flame of love to it in the heart, by its ravishing beauty." Shall the infinite purity of the Author of all virtue come short of the strength of a creature? Can we not render that visible to us by frequent meditation, which, though it be invisible in his nature, is made visible in his law, in his ways, in his Son? It would make us

ready to obey him, since we know he cannot command anything that is sinful, but what is holy, just, and good: it would put all our affections in their due place, elevate them above the creature, and subject them to the Creator.

6. It would make us patient and contented under all God's dispensations. All penal evils are the fruits of his holiness, as he is Judge and Governor of the world: he is not an arbitrary Judge, nor doth any sentence pronounced, nor warrant for execution issue from him, but what bears upon it a stamp of the righteousness of his nature; he doth nothing by passion or unrighteousness, but according to the eternal law of his own unstained nature, which is the rule to him in his works, the basis and foundation of his throne and sovereign dominion (Psalms 89:14): "Justice," or righteousness, "and judgment are the habitation of thy throne;" upon these his sovereign power is established: so that there can be no just complaint or indictment brought against any of his proceedings with men. How doth our Saviour, who had the highest apprehensions of God's holiness, justify God in his deepest distresses, when he cried, and was not answered in the particular he desired, in that prophetic Psalm of him (Psalms 22:2-3), "I cry day and night, but thou hearest not!" Thou seemest to be deaf to all my petitions, afar off "from the words of my roaring; but thou art holy;" I cast no blame upon thee: all thy dealings are squared by thy holiness: this is the only law to thee; in this I acquiesce. It is part of thy holiness to hide thy face from me, to show thereby thy detestation of sin. Our Saviour adores the Divine purity in his sharpest agony, and a like sense of it would guide us in the same steps to acknowledge and glorify it, in our greatest deserts and afflictions; especially since as they are the fruit of the holiness of his nature, so they are the means to impart to us clearer stamps of holiness, according to that in himself, which is the original copy (Hebrews 12:10). He melts us down as gold, to fit us for the receiving a new impression, to mortify the affections of the flesh, and clothe us with the graces of his Spirit. The due sense of this would make us to submit to his stroke, and to wait upon him for a good issue of his dealings.

Exhort. 2. Is holiness a perfection of the Divine nature? Is it the glory of the Deity? Then let us glorify this holiness of God. Moses glorifies it in the text, and glorifies it in a song, which was a copy for all ages. The whole corporation of seraphims have their mouths filled with the praises of it. The saints, whether militant on earth, or triumphant in heaven, are to continue the same acclamation, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts" (Revelation 4:8). Neither angels nor glorified spirits exalt at the same rate the power which formed them creatures, nor goodness which preserves them in a blessed immortality, as they do holiness, which they bear some beams of in their own nature, and whereby they are capacitated to stand before His throne. Upon the account of this, a debt of praise is demanded of all rational creatures by the Psalmist (Psalms 99:3), "Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy." Not so much for the greatness of his Majesty, or the treasures of his justice; but as they are considered in conjunction with his holiness, which renders them beautiful; "for it is holy." Grandeur and majesty, simply in themselves, are not objects of praise, nor do they merit the acclamations of men, when destitute of righteousness: this only renders everything else adorable; and this adorns the Divine greatness with an amiableness (Isaiah 12:6): "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee;" and makes his might worthy of praise (Luke 1:49). In honoring this, which is the soul and spirit of all the rest, we give a glory to all the perfections which constitute and beautify his nature: and without the glorifying this we glorify nothing of them, though we should extol every other single attribute a thousand times. He values

no other adoration of his creatures, unless this be interested, nor accepts anything as a glory from them (Leviticus 10:3) "I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and I will be glorified:" as if he had said, In manifesting my name to be holy, you truly, you only honor me. And as the Scripture seldom speaks of this perfection without a particular emphasis, it teaches us not to think of it without a special elevation of heart: by this act only, while we are on earth, can we join consort with the angels in heaven; he that doth not honor it, delight in it, and in the meditation of it, hath no resemblance of it; he hath none of the image, that delights not in the original. Everything of God is glorious, but this most of all. If he built the world principally for anything, it was for the communication of his goodness, and display of his holiness. He formed the rational creature to manifest his holiness in that law whereby he was to be governed: then deprive not God of the design of his own glory. We honor this attribute,

1. When we make it the ground of our love to God. Not because he is gracious to us, but holy in himself. As God honors it, in loving himself for it, we should honor it, by pitching our affections upon him chiefly for it. What renders God amiable to himself, should render him lovely to all his creatures (Isaiah 42:21): "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake." If the hatred of evil be the immediate result of a love to God, then the peculiar object or term of our love to God, must be that perfection which stands in direct opposition to the hatred of evil (Psalms 97:10): "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." When we honor his holiness in every stamp and impression of it: his law, not principally because of its usefulness to us, its accommodateness to the order of the world, but for its innate purity; and his people, not for our interest in them, so much as for bearing upon them this glittering mark of the Deity, we honor then the purity of the Lawgiver, and the excellency of the Sanctifier.

2. We honor it, when we regard chiefly the illustrious appearance of this in his judgments in the world. In a case of temporal judgment, Moses celebrates it in the text; in a case of spiritual judgments, the angels applaud it in Isaiah. All his severe proceedings are nothing but the strong breathings of this attribute. Purity is the flash of his revenging sword. If he did not hate evil, his vengeance would not reach the committers of it. He is a "refiner's fire" in the day of his anger (Malachi 3:2). By his separating judgments, "he takes away the wicked of the earth like dross" (Psalms 119:119). How is his holiness honored, when we take notice of his sweeping out the rubbish of the world; how he suits punishment to sin, and discovers his hatred of the matter and circumstances of the evil, in the matter and circumstances of the judgment. This perfection is legible in every stroke of his sword; we honor it when we read the syllables of it, and not by standing amazed only at the greatness and severity of the blow, when we read how holy he is in his most terrible dispensations: for as in them God magnifies the greatness of his power, so he sanctifies himself; that is, declares the purity of his nature as a revenger of all impiety (Ezekiel 38:22-23); "And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood: and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hailstones; fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself."

3. We honor this attribute, when we take notice of it in every accomplishment of his promise, and every grant of a mercy. His truth is but a branch of his righteousness, a slip from this root. He is glorious in holiness in the account of Moses, because he "led forth his people whom he had redeemed" (Exodus 15:13); his people by a covenant with their fathers, being the God of Moses, the God of Israel, and the God of their fathers (Exodus 15:2). "My God, and my father's God, I will

exalt thee." For what? for his faithfulness to his promise. The holiness of God, which Mary (Luke 1:49) magnifies, is summed up in this, the help he afforded his servant Israel in the "remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever" (Luke 1:54-55). The certainty of his covenant mercy depends upon an unchangeableness of his holiness. What are "sure mercies," (Isaiah 55:3), are holy mercies in the Septuagint, and in Acts 13:34, which makes that translation canonical. His nearness to answer us, when we call upon him for such mercies, is a fruit of the holiness of his name and nature (Psalms 145:17). "The Lord is holy in all his works; the Lord is high to all them that call upon him." Hannah, after a return of prayer, sets a particular mark upon this, in her song (1 Samuel 2:2); "There is none holy as the Lord;" separated from all dross, firm to his covenant, and righteous in it to his suppliants, that confide in him, and plead his word. When we observe the workings of this in every return of prayer, we honor it; it is a sign the mercy is really a return of prayer, and not a mercy of course, bearing upon it only the characters of a common providence. This was the perfection David would bless, for the catalogue of mercies in Psalms 103:1, &c.; "Bless his holy name." Certainly, one reason why sincere prayer is so delightful to him, is because it puts him upon the exercise of this his beloved perfection, which he so much delighteth to honor. Since God acts in all those as the governor of the world, we honor him not, unless we take notice of that righteousness which fits him for a governor, and is the inward spring of all his motions (Genesis 18:25). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It was his design in his pity to Israel, as well as the calamities he intended against the heathens, to be "sanctified in them; that is, declared holy in his merciful as well as his judicial procedure" (Ezekiel 36:21; Ezekiel 36:23). Hereby God credits his righteousness, which seemed to be forgotten by the one, and contemned by the other; [Note: Sanct. in loc.] he removes, by this, all suspicion of unfaithfulness in him.

4. We honor this attribute, when we trust his covenant, and promise against outward appearances. Thus our Saviour, in the prophecy of him (Psalms 22:2-4), when God seemed to bar up the gates of his palace against the entry of any sore petitions, this attribute proves the support of the Redeemer's soul; "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel:" as it refers to what goes before, it has been twice explained; as it refers to what follows, it is a ground of trust; "Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel:" thou hast had the praises of Israel for many ages, for thy holiness. How? "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them;" they honored thy holiness by their trust, and thou didst honor their faith by a deliverance; thou always hadst a purity that would not shame nor confound them. I will trust in thee as thou art holy, and expect the breaking out of this attribute for my good as well as my predecessors; "Our fathers trusted in thee," &c.

5. We honor this attribute, when we show a greater affection to the marks of his holiness in times of the greatest contempt of it. As the Psalmist (Psalms 119:126-127); "They have made void thy law, therefore I love thy commandments above gold;" while they spurn at the purity of thy law, I will value it above the gold they possess; I will esteem it as gold, because others count it as dross; by their scorn of it, my love to it shall be the warmer; and my hatred of iniquity shall be the sharper: the disdain of others should inflame us with a zeal and fortitude to appear in behalf of his despised honor. We honor this holiness many other ways; by preparation for our addresses to him, out of a sense of his purity; when we imitate it: as He honors us by "teaching us his statutes" (Psalms 119:135), so we honor him by learning and observing them. When we beg of him to show himself

a refiner of us, to make us more conformable to him in holiness, and bless him for any communication of it to us, it renders us beautiful and lovely in his sight. To conclude: to honor it, is the way to engage it for us; to give it the glory of what it hath done, by the arm of power for our rescue from sin, and beating down our corruptions at his feet, is the way to see more of its marvellous works, and behold a clearer brightness. As unthankfulness makes him withdraw his grace (Romans 1:21; Romans 1:24), so glorifying him causes him to impart it. God honors men in the same way they honor him; when we honor him by acknowledging his purity, he will honor us by communicating of it to us. This is the way to derive a greater excellency to our souls.

Exhort. 3. Since holiness is an eminent perfection of the Divine nature, let us labor after a conformity to God in this perfection. The nature of God is presented to us in the Scripture, both as a pattern to imitate, and a motive to persuade the creature to holiness (1 John 3:3; Matthew 5:48; Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Since it is, therefore, the nature of God, the more our natures are beautified with it, the more like we are to the Divine nature. It is not the pattern of angels, or archangels, that our Saviour, or his apostle, proposeth for our imitation; but the original of all purity, God himself; the same that created us, to be imitated by us. Nor is an equal degree of purity enjoined us; though we are to be pure, and perfect, and merciful as God is, yet not essentially so; for that would be to command us an impossibility in itself; as much as to order us to cease to be creatures, and commence gods. No creature can be essentially holy but by participation from the chief Fountain of Holiness; but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness. As a short line may be as straight as another, though it parallel it not in the immense length of it; a copy may have the likeness of the original, though not the same perfection; we cannot be good, without eyeing some exemplar of goodness as the pattern. No pattern is so suitable as that which is the highest goodness and purity. That limner that would draw the most excellent piece, fixes his eyes upon the most perfect pattern. He that would be a good orator, or poet, or artificer, considers some person most excellent in each kind, as the object of his imitation. Who so fit as God to be viewed as the pattern of holiness, in our intendment of, and endeavor after holiness? The Stoics, one of the best sects of philosophers, advised their disciples to pitch upon some eminent example of virtue, according to which to form their lives; as Socrates, &c. But true holiness doth not only endeavor to live the life of a good man, but chooses to live a divine life; as before the man was "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:19), so, upon his return, he aspires after the life of God. To endeavor to be like a good man is to make one image like another; to set our clocks by other clocks, without regarding the sun: but true holiness consists in a likeness to the most exact sampler. God being the first purity, is the rule as well as the spring of all purity in the creature, the chief and first object of imitation. We disown ourselves to be his creatures, if we breathe not after a resemblance to him in what he is imitable. There was in man, as created according to God's image, a natural appetite to resemble God: it was at first planted in him by the Author of his nature. The devil's temptation of him by that motive to transgress the law, had been as an arrow shot against a brazen wall, had there not been a desire of some likeness to his Creator engraven upon him (Genesis 3:5): it would have had no more influence upon him, than it could have had upon a mere animal. But man mistook the term; he would have been like God in knowledge, whereas, he should have affected a greater resemblance of him in purity. O that we could exemplify God in our nature! Precepts may instruct us more, but examples affect us more; one directs us, but the other attracts us. What can be more attractive of our imitation, than that which is the original of all purity, both in men and angels? This conformity to him consists in an

imitation of him,

1. In his law. The purity of his nature was first visible in this glass; hence, it is called a “holy” law (Romans 7:12); a “pure” law (Psalms 19:8). Holy and pure, as it is a ray of the pure nature of the Lawgiver. When our lives are a comment upon his law, they are expressive of his holiness: we conform to his holiness when we regulate ourselves by his law, as it is a transcript of his holiness: we do not imitate it, when we do a thing in the matter of it agreeable to that holy rule, but when we do it with respect to the purity of the Lawgiver beaming in it. If it be agreeable to God’s will, and convenient for some design of our own, and we do anything only with a respect to that design, we make not God’s holiness discovered in the law our rule, but our own conveniency: it is not a conformity to God, but a conformity of our actions to self. As in abstinence from intemperate courses, not because the holiness of God in his law hath prescribed it, but because the health of our bodies, or some noble contentments of life, require it; then it is not God’s holiness that is our rule, but our own security, conveniency, or something else which we make a God to ourselves. It must be a real conformity to the law: our holiness should shine as really in the practice, as God’s purity doth in the precept. God hath not a pretence of purity in his nature, but a reality: it is not only a sudden boiling up of an admiration of him, or a starting wish to be like him, from some sudden impression upon the fancy, which is a mere temporary blaze, but a settled temper of soul, loving everything that is like him, doing things out of a firm desire to resemble his purity in the copy he hath set; not a resting in negatives, but aspiring to positives; holy and harmless are distinct things: they were distinct qualifications in our High Priest in his obedience to the law (Hebrews 7:26), so they must be in us.

2. In his Christ. As the law is the transcript, so Christ is the image of his holiness: the glory of God is too dazzling to be beheld by us: the acute eye of an angel is too weak to look upon that bright sun without covering his face: we are much too weak to take our measures from that purity which is infinite in his nature. But he hath made his Son like us, that by the imitation of him in that temper, and shadow of human flesh, we may arrive to a resemblance of him (2 Corinthians 3:18). Then there is a conformity to him, when that which Christ did is drawn in lively colors in the soul of a Christian; when, as he died upon the cross, we die to our sins; as he rose from the grave, we rise from our lusts; as he ascended on high, we mount our souls thither; when we express in our lives what shined in his, and exemplify in our hearts what he acted in the world, and become one with him, as he was separate from sinners. The holiness of God in Christ is our ultimate pattern: as we are not only to believe in Christ, but “by Christ in God” (John 14:1), so we are not only to imitate Christ, but the holiness of God as discovered in Christ. And, to enforce this upon us, let us consider,

(1.) It is this only wherein he commands our imitation of him. We are not commanded to be mighty and wise, as God is mighty and wise: but “be holy, as I am holy.” The declarations of his power are to enforce our subjection; those of his wisdom, to encourage our direction by him; but this only to attract our imitation. When he saith, “I am holy,” the immediate inference he makes, is, “Be ye so too,” which is not the proper instruction from any other perfection. [Note: “In this,” saith Plato, “God is $\epsilon\nu\ \mu\epsilon\sigma\omega\ \pi\alpha\rho\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma\mu\alpha$.”] Man was created by Divine power, and harmonized by Divine wisdom, but not after them, or according to them, as the true image; this was the prerogative of Divine holiness, to be the pattern of his rational creature: [Note: Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.] wisdom and power were subservient to this, the one as the pencil, the other as the hand that

moved it. The condition of a creature is too mean to have the communications of the Divine essence; the true impressions of his righteousness and goodness we are only capable of. It is only in those moral perfections we are said to resemble God. The devils, those impure and ruined spirits, are nearer to him in strength and knowledge than we are; yet in regard of that natural and intellectual perfection, never counted like him, but at the greatest distance from him, because at the greatest distance from his purity. God values not a natural might, nor an acute understanding, nor vouchsafes such perfections the glorious title of that of his image. Plutarch saith, God is angry with those that imitate his thunder or lightning, his works of majesty, but delighted with those that imitate his virtue. [Note: Eugub. inde Perenni Philoso. lib. vi. cap. 6.] In this only we can never incur any reproof from him, but for falling short of him and his glory. Had Adam endeavored after an imitation of this, instead of that of Divine knowledge, he had escaped his fall, and preserved his standing; and had Lucifer wished himself like God in this, as well as his dominion, he had still been a glorious angel, instead of being now a ghastly devil: to reach after a union with the Supreme Being, in regard of holiness, is the only generous and commendable ambition.

(2.) This is the prime way of honoring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of him, as when we aspire to a conversing with him with unstained spirits, and live to him in living like him. The angels are not called holy for applauding his purity, but conforming to it. The more perfect any creature is in the rank of beings, the more is the Creator honored; as it is more for the honor of God to create an angel or man, than a mere animal; because there are in such clearer characters of Divine power and goodness, than in those that are inferior. The more perfect any creature is morally, the more is God glorified by that creature; it is a real declaration, that God is the best and most amiable Being; that nothing besides him is valuable, and worthy to be object of our imitation. It is a greater honoring of him, than the highest acts of devotion, and the most religious bodily exercise, or the singing this song of Moses in the text, with a triumphant spirit; as it is more the honor of a father to be imitated in his virtues by his son, than to have all the glaving commendations by the tongue or pen of a vicious and debauched child. By this we honor him in that perfection which is dearest to him, and counted by him as the chiefest glory of his nature. God seems to accept the glorifying this attribute, as if it were a real addition to that holiness which is infinite in his nature, and because infinite, cannot admit of any increase: and, therefore, the word sanctified is used instead of glorified. (Isaiah 8:13), "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." And (Isaiah 29:23), "They shall sanctify the holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel." This sanctification of God is by the fear of him, which signifies in the language of the Old Testament, a reverence of him, and a righteousness before him. He doth not say, when he would have his power or wisdom glorified, Empower me or make me wise; but when he would have his holiness glorified by the creature, it is, Sanctify me; that is, manifest the purity of my nature by the holiness of your lives: but he expresseth it in such a term, as if it were an addition to this infinite perfection; so acceptable it is to him, as if it were a contribution from his creature for the enlarging an attribute so pleasing to him, and so glorious in his eye. It is, as much as in the creature lies, a preserving the life of God, since this perfection is his life; and that he would as soon part with his life as part with his purity. It keeps up the reputation of God in the world, and attracts others to a love of him; whereas, unworthy carriages defame God in the eyes of men, and bring up an ill report of him, as if he were such an one as those that profess him, and walk unsuitably to their profession, appear to be.

(3.) This is the excellency and beauty of a creature. The title of “beauty” is given to it in Psalms 110:3; “beauties,” in the plural number, as comprehending it in all other beauties whatsoever. What is a Divine excellency cannot be a creature’s deformity: the natural beauty of it is a representation of the Divinity; and a holy man ought to esteem himself excellent in being such in his measure as his God is, and puts his principal felicity in the possession of the same purity in truth. This is the refined complexion of the angels that stand before his throne. The devils lost their comeliness when they fell from it. It was the honor of the human nature of our Saviour, not only to be united to the Deity, but to be sanctified by it. He was “fairer than all the children of men,” because he had a holiness above the children of men: “grace was poured into his lips” (Psalms 45:2). It was the jewel of the reasonable nature in paradise: conformity to God was man’s original happiness in his created state; and what was naturally so, cannot but be immutably so in its own nature. The beauty of every copied thing consists in its likeness to the original; everything hath more of loveliness, as it hath greater impressions of its first pattern in this regard holiness hath more of beauty on it than the whole creation, because it partakes of a greater excellency of God than the sun, moon, and stars. No greater glory can be, than to be a conspicuous and visible image of the invisible, and holy, and blessed God. As this is the splendor of all the Divine attributes, so it is the flower of all a christian’s graces, the crown of all religion: it is the glory of the Spirit. In this regard the king’s daughter is said to be “all glorious within” (Psalms 45:13). It is more excellent than the soul itself, since the greatest soul is but a deformed piece without it a “diamond without lustre.” [Note: Vaughan pp. 4, 5.] What are the noble faculties of the soul without it, but as a curious rusty watch, a delicate heap of disorder and confusion? It is impossible there can be beauty where there are a multitude of “spots and wrinkles” that blemish a countenance (Ephesians 5:27). It can never be in its true brightness but when it is perfect in purity; when it regains what it was possessed of by creation, and dispossessed of by the fall, and recovers its primitive temper. We are not so beautiful by being the work of God, as by having a stamp of God upon us. Worldly greatness may make men honorable in the sight of creeping worms. Soft lives, ambitious reaches, luxurious pleasures, and a pompous religion, render no man excellent and noble in the sight of God: this is not the excellency and nobility of the Deity which we are bound to resemble; other lines of a Divine image must be drawn in us to render us truly excellent.

(4.) It is our life. What is the life of God is truly the life of a rational creature. [Note: Amiral. in Heb. pp. 101, 102.] The life of the body consists not in the perfection of its members, and the integrity of its organs; these remain when the body becomes a carcass; but in the presence of the soul, and its vigorous animation of every part to perform the distinct offices belonging to each of them. The life of the soul consists not in its being, or spiritual substance, or the excellency of its faculties of understanding and will, but in the moral and becoming operations of them. The spirit is only “life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10). The faculties are turned by it, to acquit themselves in their functions, according to the will of God; the absence of this doth not only deform the soul, but, in a sort, annihilate it, in regard of its true essence and end. Grace gives a Christian being, and a want of it is the want of a true being (1 Corinthians 15:10). When Adam divested himself of his original righteousness, he came under the force of the threatening, in regard of a spiritual death; every person is “morally dead while he lives” an unholy life (1 Timothy 5:6). What life is to the body, that is righteousness to the spirit; and the greater measure of holiness it hath, the more of life it hath, because it is in a greater nearness, and partakes more fully of the fountain of life. Is not that the most worthy life, which God makes most account of, without which his life could not be a

pleasant and blessed life, but a life worse than death? What a miserable life is that of the men of the world, that are carried, with greedy inclinations, to all manner of unrighteousness, whither their interests or their lusts invite them! The most beautiful body is a carcass, and the most honorable person hath but a brutish life (Psalms 49:20); miserable creatures when their life shall be extinct without a Divine rectitude, when all other things will vanish as the shadows of the night at the appearance of the sun! Holiness is our life.

(5.) It is this only fits us for communion with God. Since it is our beauty and our life, without it what communion can an excellent God have with deformed creatures; a living God with dead creatures? "Without holiness none shall see God" (Hebrews 12:14). The creature must be stripped of his unrighteousness, or God of his purity, before they can come together. Likeness is the ground of communion, and of delight in it: the opposition between God and unholy souls is as great as that between "light and darkness" (1 John 1:6). Divine fruition is not so much by a union of presence as a union of nature. Heaven is not so much an outward as an inward life; the foundation of glory is laid in grace; a resemblance to God is our vital happiness, without which the vision of God would not be so much as a cloudy and shadowy happiness, but rather a torment than a felicity; unless we be of a like nature to God, we cannot have a pleasing fruition of him. Some philosophers think that if our bodies were of the same nature with the heavens, of an ethereal substance, the nearness to the sun would cherish, not scorch us. Were we partakers of a Divine nature, we might enjoy God with delight; whereas, remaining in our unlikeness to him, we cannot think of him, and approach to him without terror. As soon as sin had stripped man of the image of God, he was an exile from the comfortable presence of God, unworthy for God to hold any correspondence with: he can no more delight in a defiled person that a man can take a toad into intimate converse with him; he would hereby discredit his own nature, and justify our impurity. The holiness of a creature only prepares him for an eternal conjunction with God in glory. Enoch's walking with God was the cause of his being so soon wafted to the place of a full fruition of him; he hath as much delight in such as in heaven itself; one is his habitation as well as the other; the one is his habitation of glory, and the other is the house of his pleasure: if he dwell in Zion, it must be a "holy mountain" (Joel 3:17), and the members of Zion must be upheld in their rectitude and integrity before they be "set before the face of God forever" (Psalms 41:12.) Such are styled his jewels, his portion, as if he lived upon them, as a man upon his inheritance. As God cannot delight in us, so neither can we delight in God without it. We must purify ourselves "as he is pure," if we expect to "see him as he is," in the comfortable glory and beauty of his nature (1 John 3:2-3), else the sight of God would be terrible and troublesome: we cannot be satisfied with the likeness of God at the resurrection, unless we have a righteousness wherewith to "behold his face" (Psalms 17:15). It is a vain imagination in any to think that heaven can be a place of happiness to him, in whose eye the beauty of holiness which fills and adorns it, is an unlovely thing; or that any can have a satisfaction in that Divine purity which is loathsome to him in the imitations of it. We cannot enjoy him, unless we resemble him; nor take any pleasure in him, if we were with him, without something of likeness to him. Holiness fits us for communion with God.

(6.) We can have no evidence of our election and adoption without it. Conformity to God, in purity, is the fruit of electing love (Ephesians 1:4); "He hath chosen us that we should be holy." The goodness of the fruit evidenceth the nature of the root: this is the seal that assures us the patent is the authentic grant of the Prince. Whatsoever is holy, speaks itself to be from God; and whosoever

is holy, speaks himself to belong to God. This is the only evidence that “we are born of God” (1 John 2:29). The subduing our souls to him, the forming us into a resemblance to himself, is a more certain sign we belong to him, than if we had, with Isaiah, seen his glory in the vision, with all his train of angels about him. This justifies us to be the seed of God, when he hath, as it were, taken a slip from his own purity, and engrafted it in our spirits: he can never own us for his children without his mark, the stamp of holiness. The devil’s stamp is none of God’s badge. Our spiritual extraction from him is but pretended, unless we do things worthy of so illustrious a birth, and becoming the honor of so great a father: what evidence can we else have of any child-like love to God, since the proper act of love is to imitate the object of our affections? And that we may be in some measure like to God in this excellent perfection.

1st. Let us be often viewing and ruminating on the holiness of God, especially as discovered in Christ. It is by a believing meditation on him, that we are “changed into the same image” (2 Corinthians 3:18). We can think often of nothing that is excellent in the world, but it draws our faculties to some kind of suitable operation; and why should not such an excellent idea of the holiness of God in Christ perfect our understandings, and awaken all the powers of our souls to be formed to actions worthy of him? A painter employed in the limning some excellent piece, has not only his pattern before his eyes, but his eye frequently upon the pattern, to possess his fancy to draw forth an exact resemblance. He that would express the image of God, must imprint upon his mind the purity of his nature; cherish it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to a conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon, and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation! Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

2d. Let us often exercise ourselves in acts of love to God, because of this perfection. The more adoring thoughts we have of God, the more delightfully we shall aspire to, and more ravishingly catch after, anything that may promote the more full draught of his Divine image in our hearts. What we intensely affect, we desire to be as near to as we can, and to be that very thing, rather than ourselves. All imitations of others arise from an intense love to their persons or excellency. When the soul is ravished with this perfection of God, it will desire to be united with it; to have it drawn in it, more than to have its own being continued to it: it will desire and delight in its own being, in order to this heavenly and spiritual work. The impressions of the nature of God upon it, and the imitations of the nature of God by it, will be more desirable than any natural perfection whatsoever. The will in loving is rendered like the object beloved; is turned into its nature, [Note: *Amor naturam induit, et mores imbibit rei amatae.*] and imbibes its qualities. The soul, by loving God, will find itself more and more transformed into the Divine image; whereas, slighted ensamples are never thought worthy of imitation.

3d. Let us make God our end. Every man’s mind forms itself to a likeness to that which it makes its chief end. An earthly soul is as drossy as the earth he gapes for; an ambitious soul is as elevated as the honor he reaches at; the same characters that are upon the thing aimed at, will be imprinted upon the spirit of him that aims at it. When God and his glory are made our end, we shall find a silent likeness pass in upon us; the beauty of God will by degrees enter upon our souls.

4th. In every deliberate action, let us reflect upon the Divine purity as a pattern. Let us examine whether anything we are prompted unto bear an impression of God upon it; whether it looks like a thing that God himself would do in that case, were he in our natures and in our circumstances. See whether it hath the livery of God upon it, how congruous it is to his nature; whether, and in what manner, the holiness of God can be glorified thereby; and let us be industrious in all this; for can such an imitation be easy which is resisted by the constant assaults of the flesh, which is discouraged by our own ignorance, and depressed by our faint and languishing desires after it? O! happy we, if there were such a heart in us!

Exhort. 4. If holiness be a perfection belonging to the nature of God; then, where there is some weak conformity to the holiness of God, let us labor to grow up in it, and breathe after fuller measures of it. The more likeness we have to him, the more love we shall have from him. Communion will be suitable to our imitation; his love to himself in his essence, will cast out beams of love to himself in his image. If God loves holiness in a lower measure, much more will he love it in a higher degree, because then his image is more illustrious and beautiful, and comes nearer to the lively, lineaments of his own infinite purity. Perfection in anything is more lovely and amiable than imperfection in any state; and the nearer anything arrives to perfection, the further are those things separated from it which might cool an affection to it. An increase in holiness is attended with a manifestation of his love (John 14:21): "He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me, and he shall be loved of, my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him." It is a testimony of love to God, and God will not be behind-hand with the creature in kindness; he loves a holy man for some resemblance to him in his nature; but when there is an abounding in sanctified dispositions suitable to it, there is an increase of favor; the more we resemble the original, the more shall we enjoy the blessedness of that original as any partake more of the Divine likeness, they partake more of the Divine happiness.

Exhort. 5. Let us carry ourselves holily, in a spiritual manner, in all our religious approaches to God (Psalms 93:5); "Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever." This attribute should work in us a deep and reverential respect to God. This is the reason rendered why we should "worship at his footstool," in the lowest posture of humility prostrate before him, because "he is holy" (Psalms 99:5). Shoes must be put off from our feet (Exodus 3:5), that is, lusts from our affections, everything that our souls are clogged and bemired with, as the shoe is with dirt. He is not willing we should offer to him an impure soul, mired hearts, rotten carcasses, putrefied in vice, rotten in iniquity; our services are to be as free from profaneness, as the sacrifices of the law were to be free from sickness or any blemish. Whatsoever is contrary to his purity, is abhorred by him, and unlovely in his sight; and can meet with no other success at his hands, but a disdainful turning away both of his eye and ear (Isaiah 1:15). Since he is an immense purity, he will reject from his presence, and from having any communion with him, all that which is not conformable to him; as light chases away the darkness of the night, and will not mix with it. If we "stretch out" our "hands towards him," we must "put iniquity far away from us" (Job 11:13-14); the fruits of all service will else drop off to nothing. "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord": when? when the heart is purged by Christ sitting as a "purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3-4). Not all the incense of the Indies yield him so sweet a savor, as one spiritual act of worship from a heart estranged from the vileness of the world, and ravished with an affection to, and a desire of imitating, the purity of his nature.

Exhort. 6. Let us address for holiness to God, the fountain of it. As he is the author of bodily life in the creature, so he is the author of his own life, the life of God in the soul. By his holiness he makes men holy, as the sun by his light enlightens the air. He is not only the Holy One, but our Holy One (Isaiah 43:15); "The Lord that sanctifies us" (Leviticus 20:8). As he hath mercy to pardon us, so he hath holiness to purify us, the excellency of being a sun to comfort us, and a shield to protect us, giving "grace and glory" (Psalms 74:11). Grace whereby we may have communion with him to our comfort, and strength against our spiritual enemies for our defence; grace as our preparatory to glory, and grace growing up till it ripen in glory. He only can mould us into a Divine frame; the great original can only derive the excellency of his own nature to us. We are too low, too lame, to lift up ourselves to it; too much in love with our own deformity, to admit of this beauty without a heavenly power inclining our desires for it, our affections to it, our willingness to be partakers of it. He can as soon set the beauty of holiness in a deformed heart, as the beauty of harmony in a confused mass, when he made the world. He can as soon cause the light of purity to rise out of the darkness of corruption, as frame glorious spirits out of the insufficiency of nothing. His beauty doth not decay; he hath as much in himself now as he had in his eternity; he is as ready to impart it, as he was at the creation; only we must wait upon him for it, and be content to have it by small measures and degrees. There is no fear of our sanctification, if we come to him as a God of holiness, since he is a God of peace, and the breach made by Adam is repaired by Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23): "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly," &c. He restores the sanctifying Spirit which was withdrawn by the fall, as he is a God pacified, and his holiness righted by the Redeemer. The beauty of it appears in its smiles upon a man in Christ, and is as ready to impart itself to the reconciled creature, as before justice was to punish the rebellious one. He loves to send forth the streams of this perfection into created channels, more than any else. He did not design the making the creature so powerful as he might, because power is not such an excellency in his own nature, but as it is conducted and managed by some other excellency. Power is indifferent, and may be used well or ill, according as the possessor of it is righteous or unrighteous. God makes not the creature so powerful as he might, but he delights to make the creature that waits upon him as holy as it can be; beginning it in this world, and ripening it in the other. It is from him we must expect it, and from him that we must beg it, and draw arguments from the holiness of his nature, to move him to work holiness in our spirits; we cannot have a stronger plea. Purity is the favorite of his own nature, and delights itself in the resemblances of it in the creature. Let us also go to God, to preserve what he hath already wrought and imparted. As we cannot attain it, so we cannot maintain it without him. God gave it Adam, and he lost it; when God gives it us, we shall lose it without his influencing and preserving grace; the channel will be without a stream, if the fountain do not bubble it forth; and the streams will vanish, if the fountain doth not constantly supply them. Let us apply ourselves to him for holiness, as he is a God glorious in holiness; by this we honor God, and advantage ourselves.

On The Immutability of God

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Psalms 102:26-27.—They shall perish but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. This Psalm contains a complaint of a people pressed with a great calamity; some think of the Jewish church in Babylon; others think the Psalmist doth here personate mankind lying under a state of corruption, because he wishes for the coming of the Messiah, to accomplish that redemption promised by God, and needed by them. Indeed the title of the Psalm is “A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord;” whether afflicted with the sense of corruption, or with the sense of oppression. And the redemption by the Messiah, which the ancient church looked upon as the fountain of their deliverance from a sinful or a servile bondage, is in this psalm spoken of. A set time appointed for the discovery of his mercy to Sion (Psalms 102:13); an appearance in glory to build up Sion (Psalms 102:16); the loosing of the prisoner by redemption, and them that are appointed to death (Psalms 102:17); the calling of the Gentiles (Psalms 102:22); and the latter part of the psalm, wherein are the verses I have read, are applied to Christ (Hebrews 1:1-14.) Whatsoever the design of the psalm might be, many things are intermingled that concern the kingdom of the Messiah, and redemption by Christ.

Some make three parts of the Psalms 1:1-6. A petition plainly delivered (Psalms 102:1-2): “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee,” &c. 2. The petition strongly and argumentatively enforced and pleaded (Psalms 102:3), from the misery of the petitioner in himself, and his reproach from his enemies. 3. An acting of faith in the expectation of an answer in the general redemption promised (Psalms 102:12-13): “But thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever; thou shalt arise and the mercy upon Sion; the heathen shall fear thy name.” The first part is the petition pleaded; the second part is the petition answered, in an assurance that there should in time be a full deliverance. [Note: Pareus.] The design of the penman is to confirm the church in the truth of the divine promises; that though the foundations of the world should be ripped up, and the heavens clatter together, and the whole fabric of them be unpinned and fall to pieces, the firmest parts of it dissolved; yet the church should continue in its stability, because it stands not upon the changeableness of creatures, but is built upon the immutable rock of the truth of God, which is as little subject to change, as his essence.

They shall perish, thou shalt change them. As he had before ascribed to God the “foundation of heaven and earth” (Psalms 102:25), so he ascribes to God here the destruction of them. Both the beginning and end of the world are here ascertained. There is nothing, indeed, from the present appearance of things, that can demonstrate the cessation of the world. The heaven and earth stand firm; the motions of the heavenly bodies are the same, their beauty is not decayed; individuals corrupt, but the species and kinds remain. The successions of the year observe their due order; but the sin of man renders the change of the present appearance of the world

necessary to accomplish the design of God for the glory of his elect. The heavens do not naturally perish, as some fancied an old age of the world, wherein it must necessarily decay as the bodies of animals do; or that the parts of the heavens are broken off by their rubbing one against another in their motion, and falling to the earth, are the seeds of those things that grow among us. [Note: Plin. Hist. lib. ii. c. 3.] The earth and heavens. He names here the most stable parts of the world, and the most beautiful parts of the creation; those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God; that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below, the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its fixedness, and are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements, fire and water being often turned into air, so that there may remain but little of that air which was first created by reason of the continual transmutation; yet this firmness of the earth and heavens is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmovableness and fixedness of the being of God; as their beauty comes short of the glory of his being, so doth their firmness come short of his stability. Some, by heavens and earth, understand the creatures which reside in the earth, and those which are in the air, which is called heaven often in Scripture; but the ruin and fall of these being seen every day, had been no fit illustration of the unchangeableness of God.

They shall perish, they shall be changed. 1. They may perish, say some; they have it not from themselves that they do not perish, but from thee, who didst endue them with an incorruptible nature; they shall perish if thou speakest the word; thou canst with as much ease destroy them, as thou didst create them. But the Psalmist speaks not of their possibility, but the certainty of their perishing. 2. They shall perish in their qualities and motion, not in their substance, say others. They shall cease from that motion which is designed properly for the generation and corruption of things in the earth; but in regard of their substance and beauty they shall remain. As when the strings or wheels of a clock or watch are taken off, the material parts remain, though the motion of it, and the use for discovering the time of the day, ceaseth. [Note: Coccei. In loc.] To perish, doth not signify alway a falling into nothing, an annihilation, by which both the matter and the form are destroyed, but a ceasing of the present appearance of them; a ceasing to be what they now are; as a man is said to perish when he dies, whereas the better part of man doth not cease to be. The figure of the body moulders away, and the matter of it returns to dust; but the soul being immortal ceaseth not to act, when the body, by reason of the absence of the soul, is incapable of acting. So the heavens shall perish; the appearance they now have shall vanish, and a more glorious and incorruptible frame be erected by the power and goodness of God. The dissolution of heaven and earth is meant by the word perish; the raising a new frame is signified by the word changed: as if the Spirit of God would prevent any wrong meaning of the word perish, by alleviating the sense of that, by another which signifies only a mutation and change; as when we change a habit and garment, we quit the old to receive the new. As a garment, as a vesture. Thou shalt change them, **■λ■ξεις**, [Note: Septuag.] thou shalt fold them up. The heavens are compared to a curtain (Psalms 104:2), and shall in due time be folded up as clothes and curtains are. As a garment encompasseth the whole body, so do the heavens encircle the earth. [Note: Estius in Hebrews 1:1-14.] Some say, as a garment is folded up to be laid aside, that when there is need it may be taken again for use; so shalt thou fold up the heavens like a garment, that when they are repaired, thou mayest again stretch them out about the earth; thou shalt fold them up, so that what did appear shall not now appear. It may be illustrated by the metaphor of a scroll or book, which the

Spirit of God useth (Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14): "The heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." When a book is rolled up or shut, nothing can be read in it till it be opened again; so the face of the heavens, wherein the stars are as letters declaring the glory of God, shall be shut or rolled together, so that nothing shall appear, till by its renovation it be opened again: as a garment it shall be changed, not to be used in the same fashion, and for the same use again. It seems, indeed, to be for the worse; an old garment is not changed but into rags, to be put to other uses, and afterwards thrown upon the dunghill; but similitudes are not to be pressed too far; and this will not agree with the new heavens and new earth, physically so, as well as metaphorically so. It is not likely the heavens will be put to a worse use than God designed them for in creation; however, a change as a garment, speaks not a total corruption, but an alteration of qualities; as a garment not to be used in the same fashion as before. We may observe, that it is probable the world shall not be annihilated, but refined. It shall lose its present form and fashion; but not its foundation: indeed, as God raised it from nothing, so he can reduce it into nothing; yet it doth not appear that God will annihilate it, and utterly destroy both the matter and form of it; part shall be consumed, and part purified (2 Peter 3:12-13): "The heavens shall be on fire and dissolved; nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth." They shall be melted down as gold by the artificer, to be refined from its dross, and wrought into a more beautiful fashion, that they may serve the design of God for those that shall reside therein; a new world wherein righteousness shall dwell: the apostle opposing it thereby to the old world wherein wickedness did reside. The heavens are to be purged, as the vessels that held the sin-offering were to be purified by the fire of the sanctuary. God, indeed, will take down this scaffold, which he hath built to publish his glory. As every individual hath a certain term of its duration, so an end is appointed for the universal nature of heaven and earth (Isaiah 51:6): "The heavens shall vanish like smoke" which disappears. As smoke is resolved and attenuated into air, not annihilated, so shall the world assume a new face, and have a greater clearness and splendor; as the bodies of men, dissolved into dust, shall have more glorious qualities at their resurrection; as a vessel of gold is melted down to remove the batterings in it, and receive a more comely form by the skill of the workman.

1. The world was not destroyed by the deluge: it was rather washed by water, than consumed; so it shall be rather refined by the last fire, than lie under an irrecoverable ruin.
2. It is not likely God would liken the everlastingness of his covenant, and the perpetuity of his spiritual Israel, to the duration of the ordinances of the heavens (as he doth in Jeremiah 31:35-36), if they were wholly to depart from before him. Though that place may only tend to an assurance of a church in the world, while the world endures; yet it would be but small comfort, if the happiness of believers should endure no longer than the heavens and earth, if they were to have a total period.
3. Besides, the bodies of the saints must have place for their support to move in, and glorious objects suited to those glorious senses which shall be restored to them; not in any carnal way, which our Saviour rejects, when he saith, There is no eating, or drinking, or marrying, &c. in the other world; but whereby they may glorify God; though how or in what manner their senses shall be used, would be rashness to determine; only something is necessary for the corporeal state of men, that there may be an employment for their senses as well as their souls.

4. Again, How could the creature, the world, or any part of it, be said to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, if the whole frame of heaven and earth were to be annihilated (Romans 8:21)? The apostle saith also, that the creature waits with an “earnest expectation for this manifestation of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19); which would have no foundation if the whole frame should be reduced to nothing. What joyful expectation can there be in any of a total ruin? How should the creature be capable of partaking in this glorious liberty of the sons of God?e As the world for the sin of man lost its first dignity, and was cursed alter the fall, and the beauty bestowed upon it by creation defaced; so it shall recover that ancient glory, when he shall be fully restored by the resurrection to that dignity he lost by his first sin. As man shall be freed from his corruptibility to receive that glory which is prepared for him, so shall the creatures be freed from that imperfection or corruptibility, those stains and spots upon the face of them, to receive a new glory suited to their nature, and answerable to the design of God, when the glorious liberty of the saints shall be accomplished. [Note: Mestræzat sur. Hebrews 1:1-14.] As when a prince’s nuptials are solemnized, the whole country echoes with joy; so the inanimate creatures, when the time of the marriage of the Lamb is come, shall have a delight and pleasure from that renovation. The apostle sets forth the whole world as a person groaning; and the Scripture is frequent in such metaphors; as when the creatures are said to wait upon God, and to be troubled, the hills are said to leap and the mountains to rejoice (Psalms 104:27-29); the creature is said to groan, as the heavens are said to declare the glory of God, passively, naturally, not rationally. It is not likely angels are here meant, though they cannot but desire it; since they are affected with the dishonor and reproach God hath in the world, they cannot but long for the restoration of his honor in the restoration of the creature to its true end: and, indeed, the angels are employed to serve man in this sinful state, and cannot but in holiness wish the creature freed from his corruption. Nor is it meant of the new creatures, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; those he brings in afterwards, groaning and waiting for the adoption (Psalms 104:23); where he distinguisheth the rational creature from the creature he had spoken of before. If he had meant the believing creature by that creature that desired the liberty of the sons of God, what need had there been of that additional distinction, and not only they, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves? Whereby it seems he means some creatures below rational creatures, since neither angels nor blessed souls can be said to travail in pain, with that distress as a woman in travail hath, as the word signifies, who perform the work joyfully which God sets them upon. [Note: Mestræzat sur. Hebrews 1:1-14.] If the creatures be subject to vanity by the sin of man, they shall also partake of a happiness by the restoration of man. The earth hath borne thorns and thistles, and venomous beasts; the air hath had its tempests and infectious qualities; the water hath caused its floods and deluges. The creature hath been abused to luxury and intemperance; and been tyrannized over by man, contrary to the end of its creation. It is convenient that some time should be allotted for the creature’s attaining its true end, and that it may partake of the peace of man, as it hath done of the fruits of his sin; otherwise it would seem, that sin had prevailed more than grace, and would have had more power to deface, than grace to restore things into their due order.

5. Again, Upon what account should the Psalmist exhort the heavens to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, when God “comes to judge the world with righteousness” (Psalms 96:11-13), if they should be annihilated and sunk forever into nothing? “It would seem,” saith Daille, “to be an impertinent figure, if the Judge of the world brought to them a total destruction; an entire ruin could

not be matter of triumph to creatures, who naturally have that instinct or inclination put into them by their Creator, to preserve themselves, and to effect their own preservation.”

6. Again, the Lord is to rejoice in his works (Psalms 104:31): “The glory of the Lord shall endure forever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works;” not hath, but shall rejoice in his works: in the works of creation, which the Psalmist had enumerated, and which is the whole scope of the Psalm: and he intimates that it is part of the glory of the Lord which endures forever; that is, his manifestative glory, to rejoice in his works: the glory of the Lord must be understood with reference to the creation he had spoken of before. How short was that joy God had in his works after he had sent them beautified out of his hand! How soon did he repent, not only that he had made man, but was grieved at the heart also, that he made the other creatures which man’s sin had disordered! (Genesis 6:7.) What joy can God have in them, since the curse upon the entrance of sin into the world remains upon them? If they are to be annihilated upon the full restoration of his holiness, what time will God have to rejoice in the other works of creation? It is the joy of God to see all his works in due order; every one pointing to their true end; marching together in their excellency, according to his first intendment in their creation. Did God create the world to perform its end only for one day; scarce so much, if Adam fell the very first day of his creation? What would have been their end, if Adam had been confirmed in a state of happiness as the angels were? ’tis likely will be answered and performed upon the complete restoration of man to that happy state from whence he fell. What artificer compiles a work by his skill, but to rejoice in it? And shall God have no joy from the works of his hands? Since God can only rejoice in goodness, the creatures must have that goodness restore to them which God pronounced them to have at the first creation, and which he ordained them for, before he can again rejoice in his works. The goodness of the creatures is the glory and joy of God.

Inference 1. We may infer from hence, what a base and vile thing sin is, which lays the foundation of the world’s change. Sin brings it to a decrepit age; sin overturned the whole work of God (Genesis 3:17); so that to render it useful to its proper end, there is a necessity of a kind of a new creating it. This causes God to fire the earth for a purification of it from that infection and contagion brought upon it by the apostasy and corruption of man. It hath served sinful man, and therefore must undergo a purging flame, to be fit to serve the holy and righteous Creator. As sin is so riveted in the body of man, that there is need of a change by death to raze it out; so hath the curse for sin got so deep into the bowels of the world, that there is need of a change by fire to refine it for its master’s use. Let us look upon sin with no other notion than as the object of God’s hatred, the cause of his grief in the creatures, and the spring of the pain and ruin of the world.

2. How foolish a thing is it to set our hearts upon that which shall perish, and be no more what it is now! The heavens and the earth, the solidest and firmest parts of the creation, shall not continue in the posture they are; they must perish and undergo a refining change. How feeble and weak are the other parts of the creation, the little creatures walking upon and fluttering about the world, that are perishing and dying every day; and we scarce see them clothed with life and beauty this day, but they wither and are despoiled of all the next; and are such frail things fit objects for our everlasting spirits and affections? Though the dail employment of the heavens is the declaration of the glory of God (Psalms 19:1), yet neither this, nor their harmony, order, beauty, amazing greatness and glory of them, shall preserve them from a dissolution and melting at the presence of the Lord. Though they have remained in the same posture from the creation till this day, and are of

so great antiquity, yet they must bow down to a change before the will and word of their Creator; and shall we rest upon that which shall vanish like smoke? Shall we take any creature for our support like ice, that will crack under our feet, and must, by the order of their Lord Creator, deceive our hopes? Perishing things can be no support to the soul; if we would have rest, we must run to God and rest in God. How contemptible should that be to us, whose fashion shall pass away, which shall not endure long in its present form and appearance; contemptible as a rest, not contemptible as the work of God; contemptible as an end, not contemptible as a means to attain our end! If these must be changed, how unworthy are other things to be the centre of our souls, that change in our very using of them, and slide away in our very enjoyment of them!

Thou art the same. The essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity; so that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration. His eternity is signified in that expression, "Thou shalt endure;" his immutability in this, "Thou art the same." To endure, argues indeed his immutability as well as eternity; for what endures, is not changed, and what is changed, doth not endure; [Note: Estius in Hebrews 1:1-14.] but "Thou art the same" [Note: Chrysostom, ■■■■ ■■■■.] doth more fully signify it. He could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is; the Psalmist therefore puts not thou hast been, or shalt be, but thou art the same, without any alteration. "Thou art the same;" that is, the same God; the same in essence and nature; the same in will and purpose. Thou dost change all other things as thou pleatest, but thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no shadow of change, though never so light and small. The Psalmist here alludes to the name Jehovah, I Am; [Note: ■λλοι■σεως κρ■ιτ■υ above all change. Theodor.] and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude everything else from partaking in that perfection. All things else are tottering; God sees all other things in continual motion under his feet, like water passing away and no more seen; while he remains fixed and immovable; his wisdom and power, his knowledge and will, are always the same. His essence can receive no alteration, neither by itself, nor by any external cause; whereas other things either naturally decline to destruction, pass from one term to another, till they come to their period; or shall at the last day be wrapped up, after God hath completed his will in them and by them, as a man doth a garment he intends to repair and transform to another use. So that in the text, God, as immutable, is opposed to all creatures as perishing and changeable.

Doctrine. God is unchangeable in his essence, nature, and perfections. Immutability and eternity are linked together; and, indeed, true eternity is true immutability; whence eternity is defined the possession of an immutable life. Yet immutability differs from eternity in our conception; immutability respects the essence or existence of a thing; eternity respects the duration of a being in that state, or rather, immutability is the state itself; [Note: Gamacheus.] eternity is the measure of that state. A thing is said to be changed, when it is otherwise now in regard of nature, state, will, or any quality than it was before; when either something is added to it, or taken from it; when it either loses or acquires. But now it is the essential property of God, not to have any accession to, or diminution of, his essence or attributes, but to remain entirely the same. He wants nothing; he loses nothing; but doth uniformly exist by himself, without any new nature, new thoughts, new will, new purpose, or new place. This unchangeableness of God was anciently represented by the figure of a cube, a piece of metal or wood framed four-square, when every side is exactly of the same equality; cast it which way you will, it will always be in the same posture, because it is equal

to itself in all its dimensions. [Note: Amyrant sur Heb. ix. p. 153.] He was therefore said to be the centre of all things, and other things the circumference; the centre is never moved, while the circumference is; it remains immovable in the midst of the circle; "There is no variableness nor shadow of turning with him" (James 1:17). The moon hath her spots, so hath the sun; there is a mixture of light and darkness; it hath its changes; sometimes it is in the increase, sometimes in the wane; it is always either gaining or losing, and by the turnings and motions, either of the heavenly bodies or of the earth, it is in its eclipse, by the interposition of the earth between that and the sun. The sun also hath its diurnal and annual motion; it riseth and sets, and puts on a different face; it doth not always shine with the noon-day light; it is sometimes veiled with clouds and vapors; it is always going from one tropic to another, whereby it makes various shadows on the earth, and produceth the various seasons of the year; it is not always in our hemisphere, nor doth it always shine with an equal force and brightness in it. Such shadows and variations have no place in the eternal Father of Lights; he hath not the least spot or diminution of brightness; nothing can cloud him or eclipse him. For the better understanding this perfection of God, I shall premise three things.

1. The immutability of God is a perfection. Immutability considered in itself, without relation to other things, is not a perfection. It is the greatest misery and imperfection of the evil angels, that they are immutable in malice against God; but as God is infinite in essence, infinitely good, wise, holy; so it is a perfection necessary to his nature, that he should be immutably all this, all excellency, goodness, wisdom, immutably all that he is; without this he would be an imperfect Being. Are not the angels in heaven, who are confirmed in a holy and happy state, more perfect than when they were in a possibility of committing evil and becoming miserable? Are not the saints in heaven, whose wills by grace do unalterably cleave to God and goodness, more perfect than if they were as Adam in Paradise, capable of losing their felicity, as well as preserving it? We count a rock, in regard of its stability, more excellent than the dust of the ground, or a feather that is tossed about with every wind; is it not also the perfection of the body to have a constant tenor of health, and the glory of a man not to warp aside from what is just and right, by the persuasions of any temptations?

2. Immutability is a glory belonging to all the attributes of God. It is not a single perfection of the Divine nature, nor is it limited to particular objects thus and thus disposed. Mercy and justice have their distinct objects and distinct acts; mercy is conversant about a penitent, justice conversant about an obstinate sinner. In our notion and conception of the Divine perfections, his perfections are different: the wisdom of God is not his power, nor his power his holiness, but immutability is the centre wherein they all unite. There is not one perfection but may be said to be and truly is, immutable; none of them will appear so glorious without this beam, this sun of immutability, which renders them highly excellent without the least shadow of imperfection. How cloudy would his blessedness be if it were changeable! How dim his wisdom, if it might be obscured! How feeble his power, if it were capable to be sickly and languish! How would mercy lose much of its lustre, if it could change into wrath; and justice much of its dread, if it could be turned into mercy, while the object of justice remains unfit for mercy, and one that hath need of mercy continues only fit for the Divine fury! But unchangeableness is a thread that runs through the whole web; it is the enamel of all the rest; none of them without it could look with a triumphant aspect. His power is unchangeable: "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4). His mercy and his

holiness endure forever: he never could, nor ever can, look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). He is a rock in the righteousness of his ways, the truth of his word, the holiness of his proceedings, and the rectitude of his nature. All are expressed Deuteronomy 32:4: "He is a rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." All that we consider in God is unchangeable; for his essence and his properties are the same, and, therefore, what is necessarily belonging to the essence of God, belongs also to every perfection of the nature of God; none of them can receive any addition or diminution. From the unchangeableness of his nature, the apostle (James 1:17) infers the unchangeableness of his holiness, and himself (in Malachi 3:6) the unchangeableness of his counsel.

3. Unchangeableness doth necessarily pertain to the nature of God. It is of the same necessity with the rectitude of his nature; he can no more be changeable in his essence than he can be unrighteous in his actions. God is a necessary Being; he is necessarily what he is, and, therefore, is unchangeably what he is. Mutability belongs to contingency. If any perfection of his nature could be separated from him, he would cease to be God. What did not possess the whole nature of God, could not have the essence of God; it is reciprocated with the nature of God. Whatsoever is immutable by nature is God; whatsoever is God is immutable by nature. Some creatures are immutable by his grace and power. God is holy, happy, wise, good, by his essence; angels and men are made holy, wise, happy, strong, and good, by qualities and graces. [Note: Archbold, Serm.] The holiness, happiness, and wisdom of saints and angels, as they had a beginning, so they are capable of increase and diminution, and of an end also; for their standing is not from themselves, or from the nature of created strength, holiness, or wisdom, which in themselves are apt to fail, and finally to decay; but from the stability and confirmation they have by the gift and grace of God. The heaven and earth shall be changed; and after that renewal and reparation they shall not be changed. Our bodies after the resurrection shall not be changed, but forever be "made conformable to the glorious body of Christ" (Php 3:21); but this is by the powerful grace of God: so that, indeed, those things may be said afterwards rather to be unchanged than unchangeable, because they are not so by nature, but by sovereign dispensation. As creatures have not necessary beings, so they have not necessary immutability. Necessity of being, and, therefore, immutability of being, belongs by nature only to God; otherwise, if there were any change in God, he would be sometimes what he was not, and would cease to be what he was, which is against the nature, and, indeed, against the natural notion of a Deity. Let us see then,

I. In what regards God is immutable. II. Prove that God is immutable. III. That this is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. IV. Some propositions to clear the unchangeableness of God from anything that seems contrary to it. V. The use.

I. In what respects God is unchangeable.

1. God is unchangeable in his essence. He is unalterably fixed in his being, so that not a particle of it can be lost from it, not a mite added to it. If a man continue in being as long as Methuselah, nine hundred and sixty-nine years; yet there is not a day, nay, an hour, wherein there is not some alteration in his substance. Though no substantial part is wanting, yet there is an addition to him by his food, a diminution of something by his labor; he is always making some acquisition, or suffering some loss: but in God there can be no alteration, by the accession of anything to make his substance greater or better, or by diminution to make it less or worse. He who hath not being from

another, cannot but be always what he is: God is the first Being, an independent Being; he was not produced of himself, or of any other, but by nature always hath been, and, therefore, cannot by himself, or by any other, be changed from what he is in his own nature. That which is not may as well assume to itself a being, as he who hath and is all being, have the least change from what he is. Again, because he is a Spirit, he is not subject to those mutations which are found in corporeal and bodily natures; because he is an absolutely simple Spirit, not having the least particle of composition; he is not capable of those changes which may be in created spirits.

(1.) If his essence were mutable, God would not truly be; it could not be truly said by himself, "I Am that I Am" (Exodus 3:14), if he were such a thing or Being at this time, and a different Being at another time. Whatsoever is changed properly is not, because it doth not remain to be what it was; that which is changed was something, is something, and will be something. A being remains to that thing which is changed; yet though it may be said such a thing is, yet it may be also said such a thing is not, because it is not what it was in its first being; it is not now what it was, it is now what it was not; it is another thing than it was, it was another thing than it is; it will be another thing than what it is or was. It is, indeed, a being, but a different being from what it was before. But if God were changed, it could not be said of him that he is, but it might also be said of him that he is not; or if he were changeable, or could be changed, it might be said of him he is, but he will not be what he is; or he may not be what he is, but there will be or may be some difference in his being, and so God would not be "I Am that I Am;" for though he would not cease utterly to be, yet he would cease to be what he was before.

(2.) Again: if his essence were mutable, he could not be perfectly blessed, and fully rejoice in himself. If he changed for the better, he could not have an infinite pleasure in what he was before the change, because he was not infinitely blessed; and the pleasure of that state could not be of a higher kind than the state itself, or, at least, the apprehension of a happiness in it. If he changed for the worse, he could not have a pleasure in it after the change; for according to the diminution of his state would be the decrease of his pleasure. His pleasure could not be infinite before the change, if he changed for the better; it could not be infinite after the change, if he changed for the worse. If he changed for the better, he would not have had an infinite goodness of being before; and not having an infinite goodness of being, he would have a finite goodness of being; for there is no medium between finite and infinite. Then, though the change were for the better, yet, being finite before, something would be still wanting to make him infinitely blessed; because being finite, he could not change to that which is infinite; for finite and infinite are extremes so distant, that they can never pass into one another; that is, that that which is finite should become infinite, or that which is infinite should become finite; so that supposing him mutable, his essence in no state of change could furnish him with an infinite peace and blessedness.

(3.) Again: if God's essence be changed, he either increaseth or diminisheth. [Note: Hugo Victorin. in Petavio.] Whatsoever is changed, doth either gain by receiving something larger and greater than it had in itself before, or gains nothing by being changed. If the former, then it receives more than itself, more than it had in itself before. The Divine nature cannot be increased; for whatsoever receives anything than what it had in itself before, must necessarily receive it from another, because nothing can give to itself that which it hath not. But God cannot receive from another what he hath not already, because whatsoever other things possess is derived from him, and, therefore, contained in him, as the fountain contains the virtue in itself which it conveys to the streams; so

that God cannot gain anything. If a thing that is changed gain nothing by that change, it loseth something of what it had before in itself; and this loss must be by itself or some other. God cannot receive any loss from anything in himself; he cannot will his own diminution, that is repugnant to every nature. He may as well will his own destruction as his own decrease: every decrease is a partial destruction. But it is impossible for God to die any kind of death, to have any resemblance of death, for he is immortal, and "only hath immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16), therefore impossible to be diminished in any particle of his essence; nor can he be diminished by anything in his own nature, because his infinite simplicity admits of nothing distinct from himself, or contrary to himself. All decreases come from something contrary to the nature of that thing which doth decrease. Whatsoever is made less than itself, was not truly unum, one and simple, because that which divides itself in separation was not the same in conjunction. Nor can he be diminished by any other without himself; because nothing is superior to God, nothing stronger than God which can oppress him. But whatsoever is changed is weaker than that which changeth it, and sinks under a power it cannot successfully resist; weakness belongs not to the Deity. [Note: *ibid.*] Nor, lastly, can God change from a state wherein he is, to another state equal to the former, as men in some cases may do; for in passing from one state to another equal to it, something must be parted with which he had before, that some other thing may accrue to him as a recompense for that loss, to make him equal to what he was. This recompense then he had not before, though he had something equal to it. And in this case it could not be said by God "I Am that I Am," but I am equal to what I was; for in this case there would be a diminution and increase which, as was showed, cannot be in God.

(4.) Again: God is of himself, from no other. [Note: Austin. Fulgen in Petavio.] Natures, which are made by God, may increase, because they began to be; they may decrease, because they were made of nothing, and so tend to nothing; the condition of their original leads them to defect, and the power of their Creator brings them to increase. But God hath no original; he hath no defect, because he was not made of nothing he hath no increase, because he had no beginning. He was before all things, and, therefore, depends upon no other thing which, by its own change, can bring any change upon him. That which is from itself cannot be changed, because it hath nothing before it, nothing more excellent than itself; but that which is from another as its first cause and chief good, may be changed by that which was its efficient cause and last end. [Note: Petav. Tom. I. p. 173.]

2. God is immutable in regard of knowledge. God hath known from all eternity all that which he can know, so that nothing is hid from him. He knows not at present any more than he hath known from eternity: and that which he knows now he always knows "All things are open and naked before him" (Hebrews 4:13). A man is said to be changed in regard of knowledge, when he knows that now which he did not know before, or knows that to be false now which he thought true before, or has something for the object of his understanding now, which he had not before: But,

(1.) This would be repugnant to the wisdom and omniscience which belongs to the notions of a Deity. That cannot be God that is not infinitely wise; that cannot be infinitely wise that is either ignorant of, or mistaken in, his apprehension of any one thing. If God be changed in knowledge, it must be for want of wisdom; all change of this nature in creatures implies this defect preceding or accompanying it. Such a thought of God would have been unworthy of him that is "only wise," that hath no mate for wisdom (1 Timothy 1:17); none wise beside himself. If he knew that thing this day

which he knew not before, he would not be an “only wise” Being; for a being that did know everything at once might be conceived, and so a wiser being be apprehended by the mind of man. If God understood a thing at one time which he did not at another, he would be changed from ignorance to knowledge; as if he could not do that this day which he could do to-morrow, he would be changed from impotence to power. He could not be always omniscient, because there might be yet something still to come which he yet knows not, though he may know all things that are past. What way soever you suppose a change, you must suppose a present or a past ignorance; if he be changed in his knowledge for the perfection of his understanding, he was ignorant before; if his understanding be impaired by the change, he is ignorant after it.

(2.) If God were changeable in his knowledge, it would make him unfit to be an object of trust to any rational creature. His revelations would want the due ground for entertainment, if his understanding were changeable; for that might be revealed as truth now which might prove false hereafter, and that as false now which hereafter might prove true; and so God would be an unfit object of obedience in regard of his precepts, and an unfit object of confidence in regard of his promises. For if he be changeable in knowledge he is defective in knowledge, and might promise that now which he would know afterwards was unfit to be promised, and, therefore, unfit to be performed. It would make him an incompetent object of dread, in regard of his threatenings; for he might threaten that now which he might know hereafter were not fit or just to be inflicted. A changeable mind and understanding cannot make a due and right judgment of things to be done, and things to be avoided; no wise man would judge it reasonable to trust a weak and flitting person. God must needs be unchangeable in his knowledge; but, as the schoolmen say, that, as the sun always shines, so God always knows; as the sun never ceaseth to shine, so God never ceaseth to know. Nothing can be hid from the vast compass of his understanding, no more than anything can shelter itself without the verge of his power. This farther appears in that,

1st. God knows by his own essence. He doth not know, as we do, by habits, qualities, species, whereby we may be mistaken at one time and rectified at another. He hath not an understanding distinct from his essence as we have, but being the most simple Being, his understanding is his essence; and as from the infiniteness of his essence we conclude the infiniteness of his understanding, so from the unchangeableness of his essence, we may justly conclude the unchangeableness of his knowledge. Since, therefore, God is without all composition, and his understanding is not distinct from his essence, what he knows, he knows by his essence, and there can then be no more mutability in his knowledge than there can be in his essence; and if there were any in that, he could not be God, because he would have the property of a creature. If his understanding then be his essence, his knowledge is as necessary, as unchangeable as his essence. As his essence eminently contains all perfections in itself, so his understanding comprehends all things past, present, and future, in itself. If his understanding and his essence were not one and the same, he were not simple, but compounded: if compounded, he would consist of parts; if he consisted of parts, he would not be an independent Being, and so would not be God.

2d. God knows all things by one intuitive act. As there is no succession in his being, so that he is one thing now and another thing hereafter; so there is no succession in his knowledge. He knows things that are successive, before their existence and succession, by one single act of intuition; by one cast of his eye all things future are present to him in regard of his eternity and omnipresence;

so that though there is a change and variation in the things known, yet his knowledge of them and their several changes in nature is invariable and unalterable. As imagine a creature that could see with his eye at one glance the whole compass of the heavens, by sending out beams from his eye without receiving any species from them, he would see the whole heavens uniformly, this part now in the east, then in the west, without any change in his eye, for he sees every part and every motion together; and though that great body varies and whirls about, and is in continual agitation, his eye remains steadfast, suffers no change, beholds all their motions at once and by one glance. God knows all things from eternity, and, therefore, perpetually knows them; [Note: Suarez. Vol. I. p. 137.] the reason is because the Divine knowledge is infinite, [Note: Psalms 145:5. "His understanding is infinite."] and therefore, comprehends all knowable truths at once. An eternal knowledge comprehends in itself all time, and beholds past and present in the same manner, and, therefore, his knowledge is immutable: by one simple knowledge he considers the infinite spaces of past and future.

3d. God's knowledge and will is the cause of all things and their successions. [Note: Austin. Bradwardine.] There can be no pretence of any changeableness of knowledge in God; but in this case, before things come to pass, he knows that they will come to pass; after they are come to pass, he knows that they are past; and slide away. This would be something if the succession of things were the cause of the Divine knowledge, as it is of our knowledge; but on the contrary, the Divine knowledge and will is the cause of the succession of them: God doth not know creatures because they are; but they are because he knows them: "All his works were known to him from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). All his works were not known to him, if the events of all those works were not also known to him; if they were not known to him, how should he make them? he could not do anything ignorantly. He made them then after he knew them, and did not know them after he made them. His knowledge of them made a change in them; their existence made no change in his knowledge. He knew them when they were to be created, in the same manner that he knew them after they were created; before they were brought into act, as well as after they were brought into act; before they were made, they were, and were not; they were in the knowledge of God, when they were not in their own nature; God did not receive his knowledge from their existence, but his knowledge and will acted upon them to bring them into being.

4th. Therefore the distinction of past and future makes no change in the knowledge of God. When a thing is past, God hath no more distinct knowledge of it after it is past, than he had when it was to come; all things were all in their circumstances of past, present, and to come; seen by his understanding, as they were determined by his will. [Note: Gamch. p. 1. Acquin. Qu. 9. c. i. p. 73.] Besides, to know a day to be past or future, is only to know the state of that day in itself, and to know its relation to that which follows, and that which went before. This day wherein we are, if we consider it in the state wherein it was yesterday, it was to come, it was future; but if we consider it in that state wherein it will be to-morrow, we understand it as past. This in man cannot be said to be a different knowledge of the thing itself, but only of the circumstance attending a thing, and the different relation of it. As I see the sun this day, I know it was up yesterday, I know it will be up to-morrow; my knowledge of the sun is the same; if there be any change, it is in the sun, not in my knowledge; only I apply my knowledge to such particular circumstances. How much more must the knowledge of those things in God be unchangeable, who knows all those states, conditions, and circumstances, most perfectly from eternity; wherein there is no succession, no past or future, and

therefore will know them forever! He always beholds the same thing; he sees, indeed, succession in things, and he sees a thing to be past which before was future. As from eternity he saw Adam as existing in such a time; in the first time he saw that he would be, in the following time he saw that he had been; but this he knew from eternity; this he knew in the same manner; though there was a variation in Adam, yet there was no variation in God's knowledge of him, in all his states; though Adam was not present to himself, yet in all his states he was present to God's eternity.

5th. Consider, that the knowledge of God, in regard of the manner of it, as well as the objects, is incomprehensible to a finite creature. So that though we cannot arrive to a full understanding of the manner of God's knowledge, yet we must conceive so of it, as to remove all imperfection from him in it. And since it is an imperfection to be changeable, we must remove that from God; the knowledge of God about things past, present and future, must be inconceivably above ours: "His understanding is infinite" (Psalms 147:6). There is no number of it; it can no more be calculated or drawn into an account by us, than infinite spaces, which have no bounds and limits, can be measured by us. We can no more arrive, even in heaven, to a comprehensive understanding of the manner of his knowledge, than of the infinite glory of his essence; we may as well comprehend one as the other. This we must conclude, that God being not a body, doth not see one thing with eyes, and another thing with mind, as we do; but being a spirit, he sees and knows only with mind, and his mind is himself, and is as unchangeable as himself; and therefore as he is not now another thing than what he was, so he knows not anything now in another manner than as he knew it from eternity; he sees all things in the glass of his own essence; as, therefore, the glass doth not vary, so neither doth his vision.

3. God is unchangeable in regard of his will and purpose. A change in his purpose is, when a man determines to do that now which before he determined not to do, or to do the contrary; when a man hates that thing which he loved, or begins to love that which he before hated; when the will is changed, a man begins to will that which he willed not before, and ceaseth to will that which he willed before. But whatsoever God hath decreed, is immutable; whatsoever God hath promised, shall be accomplished: "The word that goes forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleaseth" (Isaiah 55:11); whatsoever "he purposeth, he will do" (Isaiah 46:11; Numbers 23:19); his decrees are therefore called "mountains of brass" (Zechariah 6:1): brass, as having substance and solidity; mountains, as being immovable, not only by any creature, but by himself; because they stand upon the basis of infallible wisdom, and are supported by uncontrollable power. From this immutability of his will, published to man, there could be no release from the severity of the law, without satisfaction made by the death of a Mediator, since it was the unalterable will of God, that death should be the wages of sin; and from this immutable will it was, that the length of time, from the first promise of the Redeemer to his mission, and the daily provocations of men, altered not his purpose for the accomplishment of it in the fulness of that time he had resolved upon; nor did the wickedness of former ages hinder the addition of several promises as buttresses to the first. To make this out, consider,

(1.) The will of God is the same with his essence. If God had a will distinct from his essence, he would not be the most simple Being. God hath not a faculty of will distinct from himself; as his understanding is nothing else but Deus intelligens, God understanding; so his will is nothing else but Deus volens, God willing; being, therefore, the essence of God; though it is considered, according to our weakness, as a faculty, it is as his understanding and wisdom, eternal and

immutable; and can no more be changed than his essence. The immutability of the Divine counsel depends upon that of his essence; he is the Lord Jehovah, therefore he is true to his word (Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 43:13): "Yea, before the day I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." He is the same, immutable in his essence, therefore irresistible in his power.

(2.) There is a concurrence of God's will and understanding in everything. As his knowledge is eternal, so is his purpose. Things created had not been known to be, had not God resolved them to be the act of his will; the existence of anything supposeth an act of his will. Again, as God knows all things by one simple vision of his understanding, so he wills all things by one act of volition; therefore the purpose of God in the Scripture is not expressed by counsels in the plural number, but counsel; showing that all the purposes of God are not various, but as one will, branching itself out into many acts towards the creature; but all knit in one root, all links of one chain. Whatsoever is eternal is immutable; as his knowledge is eternal, and therefore immutable, so is his will; he wills or nills nothing to be in time, but what he willed and nilled from eternity; if he willed in time that to be that he willed not from eternity, then he would know that in time which he knew not from eternity; for God knows nothing future, but as his will orders it to be future, and in time to be brought into being.

(3.) There can be no reason for any change in the will of God. When men change in their minds, it must be for want of foresight; because they could not foresee all the rubs and bars which might suddenly offer themselves; which if they had foreseen, they would not have taken such measures: hence men often will that which they afterwards wish they had not willed when they come to understand it clearer, and see that to be injurious to them which they thought to be good for them; or else the change proceeds from a natural instability without any just cause, and an easiness to be drawn into that which is unrighteous; or else it proceeds from a want of power, when men take new counsels, because they are invincibly hindered from executing the old. But none of those can be in God.

1st. It cannot be for want of foresight. What can be wanting to an infinite understanding? How can any unknown event defeat his purpose, since nothing happens in the world but what he wills to effect, or wills to permit; and therefore all future events are present with him? Besides, it doth not consist with God's wisdom to resolve anything, but upon the highest reason; and what is the highest and infinite reason, cannot but be unalterable in itself; for there can be no reason and wisdom higher than the highest. All God's purposes are not bare acts of will, but acts of counsel. "He works all things according to the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11): and he doth not say so much that his will, as that "his counsel shall stand" (Isaiah 46:10). It stands, because it is counsel; and the immutability of a promise is called the "immutability of his counsel" (Hebrews 6:17), as being introduced and settled by the most perfect wisdom, and therefore to be carried on to a full and complete execution; his purpose, then, cannot be changed for want of foresight; for this would be a charge of weakness.

2d. Nor can it proceed from a natural instability of his will, or an easiness to be drawn to that which is unrighteous. If his will should not adhere to his counsel, it is because it is not fit to be followed, or because it will not follow it; if not fit to be followed, it is a reflection upon his wisdom; if it be established, and he will not follow it, there is a contrariety in God, as there is in a fallen creature, will against wisdom. That cannot be in God which he hates in a creature, viz. the disorder of

faculties, and being out of their due place. The righteousness of God is like a “great mountain” (Psalms 36:6). The rectitude of his nature is as immovable in itself, as all the mountains in the world are by the strength of man. “He is not as a man, that he should repent or lie” (Numbers 23:19); who often changes, out of a perversity of will, as well as want of wisdom to foresee, or want of ability to perform. His eternal purpose must either be righteous or unrighteous; if righteous and holy, he would become unholy by the change; if not righteous nor holy, then he was unrighteous before the change; which way soever it falls, it would reflect upon the righteousness of God, which is a blasphemous imagination. [Note: Maxim. Pyrius dissert. 3, 30.] If God did change his purpose, it must be either for the better,—then the counsel of God was bad before; or for the worse,—then he was not wise and good before.

3d. Nor can it be for want of strength. Who hath power to control him? Not all the combined devices and endeavors of men can make the counsel of God to totter (Proverbs 19:21): “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;” that, and that only shall stand. Man hath a power to devise and imagine, but no power to effect and execute of himself. God wants no more power to effect what he will, than he wants understanding to know what is fit. Well, then, since God wanted not wisdom to frame his decrees, nor holiness to regulate them, nor power to effect them, what should make him change them? since there can be no reason superior to his, no event unforeseen by him, no holiness comparable to his, no unrighteousness found in him, no power equal to his, to put a rub in his way.

4th. Though the will of God be immutable, yet it is not to be understood so, as that the things themselves so willed are immutable. Nor will the immutability of the things willed by him, follow upon the unchangeableness of his will in willing them; though God be firm in willing them, yet he doth not will that they should alway be. God did not perpetually will the doing those things which he once decreed to be done; he decreed that Christ should suffer, but he did not decree that Christ should alway suffer; so he willed the Mosaical rites for a time, but he did not will that they should alway continue; he willed that they should endure only for a time; and when the time came for their ceasing, God had been mutable if he had not put an end to them, because his will had fixed such a period. So that the changing of those things which he had once appointed to be practised, is so far from charging God with changeableness, that God would be mutable if he did not take them away; since he decreed as well their abolition at such a time, as their continuance till such a time; so that the removal of them was pursuant to his unchangeable will and decree. If God had decreed that such laws should alway continue, and afterwards changed that decree, and resolved the abrogation of them, then indeed God had been mutable; he had rescinded one decree by another; he had then seen an error in his first resolve, and there must be some weakness in the reason and wisdom whereon it was grounded. [Note: Turrentin de Satisfac. p. 266.] But it was not so here; for the change of those laws is so far from slurring God with any mutability, that the very, change of them is no other than the issue of his eternal decree; for from eternity he purposed in himself to change this or that dispensation, though he did decree to bring such a dispensation into the world. The decree itself was eternal and immutable, but the thing decreed was temporary and mutable. As a decree from eternity doth not make the thing decreed to be eternal, so neither doth the immutability of the decree render the thing so decreed to be immutable: as for example, God decreed from all eternity to create the world; the eternity of this decree did not make the world to be in being and actually created from eternity; so God decreed immutably that the world so

created should continue for such a time; the decree is immutable if the world perish at that time, and would not be immutable if the world did endure beyond that time that God hath fixed for the duration of it: as when a prince orders a man's remaining in prison for so many days; if he be prevailed with to give him a delivery before those days, or to continue him in custody for the same crime after those days, his order is changed; but if he orders the delivery of him just at that time, till which he had before decreed that he should continue in prison, the purpose and order of the prince remains firm, and the change in the state of the prisoner is the fruit of that firm and fixed resolution: so that we must distinguish between the person decreeing, the decree itself, and the thing decreed. The person decreeing, viz., God, is in himself immutable, and the decree is immutable; but the thing decreed may be mutable; and if it were not changed according to the first purpose, it would argue the decree itself to be changed; for while a man wills that this may be done now, and another thing done afterwards, the same will remains; and though there be a change in the effects, there is no change in the will.

5th. The immutability of God's will doth not infringe the liberty of it. The liberty of God's will consists with the necessity of continuing his purpose. God is necessarily good, immutably good; yet he is freely so, and would not be otherwise than what he is. God was free in his first purpose; and purposing this or that by an infallible and unerring wisdom, it would be a weakness to change the purpose. But, indeed, the liberty of God's will doth not seem so much to consist in an indifferency to this or that, as in an independency on anything without himself: his will was free, because it did not depend upon the objects about which his will was conversant. To be immutably good is no point of imperfection, but the height of perfection.

4. As God is unchangeable in regard of essence, knowledge, purpose, so he is unchangeable in regard of place. He cannot be changed in time, because he is eternity; so he cannot be changed in place, because he hath ubiquity: he is eternal, therefore cannot be changed in time; he is omnipresent, therefore cannot be changed in place he doth not begin to be in one place wherein he was not before, or cease to be in a place wherein he was before. He that fills every place in heaven and earth, cannot change place; he cannot leave one to possess another, that is equally, in regard of his essence, in all: "He fills heaven and earth" (Jeremiah 23:24). The heavens that are not subject to those changes to which sublunary bodies are subject, that are not diminished in quantity or quality; yet they are alway changing place in regard of their motion; no part of them doth alway continue in the same point: but God hath no change of his nature, because he is most inward in everything; he is substantially in all spaces, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world which he doth not fill; no place can be imagined wherein he doth not exist. Suppose a million of worlds above and about this, encircling one another; his essence would be in every part and point of those worlds; because it is indivisible, it cannot be divided; nor can it be contained within those created limits of millions of worlds, when the most soaring and best coining fancy hath run through all creatures to the highest sphere of the heavens, and imagined one world after another, till it can fancy no more: none of these, nor all of these, can contain God; for the "heaven of heavens cannot contain him" (1 Kings 8:27); "He is higher than heaven, deeper than hell" (Job 11:8), and possesses infinite imaginary spaces beyond created limits. He who hath no cause of being, can have no limits of being; [Note: Gamacheus ut supra.] and though by creation he began to be in the world, yet he did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the same imaginary space from all eternity; for he was alway in himself by his own eternal ubi. Therefore observe, that

when God is said to draw near to us when we draw near to him (James 4:8), it is not by local motion or change of place, but by special and spiritual influences, by exciting and supporting grace. As we ordinarily say, the sun is come into the house when yet it remains in its place and order in the heavens, because the beams pierce through the windows and enlighten the room, so when God is said to come down or descend (Genesis 11:5; Exodus 34:5), it is not by a change of place, but a change of outward acts, when he puts forth himself in ways of fresh mercy or new judgments, in the effluxes of his love or the flames of his wrath. When good men feel the warm beams of his grace refreshing them, or wicked men feel the hot coals of his anger scorching them. God's drawing near to us is not so much his coming to us, but his drawing us to him; [Note: The ancients, as Dionysius, expressed it by this similitude.] as when watermen pull a rope that is in one end fastened to the shore, and the other end to the vessel; the shore is immovable, yet it seems to the eye to come to them, but they really move to the shore. God is an immovable rock; we are floating and uncertain creatures; while he seems to approach to us, he doth really make us to approach to him; he comes not to us by any change of place himself, but draws us to him by a change of mind, will, and affections in us.

II. The second thing propounded, is the reasons to prove God immutable. The heathens acknowledged God to be so: Plato [Note: Plato calls God οὐρανὸν ἀγαθόν, lib. i. de Be.] and the Pythagoreans called God, or the stable good principle, καλόν, idem: the evil principle, κακόν, another thing, changeable; one thing one time, and another thing another time [Note: Stabilisque manens dat cuncta moveri. Boet. Consolat. lib. iii.] (Daniel 6:26): "He is the living God, and steadfast forever."

1. The name Jehovah signifies this attribute (Exodus 3:14): "I am that I am; I am hath sent me to you." It signifies his immutability as well as eternity. I am, signifies his eternity; that, or the same that I am, his immutability: [Note: Trap. on Exod.] as it respects the essence of God, it signifies his unchangeable being from eternity to eternity; as it respects the creature, it signifies his constancy in his counsels and promises, which spring from no other cause but the unchangeableness of his nature. [Note: Amyrald de Trinitat. p. 433] The reason why men stand not to their covenant, is because they are not always the same; I am, that is, I am the same, before the creation of the world, and since the creation of the world; before the entrance of sin, and since the entrance of sin; before their going into Egypt, and while they remain in Egypt. The very name Jehovah [Note: Spanhe. Synta. Part. I. p. 89.] bears, according to the grammatical order, a mark of God's unchangeableness; it never hath anything added to it nor anything taken from it; it hath no plural number, no affixes—a custom peculiar to the eastern languages; it never changes its letters as other words do. That only is a true being which hath not only an eternal existence, but stability in it: that is not truly a being, that never remains in the same state. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. 1. c. 6. § 6–8.] All things that are changed cease to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not, and therefore cannot have the title truly applied to them, they are; they are, indeed, but like a river in a continual flux, that no man ever sees the same; let his eye be fixed upon one place of it, the water he sees, slides away, and that which he saw not succeeds in its place; let him take his eye off but for the least moment, and fix it there again, and he sees not the same that he saw before. All sensible things are in a perpetual stream; that which is sometimes this and sometimes that, is not, because it is not always the same; whatsoever is changed, is something now which it was not alway; but of God it is said, I am, which could not be if he were changeable; for it may be

said of him, he is not, as well as he is, because he is not what he was; if we say not of him, he was, nor he will be, but only he is, whence should any change arrive? He must invincibly remain the same, of whose nature, perfections, knowledge and will, it cannot be said it was, as if it were not now in him; or it shall be, as if it were not yet in him; but he is, because he doth not only exist, but doth alway exist the same. I am, that is, I receive from no other what I am in myself; he depends upon no other in his essence, knowledge, purposes, and therefore hath no changing power over him.

2. If God were changeable, he could not be the most perfect Being. God is the most perfect Being, and possesses in himself infinite and essential goodness (Matthew 5:48): "Your heavenly Father is perfect." If he could change from that perfection, he were not the highest exemplar and copy for us to write after. If God doth change, it must be either to a greater perfection than he had before, or to a less, *mutatio perfectiva vel amissiva*; if he changes to acquire a perfection he had not, then he was not before the most excellent being; necessarily, he was not what he might be; there was a defect in him, and a privation of that which is better than what he had and was; and then he was not alway the best, and so was not alway God; and being not alway God, could never be God; for to begin to be God is against the notion of God; not to a less perfection than he had; that were to change to imperfection, and to lose a perfection which he possessed before, and cease to be the best Being; for he would lose some good which he had, and acquire some evil which he was free from before. So that the sovereign perfection of God is an invincible bar to any change in him; for which way soever you cast it for a change, his supreme excellency is impaired and nulled by it: for in all change there is something from which a thing is changed, and something to which it is changed; so that on the one part there is a loss of what it had, and on the other part there is an acquisition of what it had not. If to the better, he was not perfect, and so was not God; if to the worse, he will not be perfect, and so be no longer God after that change. If God be changed, his change must be voluntary or necessary; if voluntary, he then intends the change for the better, and chose it to acquire a perfection by it; the will must be carried out to anything under the notion of some goodness in that which it desires. Since good is the object of the desire and will of the creature, evil cannot be the object of the desire and will of the Creator. And if he should be changed for the worse, when he did really intend the better, it would speak a defect of wisdom, and a mistake of that for good which was evil and imperfect in itself; and if it be for the better, it must be a motion or change for something without himself; that which he desireth is not possessed by himself, but by some other. There is, then, some good without him and above him, which is the end in this change; for nothing acts but for some end, and that end is within itself or without itself; if the end for which God changes be without himself, then there is something better than himself: besides, if he were voluntarily changed for the better, why did he not change before? If it were for want of power, he had the imperfection of weakness; if for want of knowledge of what was the best good, he had the imperfection of wisdom, he was ignorant of his own happiness; if he had both wisdom to know it, and power to effect it, it must be for want of will; he then wanted that love to himself and his own glory, which is necessary in the Supreme Being. Voluntarily he could not be changed for the worse, he could not be such an enemy to his own glory; there is nothing but would hinder its own imperfection and becoming worse. Necessarily he could not be changed, for that necessity must arise from himself, and then the difficulties spoken of before will recur, or it must arise from another; he cannot be bettered by another, because nothing hath any good but what it hath received from the hands of his bounty, and that without loss to himself, nor made worse; if

anything made him worse, it would be sin, but that cannot touch his essence or obscure his glory, but in the design and nature of the sin itself (Job 35:6-7): "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? if thou be righteous, what givest thou him; or what receives he at thy hand?" He hath no addition by the service of man, no more than the sun hath of light by a multitude of torches kindled on the earth; nor any more impair by the sins of men, than the light of the sun hath by men's shooting arrows against it.

3. God were not the most simple being if he were not immutable. [Note: Gamach. in prim. part. Aquin. qu. 9. c. 1. part. 72.] There is in everything that is mutable a composition either essential or accidental; and in all changes, something of the thing changed remains, and something of it ceaseth and is done away; as for example, in an accidental change, if a white wall be made black, it loses its white color; but the wall itself, which was the subject of that color, remains and loses nothing of its substance: likewise in a substantial change, as when wood is burnt, the substantial part of wood is lost, the earthly part is changed into ashes, the airy part ascends in smoke, the watery part is changed into air by the fire: there is not an annihilation of it, but a resolution of it into those parts whereof it was compounded; and this change doth evidence that it was compounded of several parts distinct from one another. If there were any change in God, it is by separating something from him, or adding something to him; if by separating something from him, then he was compounded of something distinct from himself; for if it were not distinct from himself it could not be separated from him without loss of his being; if by adding anything to him, then it is a compounding of him, either substantially or accidentally. Mutability is absolutely inconsistent with simplicity, whether the change come from an internal or external principle. If a change be wrought by something without, it supposeth either contrary or various parts in the thing so changed, whereof it doth consist; if it be wrought by anything within, it supposeth that the thing so changed doth consist of one part that doth change it, and another part that is changed, and so it would not be a simple being. If God could be changed by anything within himself, all in God would not be God; his essence would depend upon some parts, whereof some would be superior to others; if one part were able to change or destroy another, that which doth change would be God, that which is changed would not be God; so God would be made up of a Deity and a non-Deity, and part of God would depend upon God; part would be dependent, and part would be independent; part would be mutable, part immutable: so that mutability is against the notion of God's independency as well as his simplicity. God is the most simple being; for that which is first in nature, having nothing beyond it, cannot by any means be thought to be compounded; for whatsoever is so, depends upon the parts whereof it is compounded, and so is not the first being: now God being infinitely simple, hath nothing in himself which is not himself, and therefore cannot will any change in himself, he being his own essence and existence. [Note: Ficinus Zachar. mitylen in Peta. Tom. I. p. 169.]

4. God were not eternal if he were mutable. In all change there is something that perishes, either substantially or accidentally. All change is a kind of death, or imitation of death; that which was dies, and begins to be what it was not. The soul of man, though it ceaseth not to be and exist, yet when it ceaseth to be in quality what it was, is said to die. Adam died when he changed from integrity to corruption, though both his soul and body were in being (Genesis 2:17); and the soul of a regenerate man is said to "die to sin," when it is changed from sin to grace (Romans 6:11). In all change there is a resemblance of death; so the notion of mutability is against the eternity of God. If

anything be acquired by a change, then that which is acquired was not from eternity, and so he was not wholly eternal; if anything be lost which was from eternity, he is not wholly everlasting; if he did decrease by the change, something in him which had no beginning would have an end; if he did increase by that change, something in him would have a beginning that might have no end. What is changed doth not remain, and what doth not remain is not eternal. [Note: Austin in Pet. Tom. I. p. 201.] Though God alway remains in regard of existence, he would be immortal, and live alway; yet if he should suffer any change, he could not properly be eternal, because he would not alway be the same, and would not in every part be eternal; for all change is finished in time, one moment precedin, another moment following; but that which is before time cannot be changed by time. God cannot be eternally what he was; that is, he cannot have a true eternity, if he had a new knowledge, a new purpose, a new essence; if he were sometimes this and sometimes that, sometimes know this and sometimes know that, sometimes purpose this and afterwards hath a new purpose; he would be partly temporary and partly eternal, not truly and universally eternal. He that hath anything of newness, hath not properly and truly an entire eternity. Again, by the same reason that God could in the least cease to be what he was, he might also cease wholly to be; and no reason can be rendered why God might not cease wholly to be, as well as cease to be entirely and uniformly what he was. All changeableness implies a corruptibility.

5. If God were changeable, he were not infinite and almighty. All change ends in addition or diminution; if anything be added, he was not infinite before, if anything be diminished, he is not infinite after. All change implies bounds and limits to that which is changed; but God is infinite; "His greatness is unsearchable:" [Note: Psalms 145:3, ■■■■ ■■■■ no end, no term.] we can add number to number without any end, and can conceive an infinite number; yet the greatness of God is beyond all our conceptions. But if there could be any change in his greatness for the better, it would not be unsearchable before that change; if for the worse, it would not be unsearchable after that change. Whatsoever hath limits and is changeable, is conceivable and searchable; but God is not only not known, but impossible in his own nature to be known and searched out, and, therefore, impossible to have any diminution in his nature. All that which is changed arrives to something which it was not before, or ceaseth in part to be what it was before. He would not also be almighty. What is omnipotent cannot be made worse; for to be made worse, is in part to be corrupted. If he be made better, he was not almighty before; something of power was wanting to him. If there should be any change, it must proceed from himself or from another; if from himself, it would be an inability to preserve himself in the perfection of his nature; if from another, he would be inferior in strength, knowledge, and power, to that which changes him, either in his nature, knowledge, or will; in both an inability; an inability in him to continue the same, or an inability in him to resist the power of another.

6. The world could not be ordered and governed but by some Principle or Being which were immutable. Principles are alway more fixed and stable than things which proceed from those principles; and this is true both in morals and naturals. Principles in conscience, whereby men are governed, remain firmly engraven in their minds. The root lies firmly in the earth, while branches are shaken with the wind. The heavens, the cause of generation, are more firm and stable than those things which are wrought by their influence. All things in the world are moved by some power and virtue which is stable; and unless it were so, no order would be observed in motion, no motion could be regularly continued. He could not be a full satisfaction to the infinite desire of the

souls of his people. Nothing can truly satisfy the soul of man but rest; and nothing can give it rest but that which is perfect and immutably perfect; for else it would be subject to those agitations and variations which the being it depends upon is subject to. The principle of all things must be immutable, [Note: Fotherby Atheomastix, p. 308. Gerhard loc. com.] which is described by some by a unity, the principle of number, wherein there is a resemblance of God's unchangeableness. A unit is not variable; it continues in its own nature immutably a unit. It never varies from itself; it cannot be changed from itself; but is, as it were, so omnipotent towards others, that it changes all numbers. If you add any number, it is the beginning of that number, but the unit is not increased by it; a new number ariseth from that addition, but the unit still remains the same, and adds value to other figures, but receives none from them.

III. The third thing to speak to is, that immutability is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Mutability is natural to every creature as a creature, and immutability is the sole perfection of God. He only is infinite wisdom, able to foreknow future events; he only is infinitely powerful, able to call forth all means to effect; so that wanting neither wisdom to contrive, nor strength to execute, he cannot alter his counsel. None being above him, nothing in him contrary to him, and being defective in no blessedness and perfection, he cannot vary in his essence and nature. Had not immutability as well as eternity been a property solely pertaining to the Divine nature, as well as creative power and eternal duration, the apostle's argument to prove Christ to be God from this perpetual sameness, had come short of any convincing strength. These words of the text he applies to Christ (Hebrews 1:10-12): "They shall be changed, but thou art the same." There had been no strength in the reason, if immutability by nature did belong to any creature. The changeableness of all creatures is evident:

1. Of corporeal creatures it is evident to sense. All plants and animals, as they have their duration bounded in certain limits; so while they do exist, they proceed from their rise to their fall. They pass through many sensible alterations, from one degree of growth to another, from buds to blossoms, from blossoms to flowers and fruits. They come to their pitch that nature had set them, and return back to the state from whence they sprung; there is not a day but they make some acquisition, or suffer some loss. They die and spring up every day; nothing in them more certain than their inconstancy: "The creature is subject to vanity" (Romans 8:20). The heavenly bodies are changing their place; the sun every day is running his race, and stays not in the same point; and though they are not changed in their essence, yet they are in their place. Some, indeed, say there is a continual generation of light in the sun, as there is a loss of light by the casting out its beams, as in a fountain there is a flowing out of the streams, and a continual generation of supply. And though these heavenly bodies have kept their standing and motion from the time of their creation, yet both the sun's standing still in Joshua's time, and its going back in Hezekiah's time, show that they are changeable at the pleasure of God. But in man the change is perpetually visible; every day there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from one will to another, from passion to passion, sometimes sad and sometimes cheerful, sometimes craving this, and presently nauseating it; his body changes from health to sickness, or from weakness to strength; some alteration there is either in body or mind. Man, who is the noblest creature, the subordinate end of the creation of other things, cannot assure himself of a consistency and fixedness in anything the short space of a day, no, not of a minute. All his months are months of vanity (Job 7:3); whence the Psalmist calls man at the "best estate altogether vanity," a mere heap of vanity (Psalms 35:1-28.) As he contains

in his nature the nature of all creatures, so he inherits in his nature the vanity of all creatures. A little world, the centre of the world and of the vanity of the world; yea, "lighter than vanity" (Psalms 62:9), more movable than a feather; tossed between passion and passion, daily changing his end, and changing the means; an image of nothing.

2. Spiritual natures, as angels. They change not in their being, but that is from the indulgence of God. They change not in their goodness, but that is not from their nature, but divine grace in their confirmation; but they change in their knowledge; they know more by Christ than they did by creation (1 Timothy 3:16). They have an addition of knowledge every day, by the providential dispensations of God to his church (Ephesians 3:10); and the increase of their astonishment and love is according to the increase of their knowledge and insight. They cannot have a new discovery without new admirations of what is discovered to them: there is a change in their joy when there is a change in a sinner (Luke 15:10). They were changed in their essence, when they were made such glorious spirits of nothing; some of them were changed in their will, when of holy they became impure. The good angels were changed in their understandings, when the glories of God in Christ were presented to their view; and all can be changed in their essence again; and as they were made of nothing, so by the power of God may be reduced to nothing again. So glorified souls shall have an unchanged operation about God, for they shall behold his face without any grief or fear of loss, without vagrant thoughts; but they can never be unchangeable in their nature, because they can never pass from finite to infinite. No creature can be unchangeable in its nature:—1. Because every creature rose from nothing. As they rose from nothing, so they tend to nothing, unless they are preserved by God. The notion of a creature speaks changeableness; because to be a creature is to be made something of nothing, and, therefore, creation is a change of nothing into something. The being of a creature begins from change, and, therefore, the essence of a creature is subject to change. God only is uncreated, and, therefore, unchangeable. If he were made he could not be immutable; for the very making is a change of not being into being. All creatures were made good, as they were the fruits of God's goodness and power; but must needs be mutable, because they were the extracts of nothing. 2. Because every creature depends purely upon the will of God. They depend not upon themselves, but upon another for their being. As they received their being from the word of his mouth and the arm of his power, so by the same word they can be cancelled into nothing, and return into as little significancy as when they were nothing. He that created them by a word, can by a word destroy them: if God should "take away their breath, they die, and return into their dust" (Psalms 104:29). As it was in the power of the Creator that things might be, before they actually were, so it is in the power of the Creator that things after they are may cease to be what they are; and they are, in their own nature, as reducible to nothing as they were producible by the power of God from nothing; for there needs no more than an act of God's will to null them, as there needed only an act of God's will to make them. Creatures are all subject to a higher cause: they are all reputed as nothing. "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" (Daniel 4:35.) But God is unchangeable, because he is the highest good; none above him, all below him; all dependent on him; himself upon none. 3. No creature is absolutely perfect. No creature can be so perfect, or can ever be, but something by the infinite power of God may be added to it; for whatsoever is finite may receive greater additions, and, therefore, a change. No creature you can imagine, but in your thoughts you may fancy him capable of greater perfections than you know he hath, or than really he hath. The perfections of all

creatures are searchable; the perfection of God is only unsearchable (Job 11:6), and, therefore, he only immutable. God only is always the same. Time makes no addition to him, nor diminisheth anything of him. His nature and essence, his wisdom and will, have always been the same from eternity, and shall be the same to eternity, without any variation.

IV. The fourth thing propounded is, Some propositions to clear this unchangeableness of God from anything that seems contrary to it.

Prop. I. There was no change in God when he began to create the world in time. The creation was a real change, but the change was not subjectively in God, but in the creature; the creature began to be what it was not before. Creation is considered as active or passive. [Note: Gamach. in Part 1. Aquin. Q. 9. c. i. p. 72.] Active creation is the will and power of God to create. This is from eternity, because God willed from eternity to create in time; this never had beginning, for God never began in time to understand anything, to will anything, or to be able to do anything; but he alway understood and alway willed those things which he determined from eternity to produce in time. The decree of God may be taken for the act decreeing, that is eternal and the same, or for the object decreed, that is in time; so that there may be a change in the object, but not in the will whereby the object doth exist.

1. There was no change in God by the act of creation, because there was no new will in him. There was no new act of his will which was not before. The creation began in time, but the will of creating was from eternity. The work was new, but the decree whence that new work sprung was as ancient as the Ancient of Days. When the time of creating came, God was not made ex nolente volens, as we are; for whatsoever God willed to be now done, he willed from eternity to be done; but he willed also that it should not be done till such an instant of time, and that it should not exist before such a time. If God had willed the creation of the world only at that time when the world was produced, and not before, then, indeed, God had been changeable. But though God spake that word which he had not spoke before, whereby the world was brought into act; yet he did not will that will he willed not before. God did not create by a new counsel or new will, but by that which was from eternity (Ephesians 1:9). All things are wrought according to that "purpose in himself," an according to "the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11); and as the holiness of the elect is the fruit of his eternal will "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), so, likewise, is the existence of things, and of those persons whom he did elect. As when an artificer frames a house or a temple according to that model he had in his mind some years before, there is no change in the model in his mind; the artificer is the same, though the work is produced by him some time after he had framed that copy of it in his own mind, but there is a change of the thing produced by him according to that model. Or, when a rich man intends, four or five years hence, if he lives, to build a hospital, is there any change in will, when, after the expiration of that time, he builds and endows it? Though it be after his will, yet it is the fruit of his precedent will. So God, from all eternity, did will and command that the creatures should exist in such a part of time; and, by his eternal will, all things, whether past, present, or to come, did, do, and shall exist, at that point of time which that will did appoint for them: not, as though God had a new will when things stood up in being, but only that which was prepared in his immutable counsel and will from eternity, doth then appear. There can be no instant fixed from eternity, wherein it can be said, God did not will the creation of the world; for had the will of God for the shortest moment been undetermined to the creation of the world, and afterwards resolved upon it, there had been a moral change in God from not willing to

willing; but this there was not, for God executes nothing in time which he had not ordained from eternity, and appointed all the means and circumstances whereby it should be brought about. As the determination of our Saviour to suffer was not a new will, but an eternal counsel, and wrought no change in God (Acts 2:23).

2. There is no change in God by the act of creation, because there was no new power in God. Had God had a will at the time of creation which he had not before, there had been a moral change in him; so had there been in him a power only to create then and not before, there had been a physical change in him from weakness to ability. There can be no more new power in God, than there can be a new will in God; for his will is his power, and what he willeth to effect, that he doth effect: as he was unchangeably holy, so he was unchangeably almighty, “which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8); which was almighty, and is almighty, and ever will be almighty. The work therefore makes no change in God, but there is a change in the thing wrought by that power of God. Suppose you had a seal engraven upon some metal a hundred years old, or as old as the creation, and you should this day, so many ages after the engraving of it, make an impression of that seal upon wax; would you say the engravement upon the seal were changed, because it produced that stamp upon the wax now which it did not before? No, the change is purely in the wax, which receives a new figure or form by the impression; not in the seal, that was capable of imprinting the same long before. God was the same from eternity as he was when he made a signature of himself upon the creatures by creation, and is no more changed by stamping them into several forms, than the seal is changed by making impression upon the wax. As when a house is enlightened by the sun, or that which was cold is heated by it, there is a change in the house from darkness to light, from coldness to heat; but is there any change in the light and heat of the sun? There is a change in the thing enlightened or warmed by that light and heat which remains fixed and constant in the sun, which was as capable in itself to produce the same effects before, as at that instant when it works them; so when God is the author of a new work, he is not changed, because he works it by an eternal will and an eternal power.

3. Nor is there any new relation acquired by God by the creation of the world. There was a new relation acquired by the creature, as, when a man sins, he hath another relation to God than he had before,—he hath relation to God, as a criminal to a Judge; but there is no change in God, but in the malefactor. The being of men makes no more change in God than the sins of men. As a tree is now on our right hand, and by our turning about it is on our left hand, sometimes before us, sometimes behind us, according to our motion near it or about it, and the turning of the body; there is no change in the tree, which remains firm and fixed in the earth, but the change is wholly in the posture of the body, whereby the tree may be said to be before us or behind us, or on the right hand or on the left hand. [Note: Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. I.] God gained no new relation of Lord or Creator by the creation; for though he had created nothing to rule over, yet he had the power to create and rule, though he did not create and rule: as a man may be called a skilful writer, though he does not write, because he is able to do it when he pleases; or a man skilful in physic is called a physician, though he doth not practise that skill, or discover his art in the distribution of medicines, because he may do it when he pleases; it depends upon his own will to show his art when he has a mind to it. So the name Creator and Lord belongs to God from eternity, because he could create and rule, though he did not create and rule. But, howsoever, if there were any such change of relation, that God may be called Creator and Lord after the creation and not before, it is

not a change in essence, nor in knowledge, nor in will; God gains no perfection nor diminution by it; his knowledge is not increased by it; he is no more by it than he was, and will be, if all those things ceased; and therefore Austin illustrates it by this similitude:—as a piece of money when it is given as the price of a thing, or deposited only as a pledge for the security of a thing borrowed; the coin is the same, and is not change though the relation it had as a pledge and as a price be different from one another: so that suppose any new relation be added, yet there is nothing happens to the nature of God which may infer any change.

Prop. II. There was no change in the Divine nature of the Son, when he assumed human nature. There was an union of the two natures, but no change of the Deity into the humanity, or of the humanity into the Deity: both preserved their peculiar properties. The humanity was changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature, not by being brought into an equality with it, for that was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator. He took the “form of a servant,” but he lost not the form of God; he despoiled not himself of the perfections of the Deity. He was indeed emptied, “and became of no reputation” (Php 2:7); but he did not cease to be God, though he was reputed to be only a man, and a very mean one too. The glory of his divinity was not extinguished nor diminished, though it was obscured and darkened, under the veil of our infirmities; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun when it is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud. His blood while it was pouring out from his veins was the “blood of God” (Acts 20:28); and, therefore, when he was bowing the head of his humanity upon the cross, he had the nature and perfections of God; for had he ceased to be God, he had been a mere creature, and his sufferings would have been of as little value and satisfaction as the sufferings of a creature. He could not have been a sufficient Mediator, had he ceased to be God: and he had ceased to be God, had he lost any one perfection proper to the divine nature; and losing none, he lost not this of unchangeableness, which is none of the meanest belonging to the Deity. Why by his union with the human nature should he lose this, any more than he lost his omniscience, which he discovered by his knowledge of the thoughts of men; or his mercy, which he manifested to the height in the time of his suffering? That is truly a change, when a thing ceaseth to be what it was before: this was not in Christ; he assumed our nature without laying aside his own. When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it? No; but it makes a change in the body, and of a dull lump it makes it a living mass, conveys vigor and strength to it, and, by its power, quickens it to sense and motion. [Note: Zanch. de Immutab. Dei.] So did the divine nature and human remain entire; there was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art change sand or ashes into glass: and when he prays “for the glory he had with God before the world was” (John 17:5), he prays that a glory he had in his Deity might shine forth in his person as Mediator, and be evidenced in that height and splendor suitable to his dignity, which had been so lately darkened by his abasement; that as he had appeared to be the Son of Man in the infirmity of the flesh, he might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of his person, that he might appear to be the Son of God and the Son of Man in one person. [Note: Goulart de Immutab. de Dieu.] Again, there could be no change in this union; for, in a real change, something is acquired which was not possessed before, neither formally nor eminently: but the divinity had from eternity, before the incarnation, all the perfections of the human nature eminently in a nobler manner than they are in themselves, and therefore could not be changed by a real union. [Note: Gamach. in Part L Aquin. Qu. 9. c. i.]

Prop. III. Repentance and other affections ascribed to God in Scripture, argue no change in God. We often read of God's repenting, repenting of the good he promised (Jeremiah 18:10), and of the evil he threatened (Exodus 32:14; John 3:10), or of the work he hath wrought (Genesis 6:6). We must observe, therefore, that,

1. Repentance is not properly in God. He is a pure Spirit, and is not capable of those passions which are signs of weakness and impotence, or subject to those regrets we are subject to. Where there is a proper repentance there is a want of foresight, an ignorance of what would succeed, or a defect in the examination of the occurrences which might fall within consideration. All repentance of a fact is grounded upon a mistake is the event which was not foreseen, or upon an after knowledge of the evil of the thing which was acted by the person repenting. But God is so wise that he cannot err, so holy he cannot do evil; and his certain prescience, or foreknowledge, secures him against any unexpected events. God doth not act but upon clear and infallible reason; and a change upon passion is accounted by all so great a weakness in man, that none can entertain so unworthy a conceit of God. Where he is said to repent (Genesis 6:6), he is also said to grieve; now no proper grief can be imagined to be in God. As repentance is inconsistent with infallible foresight, so is grief no less inconsistent with undefiled blessedness. God is "blessed forever" (Romans 9:8), and therefore nothing can befall him that can stain that blessedness. His blessedness would be impaired and interrupted while he is repenting, though he did soon rectify that which is the cause of his repentance. "God is of one mind, and who can turn him? what his soul desires that he doth" (Job 23:13).

2. But God accommodates himself in the Scripture to our weak capacity. God hath no more of a proper repentance, than he hath of a real body; though he, in accommodation to our weakness, ascribes to himself the members of our bodies to set out to our understanding the greatness of his perfections, we must not conclude him a body like us; so, because he is said to have anger and repentance, we must not conclude him to have passions like us. When we cannot fully comprehend him as he is, he clothes himself with our nature in his expressions that we may apprehend him as we are able, and by an inspection into ourselves, learn something of the nature of God; yet those human ways of speaking ought to be understood in a manner agreeable to the infinite excellency and majesty of God, and are only designed to mark out something in God which hath a resemblance with something in us; as we cannot speak to God as gods, but as men, so we cannot understand him speaking to us as a God, unless he condescend to speak to us like a man. God therefore frames his language to our dulness, not to his own state, and informs us by our own phrases, what he would have us learn of his nature, as nurses talk broken language to young children. In all such expressions, therefore, we must ascribe the perfection we conceive in them to God, and lay the imperfection at the door of the creature.

3. Therefore, repentance in God is only a change of his outward conduct, according to his infallible foresight and immutable will. He changes the way of his providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence. When God speaks of his repenting "that he had made man" (Genesis 6:6), it is only his changing his conduct from a way of kindness to a way of severity, and is a word suited to our capacities to signify his detestation of sin, and his resolution to punish it, after man had made himself quite another thing, than God had made him; "it repents me," that is, I am purposed to destroy the world, as he that repents of his work throws it away; [Note: Mercer in loc.] as if a potter cast away the vessel he had

framed, it were a testimony that he repented that ever he took pains about it, so the destruction of them seems to be a repentance in God that ever he made them; it is a change of events, not of counsels. Repentance in us is a grief for a former fact, and a changing of our course in it; grief is not in God, but his repentance is a willing a thing should not be as it was, which will was fixed from eternity; for God, foreseeing man would fall, and decreeing to permit it, he could not be said to repent in time of what he did not repent from eternity; and therefore, if there were no repentance in God from eternity, there could be none in time. [Note: Petavius Theol. Dogmat.] But God is said to repent when he changes the disposition of affairs without himself; as men, when they repent, alter the course of their actions, so God alters things, extra se, or without himself, but changes nothing of his own purpose within himself. It rather notes the action he is about to do, than anything in his own nature, or any change in his eternal purpose. God's repenting of his kindness is nothing but an inflicting of punishment, which the creature by the change of his carriage hath merited: as his repenting of the evil threatened is the withholding the punishment denounced, when the creature hath humbly submitted to his authority, and acknowledged his crime. Or else we may understand those expressions of joy, and grief, and repentance, to signify thus much, that the things declared to be the objects of joy, and grief, and repentance, are of that nature, that if God were capable of our passions, he would discover himself in such cases as we do; as when the prophets mention the joys and applaudings of heaven, earth, and the sea, they only signify that the things they speak of are so good, that if the heavens and the sea had natures capable of joy, they would express it upon that occasion in such a manner as we do; so would God have joy at the obedience of men, and grief at the unworthy carriage of men, and repent of his kindness when men abuse it, and repent of his punishment when men reform under his rod, were the majesty of his nature capable of such affections. [Note: Daille, in Sermon on 2 Peter 3:9. p. 30.]

Prop. IV. The not fulfilling of some predictions in Scripture, which seem to imply a changeableness of the Divine will, do not argue any change in it. As when he reprieved Hezekiah from death, after a message sent by the prophet Isaiah, that he should die (2 Kings 20:1-5; Isaiah 38:1-5), and when he made an arrest of that judgment he had threatened by Jonah against Nineveh (Jonah 3:4-10). There is not, indeed, the same reason of promises and threatenings altogether; for in promising, the obligation lies upon God, and the right to demand is in the party that perform the condition of the promise: but in threatenings, the obligation lies upon the sinner, and God's right to punish is declared thereby; so that through God doth not punish, his will is not changed, because his will was to declare the demerit of sin, and his right to punish upon the commission of it; though he may not punish according to the strict letter of the threatening the person sinning, but relax his own law for the honor of his attributes, and transfer the punishment from the offender to a person substituted in his room: this was the case in the first threatening against man, and the substituting a Surety in the place of the malefactor. But the answer to these cases is this, that where we find predictions in Scripture declared, and yet not executed, we must consider them, not as absolute but conditional, or as the civil law calls it, an interlocutory sentence. [Note: Rivet in Genes. exercita. 51. p. 213.] God declared what would follow by natural causes, or by the demerit of man, not what he would absolutely himself do: and in many of those predictions, though the condition be not expressed, yet it is to be understood; so the promises of God are to be understood, with the condition of perseverance in well doing; and threatenings, with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent: and this God lays down as a general case, alway to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting his threatenings against a nation, and the same reason

will hold in threatenings against a particular person. (Jeremiah 18:7-10) "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them;" and so when he speaks of planting a nation, if they do evil, he will repent of the good, &c. It is a universal rule by which all particular cases of this nature are to be tried; so that when man's repentance arrives, God remains firm in his first will, always equal to himself; and it is not he that changes, but man. For since the interposition of the Mediator, with an eye to whom God governed the world after the fall, the right of punishing was taken off if men repented, and mercy was to flow out, if by a conversion men returned to their duty (Ezekiel 18:20-21). This, I say, is grounded upon God's entertaining the Mediator; for the covenant of works discovered no such thing as repentance or pardon. Now these general rules are to be the interpreters of particular cases: so that predictions of good are not to be counted absolute, if men return to evil; nor predictions of evil, if men be thereby reduced to a repentance of their crimes. So Nineveh shall be destroyed, that is, according to the general rule, unless the inhabitants repent, which they did; they manifested a belief of the threatening, and gave glory to God by giving credit to the prophet: and they had a notion of this rule God lays down in the other prophets; for they had an apprehension that, upon their humbling themselves, they might escape the threatened vengeance, and stop the shooting those arrows that were ready in the bow. [Note: Sanderson's Sermon, Part II. p. 157, 158.] Though Jonah proclaimed destruction without declaring any hopes of an arrest of judgment, yet their natural notion of God afforded some natural hopes of relief if they did their duty, and spurned not against the prophet's message; and therefore, saith one, God did not always express this condition, because it was needless; his own rule revealed in Scripture was sufficient to some; and the natural notion all men had of God's goodness upon their repentance, made it not absolutely necessary to declare it. And besides, saith he, it is bootless; the expressing it can do but little good; secure ones will repent never the sooner, but rather presume upon their hopes of God's forbearance, and linger out their repentance till it be too late. And to work men to repentance, whom he hath purposed to spare, he threatens them with terrible judgments; which by how much the more terrible and peremptory they are, are likely to be more effectual for that end God in his purpose designs them; viz. to humble them under a sense of their demerit, and an acknowledgment of his righteous justice; and, therefore, though they be absolutely denounced, yet they are to be conditionally interpreted with a reservation of repentance. As for that answer which one gives, that by forty days was not meant forty natural days, but forty prophetic days, that is years, a day for a year; and that the city was destroyed forty years after by the Medes; the expression of God's repenting upon their humiliation puts a bar to that interpretation; God repented, that is, he did not bring the punishment upon them according to those days the prophet had expressed; and, therefore, forty natural days are to be understood; and if it were meant forty years, and they were destroyed at the end of that term, how could God be said to repent, since according to that, the punishment threatened was, according to the time fixed, brought upon them? and the destruction of it forty years after will not be easily evinced, if Jonah lived in the time of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel, as he did (2 Kings 14:25); and Nineveh was destroyed in the time of Josiah, king of Judah. But the other answer is plain. God did not fulfil what he had threatened, because they reformed what they had committed: when the threatening was made, they were a fit object for justice; but when they repented, they were a fit object for a merciful respite. To threaten when sins are high, is a part of God's justice; not to execute when sins are

revoked by repentance, is a part of God's goodness. And in the case of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1; 2 Kings 20:5), Isaiah comes with a message from God, that he should "set his house in order," for he shall die; that is, the disease was mortal, and no outward applications could in their own nature resist the distemper: "Behold, I will add to thy days fifteen years; I will heal thee" (Isaiah 38:1; Isaiah 38:5). It seems to me to be one entire message, because the latter part of it was so suddenly after the other committed to Isaiah, to be delivered to Hezekiah; for he was not gone out of the king's house, before he was ordered to return with the news of his health, by an extraordinary indulgence of God against the power of nature and force of the disease, "Behold, I will add to thy life;" noting it as an extraordinary thing; he was in the second court of the king's house when this word came to him (2 Kings 20:4); the king's house having three courts, so that he was not gone above half-way out of the palace. God might send this message of death, to prevent the pride Hezekiah might swell with for his deliverance from Sennacherib: as Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him to prevent his lifting up (2 Corinthians 12:7); and this good man was subject to this sin, as we find afterwards in the case of the Babylonish ambassadors; and God delayed this other part of the message to humble him, and draw out his prayer: and as soon as ever he found Hezekiah in this temper, he sent Isaiah with a comfortable message of recovery; so that the will of God was to signify to him the mortality of his distemper, and afterwards to relieve him by a message of an extraordinary recovery.

Prop. V. God is not changed, when of loving to any creatures he becomes angry with them, or of angry he becomes appeased. The change in these cases is in the creature; according to the alteration in the creature, it stands in a various relation to God: an innocent creature is the object of his kindness, an offending creature is the object of his anger; there is a change in the dispensations of God, as there is a change in the creature making himself capable of such dispensations. God always acts according to the immutable nature of his holiness, and can no more change in his affections to good and evil, than he can in his essence. When the devils, now fallen, stood as glorious angels, they were the objects of God's love, because holy; when they fell, they were the objects of God's hatred, because impure; the same reason which made him love them while they were pure, made him hate them when they were criminal. The reason of his various dispensations to them was the same in both, as considered in God, his immutable holiness; but as respecting the creature, different; the nature of the creature was changed, but the Divine holy nature of God remained the same: "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward" (Psalms 18:26): he is a refreshing light to those that obey him, and a consuming fire to those that resist him. Though the same angels were not always loved, yet the same reason that moved him to love them, moved him to hate them. It had argued a change in God if he had loved them alway, in whatsoever posture they were towards him; it could not be counted love, but a weakness and impotent fondness; the change is in the object, not in the affection of God; for the object loved before is not beloved now, because that which was the motive of love, is not now in it; so that the creature having a different state from what it had, falls under a different affection or dispensation. It had been a mutable affection in God to love that which was not worthy of love with the same love wherewith be loved that which had the greatest resemblance to himself; had God loved the fallen angels in that state and for that state, he had hated himself, because he had loved that which was contrary to himself and the image of his own holiness, which made them appear before, good in his sight. The will of God is unchangeably set to love righteousness and hate iniquity, and from this hatred to punish it; and if a righteous

creature contracts the wrath of God, or a sinful creature hath the communications of God's love, it must be by a change in themselves. Is the sun changed when it hardens one thing and softens another, according to the disposition of the several subjects? Or when the sun makes a flower more fragrant, and a dead carcass more noisome? There are divers effects, but the reason of that diversity is not in the sun, but in the subject; the sun is the same, and produceth those different effects by the same quality of heat; so if an unholy soul approach to God, God looks angrily upon him; if a holy soul come before him, the same immutable perfection in God draws out his kindness towards him: as some think, the sun would rather refresh than scorch us, if our bodies were of the same nature and substance with that luminary. As the will of God for creating the world was no new, but an eternal will, though it manifested itself in time, so the will of God for the punishment of sin, or the reconciliation of the sinner, was no new will: though his wrath in time break out in the effects of it upon sinners, and his love flows out in the effects of it upon penitents. Christ by his death reconciling God to man, did not alter the will of God, but did what was consonant to his eternal will; he came not to change his will, but to execute his will: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). And the grace of God in Christ was not a new grace, but an old grace in a new appearance; "the grace of God hath appeared" (Titus 1:11).

Prop. VI. A change of laws by God argues no change in God, when God abrogates some laws which he had settled in the church, and enacts others. I spake of this something the last day; I shall only add this: God commanded one thing to the Jews, when the church was in an infant state; and removed those laws, when the church came to some growth. The elements of the world were suited to the state of children (Galatians 4:3). A mother feeds not the infant with the same diet as she doth when it is grown up. Our Saviour acquainted not his disciples with some things at one time which he did at another, because they were not able to bear them: where was the change; in Christ's will, or in their growth from a state of weakness to that of strength? A physician prescribes not the same thing to a person in health, as he doth to one conflicting with a distemper; nor the same thing in the beginning as he doth in the state or declination of the disease. The physician's will and skill are the same, but the capacity and necessity of the patient for this or that medicine, or method of proceeding, are not the same. When God changed the ceremonial law, there was no change in the Divine will, but an execution of his will; for when God commanded the observance of the law he intended not the perpetuity of it; nay, in the prophets he declares the cessation of it; he decreed to command it, but he decreed to command it only for such a time; so that the abrogation of it was no less an execution of his decree, than the establishment of it for a season was; the commanding of it was pursuant to his decree for the appointing of it, and the nulling of it was pursuant to his decree of continuing it only for such a season; so that in all this there was no change in the will of God. The counsel of God stands sure; what changes soever there are in the world, are not in God or his will, but in the events of things, and the different relations of things to God: it is in the creature, not in the Creator. The sun always remains of the same hue, and is not discolored in itself, because it shines green through a green glass, and blue through a blue glass; the different colors come from the glass, not from the sun; the change is always in the disposition of the creature, and not in the nature of God or his will.

V. Use 1. For information.

1. If God be unchangeable in his nature, and immutability be a property of God, then Christ hath a Divine nature. This in the Psalm is applied to Christ in the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:11), where he

joins the citation out of this Psalm with that out of Psalms 45:6-7, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows; and thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," &c. As the first must necessarily be meant of Christ the Mediator, and therein he is distinguished from God, as one anointed by him; so the other must be meant of Christ, whereby he is made one with God in regard of the creation and dissolution of the world, in regard of eternity and immutability. Both the testimonies are linked together by the copulative and, "and thou, Lord;" declaring thereby that they are both to be understood of the same person, the Son of God. The design of the chapter is to prove Christ to be God; and such things are spoken of him as could not belong to any creature; no, not to the most excellent of the angels. The same person that is said to be anointed above his fellows, and is said to lay the foundation of the earth and heavens, is said to be the same; that is, the same in himself; the prerogative of sameness belongs to that person as well as creation of heaven and earth. The Socinians say it is spoken of God, and that God shall destroy the heavens by Christ; if so, Christ is not a mere creature, not created when he was incarnate; for the same person that shall change the world did create the world; if God shall change the world by him, God also created the world by him; he was then before the world was; for how could God create the world by one that was not; that was not in being till after the creation of the world. 2 The heavens shall be changed, but the person who is to change the heavens is said to be the same, or unchangeable in the creation as well as the dissolution of the world. This sameness refers to the whole sentence. The Psalm wherein the text is, and whence this in the Hebrews is cited, is properly meant of Christ, and redemption by him, and the completing of it at the last day, and not of the Babylonish captivity; [Note: Placeus de Deitate Christi.] that captivity was not so deplorable as the state of the Psalmist describes; Daniel and his companions flourished in that captivity; it could not reasonably be said of them, that their days were consumed like smoke, their hearts withered like grass; that they forgot to "eat their bread" (Psalms 102:3-4). Besides, he complains of "shortness of life" (Psalms 102:11); but none had any more reason to complain of that in the time of the captivity, than before and after it, than at any other time: their deliverance would contribute nothing to the natural length of their lives. Besides, when Sion should be built, the heathen should "fear the name of the Lord" (that is, worship God), and "all the kings of the earth his glory" (Psalms 102:15). The rearing the second temple after the deliverance, did not proselyte the nations; nor did the kings of the earth worship the glory of God; nor did God appear in such glory at the erecting the second temple. The second temple was less glorious than the first, for it wanted some of the ornaments which were the glory of the first; but it is said of this state, that when the Lord should build up Sion, he should "appear in his glory" (Psalms 102:16); his proper glory, and extraordinary glory. Now that God who shall appear in glory, and build up Sion, is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world; he builds up the church, he causes the nations to fear the Lord, and the kings of the earth his glory; he broke down the partition wall, and opened a door for the entrance of the Gentiles; he struck the chains from off the prisoners, and loosed those that were appointed to death by the curse of the law (Psalms 102:20): and to this person is ascribed the creation of the world; and he is pronounced to remain the same in the midst of an infinite number of changes in inferior things. And it is likely the Psalmist considers not only the beginning of redemption, but the completing of it at the second coming of Christ; for he complains of those evils which shall be removed by his second coming, viz., the shortness of life, persecutions and reproaches wherewith the church is afflicted in this world; and

comforts not himself with those attributes which are directly opposed to sin, as the mercy of God, the covenant of God, but with those that are opposed to mortality and calamities, as the unchangeableness and eternity of God; and from thence infers a perpetual establishment of believers. "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalms 102:28): so that the Psalm itself seems to aim in the whole discourse at Christ, and asserts his divinity, which the apostle, as an interpreter, doth fully evidence; applying it to him, and manifesting his deity by his immutability as well as eternity. [Note: Daille, Melang. des Sermons, Part 11. § 1. p. 8–10, &c.] While all other things lose their forms, and pass through multitudes of variations, he constantly remains the same, and shall be the same, when all the empires of the world shall slide away, and a period be put to the present motions of the creation: and as there was no change made in his being by the creation of things, so neither shall there be by the final alteration of things; he shall see them finish, as he saw them rise up into being, and be the same after their reign, as he was before their original; he is the first and the last (Revelation 1:17).

2. Here is ground and encouragement for worship. An atheist will make another use of this; if God be immutable, why should we worship him, why should we pray to him? good will come if he wills it; evil cannot be averted by all our supplications, if he hath ordained it to fall upon us. But certainly since unchangeableness is knowing, and willing goodness is a perfection, an adoration and admiration is due to God, upon the account of this excellence. If he be God, he is to be revered, and the more highly revered, because he cannot but be God. Again, what comfort could it be to pray to a God, that like the chameleon changed colors every day, every moment? What encouragement could there be to lift up our eyes to one that were of one mind this day and of another mind tomorrow? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that were so mutable, as to grant a petition one day and deny it another, and change his own act? But if a prince promise this or that thing upon such or such a condition, and you know his promise to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, would any man reason thus? because it is unchangeable we will not seek to him, we will not perform the condition, upon which the fruit of the proclamation is to be enjoyed. Who would not count such an inference ridiculous? What blessings hath not God promised upon the condition of seeking him? Were he of an unrighteous nature, or changeable in his mind, this would be a bar to our seeking him, and frustrate our hopes; but since it is otherwise, is not this excellency of his nature the highest encouragement, to ask of him the blessings he hath promised, and a beam from heaven to fire our zeal in asking? If you sire things against his will, which he hath declared he will not grant, prayer then would be an act of disobedience and injury to him, as well as an act of folly in itself; his unchangeableness then might stifle such desires: but if we ask according to his will, and according to our reasonable wants, what ground have we to make such a ridiculous argument? He hath willed everything that may be for our good, if we perform the condition he hath required; and hath put it upon record, that we may know it and regulate our desires and supplications according to it. If we will not seek him, his immutability cannot be a bar, but our own folly is the cause; and by our neglect we despoil him of this perfection as to us, and either imply that he is not sincere, and means not as he speaks; or that he is as changeable as the wind, sometimes this thing, sometimes that, and not at all to be confided in. If we ask according to his revealed will, the unchangeableness of his nature will assure us of the grant; and what a presumption would it be in a creature dependent upon his sovereign, to ask that which he knows he hath declared his will against; since there is no good we can want, but he hath promised to give, upon our sincere and ardent desire for it? God hath decreed to give this or that

to man, but conditionally, and by the means of inquiring after him, and asking for it: "Ask, and you shall receive" (Ezekiel 36:37; Matthew 7:7): as much as to say, You shall not receive unless you ask. When the highest promises are made, God expects they should be put in suit; our Saviour joins the promise and the petition together; the promise to encourage the petition, and the petition to enjoy the promise: he doth not say perhaps it shall be given, but it shall, that is, it certainly shall; your heavenly Father is unchangeably willing to give you those things. We must depend upon his immutability for the thing, and submit to his wisdom for the time. Prayer is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God; which dependence could have no firm foundation without unchangeableness. Prayer doth not desire any change in God, but is offered to God that he would confer those things which he hath immutably willed to communicate; but he willed them not without prayer as the means of bestowing them. The light of the sun is ordered for our comfort, for the discovery of visible things, for the ripening the fruits of the earth; but withal it is required that we use our faculty of seeing, that we employ our industry in sowing and planting, and expose our fruits to the view of the sun, that they may receive the influence of it. If a man shuts his eyes, and complains that the sun is changed into darkness, it would be ridiculous; the sun is not changed, but we alter ourselves; nor is God changed in not giving us the blessings he hath promised, because he hath promised in the way of a due address to him, and opening our souls to receive his influence, and to this, his immutability is the greatest encouragement.

3. This shows how contrary man is to God in regard of his inconstancy. What an infinite distance is there between the immutable God, and mutable man, and how should we bewail this flittingness in our nature! There is a mutability in us as creatures, and a creature cannot but be mutable by nature, otherwise it were not a creature but God. The establishment of any creature is from grace and gift; naturally we tend to nothing, as we come from nothing. This creature-mutability is not our sin, yet it should cause us to lie down under a sense of our own nothingness, in the presence of the Creator. The angels as creatures, though not corrupt, cover their faces before him: and the arguments God uses to humble Job, though a fallen creature, are not from his corruption: for I do not remember that he taxed him with that; but from the greatness of his majesty and excellency of his nature declared in his works (Job 38:1-41; Job 39:1-30; Job 40:1-24; Job 41:1-34.); and, therefore, men that have no sense of God and humility before him, forget that they are creatures as well as corrupt ones. How great is the distance between God and us, in regard of our inconstancy in good, which is not natural to us by creation: for the mind and affections were regular, and by the great artificer were pointed to God as the object of knowledge and love. We have the same faculties of understanding, will, and affection, as Adam had in innocence; but not with the same light, the same bias, and the same ballast. Man, by his fall, wounded his head and heart; the wound in his head made him unstable in the truth, and that in his heart unsteadfast in his affections: he changed himself from the image of God to that of the devil, from innocence to corruption, and from an ability to be steadfast to a perpetual inconstancy; "his silver became dross, and his wine was mixed with water" (Isaiah 1:22). He changed,

(1.) To inconstancy in truth, opposed to the immutability of knowledge in God. How are our minds floating between ignorance and knowledge! Truth in us is like those ephemera, creatures of a day's continuance,—springs up in the morning, and expires at night. How soon doth that fly away from us which we have had, not only some weak flashes of, but which we have learned and have had some relish of! The devil stood not in the truth (John 8:44), and therefore manages his

engines to make us as unstable as himself: our minds reel, and corrupt reasonings oversway us; like sponges we suck up water, and a light compression makes us spout it out again. Truths are not engraven upon our hearts, but writ as in dust, defaced by the next puff of wind, "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14); like a ship without a pilot and sails, at the courtesy of the next storm, or like clouds that are tenants to the wind and sun, moved by the wind and melted by the sun. The Galatians were no sooner called into the grace of God, but they were removed from it (Galatians 1:6); some have been reported to have menstruated their faith, kept an opinion for a month; and many are like him that believed the soul's immortality no longer than he had Plato's book of that subject in his hand: [Note: Sedgwick Christ's Counsel, p. 230.] one likens such to children; they play with truths as children do with babies, one while embrace them, and a little after throw them into the dirt. How soon do we forget what the truth is delivered to us, and what it represented us to be (James 1:23-24). Is it not a thing to be bewailed, that man should be such a weathercock, turned about with every breath of wind, and shifting aspects as the wind shifts points?

(2.) Inconstancy in will, and affections opposed to the immutability of will in God. We waver between God and Baal; and while we are not only resolving, but upon motion a little way, look back with a hankering after Sodom; sometimes lifted up with heavenly intentions, and presently cast down with earthly cares, like a ship that by an advancing wave seems to aspire to heaven, and the next fall of the waves makes it sink down to the depths. We change purposes oftener than fashions, and our resolutions are like letters in water, whereof no mark remains; we will be as John to-day to love Christ, and as Judas to-morrow to betray him, and, by an unworthy levity, pass into the camp of the enemies of God; resolved to be as holy as angels in the morning, when the evening beholds us as impure as devils. How often do we hate what before we loved, and shun what before we longed for! and our resolutions are like vessels of crystal, which break at the first knock, are dashed in pieces by the next temptation. Saul resolved not to persecute David any more, but you soon find him upon his old game. Pharaoh more than once promised, and probably resolved, to let Israel go, but at the end of the storm his purposes vanish (Exodus 8:27; Exodus 8:32). When an affliction pincheth men, they intend to change their course, and the next news of ease changes their intentions; like a bow not fully bent in their inclinations, they cannot reach the mark, but live many years between resolutions of obedience and affections to rebellion (Psalms 78:17): and what promises men make to God are often the fruit of their passion, their fear, not of their will. The Israelites were startled at the terrors wherewith the law was delivered, and promised obedience (Exodus 20:19), but a month after forgot them, and made a golden calf, and in the sight of Sinai call for, and dance before, their gods (Exodus 32:1-35.); never people more unconstant. Peter, who vowed an allegiance to his Master, and a courage to stick to him, forswears him almost with the same breath. Those that cry out with a zeal, "The Lord he is God," shortly after return to the service of their idols (1 Kings 18:39). That which seems to be our pleasure this day, is our vexation to-morrow; a fear of a judgment puts us into a religious pang, and a love to our lusts reduceth us to a rebellious inclination; as soon as the danger is over, the saint is forgotten: salvation and damnation present themselves to us, touch us, and engender some weak wishes, which are dissolved by the next allurements of a carnal interest. No hold can be taken of our promises, no credit is to be given to our resolutions.

(3.) Inconstancy in practice. How much beginning in the Spirit, and ending in the flesh; one day in the sanctuary, another in the stews; clear in the morning as the sun, and clouded before noon; in heaven by an excellency of gifts, in hell by a course of profaneness; like a flower, which some mention, that changes its color three times a day, one art white, then purple, then yellow! The spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh quickly triumphs over the spirit. In a good man how often is there a spiritual lethargy; though he doth not openly defame God, yet he doth not always glorify him; he doth not forsake the truth, but he doth not always make the attainment of it, and settlement in it his business. This levity discovers itself in religious duty, “when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Romans 7:21). Never more present, than when we have a mind to do good, and never more present than when we have a mind to do the best and greatest good. How hard is it to make our thoughts and affections keep their stand! place them upon a good object, and they will be frisking from it, as a bird from one bough, one fruit, to another: we vary postures according to the various objects we meet with. The course of the world is a very airy thing, suited to the uncertain notions of that “prince of the power of the air,” which works in it (Ephesians 2:2). This ought to be bewailed by us. Though we may stand fast in the truth, though we may spin our resolutions into a firm web, though the spirit may triumph over the flesh in our practice, yet we ought to bewail it, because inconstancy is our nature, and what fixedness we have in good is from grace. What we find practised by most men is natural to all; [Note: Lawrence, of Faith, p. 262.] “as face answers to face in a glass, so doth heart to heart” (Proverbs 27:19); a face in the glass is not more like a natural face, whose image it is, than one man’s heart is naturally like another.

1st. It is natural to those out of the church. Nebuchadnezzar is so affected with Daniel’s prophetic spirit, that he would have none accounted the true God, but the “God of Daniel” (Daniel 2:47). How soon doth this notion slip from him, and an image must be set up for all to worship, upon pain of a most cruel, painful death! Daniel’s God is quite forgotten. The miraculous deliverance of the three children, for not worshipping his image, makes him settle a decree to secure the honor of God from the reproach of his subjects (Daniel 3:29); yet, a little while after, you have him strutting in his palace, as if there were no God but himself.

2d. It is natural to those in the Church. The Israelites were the only church God had in the world, and a notable example of inconsistency. After the miracles of Egypt, they murmured against God, when they saw Pharaoh marching with an army at their heels. They desired food, and soon nauseated the manna they were before fond of. When they came into Canaan, they sometimes worshipped God, and sometimes idols, not only the idols of one nation, but of all their neighbors. In which regard God calls this, his heritage; “a speckled bird” (Jeremiah 12:9); a peacock, saith Hierom, inconstant, made up of varieties of idolatrous colors and ceremonies. This levity of spirit is the root of all mischief; it scatters our thoughts in the service of God; it is the cause of all revolts and apostasies from him; it makes us unfit to receive the communications of God whatsoever we hear is like words writ in sand, ruffled out by the next gale; whatsoever is put into us is like precious liquor in a palsy hand, soon spilt: it breeds distrust of God when we have an uncertain judgment of him, we are not like to confide in him; an uncertain judgment will be followed with a distrustful heart. In fine, where it is prevalent, it is a certain sign of ungodliness. To be driven with the wind like chaff, and to be ungodly, is all one in the judgment of the Holy Ghost (Psalms 1:4); the ungodly are “like the chaff which the wind drives away,” which signifies not their destruction, but their disposition, for their destruction is inferred from it (ver. 5), “therefore the ungodly shall not

stand in judgment.” How contrary is this to the unchangeable God, who is alway the same, and would have us the same, in our religious promises and resolutions for good!

4. If God be immutable, it is sad news to those that are resolved in wickedness, or careless of returning to that duty he requires. Sinners must not expect that God will alter his will, make a breach upon his nature, and violate his own word to gratify their lusts. No, it is not reasonable God should dishonor himself to secure them, and cease to be God, that they may continue to be wicked, by changing his own nature, that they may be unchanged in their vanity. God is the same; goodness is as amiable in his sight, and sin as abominable in his eyes now, as it was at the beginning of the world. Being the same God, he is the same enemy to the wicked as the same friend to the righteous. He is the same in knowledge, and cannot forget sinful acts. He is the same in will, and cannot approve of unrighteous practices. Goodness cannot but be alway the object of his love, and wickedness cannot but be alway the object of his hatred: and as his aversion to sin is alway the same, so as he hath been in his judgments upon sinners, the same he will be still; for the same perfection of immutability belongs to his justice for the punishment of sin, as to his holiness for his disaffection to sin. Though the covenant of works was changeable by the crime of man violating it, yet it was unchangeable in regard of God’s justice vindicating it, which is inflexible in the punishment of the breaches of his law. The law had a preceptive part, and a minatory part: when man changed the observation of the precept, the righteous nature of God could not null the execution of the threatening; he could not, upon the account of this perfection, neglect his just word, and countenance the unrighteous transgression. Though there were no more rational creatures in being but Adam and Eve, yet God subjected them to that death he had assured them of: and from this immutability of his will, ariseth the necessity of the suffering of the Son of God for the relief of the apostate creature. His will in the second covenant is as unchangeable as that in the first, only repentance is settled as the condition of the second, which was not indulged in the first; and without repentance, the sinner must irrevocably perish, or God must change his nature: there must be a change in man; there can be none in God; his bow is bent, his arrows are ready, if the wicked do not turn (Psalms 7:11). There is not an atheist, an hypocrite, a profane person, that ever was upon the earth, but God’s soul abhorred him as such, and the like he will abhor forever; while any therefore continue so, they may sooner expect the heavens should roll as they please, the sun stand still at their order, the stars change their course at their beck, than that God should change his nature, which is opposite to profaneness and vanity; “Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?” (Job 9:4.)

Use 2. Of comfort. The immutability of a good God is a strong ground of consolation. Subjects wish a good prince to live forever, as being loth to change him, but care not how soon they are rid of an oppressor. This unchangeableness of God’s will shows him as ready to accept any that come to him as ever he was; so that we may with confidence make our address to him, since he cannot change his affections to goodness. The fear of change in a friend hinders a full reliance upon him; an assurance of stability encourages hope and confidence. This attribute is the strongest prop for faith in all our addresses; it is not a single perfection, but the glory of all those that belong to his nature; for he is unchangeable in his love (Jeremiah 31:3), in his truth (Psalms 117:2). The more solemn revelation of himself in this name, Jehovah, which signifies chiefly his eternity and immutability, was to support the Israelites’ faith in expectation of a deliverance from Egypt, that he had not retracted his purpose, and his promise made to Abraham for giving Canaan

to his posterity (Exodus 3:14-17). Herein is the basis and strength of all his promises; therefore, saith the Psalmist, "Those that know thy name, will put their trust in thee" (Psalms 9:10): those that are spiritually acquainted with thy name, Jehovah, and have a true sense of it upon their hearts, will put their trust in thee. His goodness could not be distrusted, if his unchangeableness were well apprehended and considered. All distrust would fly before it, as darkness before the sun; it only gets advantage of us when we are not well grounded in his name; and if ever we trusted God, we have the same reason to trust him forever: (Isaiah 26:4) "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, "a Rock of Ages," that is, perpetually unchangeable. We find the traces of God's immutability in the creatures. He has, by his peremptory decree, set bounds to the sea: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11). Do we fear the sea overflowing us in this island? No, because of his fixed decree. And is not his promise in his Word as unchangeable as his word concerning inanimate things, as good a ground to rest upon?

1. The covenant stands unchangeable. Mutable creatures break their leagues and covenants, and snap them asunder like Samson's cords, when they are not accommodated to their interests. But an unchangeable God keeps his: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10). The heaven and earth shall sooner fall asunder, and the strongest and firmest parts of the creation crumble to dust, sooner than one iota of my covenant shall fail. It depends upon the unchangeableness of his will and the unchangeableness of his word, and, therefore, is called "the immutability of his counsel" (Hebrews 6:17). It is the fruit of the everlasting purpose of God; whence the apostle links purpose and grace together (2 Timothy 1:9). A covenant with a nation may be changeable, because it may not be built upon the eternal purpose of God, "to put his fear in the heart;" but with respect to the creature's obedience. Thus God chose Jerusalem as the place wherein he would "dwell forever" (Psalms 132:14), yet he threatens to depart from them when they had broken covenant with him; "and the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city to the mountain on the east side" (Ezek. 11:33). The covenant of grace doth not run, "I will be your God if you will be my people;" but "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Hosea 2:19, &c.) "I will betroth thee to me forever; I, will say, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God." His everlasting purpose is, to write his laws in the hearts of the elect. He puts a condition to his covenant of grace, the condition of faith, and he resolves to work that condition in the hearts of the elect; and, therefore, believers have two immutable pillars for their support, stronger than those erected by Solomon at the porch of the temple (1 Kings 7:21), called Jakin and Boaz, to note the firmness of that building dedicated to God; these are election, or the standing. counsel of God, and the covenant of grace. He will not revoke the covenant, and blot the names of his elect out of the book of life.

2. Perseverance is ascertained. It consists not with the majesty of God to call a person effectually to himself to-day, to make him fit for his eternal love, to give him faith, and take away that faith to-morrow. His effectual call is the fruit of his eternal election, and that counsel hath no other foundation but his constant and unchangeable will; a foundation that stands sure, and, therefore, called the foundation of God, and not of the creature; "the foundation of God stands sure, the Lord knows who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19). It is not founded upon our own natural strength; it may be then subject to change, as all the products of nature are. The fallen angels had created grace in

their innocence, but lost it by their fall. Were this the foundation of the creature, it might soon be shaken; since man, after his revolt, can ascribe nothing constant to himself, but his own inconstancy. But the foundation is not in the infirmity of nature, but the strength of grace, and of the grace of God, who is immutable, who wants not virtue to be able, nor kindness to be willing, to reserve his own foundation. [Note: Turretin. Ser. p. 322.] To what purpose doth our Saviour tell his disciples their names “were written in heaven” (Luke 10:20), but to mark the infallible certainty of their salvation by an opposition to those things which perish, and have their “names written in the earth” (Jeremiah 17:23); or upon the sand, where they may be defaced? And why should Christ order his disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, if God were changeable to blot them out again? or why should the apostle assure us, that though God had rejected the greatest part of the Jews, he had not, therefore, rejected his people elected according to his purpose and immutable counsel; because there are none of the elect of God but will come to salvation? For, saith he, the “election hath obtained it” (Romans 11:7); that is, all those that are of the election have obtained it, and the others are hardened. Where the seal of sanctification is stamped, it is a testimony of God’s election, and that foundation shall stand sure: “The foundation of the Lord stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows who are his;” that is the foundation, the “naming the name of Christ,” or believing in Christ, and “departing from iniquity,” is the seal. [Note: Cocceius.] As it is impossible when God calls those things that are not, but that they should spring up into being and appear before him; so it is impossible but that the seed of God, by his eternal purpose, should be brought to a spiritual life, and that calling cannot be retracted; for that “gift and calling is without repentance” (Romans 11:29). And when repentance is removed from God in regard of some works, the immutability of those works is declared; and the reason of that immutability is their pure dependence on the eternal favor and unchangeable grace of God “purposed in himself” (Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 1:11), and not upon the mutability of the creature. Hence their happiness is not as patents among men, *quam diu bene se gesserint*, so long as they behave themselves well; but they have a promise that they shall behave themselves so as never wholly to depart from God (Jeremiah 32:40): “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” God will not turn from them, to do them good, and promiseth that they shall not turn from him forever, or forsake him. And the bottom of it is the everlasting covenant, and, therefore, believing and sealing for security are linked together (Ephesians 1:13). And when God doth inwardly teach us his law, he puts in a will not to depart from it: (Psalms 119:102) “I have not departed from thy judgments;” what is the reason? “For thou hast taught me.”

3. By this eternal happiness is insured. This is the inference made from the eternity and unchangeableness of God in the verse following the text (Psalms 102:28): “The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.” This is the sole conclusion drawn from those perfections of God solemnly asserted before. The children which the prophets and apostles have begotten to thee, shall be totally delivered from the relics of their apostasy, and the punishment due to them, and rendered partakers of immortality with thee, as sons to dwell in their Father’s house forever. The Spirit begins a spiritual life here, to fit for an immutable life in glory hereafter, where believers shall be placed upon a throne that cannot be shaken, and possess a crown that shall not be taken off their heads forever.

Use 3. Of exhortation. 1. Let a sense of the changeableness and uncertainty of all other things beside God, be upon us. There are as many changes as there are figures in the world. The whole fashion of the world is a transient thing; every man may say as Job, "Changes and war are against me" (Job 10:17). Lot chose the plain of Sodom, because it was the richer soil. He was but a little time there before he was taken prisoner, and his substance made the spoil of his enemies. That is again restored; but a while after, fire from heaven devours his wealth, though his person was secured from the judgment by a special Providence. We burn with a desire to settle ourselves, but mistake the way, and build castles in the air, which vanish like bubbles of soap in water. And, therefore,

(1.) Let not our thoughts dwell much upon them. Do but consider those souls that are in the possession of an unchangeable God, that behold his never-fading glory! Would it not be a kind of hell to them to have their thoughts starting out to these things, or find any desire in themselves to the changeable trifles of the earth? Nay, have we not reason to think that they cover their faces with shame, that ever they should have such a weakness of spirit when they were here below, as to spend more thoughts upon them than were necessary for this present life; much more that they should at any time value and court them above an unchangeable good? Do they not disdain themselves that they should ever debase the immutable perfections of God, as to have neglecting thoughts of him at any time, for the entertainment of such a mean and inconstant rival?

(2.) Much less should we trust in them, or rejoice in them. The best things are mutable, and things of such a nature are not fit objects of confidence. Trust not in riches, they have their wanes as well as increases; they rise sometimes like a torrent, and flow in upon men, but resemble also a torrent in as sudden a fall and departure, and leave nothing but slime behind them. Trust not in honor; all the honor and applause in the world is no better than an inheritance of wind, which the pilot is not sure of, but shifts from one corner to another, and stands not perpetually in the same point of the heavens. How, in a few ages did the house of David, a great monarch, and a man after God's own heart, descend to a mean condition, and all the glory of that house shut up in the stock of a carpenter? David's sheep-hook was turned into a sceptre, and the sceptre by the same hand of Providence turned into a hatchet in Joseph his descendant. Rejoice not immoderately in wisdom; that, and learning languish with age. A wound in the head may impair that which is the glory of man. If an organ be out of frame, folly may succeed, and all a man's prudence be wound up in an irrecoverable dotage. Nebuchadnezzar was no fool, yet, by a sudden hand of God, he became not only a fool or a madman, but a kind of brute. Rejoice not in strength; that decays, and a mighty man may live to see his strong arm withered, and a grasshopper to become a burthen (Ecclesiastes 12:5): "The strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders shall cease because they are few" (Ecclesiastes 12:3): nor rejoice in children; they are like birds upon a tree, that make a little chirping music, and presently fall into the fowler's net. Little did Job expect such sad news as the loss of all his progeny at a blow, when the messenger knocked at his gate; and such changes happen oftentimes when our expectations of comfort, and a contentment in them, are at the highest. How often doth a string crack when the musician hath wound it up to a just height for a tune, and all his pains and delight marred in a moment! Nay, all these things change while we are using them, like ice that melts between our fingers, and flowers that wither while we are smelling to them. The apostle gave them a good title when he called them "uncertain riches," and thought it a strong argument to dissuade them from trusting in them (1 Timothy 6:17). The wealth of the

merchant depends upon the winds and waves, and the revenue of the husbandman upon the clouds; and since they depend upon those things which are used to express the most changeableness, they can be no fit object for trust. Besides, God sometimes kindles a fire under all a man's glory, which doth insensibly consume it (Isaiah 10:16); and while we have them, the fear of losing them renders us not very happy in the fruition of them; we can scarce tell whether they are contentments or no, because sorrow follows them so close at the heels. It is not an unnecessary exhortation for good men; the best men have been apt to place too much trust in them. David thought himself immutable in his prosperity, and such thoughts could not be without some immoderate outlets of the heart to them, and confidences in them; and Job promised himself to die in his nest, and "multiply his days as the sand," without any interruption (Job 29:18-19, &c.); but he was mistaken and disappointed. Let me add this: trust not in men, who are as inconstant as anything else, and often change their most ardent affections into implacable hatred; and though their affections may not be changed, the power to help you may. Haman's friends, that depended on him one day, were crest-fallen the next, when their patron was to exchange his chariot of state for an ignominious gallows.

(3.) Prefer an immutable God before mutable creatures. Is it not a horrible thing to see what we are, and what we possess, daily crumbling to dust, and in a continual flux from us, and not seek out something that is permanent, and always abide the same, for our portion? In God, or Wisdom, which is Christ, there is substance (Proverbs 8:21), in which respect he is opposed to all the things in the world, that are but shadows, that are shorter or longer, according to the motion of the sun; mutable also, by every little body that intervenes. God is subject to no decay within, to no force without; nothing in his own nature can change him from what he is, and there is no power above can hinder him from being what he will to the soul. He is an ocean of all perfection: he wants nothing without himself to render him blessed, which may allure him to a change. His creatures can want nothing out of him to make them happy, whereby they may be enticed to prefer anything before him. If we enjoy other things, it is by God's donation, who can as well withdraw them as bestow them; and it is but a reasonable, as well as a necessary thing, to endeavor the enjoyment of the immutable Benefactor, rather than his revocable gifts. If the creatures had a sufficient virtue in themselves to ravish our thoughts and engross our souls; yet when we take a prospect of a fixed and unchangeable Being, what beauty, what strength have any of those things to vie with him? How can they bear up and maintain their interest against a lively thought and sense of God? All the glory of them would fly before him like that of the stars before the sun. They were once nothing, they may be nothing again; as their own nature brought them not out of nothing, so their nature secures them not from being reduced to nothing. What an unhappiness is it to have our affections set upon that which retains something of its non esse with its esse, its not being with its being; that lives indeed, but in a continual flux, and may lose that pleasurable to-morrow which charms us to-day?

2. This doctrine will teach us patience under such providences as declare his unchangeable will. The rectitude of our wills consists in conformity to the Divine, as discovered in his words, and manifested in his providence, which are the effluxes of his immutable will. The time of trial is appointed by his immutable will (Daniel 11:35); it is not in the power of the sufferer's will to shorten it, nor in the power of the enemies' will to lengthen it. Whatsoever doth happen hath been decreed by God (Ecclesiastes 6:10), "That which hath been is named already;" therefore to murmur or be

discontented is to contend with God, who is mightier than we, to maintain his own purposes. God doth act all things conveniently for that immutable end intended by himself, and according to the reason of his own will, in the true point of time most proper for it and for us, not too soon or too slow, because he is unchangeable in knowledge and wisdom. God doth not act anything barely by an immutable will, but by an immutable wisdom, and an unchangeable rule of goodness; and, therefore, we should not only acquiesce in what he works, but have a complacency in it; and by having our wills thus knitting themselves with the immutable will of God, we attain some degree of likeness to him in his own unchangeableness. When, therefore, God hath manifested his will in opening his decree to the world by his work of providence, we must cease all disputes against it, and, with Aaron hold our peace, though the affliction be very smart (Revelation 10:3). "All flesh must be silent before God" (Zechariah 2:13); for whatsoever is his counsel shall stand, and cannot be recalled. All struggling against it is like a brittle glass contending with a rock; for "if he cut off and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?" (Job 11:10.) Nothing can help us, if he hath determined to afflict us, as nothing can hurt us, if he hath determined to secure us. The more clearly God hath evidenced this or that to be his will, the more sinful is our struggling against it. Pharaoh's sin was the greater in keeping Israel, by how much the more God's miracles had been demonstrations of his settled will to deliver them. Let nothing snatch our hearts to a contradiction to him, but let us fear and give glory to him, when the hour of judgment which he hath appointed is come (Revelation 14:7); that is, comply with the unchangeable will of his precept, the more he declares the immutable will of his providence. We must not think God must disgrace his nature and change his proceedings for us; better the creature should suffer, than God be impaired in any of his perfections. If God changed his purpose he would change his nature. Patience is the way to perform the immutable will of God, and a means to attain a gracious immutability for ourselves by receiving the promise (Hebrews 10:36), "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

3. This doctrine will teach us to imitate God in this perfection, by striving to be immovable in goodness. God never goes back from himself; he finds nothing better than himself for which he should change; and can we find anything better than God, to allure our hearts to a change from him? The sun never declines from the ecliptic line, nor should we from the paths of holiness. A steadfast obedience is encouraged by an unchangeable God to reward it (1 Corinthians 15:58): "Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." Unsteadfastness is the note of a hypocrite (Psalms 78:37): steadfastness in that which is good is the mark of a saint; it is the character of a righteous person to "keep the truth" (Isaiah 26:2). And it is as positively said that "he that abides not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God" (2 John 1:9); but he that doth, "hath both the Father and the Son." So much of uncertainty, so much of nature, so much of firmness in duty, so much of grace. We can never honor God unless we finish his work; as Christ did not glorify God but in finishing the work God gave him to do (John 17:4). The nearer the world comes to an end, the more is God's immutability seen in his promises and predictions, and the more must our unchangeableness be seen in our obedience (Hebrews 10:23; Hebrews 10:25): "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." The christian Jews were to be the more tenacious of their faith, the nearer they saw the day approaching, the day of Jerusalem's destruction prophesied of by Daniel (Daniel 9:26), which accomplishment must be a great argument to establish the christian Jews in the profession of Christ to be the Messiah, because the

destruction of the city was not to be before the cutting off the Messiah. Let us be, therefore, constant in our profession and service of God, and not suffer ourselves to be driven from him by the ill usage, or flattered from him by the caresses of the world.

(1.) It is reasonable. If God be unchangeable in doing us good, it is reason we should be unchangeable in doing him service. If he assure us that he is our God, our "I Am," he would also that we should be his people; his we are. If he declare himself constant in his promises, he expects we should be so in our obedience. As a spouse, we should be unchangeably faithful to him as a Husband; as subjects, have an unchangeable allegiance to him as our Prince. He would not have us faithful to him for an hour or a day, but "to the death" (Revelation 2:10); and it is reason we should be his, and if we be his children, imitate him in his constancy of his holy purposes.

(2.) It is our glory and interest. To be a reed shaken with every wind is no commendation among men, and it is less a ground of praise with God. It was Job's glory that he held fast his integrity (Job 1:22): "In all this Job sinned not;" in all this,—which whole cities and kingdoms would have thought ground enough of high exclamations against God, and also against the temptation of his wife,—he retained his integrity (Job 2:9): "Dost thou still retain thy integrity?" The devil, who by God's permission stripped him of his goods and health, yet could not strip him of his grace. As a traveller, when the wind and snow beats in his face, wraps his cloak more closely about him to preserve that and himself. Better we had never made profession, than afterwards to abandon it; such a withering profession serves for no other use than to aggravate the crime, if any of us fly like a coward, or revolt like a traitor; what profit will it be to a soldier, if he hath withstood many assaults, and turn his back at last? If we would have God crown us with an immutable glory, we must crown our beginnings with a happy perseverance (Revelation 2:10): "Be faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life;" not as though this were the cause to merit it, but a necessary condition to possess it: constancy in good is accompanied with an immutability of glory.

(3.) By an unchangeable disposition to good, we should begin the happiness of heaven upon earth. This is the perfection of blessed spirits, those that are nearest to God as angels and glorified souls, they are immutable; not, indeed, by nature, but by grace; yet not only by a necessity of grace, but a liberty of will: grace will not let them change; and that grace doth animate their wills that they would not change; an immutable God fills their understandings and affections, and gives satisfaction to their desires. The saints when they were below, tried other things, and found them deficient; but now they are so fully satisfied with the beatific vision, that if Satan should have an entrance among the angels and sons of God, it is not likely he should have any influence upon them; he could not present to their understandings anything that could either at the first glance, or upon a deliberate view, be preferable to what they enjoy and are fixed in. Well, then, let us be immovable in the knowledge and love of God. It is the delight of God to see his creatures resemble him in what they are able. Let not our affections to him be as Jonah's gourd, growing up in one night and withering the next. Let us not only fight a good fight, but do so till we have finished our course, and imitate God in an unchangeableness of holy purposes; and to that purpose, examine ourselves daily what fixedness we have arrived unto; and to prevent any temptation to a revolt, let us often possess our minds with thoughts of the immutability of God's nature and will, which, like fire under water, will keep a good matter boiling up in us, and make it both retain and increase its heat.

(4.) Let this doctrine teach us to have recourse to God, and aim at a near conjunction with him. When our spirits begin to flag, and a cold aguish temper is drawing upon us, let us go to him who can only fix our hearts, and furnish us with a ballast to render them steadfast. As he is only immutable in his nature, so he is the only principle of immutability, as well as being in the creature. Without his grace, we shall be as changeable in our appearances as the chameleon, and in our turnings as the wind. When Peter trusted in himself, he changed to the worse; it was his Master's recourse to God for him that preserved in him a reducing principle, which changed him again for the better, and fixed him in it (Luke 22:32). It will be our interest to be in conjunction with him, that moves not about with the heavens, nor is turned by the force of nature, nor changed by the accidents in the world; but sits in the heavens, moving all things by his powerful arm, according to his infinite skill. While we have him for our God, we have his immutability as well as any other perfection of his nature for our advantage; the nearer we come to him, the more stability we shall have in ourselves; the further from him, the more liable to change. The line that is nearest to the place where it is first fixed, is least subject to motion; the further it is stretched from it, the weaker it is, and more liable to be shaken. Let us also affect those things which are nearest to him in this perfection; the righteousness of Christ that shall never wear out, and the graces of the Spirit that shall never burn out; by this means, what God is infinitely by nature, we shall come to be finitely immutable by grace, as much as the capacity of a creature can contain.

On The Power of God

ON THE POWER OF GOD

Job 26:14.—Lo! these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

Bildad had, in the foregoing chapter, entertained Job with a discourse of the dominion and power of God, and the purity of his righteousness, whence he argues an impossibility of the justification of man in his presence, who is no better than a worm. Job, in this chapter, acknowledges the greatness of God's power, and descants more largely upon it than Bildad had done; but doth preface it with a kind of ironical speech, as if he had not acted a friendly part, or spake little to the purpose, or the matter in hand: the subject of Job's discourse was the worldly happiness of the wicked, and the calamities of the godly: and Bildad reads him a lecture, of the extent of God's dominion, the number of his armies, and the unspotted rectitude of his nature, in comparison of which the purest creatures are: foul and crooked. Job, therefore, from Job 26:1-4, taxeth him in a kind of scoffing manner, that he had not touched the point, but rambled from the subject in hand, and had not applied a salve proper to this sore (Job 26:2): "How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm of him that hath no strength?" &c., your discourse is so impertinent, that it will neither strengthen a weak person, nor instruct a simple one. [Note: Munster.] But since Bildad would take up the argument of God's power, and discourse so short of it, Job would show that he wanted not his instructions in that kind, and that he had more distinct conceptions of it than his antagonist had uttered: and therefore from Job 26:5-14, he doth magnificently treat of the power of God in several branches. And (Job 26:5) he begins with the lowest. "Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof:" You read me a lecture of the power of God in the heavenly host: indeed it is visible there, yet of a larger extent; and monuments of it are found in the lower parts. What do you think of those dead things under the earth and waters, of the corn that dies, and by the moistening influences of the clouds, springs up again with a numerous progeny and increase for the nourishment of man? What do you think of those varieties of metals and minerals conceived in the bowels of the earth; those pearls and riches in the depths of the waters, midwived by this power of God? Add to these those more prodigious creatures in the sea, the inhabitants of the waters, with their vastness and variety, which are all the births of God's power; both in their first creation by his mighty voice, and their propagation by his cherishing providence. Stop not here, but consider also that his power extends to hell; either the graves the repositories of all the crumbled dust that hath yet been in the world (for so hell is sometimes taken in Scripture: ver. 6, "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.") The several lodgings of deceased men are known to him: no screen can obscure them from his sight, nor their dissolution be any bar to his power, when the time is come to compact those mouldered bodies to entertain again their departed souls, either for weal or woe. The grave, or hell, the place of punishment, is naked before him; as distinctly discerned by him, as a naked body in all its lineaments by us, or a dissected body is in all its parts by a skilful eye.

Destruction hath no covering; none can free himself from the power of his hand. Every person in the bowels of hell; every person punished there is known to him, and feels the power of his wrath. From the lower parts of the world he ascends to the consideration of the power of God in the creation of heaven and earth; "He stretches out the north over the empty places" (Job 26:7). The north, or the north pole, over the air, which, by the Greeks, was called void or empty, because of the tenuity and thinness of that element; and he mentions here the north, or north pole, for the whole heaven, because it is more known and apparent than the southern pole. "And hangs the earth upon nothing;" the massy and weighty earth hangs like a thick globe in the midst of a thin air, that there is as much air on the one side of it, as on the other. The heavens have no prop to sustain them in their height, and the earth hath no basis to support it in its place. The heavens are as if you saw a curtain stretched smooth in the air without any hand to hold it; and the earth is as if you saw a ball hanging in the air without any solid body to under-prop it, or any line to hinder it from falling; both standing monuments of the omnipotence of God. He then takes notice of his daily power in the clouds; "He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them" (Job 26:8). He compacts the waters together in clouds, and keeps them by his power in the air against the force of their natural gravity and heaviness, till they are fit to flow down upon the earth, and perform his pleasure in the places for which he designs them. "The cloud is not rent under them;" the thin air is not split asunder by the weight of the waters contained in the cloud above it. He causes them to distil by drops, and strains them, as it were, through a thin lawn, for the refreshment of the earth; and suffers them not to fall in the whole lump, with a violent torrent, to waste the industry of man, and bring famine upon the world, by destroying the fruits of the earth. What a wonder it would be to see but one entire drop of water hang itself but one inch above the ground, unless it be a bubble which is preserved by the air enclosed within it! What a wonder would it be to see a gallon of water contained in a thin cobweb as strongly as in a vessel of brass! Greater is the wonder of Divine power in those thin bottles of heaven, as they are called (Job 38:37); and therefore called his clouds here, as being daily instances of his omnipotence: that the air should sustain those rolling vessels, as it should seem, weightier than itself; that the force of this mass of waters should not break so thin a prison, and hasten to its proper place, which is below the air: that they should be daily confined against their natural inclination, and held by so slight a chain; that there should be such a gradual and successive falling of them, as if the air were pierced with holes like a gardener's watering-pot, and not fall in one entire body to drown or drench some parts of the earth. These are hourly miracles of Divine power, as little regarded as clearly visible. He proceeds (Job 26:9), "He holds back the face of his throne, and spreads the clouds upon it." The clouds are designed as curtains to cover the heavens, as well as vessels to water the earth (Psalms 147:8). As a tapestry curtain between the heavens, the throne of God (Isaiah 46:1), and the earth his footstool: the heavens are called his throne, because his power doth most shine forth there, and magnificently declare the glory of God; and the clouds are as a screen between the scorching heat of the sun, and the tender plants of the earth, and the weak bodies of men. From hence he descends to the sea, and considers the Divine power apparent in the bounding of it (Job 26:10); "He hath compassed the waters with bounds, till the day and night come to an end." This is several times mentioned in Scripture as a signal mark of Divine strength (Job 38:8; Proverbs 8:27). He hath measured a place for the sea, and struck the limits of it as with a compass, that it might not mount above the surface of the land, and ruin the ends of the earth's creation; and this, while day and night have their mutual turns, till he shall make an end of time by

removing the measures of it. The bounds of the tumultuous sea are, in many places, as weak as the bottles of the upper waters; the one is contained in thin air, and the other restrained by weak sands, in many places, as well as by stubborn rocks in others; that, though it swells, foams, roars, and the waves, encouraged and egged on by strong winds, come like mountains against the shore; they overflow it not, but humble themselves when they come near to those sands, which are set as their lists and limits, and retire back to the womb that brought them forth, as if they were ashamed and repented of their proud invasion: or else it may be meant of the tides of the sea, and the stated time God hath set it for its ebbing and flowing, till night and day come to an end; [Note: Coccei in loc.] both that the fluid waters should contain themselves within due bounds, and keep their perpetually orderly motion, are amazing arguments of Divine power. He passes on to the consideration of the commotions in the air and earth, raised and stilled by the power of God; "The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof:" By pillars of heaven are not meant angels, as some think, but either the air, called the pillars of heaven in regard of place, as it continues and knits together the parts of the world, as pillars do the upper and nether parts of a building: as the lowest parts of the earth are called the foundations of the earth, so the lowest parts of the heaven may be called the pillars of heaven: [Note: Coccei.] or else by that phrase may be meant mountains, which seem, at a distance, to touch the sky, as pillars do the top of a structure; and so it may be spoken, according to vulgar capacity, which imagines the heavens to be sustained by the two extreme parts of the earth, as a convex body, or to be arched by pillars; whence the Scripture, according to common apprehensions, mentions the ends of the earth, and the utmost parts of the heavens, though they have properly no end, as being round. The power of God is seen in those commotions in the air and earth, by thunders, lightnings, storms, earthquakes, which rack the air, and make the mountains and hills tremble as servants before a frowning and rebuking master. And as he makes motions in the earth and air, so is his power seen in their influences upon the sea; "He judges the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smites through the proud" (Job 26:12). At the creation he put the waters into several channels, and caused the dry land to appear barefaced for a habitation for man and beasts; or rather, he splits the sea by storms, as though he would make the bottom of the deep visible, and rakes up the sands to the surface of the waters, and marshals the waves into mountains and valleys. After that, "he smites through the proud," that is, humbles the proud waves, and, by allaying the storm, reduceth them to their former level: the power of God is visible, as well in rebuking, as in awakening the winds; he makes them sensible of his voice, and, according to his pleasure, exasperates or calms them. The "striking through the proud" here, is not, probably, meant of the destruction of the Egyptian army, for some guess that Job died that year, [Note: Drusius in loc.] or about the time of the Israelites coming out of Egypt; so that this discourse here, being in the time of his affliction, could not point at that which was done after his restoration to his temporal prosperity. And now, at last, he sums up the power of God, in the chiefest of his works above, and the greatest wonder of his works below (Job 26:13); "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent," &c. The greater and lesser lights, sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments and furniture of heaven; and the whale, a prodigious monument of God's power, often mentioned in Scripture to this purpose, and, in particular, in this book of Job (Job 41:1-34); and called by the same name of crooked serpent (Isaiah 27:1), where it is applied, by way of metaphor, to the king of Assyria or Egypt, or all oppressors of the church. Various interpretations there are of this crooked serpent: some understanding that constellation in heaven

which astronomers call the dragon; some that combination of weaker stars, which they call the galaxia, which winds about the heavens: but it is most probable that Job, drawing near to a conclusion of his discourse, joins the two greatest testimonies of God's power in the world, the highest heavens, and the lowest leviathan, which is here called a bar serpent, [Note: As the word signifies in the Hebrew.] in regard of his strength and hardness, as mighty men are called bars in Scripture (Jeremiah 51:30); "Her bars are broken things." And in regard of this power of God in the creation of this creature, it is particularly mentioned in the catalogue of God's works (Genesis 1:21); "And God created great whales;" all the other creatures being put into one sum, and not particularly expressed. And now he makes use of this lecture in the text, "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" This is but a small landscape of some of his works of power; the outsides and extremities of it; more glorious things are within his palaces: though those things argue a stupendous power of the Creator, in his works of creation and providence, yet they are nothing to what may be declared of his power. And what may be declared, is nothing to what may be conceived; and what may be conceived, is nothing to what is above the conceptions of any creature. These are but little crumbs and fragments of that Infinite Power, which is, in his nature, like a drop in comparison of the mighty ocean; a hiss or whisper in comparison of a mighty voice of thunder. [Note: Oecolamp.] This, which I have spoken, is but like a spark to the fiery region, a few lines, by the by, a drop of speech. The thunder of his power. Some understand it of thunder literally, for material thunder in the air: "The thunder of his power," that is, according to the Hebrew dialect, "his powerful thunder." This is not the sense; the nature of thunder in the air doth not so much exceed the capacity of human understanding; it is, therefore, rather to be understood metaphorically, "the thunder of his power," that is, the greatness and immensity of his power, manifested in the magnificent miracles of nature, in the consideration whereof men are astonished, as if they had heard an unusual clap of thunder. So thunder is used (Job 39:25), "The thunder of the captains;" that is, strength and force of the captains of an army: and (Job 39:19), God, speaking to Job of a horse, saith, "Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" that is, strength: and thunder being a mark of the power of God, some of the heathen have called God by the name of a Thunderer. [Note: The ancient Gauls worshipped him under the name of Taranis. The Greeks called Jupiter Βρονταῖος, and Thor; whence our Thursday is derived, signifieth Thunderer, a title the Germans gave their God. And Toran, in the British language, signifies thunder. Voss. Idolo. lib. ii. cap. 33. Camb. Britan. p. 17.] As thunder pierceth the lowest places, and alters the state of things, so doth the power of God penetrate into all things whatsoever; the thunder of his power, that is, the greatness of his power; as "the strength of salvation" (Psalms 20:6), that is, a mighty salvation. Who can understand? Who is able to count all the monuments of his power? How doth this little, which I have spoken of, exceed the capacity of our understanding, and is rather the matter of our astonishment, than the object of our comprehensive knowledge. The power of the greatest potentate, or the mightiest creature, is but of small extent: none but have their limits; it may be understood how far they can act, in what sphere their activity is bounded: but when I have spoken all of Divine power that I can, when you leave thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more beyond what I have spoken, and what you have thought. His power shines in everything, and is beyond everything. There is infinitely more power lodged in his nature, not expressed to the world. The understanding of men and angels, centred in one creature, would fall short of the perception of the infiniteness of it. All that can be comprehended of it, are but little

fringes of it, a small portion. No man ever discoursed, or can, of God's power, according to the magnificence of it. No creature can conceive it; God himself only comprehends it; God himself is only able to express it. Man's power being limited, his line is too short to measure the incomprehensible omnipotence of God. "The thunder of his power who can understand?" that is, none can. The text is a lofty declaration of the Divine power, with a particular note of attention, Lo! I. In the expressions of it, in the works of creation and providence, Lo, these are his ways; ways and works excelling any created strength, referring to the little summary of them he had made before. II. In the insufficiency of these ways to measure his power, But how little a portion is heard of him. III. In the incomprehensibleness of it, The thunder of his power, who can understand? Doctrine. Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed, in part, in his works; or, though there be a mighty expression of Divine power in his works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to his nature. "The thunder of his power, who can understand?" His power glitters in all his works, as well as his wisdom (Psalms 62:11): "Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." In the law and in the prophets, say some; but why power twice, and not mercy, which he speaks of in the following verse? He had heard of power twice, from the voice of creation, and from the voice of government. Mercy was heard in government after man's fall, not creation; innocent man was an object of God's goodness, not of his mercy, till he made himself miserable; power was expressed in both: or, twice have I heard that power belongs to God, that is, it is a certain and undoubted truth, that power is essential to the Divine nature. It is true, mercy is essential, justice is essential; but power more apparently essential, because no acts of mercy, or justice, or wisdom, can be exercised by him without power; the repetition of a thing confirms the certainty of it. Some observe, that God is called Almighty seventy times in Scripture. [Note: Lessius, de Perfect. Divin. lib. v. cap. 1.] Though his power be evident in all his works, yet he hath a power beyond the expression of it in his works, which, as it is the glory of his nature, so it is the comfort of a believer. To which purpose the apostle expresseth it by an excellent paraphrasis for the honor of the Divine nature (Ephesians 3:20): "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, unto him be glory in the churches." We have reason to acknowledge him Almighty, who hath a power of acting above our power of understanding. Who could have imagined such a powerful operation in the propagation of the gospel, and the conversion of the Gentiles, which the apostle seems to hint at in that place? His power is expressed by "horns in his hands" (Habakkuk 3:4); because all the works of his hands are wrought with Almighty strength. Power is also used as a name of God (Mark 14:62): "The Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power," that is, at the right hand of God; God and power are so inseparable, that they are reciprocated. As his essence is immense, not to be confined in place; as it is eternal, not to be measured by time; so it is Almighty, not to be limited in regard of action.

1. It is ingenuously illustrated by some by a unit; [Note: Fotherby, Atheomastic, pp. 306, 307.] all numbers depend upon it; it makes numbers by addition, multiplies them unexpressibly; when one unit is removed from a number, how vastly doth it diminish it! It gives perfection to all other numbers, it receives perfection from none. If you add a unit before 100, how doth it multiply it to 1,100! If you set a unit before 20,000,000, it presently makes the number swell up to 120,000,000; and so powerful is a unit, by adding it to numbers, that it will infinitely enlarge them to such a vastness, that shall transcend the capacity of the best arithmetician to count them. By such a meditation as this, you may have some prospect of the power of that God who is only unity; the beginning of all things, as a unit is the beginning of all numbers; and can perform as many things

really, as a unit can numerically; that is, can do as much in the making of creatures, as a unit can do in the multiplying of numbers. The omnipotence of God was scarce denied by any heathen that did not deny the being of a God; and that was Pliny, and that upon weak arguments.

2. Indeed we cannot have a conception of God, if we conceive him not most powerful, as well as most wise; he is not a God that cannot do what he will, and perform all his pleasure. If we imagine him restrained in his power, we imagine him limited in his essence; as he hath an infinite knowledge to know what is possible, he cannot be without an infinite power to do what is possible; as he hath a will to resolve what he sees good, so he cannot want a power to effect what he sees good to decree; as the essence of a creature cannot be conceived without that activity that belongs to his nature; as when you conceive fire, you cannot conceive it without a power of burning and warming; and when you conceive water, you cannot conceive it without a power of moistening and cleansing: so you cannot conceive an infinite essence without an infinite power of activity; and therefore a heathen could say, "If you know God, you know he can do all things;" and therefore, saith Austin, "Give me not only a Christian, but a Jew; not only a Jew, but a heathen, that will deny God to be Almighty." A Jew, a heathen, may deny Christ to be omnipotent, but no heathen will deny God to be omnipotent, and no devil will deny either to be so: God cannot be conceived without some power, for then he must be conceived without action. Whose, then, are those products and effects of power, which are visible to us in the world? to whom do they belong? who is the Father of them? God cannot be conceived without a power suitable to his nature and essence. If we imagine him to be of an infinite essence, we must imagine him to be of an infinite power and strength. In particular, I shall show—I. The nature of God's power. II. Reasons to prove that God must needs be powerful. III. How his power appears in creation, in government, in redemption. IV. The Use.

I. What this power is; or the nature of it.

1. Power sometimes signifies authority: and a man is said to be mighty and powerful in regard of his dominion, and the right he hath to command multitudes of other persons to take his part; but power taken for strength, and power taken for authority, are distinct things, and may be separated from one another. Power may be without authority; as in successful invasions, that have no just foundation. Authority may be without power; as in a just prince, expelled by an unjust rebellion, the authority resides in him, though he be overpowered, and is destitute of strength to support and exercise that authority. The power of God is not to be understood of his authority and dominion, but his strength to act; and the word in the text properly signifies strength. [Note: ■■■■■■ Sept. *σθενος*.]

2. This power is divided ordinarily into absolute and ordinate. Absolute, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done; ordinate, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised; [Note: Scaliger, Publ. Exercit. 365, § 8.] which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power. His ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do every thing that he could will, he might not have the power to do everything that he doth will. The object of his absolute power is all things possible; such things that imply not a contradiction, such that are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, and such as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done. Those things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are

several, as to make a thing which is past not to be past. As, for example, the world is created; God could have chose whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to dissolve it; but after it was created, and when it is dissolved, it will be eternally true, that the world was created, and that it was dissolved; for it is impossible, that that which was once true, should ever be false: if it be true that the world was created, it will forever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwise. And also, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impossible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God; as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish; impossible for him, in regard of truth, to lie and deceive. But of this hereafter; only at present to understand the object of God's absolute power to be things possible, that is, possible in nature; not by any strength in themselves, or of themselves; for nothing hath no strength, and everything is nothing before it comes into being; [Note: Estius in Sent. lib. i. dist. 43. § 2.] so God, by his absolute power, might have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and so have preserved them in their first habitation. He might, by his absolute power, have restrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or restrained her and Adam from swallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his absolute power, God might have given the reins to Peter to betray his Master, as well as to deny him; and employed Judas in the same glorious and successful service, wherein he employed Paul. By his absolute power, he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptist affirms, when he tells us, "That God is able of these stones (meaning the stones in the wilderness, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) to raise up children to Abraham" (Matthew 3:9); that is, there is a possibility of such a thing there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he please. But now the object of his ordinate power, is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him; and because of the Divine ordination of things, this power is called ordinate; and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, because of his unchangeableness. Both those powers are expressed (Matthew 26:53-54), "My Father can send twelve legions of angels," there is his absolute power; "but how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called absolute; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His absolute power is necessary, and belongs to his nature; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will;—a power guided by his will,—not, as I said before, that they are two distinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the latter is the same with the former, only it is guided by his will and wisdom.

3. It follows, then, that the power of God is that ability and strength, whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he please; whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act; it is power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing: as God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power notes the principle of the action, and, therefore, is greater than the act itself. Power exercised and diffused, in bringing forth and nursing in its particular objects without, is inconceivably less than that strength which is infinite in himself, the same with his essence, and is indeed himself: by his power exercised he doth whatsoever he actually wills; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatsoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extensive than their power; and their power more contracted and shortened than their will: but, as the prophet saith, "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). His power is as great as his

will, that is, whatsoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compass of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet supposing he should will it, he is able to perform it: so that you must, in your notion of Divine power, enlarge it further than to think God can only do what he hath resolved to do; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act, as he hath an infinite capacity of will to resolve. Besides, this power is of that nature, that he can do whatsoever he pleases without difficulty, without resistance; it cannot be checked, restrained, frustrated. [Note: Cra. Syntag. lib. iii. cap. 17. p. 611.] As he can do all things possible in regard of the object, he can do all things easily in regard of the manner of acting: what in human artificers is knowledge, labor, industry, that in God is his will; his will works without labor; his works stand forth as he wills them. Hands and arms are ascribed to him for our conceptions, because our power of acting is distinct from our will; but God's power of acting is not really distinct from his will; it is sufficient to the existence of a thing that God wills it to exist; he can act what he will only by his will, without any instruments. He needs no matter to work upon, because he can make something from nothing; all matter owes itself to his creative power: he needs no time to work in, for he can make time when he pleases to begin to work: he needs no copy to work by; himself is his own pattern and copy in his works: All created agents want matter to work upon, instruments to work with, copies to work by; time to bring either the births of their minds, or the works of their hands, to perfection: but the power of God needs none of these things, but is of a vast and incomprehensible nature, beyond all these. As nothing can be done without the compass of it, so itself is without the compass of every created understanding.

4. This power is of a distinct conception from the wisdom and will of God. They are not really distinct, but according to our conceptions. We cannot discourse of Divine things, without observing some proportion of them with human, ascribing unto God the perfections, sifted from the imperfections of our nature. In us there are three orders of understanding, will, power; and, accordingly, three acts, counsel, resolution, execution; which, though they are distinct in us, are not really distinct in God. In our conceptions, the apprehension of a thing belongs to the understanding of God; determination, to the will of God; direction, to the wisdom of God; execution, to the power of God. The knowledge of God regards a thing as possible, and as it may be done; the wisdom of God regards a thing as fit, and convenient to be done; the will of God resolves that it shall be done; the power of God is the application of his will to effect what it hath resolved. Wisdom is a fixing the being of things, the measures and perfections of their several beings; power is a conferring those perfections and beings upon them. His power is his ability to act, and his wisdom is the director of his action: his will orders, his wisdom guides, and his power effects. His will as the spring, and his power as the worker, are expressed (Psalms 115:3). "He hath done whatsoever he pleased. He commanded, and they were created" (Psalms 140:5); and all three expressed (Ephesians 1:11), "Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will:" so that the power of God is a perfection, as it were, subordinate to his understanding and will, to execute the results of his wisdom, and the orders of his will; to his wisdom as directing, because he works skilfully; to his will as moving and applying, because he works voluntarily and freely. The exercise of his power depends upon his will: His will is the supreme cause of everything that stands up in time, and all things receive a being as he wills them. His power is but will perpetually working, and diffusing itself in the season his will hath fixed from eternity; it is his eternal will in perpetual and successive springs and streams in the creatures; it is nothing else but the constant efficacy of his omnipotent will. This must be understood of his ordinate power; but his absolute

power is larger than his resolving will: for though the Scripture tells us, "He hath done whatsoever he will," yet it tells us not, that he hath done whatsoever he could: he can do things that he will never do. Again, his power is distinguished from his will in regard of the exercise of it, which is after the act of his will: his will was conversant about objects, when his power was not exercised about them. Creatures were the objects of his will from eternity, but they were not from eternity the effects of his power. His purpose to create was from eternity, but the execution of his purpose was in time. Now this execution of his will we call his ordinate power: his wisdom and his will are supposed antecedent to his power, as the counsel and resolve; as the cause precedes the performance of the purpose as the effect. Some distinguish [Note: Gamacheus.] his power from his understanding and will, in regard that his understanding and will are larger than his absolute power; for God understands sins, and wills to permit them, but he cannot himself do any evil or unjust action, nor have a power of doing it. But this is not to distinguish that Divine power, but impotence; for to be unable to do evil is the perfection of power; and to be able to do things unjust and evil, is a weakness, imperfection, and inability. Man indeed wills many things that he is not able to perform, and understands many things that he is not able to effect; he understands much of the creatures, something of sun, moon, and stars; he can conceive many suns, many moons, yet is not able to create the least atom: but there is nothing that belongs to power but God understands, and is able to effect. To sum this up, the will of God is the root of all, the wisdom of God is the copy of all, and the power of God is the framer of all.

5. The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature, and is of a larger extent and efficacy, in regard of its objects, than some perfections of his nature. I put them both together.

(1.) It contributes life and activity to all the other perfections of his nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them! His mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his justice a slighted scarecrow, without power to punish; his promises an empty sound, without power to accomplish them. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of all his attributes in their exercise; and as holiness, so power, is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wisdom to attain his ends without interruption: he hath a powerful mercy to remove our misery; a powerful justice to lay all misery upon offenders: he hath a powerful truth to perform his promises; an infinite power to bestow rewards, and inflict penalties. It is to this purpose power is first put in the two things which the Psalmist had heard (Psalms 62:11-12). "Twice have I heard," or two things have I heard; first power, then mercy and justice, included in that expression, "Thou renderest to every man according to his work:" in every perfection of God he heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the Deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on, when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world: by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every stage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

(2.) It is of a larger extent, in regard of its objects, than some other attributes. Power doth not always suppose an object, but constitutes an object. It supposeth an object in the act of preservation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy supposeth an object miserable, yet doth not make it so. Justice supposeth an object criminal, but doth not constitute it so: mercy supposeth him miserable, to relieve him; justice supposeth him criminal, to punish him: but power supposeth not a thing in real existence, but as possible; or rather, it is from power that any thing hath a possibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing. Again, power

extends further than either mercy or justice. Mercy hath particular objects, which justice shall not at last be willing to punish; and justice hath particular objects, which mercy at last shall not be willing to refresh: but power doth, and alway will, extend to the objects of both mercy and justice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor justice, nor of rewarding goodness: a creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodness; a creature, as miserable, is the object of compassionate mercy; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging justice: but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with those attributes of goodness, mercy, and justice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, and justice, and truth, and wisdom, exercise themselves about, hath a possibility and an actual being from this perfection of Divine power. It is power first frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or justice, though it doth not give an immediate qualification for the exercise of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and so confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miserable by its own fault, and punishable by God's justice; or pitiable by God's compassion, and relievable by God's mercy but it doth not make him sinful, whereby he becomes miserable and punishable. Again, power runs through all the degrees of the states of a creature. As a thing is possible, or may be made, it is the object of absolute power; as it is factible, or ordered to be made, it is the object of ordinate power: as a thing is actually made, and brought into being, it is the object of preserving power. So that power doth stretch out its arms to all the works of God, in all their circumstances, and at all times. When mercy ceaseth to relieve a creature, when justice ceaseth to punish a creature, power ceaseth not to preserve a creature. The blessed in heaven, that are out of the reach of punishing justice, are forever maintained by power in that blessed condition: the damned in hell, that are cast out of the bosom of entreating mercy, are forever sustained in those remediless torments by the Arm of Power.

6. This power is originally and essentially in the nature of God, and not distinct from his essence. It is originally and essentially in God. The strength and power of great kings is originally in their people, and managed and ordered by the authority of the prince for the common good. Though a prince hath authority in his person to command, yet he hath not sufficient strength in his person, without the assistance of others, to make his commands to be obeyed. He hath not a single strength in his own person to conquer countries and kingdoms, and increase the number of his subjects: he must make use of the arms of his own subjects, to overrun other places, and yoke them under his dominion: but the power of all things that ever were, are, or shall be, is originally and essentially in God. It is not derived from any thing without him, as the power of the greatest potentates in the world is: therefore (Psalms 62:11) it is said, "Power belongs unto God," that is, solely and to none else. He hath a power to make his subjects, and as many as he pleases; to create worlds, to enjoin precepts, to execute penalties, without calling in the strength of his creatures to his aid. The strength that the subjects of a mortal prince have, is not derived to them from the prince, though the exercise of it for this or that end, is ordered and directed by the authority of the prince: but what strength soever any thing hath to act as a means, it hath from the power of God as Creator, as well as whatsoever authority it hath to act is from God, as a Rector and Governor of the world. God hath a strength to act without means, and no means can act any thing without his power and strength communicated to them. As the clouds, in ver. 8, before the text, are called God's clouds, "his clouds:" so all the strength of creatures may be called, and truly is, God's strength and power in them: a drop of power shot down from heaven, originally only in God. Creatures have but a little mite of power; somewhat communicated to them, somewhat kept and reserved from them, of what they are capable to possess. They have limited natures, and

therefore a limited sphere of activity. Clothes can warm us, but not feed us; bread can nourish us, but not clothe us. One plant hath a medicinal quality against one disease, another against another; but God is the possessor of universal power, the common exchequer of this mighty treasure. He acts by creatures, as not needing their power, but deriving power to them: what he acts by them, he could act himself without them: and what they act as from themselves, is derived to them from him through invisible channels. And hence it will follow, that because power is essentially in God, more operations of God are possible than are exerted. And as power is essentially in God, so it is not distinct from his essence. It belongs to God in regard of the inconceivable excellency and activity of his essence. [Note: *Ratione summæ actualitatis essentiæ*. Suarez, Vol. I. pp. 150, 151.] And omnipotent is nothing but the Divine essence efficacious ad extra. It is his essence as operative, and the immediate principle of operation: as the power of enlightening in the sun, and the power of heating in the fire, are not things distinct from the nature of them; but the nature of the sun bringing forth light, and the nature of the fire bringeth forth heat. The power of acting is the same with the substance of God, though the action from that power be terminated in the creature. If the power of God were distinct from his essence, he were then compounded of substance and power, and would not be the most simple being. As when the understanding is informed in several parts of knowledge, it is skilled in the government of cities and countries, it knows this or that art: it learns mathematics, philosophy; this, or that science. The understanding hath a power to do this; but this power, whereby it learns those excellent things, and brings forth excellent births, is not a thing distinct from the understanding itself; we may rather call it the understanding powerful, than the power of the understanding; and so we may rather say, God powerful, than say, the power of God; because his power is not distinct from his essence. From both these, it will follow, that this omnipotence is incommunicable to any creature; no creature can inherit it, because it is a contradiction for any creature to have the essence of God. This omnipotence is a peculiar right of God, wherein no creature can share with him. To be omnipotent is to be essentially God. And for a creature to be omnipotent, is for a creature to be its own Creator. It being therefore the same with the essence of the Godhead, it cannot be communicated to the humanity of Christ, as the Lutherans say it is, without the communication of the essence of the Godhead; for then the humanity of Christ would not be humanity, but Deity. If omnipotence were communicated to the humanity of Christ, the essence of God were also communicated to his humanity, and then eternity would be communicated. His humanity then was not given him in time; his humanity would be uncompounded, that is, his body would be no body, his soul no soul. Omnipotence is essentially in God; it is not distinct from the essence of God, it is his essence, omnipotent, able to do all things.

7. Hence it follows, that this power is infinite (Ephesians 1:19); "What is the exceeding greatness of his power," &c. "according to the working of his mighty power." God were not omnipotent, unless his power were infinite; for a finite power is a limited power, and a limited power cannot effect everything that is possible. Nothing can be too difficult for the Divine power to effect; he hath a fullness of power, an exceeding strength, above all human capacities; it is a "mighty power" (Ephesians 1:19), "able to do above all that we can ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20): that which he acts, is above the power of any creature to act. Infinite power consists in the bringing things forth from nothing. No creature can imitate God in this prerogative of power. Man indeed can carve various forms, and erect various pieces of art, but from pre-existent matter. Every artificer hath the matter brought to his hand, he only brings it forth in a new figure. Chemists separate one thing from another, but create nothing, but sever those things which were before compacted and

crudled together: but when God speaks a powerful word, nothing begins to be something: things stand forth from the womb of nothing, and obey his mighty command, and take what forms he is pleased to give them. The creating one thing, though never so small and minute, as the least fly, cannot be but by an infinite power; much less can the producing of such variety we see in the world. His power is infinite, in regard it cannot be resisted by anything that he hath made; nor can it be confined by anything he can will to make. "His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalms 145:3). It is a greatness, not of quantity, but quality. The greatness of his power hath no end: it is a vanity to imagine any limits can be affixed to it, or that any creature can say, "Hitherto it can go, and no further." It is above all conception, all inquisition of any created understanding. No creature ever had, nor ever can have, that strength of wit and understanding, to conceive the extent of his power, and how magnificently he can work.

First, His essence is infinite. As in a finite subject there is a finite virtue, so in an infinite subject there must be an infinite virtue. Where the essence is limited, the power is so: [Note: *Operationes sequuntur essentiam.*] where the essence is unlimited, the power knows no bounds. [Note: Aquin. Part 1 Qu. 25. Articæ.] Among creatures, the more excellency of being and form anything hath, the more activity, vigor, and power it hath, to work according to its nature. The sun hath a mighty power to warm, enlighten, and fructify, above what the stars have; because it hath a vaster body, more intense degrees of light, heat, and vigor. Now, if you conceive the sun made much greater than it is, it would proportionably have greater degrees of power to heat and enlighten than it hath now: and were it possible to have an infinite heat and light, it would infinitely heat and enlighten other things; for everything is able to act according to the measures of its being: therefore, since the essence of God is unquestionably infinite, his power of acting must be so also. His power (as was said before) is one and the same with his essence: and though the knowledge of God extends to more objects than his power, because he knows all evils of sin, which because of his holiness he cannot commit, yet it is as infinite as his knowledge, because it is as much one with his essence, as his knowledge and wisdom is: for as the wisdom or knowledge of God is nothing but the essence of God, knowing, so the power of God is nothing but the essence of God, able. The objects of Divine power are innumerable. The objects of Divine power are not essentially infinite; and therefore we must not measure the infiniteness of Divine power by an ability to make an infinite being; because there is an incapacity in any created thing to be infinite; for to be a creature and to be infinite; to be infinite and yet made, is a contradiction. To be infinite, and to be God, is one and the same thing. Nothing can be infinite but God; nothing but God is infinite. But the power of God is infinite, because it can produce infinite effects, or innumerable things, such as surpass the arithmetic of a creature; nor yet doth the infiniteness consist simply in producing innumerable effects; for that a finite cause can produce. Fire can, by its finite and limited heat, burn numberless combustible things and parcels; and the understanding of man hath an infinite number of thoughts and acts of intellection, and thoughts different from one another. Who can number the imaginations of his fancy, and thoughts of his mind, the space of one month or year? much less of forty or an hundred years; yet all these thoughts are about things that are in being, or have a foundation in things that are in being. But the infiniteness of God's power consists in an ability to produce infinite effects, formally distinct, and diverse from one another; such as never had being, such as the mind of man cannot conceive: "Able to do above what we can think" (Ephesians 3:20). And whatsoever God hath made, or is able to make, he is able to make in an infinite manner, by calling them to stand forth from nothing. To produce innumerable effects of distinct natures, and

from so distant a term as nothing, is an argument of infinite power. Now, that the objects of Divine power are innumerable, appears, because God can do infinitely more than he hath done, or will do. Nothing that God hath done can enfeeble or dull his power; there still resides in him an ability beyond all the settled contrivances of his understanding and resolves of his will, which no effects which he hath wrought can drain and put to a stand. As he can raise stones to be children to Abraham (Matthew 3:9); so with the same mighty word, whereby he made one world, he can make infinite numbers of worlds to be the monuments of his glory. After the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:17), had spoke of God's power in creation, he adds, "And there is nothing too hard for thee." For one world that he hath made, he can create millions: for one star which he hath beautified the heavens with, he could have garnished it with a thousand, and multiplied, if he had pleased, every one of those into millions, "for he can call things that are not" (Romans 4:17); not some things, but all things possible. The barren womb of nothing can no more resist his power now to educe a world from it, than it could at first: no doubt, but for one angel which he hath made, he could make many worlds of angels. He that made one with so much ease, as by a word, cannot want power to make many more, till he wants a word. The word that was not too weak to make one, cannot be too weak to make multitudes. If from one man he hath, in a way of nature, multiplied so many in all ages of the world, and covered with them the whole face of the earth; he could, in a supernatural way, by one word, multiply as many more. "It is the breath of the Almighty that gives life" (Job 33:4). He can create infinite species and kinds of creatures more than he hath created, more variety of forms: for since there is no searching of his greatness, there is no conceiving the numberless possible effects of his power. The understanding of man can conceive numberless things possible to be, more than have been or shall be. And shall we imagine, that a finite understanding of a creature hath a greater omnipotency to conceive things possible, than God hath to produce things possible? When the understanding of man is tired in its conceptions, it must still be concluded, that the power of God extends, not only to what can be conceived, but infinitely beyond the measures of a finite faculty. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power and in judgment" (Job 36:23). For the understanding of man, in its conceptions of more kind of creatures, is limited to those creatures which are: it cannot, in its own imagination; conceive anything but what hath some foundation in and from something already in being. It may frame a new kind of creature, made up of a lion, a horse, an ox; but all those parts whereof its conception is made, have distinct beings in the world, though not in that composition as his mind mixes and joins them; but no question but God can create creatures that have no resemblance with any kind of creatures yet in being. It is certain that if God only knows those things which he hath done, and will do, and not all things possible to be done by him, his knowledge were finite; so if he could do no more than what he hath done, his power would be finite.

(I.) Creatures have a power to act about more objects than they do. The understanding of man can frame from one principle of truth, many conclusions and inferences more than it doth. Why cannot, then, the power of God frame from one first matter, an infinite number of creatures more than have been created? The Almightyness of God in producing real effects, is not inferior to the understanding of man in drawing out real truths. An artificer that makes a watch, supposing his life and health, can make many more of a different form and motion; and a limner can draw many draughts, and frame many pictures with a new variety of colors, according to the richness of his fancy. If these can do so, that require a pre-existent matter framed to their hands, God can much more, who can raise beautiful structures from nothing. As long as men have matter, they can

diversify the matter, and make new figures from it; so long as there is nothing, God can produce out of that nothing whatsoever he pleases. We see the same. in inanimate creatures. A spark of fire hath a vast power in it: it will kindle other things, increase and enlarge itself; nothing can be exempt from the active force of it. It will alter, by consuming or refining, whatsoever you offer to it. It will reach all, and refuse none; and by the efficacious power of it, all those new figures which we see in metals, are brought forth; when you have exposed to it a multitude of things, still add more, it will exert the same strength; yea, the vigor is increased rather than diminished. The more it catcheth, the more fiercely and irresistibly it will act; you cannot suppose an end of its operation, or a decrease of its strength, as long as you can conceive its duration and continuance: this must be but a weak shadow of that infinite power which is in God. Take another instance, in the sun: it hath power every year to produce flowers and plants from the earth; and is as able to produce them now, as it was at the first lighting it and rearing it in that sphere wherein it moves. And if there were no kind of flowers and plants now created, the sun hath a power residing in it, ever since its first creation, to afford the same warmth to them for the nourishing and bringing them forth. Whatsoever you can conceive the sun to be able to do in regard of plants, that can God do in regard of worlds; produce more worlds than the sun doth plants every year, without weariness, without languishment. The sun is able to influence more things than it doth, and produce numberless effects; but it doth not do so much as it is able to do, because it wants matter to work upon. God, therefore, who wants no matter, can do much more than he doth; he can either act by second causes if there were more, or make more second causes if he pleased.

(2.) God is the most free agent. Every free agent can do more than he will do. Man being a free creature, can do more than ordinarily he doth will to do. God is most free, as being the spring of liberty in other creatures; he acts not by a necessity of nature, as the waves of the sea, or the motions of the wind; and, therefore, is not determined to those things which he hath already called forth into the world. If God be infinitely wise in contrivance, he could contrive more than he hath, and therefore, can effect more than he hath effected. He doth not act to the extent of his power upon all occasions. It is according to his will that he works (Ephesians 1:1-23.). It is not according to his work that he wills; his work is an evidence of his will, but not the rule of his will. His power is not the rule of his will, but his will is the disposer of his power, according to the light of his infinite wisdom, and other attributes that direct his will; and therefore his power is not to be measured by his actual will. No doubt, but he could in a moment have produced that world which he took six days' time to frame; he could have drowned the old world at once, without prolonging the time till the revolution of forty days; he was not limited to such a term of time by any weakness, but by the determination of his own will. God doth not do the hundred thousandth part of what he is able to do, but what is convenient to do, according to the end which he hath proposed to himself. Jesus Christ, as man, could have asked legions of angels; and God, as a sovereign, could have sent them (Matthew 26:53). God could raise the dead every day if he pleased, but he doth not: he could heal every diseased person in a moment, but he doth not. As God can will more than he doth actually will, so he can do more than he hath actually done; he can do whatsoever he can will; he can will more worlds, and therefore can create more worlds. If God hath not ability to do more than he will do, he then can do no more than what he actually hath done; and then it will follow, that he is not a free, but a natural and necessary agent, which cannot be supposed of God.

Second. This power is infinite in regard of action. As he can produce numberless objects above what he hath produced, so he could produce them more magnificently than he hath made them. As he never works to the extent of his power in regard of things, so neither in regard of the manner of acting; for he never acts so but he could act in a higher and perfecter manner.

(1.) His power is infinite in regard of the independency of action: he wants no instrument to act. When there was nothing but God, there was no cause of action but God; when there was nothing in being but God, there could be no instrumental cause of the being of anything. God can perfect his action without dependence on any thing; [Note: Suarez, Vol. I, de Deo. p. 151.] and to be simply independent, is to be simply infinite. In this respect it is a power incommunicable to any creature, though you conceive a creature in higher degrees of perfection than it is. A creature cannot cease to be dependent, but it must cease to be a creature; to be a creature and independent, are terms repugnant to one another.

(2.) But the infiniteness of Divine power consists in an ability to give higher degrees of perfection to everything which he hath made. As his power is infinite extensive, in regard of the multitude of objects he can bring into being, so it is infinite intensive, in regard of the manner of operation, and the endowments he can bestow upon them. [Note: Becan. Sum. Theol. p. 82.] Some things, indeed, God doth so perfect, that higher degrees of perfection cannot be imagined to be added to them. [Note: Ibid. p. 84.] As the humanity of Christ cannot be united more gloriously than to the person of the Son of God, a greater degree of perfection cannot be conferred upon it. Nor can the souls of the blessed have a nobler object of vision and fruition than God himself, the infinite Being: no higher than the enjoyment of himself can be conferred upon a creature, respectu termini. This is not want of power; he cannot be greater, because he is greatest; not better, because he is best; nothing can be more than infinite. But as to the things which God hath made in the world, he could have given them other manner of being than they have, A human understanding may improve a thought or conclusion; strengthen it with more and more force of reason; and adorn it with richer and richer elegancy of language: why, then, may not the Divine providence produce a world more perfect and excellent than this? He that makes a plain vessel, can embellish it more, engrave more figures upon it, according to the capacity of the subject: and cannot God do so much more with his works. Could not God have made this world of a larger quantity, and the sun of a greater bulk and proportionable strength, to influence a bigger world? so that this world would have been to another that God might have made, as a ball or a mount, this sun as a star to another sun that he might have kindled. He could have made every star a sun, every spire of grass a star, every grain of dust a flower, every soul an angel. And though the angels be perfect creatures, and inexpressibly more glorious than a visible creature, yet who can imagine God so confined, that he cannot create a more excellent kind, and endow those which he hath made with excellency of a higher rank than he invested them with at the first moment of their creation? Without question God might have given the meaner creatures more excellent endowments, put them into another order of nature for their own good and more diffusive usefulness in the world. What is made use of by the prophet (Malachi 2:15) in another case, may be used in this: "Yet had he a residue of Spirit." The capacity of every creature might have been enlarged by God; for no work of his in the world doth equal his power, as nothing that he hath framed doth equal his wisdom. The same matter which is the matter of the body of a beast, is the matter of a plant and flower; is the matter of the body of a man; and so was capable of a higher form and higher perfections, than God hath been pleased to

bestow upon it. And he had power to bestow that perfection on one part of matter which he denied to it, and bestowed on another part. If God cannot make things in a greater perfection, there must be some limitation of him: he cannot be limited by another, because nothing is superior to God. If limited by himself, that limitation is not from a want of power, but a want of will. He can, by his own power, raise stones to be children to Abraham (Matthew 3:9): he could alter the nature of the stones, form them into human bodies, dignify them with rational souls, inspire those souls with such graces that may render them the children of Abraham. But for the more fully understanding the nature of this power, we may observe,

[1.] That though God can make everything with a higher degree of perfection, yet still within the limits of a finite being. No creature can be made infinite, because no creature can be made God. No creature can be so improved as to equal the goodness and perfection of God; [Note: Gamach in Aquin. Tom. I. Qu. 25.] yet there is no creature but we may conceive a possibility of its being made more perfect in that rank of a creature than it is: as we may imagine a flower or plant to have greater beauty and richer qualities imparted to it by Divine power, without rearing it so high as to the dignity of a rational or sensitive creature. Whatsoever perfections may be added by God to a creature, are still finite perfections; and a multitude of finite excellences can never amount to the value and honor of infinite: as if you add one number to another as high as you can, as much as a large piece of paper can contain, you can never make the numbers really infinite, though they may be infinite in regard of the inability of any human understanding to count them. The finite condition of the creature suffers it not to be capable of an infinite perfection. God is so great, so excellent, that it is his perfection not to have any equal; the defect is in the creature, which cannot be elevated to such a pitch; as you can never make a gallon measure to hold the quantity of a butt, or a butt the quantity of a river, or a river the fulness of the sea.

[2.] Though God hath a power to furnish every creature with greater and nobler perfections than he hath bestowed upon it, yet he hath framed all things in the perfectest manner, and most convenient to that end for which he intended them. Everything is endowed with the best nature and quality suitable to God's end in creation, though not in the best manner for itself. [Note: Best, ex parte facientis et modi: but not ex parte rei. Esti. in Senten. lib. i. distin. 44. § 2.] In regard of the universal end, there cannot be a better; for God himself is the end of all things, who is the Supreme Goodness. Nothing can be better than God, who could not be God if he were not superlatively best, or optimus; and he hath ordered all things for the declaration of his goodness or justice, according to the behaviors of his creatures. Man doth not consider what strength or power he can put forth in the means he useth to attain such an end, but the suitableness of them to his main design, and so fits and marshals them to his grand purpose. Had God only, created things that are most excellent, he had created only angels and men; how, then, would his wisdom have been conspicuous in other works in the subordination and subserviency of them to one another? God therefore determined his power by his wisdom: and though his absolute power could have made every creature better, yet his ordinate power, which in every step was regulated by his wisdom, made everything best for his designed intention. [Note: Aquin. Part I, Qu, 25, art. 6.] A musician hath a power to wind up a string on a lute to a higher and more perfect note in itself, but in wisdom he will not do it, because the intended melody would be disturbed thereby if it were not suited to the other strings on the instrument; a discord would mar and taint the harmony which the lutenist designed. God, in creation, observed the proportions of nature: he can make a spider as

strong as a lion; but according to the order of nature which he hath settled, it is not convenient that a creature of so small a compass should be as strong as one of a greater bulk. The absolute power of God could have prepared a body for Christ as glorious as that he had after his resurrection; but that had not been agreeable to the end designed in his humiliation: and, therefore, God acted most perfectly by his ordinate power, in giving him a body that wore the livery of our infirmities. God's power is alway regulated by his wisdom and will; and though it produceth not what is most perfect in itself, yet what is most perfect and decent in relation to the end he fixed. And so in his providence, though he could rack the whole frame of nature to bring about his ends in a more miraculous way and astonishment to mortals, yet his power is usually and ordinarily confined by his will to act in concurrence with the nature of the creatures, and direct them according to the laws of their being, to such ends which he aims at in their conduct, without violencing their nature.

[3.] Though God hath an absolute power to make more worlds, and infinite numbers of other creatures, and to render every creature a higher mark of his power, yet in regard of his decree to the contrary, he cannot do it. He hath a physical power, but after his resolve to the contrary, not a moral power: the exercise of his power is subordinate to his decree, but not the essence of his power. The decree of God takes not away any power from God, because the power of God is his own essence, and incapable of change; and is as great physically and essentially after his decree, as it was before; only his will hath put in a bar to the demonstration of all that power which he is able to exercise. [Note: Gamach in Aquin. Tom. I. Qu. 25.] As a prince that can raise 100,000 men for an invasion, raises only 20 or 30,000; he here, by his order, limits his power, but doth not divest himself of his authority and power to raise the whole number of the forces of his dominions if he pleases: the power of God hath more objects than his decree hath; but since it is his perfection to be immutable, and not to change his decree, he cannot morally put forth his power upon all those objects, which, as it is essentially in him, he hath ability to do. God hath decreed to save those that believe in Christ, and to judge unbelievers to everlasting perdition: he cannot morally damn the first, or save the latter; yet he hath not divested himself of his absolute power to save all or damn all. [Note: Crell. de Deo. cap. 22.] Or suppose God hath decreed not to create more worlds than this we are now in, doth his decree weaken his strength to create more if he pleased? His not creating more is not a want of strength, but a want of will: it is an act of liberty, not an act of impotency. As when a man solemnly resolves not to walk in such a way, or come at such a place, his resolution deprives him not of his natural strength to walk thither, but fortifies his will against using his strength in any such motion to that place. The will of God hath set bounds to the exercise of his power, but doth not infringe that absolute power which still resides in his nature: he is girded about with more power than he puts forth (Psalms 65:6).

[4.] As the power of God is infinite in regard of his essence, in regard of the objects, in regard of action, so, fourthly, in regard of duration. The apostle calls it "an eternal power" (Romans 1:20). His eternal power is collected and concluded from the things that are made: they must needs be the products of some Being which contains truly in itself all power, who wrought them without engines, without instruments; and, therefore, this power must be infinite, and possessed of an unalterable virtue of acting. If it be eternal, it must be infinite, and hath neither beginning nor end; what is eternal hath no bounds. If it be eternal, and not limited by time, it must be infinite, and not to be restrained by any finite object: his power never begun to be, nor ever ceaseth to be; it cannot

languish; men are fain to unbend themselves, and must have some time to recruit their tired spirits: but the power of God is perpetually vigorous, without any interrupting qualm (Isaiah 40:28): "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" That might which suffered no diminution from eternity, but hatched so great a world by brooding upon nothing, will not suffer any dimness or decrease to eternity. This power being the same with his essence, is as durable as his essence, and resides for ever in his nature.

8. The eighth consideration, for the right understanding of this attribute; the impossibility of God's doing some things, is no infringing of his almightiness, but rather a strengthening of it. It is granted that some things God cannot do; or, rather, as Aquinas and others, it is better to say, such things cannot be done, than to say that God cannot do them; to remove all kind of imputation or reflection of weakness on God, [Note: Robins. Observ. p. 14.] and because the reason of the impossibility of those things is in the nature of the things themselves.

1. Some things are impossible in their own nature. Such are all those things which imply a contradiction; as for a thing to be, and not to be at the same time; for the sun to shine, and not to shine at the same moment of time; for a creature to act, and not to act at the same instant: one of those parts must be false; for if it be true that the sun shines this moment, it must be false to say it doth not shine. So it is impossible that a rational creature can be without reason: 'Tis a contradiction to be a rational creature, and yet want that which is essential to a rational creature. So it is impossible that the will of man can be compelled, because liberty is the essence of the will; while it is will it cannot be constrained; and if it be constrained, it ceaseth to be will. God cannot at one time act as the author of the will and the destroyer of the will. [Note: Magalano. de Scientia Dei, Part II. c. 6, §. 3.] It is impossible that vice and virtue, light and darkness, life and death, should be the same thing. Those things admit not of a conception in any understanding. Some things are impossible to be done, because of the incapability of the subject; as for a creature to be made infinite, independent, to preserve itself without the Divine concurrence and assistance. So a brute cannot be taken into communion with God, and to everlasting spiritual blessedness, because the nature of a brute is incapable of such an elevation: a rational creature only can understand and relish spiritual delights, and is capable to enjoy God, and have communion with him. Indeed, God may change the nature of a brute, and bestow such faculties of understanding and will upon it, as to render it capable of such a blessedness; but then it is no more a brute, but a rational creature: but, while it remains a brute, the excellency of the nature of God doth not admit of communion with such a subject; so that this is not for want of power in God, but because of a deficiency in the creature: to suppose that God could make a contradiction true, is to make himself false, and to do just nothing.

2. Some things are impossible to the nature and being of God. As to die, implies a flat repugnance to the nature of God; to be able to die, is to be able to be cashiered out of being. If God were able to deprive himself of life, he might then cease to be: he were not then a necessary, but an uncertain, contingent being, and could not be said only to have immortality, as he is (1 Timothy 6:16). He can not die who is life itself, and necessarily existent; he cannot grow old or decay, because he cannot be measured by time: and this is no part of weakness, but the perfection of power. His power is that whereby he remains forever fixed in his own everlasting being. That cannot be reckoned as necessary to the omnipotence of God which all mankind count a part of

weakness in themselves: God is omnipotent, because he is not impotent; and if he could die, he would be impotent, not omnipotent: death is the feebleness of nature. It is undoubtedly the greatest impotence to cease to be: who would count it a part of omnipotency to disenable himself, and sink into nothing and not being? The impossibility for God to die is not a fit article to impeach his omnipotence; this would be a strange way of arguing: a thing is not powerful, because it is not feeble, cannot cease to be powerful, for death is a cessation of all power. God is almighty in doing what he will, not in suffering what he will not. [Note: Augus.] To die is not an active, but a passive power; a defect of a power: God is of too noble a nature to perish. Some things are impossible to that eminency of nature which he hath above all creatures; as to walk, sleep, feed, these are imperfections belonging to bodies and compounded natures. If he could walk, he were not everywhere present: motion speaks succession. If he could increase, he would not have been perfect before.

3. Some things are impossible to the glorious perfections of God. God cannot do anything unbecoming his holiness and goodness; any thing unworthy of himself, and against the perfections of his nature. God can do whatsoever he can will. As he doth actually do whatsoever he doth actually will, so it is possible for him to do whatsoever it is possible for him to will. He doth whatsoever he will, and can do whatsoever he can will; but he cannot do what he cannot will: he cannot will any unrighteous thing, and therefore cannot do any unrighteous thing. God cannot love sin, this is contrary to his holiness; he cannot violate his word, this is a denial of his truth; he cannot punish an innocent, this is contrary to his goodness; he cannot cherish an impenitent sinner, this is an injury to his justice; he cannot forget what is done in the world, this is a disgrace to his omniscience; he cannot deceive his creature, this is contrary to his faithfulness: none of these things can be done by him, because of the perfection of his nature. Would it not be an imperfection in God to absolve the guilty, and condemn the innocent? Is it congruous to the righteous and holy nature of God, to command murder and adultery; to command men not to worship him, but to be base and unthankful? These things would be against the rules of righteousness; as, when we say of a good man, he cannot rob or fight a duel, we do not mean that he wants a courage for such an act, or that he hath not a natural strength and knowledge to manage his weapon as well as another, but he hath a righteous principle strong in him which will not suffer him to do it; his will is settled against it: no power can pass into act unless applied by the will; but the will of God cannot will anything but what is worthy of him, and decent for his goodness.

(1.) The Scripture saith it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18); and God cannot deny himself because of his faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13). As he cannot die, because he is life itself; as he cannot deceive, because he is goodness itself; as he cannot do an unwise action, because he is wisdom itself, so he cannot speak a false word, because he is truth itself. If he should speak anything as true, and not know it, where is his infinite knowledge and comprehensiveness of understanding? If he should speak anything as true, which he knows to be false, where is his infinite righteousness? If he should deceive any creature, there is an end of his perfection of fidelity and veracity. If he should be deceived himself, there is an end of his omniscience; we must then fancy him to be a deceitful God, an ignorant God, that is, no God at all. If he should lie, he would be God and no God; God upon supposition, and no God, because not the first truth. [Note: Becan. sum. Theolog. p. 83.] All unrighteousness is weakness, not power; it is a defection from right reason, a deviation from moral principles, and the rule of perfect action, and ariseth from a

defect of goodness and power: it is a weakness, and not omnipotence, to lose goodness: God is light; it is the perfection of light not to become darkness, and a want of power in light, if it should become darkness: [Note: Maximus Tyrius.] his power is infinitely strong, so is his wisdom infinitely clear, and his will infinitely pure: would it not be a part of weakness to have a disorder in himself, and these perfections shock one against another? Since all perfections are in God, in the most sovereign height of perfection, nothing can be done by the infiniteness of one against the infiniteness of the other. He would then be unstable in his own perfections, and depart from the infinite rectitude of his own will, if he should do an evil action. Again, [Note: Ambrose.] what is an argument of greater strength, than to be utterly ignorant of infirmity? God is omnipotent because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent if he could; those things would be marks of weakness, and not characters of majesty. Would you count a sweet fountain impotent because it cannot send forth bitter streams? or the sun weak, because it cannot diffuse darkness as well as light in the air? There is an inability arising from weakness, and an ability arising from perfection: it is the perfection of angels and blessed spirits, that they cannot sin; and it would be the imperfection of God, if he could do evil.

(2.) Hence it follows, that it is impossible that a thing past should not be past. If we ascribe a power to God, to make a thing that is past not to be past, we do not truly ascribe power to him, but a weakness; for it is to make God to lie, as though God might not have created man, yet, after he had created Adam, though he should presently have reduced Adam to his first nothing, yet it would be forever true that Adam was created, and it would forever be false that Adam never was created: so, though God may prevent sin, yet when sin hath been committed, it will alway be true that sin was committed; it will never be true to say such a creature that did sin, did not sin; his sin cannot be recalled: though God, by pardon, take off the guilt of Peter's denying our Saviour, yet it will be eternally true that Peter did deny him. It is repugnant to the righteousness and truth of God to make that which was once true to become false, and not true; that is, to make a truth to become a lie, and a lie to become a truth. This is well argued from Hebrews 6:18 : "It is impossible for God to lie." The apostle argues, that what God had promised and sworn will come to pass, and cannot but come to pass. [Note: Becan. sum. Theol. p. 84. Crel. de Deo, cap. 22.] Now, if God could make a thing past not to be past, this consequence would not be good, for then he might make himself not to have promised, not to have sworn, after he hath promised and sworn; and so, if there were a power to undo that which is past, there would be no foundation for faith, no certainty of revelation. It cannot be asserted, that God hath created the world; that God hath sent his Son to die; that God hath accepted his death for man. These might not be true, if it were possible, that that which hath been done, might be said never to have been done: so that what any may imagine to be a want of power in God, is the highest perfection of God, and the greatest security to a believing creature that hath to do with God.

4. Some things are impossible to be done, because of God's ordination, Some things are impossible, not in their own nature, but in regard of the determined will of God: so God might have destroyed the world after Adam's fall, but it was impossible; not that God wanted power to do it, but because he did not only decree from eternity to create the world, but did also decree to redeem the world by Jesus Christ, and erected the world in order to the manifestation of his "glory in Christ" (Ephesians 1:4-5). The choice of some in Christ was "before the foundation of the world." Supposing that there was no hindrance in the justice of God to pardon the sin of Adam after his

fall, and to execute no punishment on him, yet in regard of God's threatening, that in the day he eat of the forbidden fruit he should die, it was impossible: so, though it was possible that the cup should pass from our blessed Saviour, that is, possible in its own nature, yet it was not possible in regard of the determination of God's will, since he had both decreed and published his will to redeem man by the passion and blood of his Son. These things God, by his absolute power, might have done; but upon the account of his decree, they were impossible, because it is repugnant to the nature of God to be mutable: it is to deny his own wisdom which contrived them, and his own will which resolved them, not to do that which he had decreed to do. This would be a diffidence in his wisdom, and a change of his will. The impossibility of them is no result of a want of power, no mark of an imperfection, of feebleness and impotence; but the perfection of immutability and unchangeableness. Thus have I endeavored to give you a right notion of this excellent attribute of the power of God, in as plain terms as I could, which may serve us for a matter of meditation, admiration, fear of him, trust in him, which are the proper uses we should make of this doctrine of Divine power. The want of a right understanding of this doctrine of the Divine power hath caused many to run into mighty absurdities; I have, therefore, taken the more pains to explain it.

II. The second thing I proposed, is the reasons to prove God to be omnipotent. The Scripture describes God by this attribute of power (Psalms 115:3): "He hath done whatsoever he pleased." It sometimes sets forth his power in a way of derision of those that seem to doubt of it. When Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age (Genesis 18:14), "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" They deserve to be scoffed, that will despoil God of his strength, and measure him by their shallow models. And when Moses uttered something of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Israelites, besides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious scoff; "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or, shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?" &c. (Numbers 11:22). God takes him up short (Numbers 11:23): "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" What! can any weakness seize upon my hand? Can I draw out of my own treasures what is needful for a supply? The hand of God is not at one time strong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an outstretched arm; because the strength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his strength. Sometimes, according to the different manifestation of it, it is expressed by finger, when a less power is evidenced; by hand, when something greater; by arm, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is also Almighty, without limits of strength. As he cannot be said to be more in being now than he was before, so he is neither more nor less in strength than he was before: as he cannot cease to be so, so he cannot cease to be powerful, because he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonstrable (Romans 1:20); God is called the God of gods El Elohim (Daniel 11:36); the Mighty of mighties, whence all mighty persons have their activity and vigor he is called the Lord of Hosts, as being the Creator and Conductor of the heavenly militia.

Reason 1. The power that is in creatures demonstrates a greater and an unconceivable power in God. Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature: no creature but can act something. The sun warms and enlightens everything: it sends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the sea: all generations owe themselves to its instrumental virtue. How powerful is a small seed to rise into a mighty tree with a lofty top, and

extensive branches, and send forth other seeds, which can still multiply into numberless plants! How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed so small a creature as a seed, with so fruitful an activity! Yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature. God is both the producing and preserving cause of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature. The power of every creature belongs to him as the Fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the first Being, he is the original of all being; as he is the first Good, he is the spring of all goodness; as he is the first Truth, he is the source of all truth; so, as he is the first Power, he is the fountain of all power.

1. He, therefore, that communicates to the creature what power it hath, contains eminently much more power in himself. (Psalms 94:10), "He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know?" So he that gives created beings power, shall not he be powerful? The first Being must have as much power as he Hath given to other: he could not transfer that upon another, which he did not transcendently possess himself. The sole cause of created power cannot be destitute of any power in himself. We see that the power of one creature transcends the power of another. Beasts can do the things that plants cannot do; besides the power of growth, they have a power of sense and progressive motion. Men can do more than beasts; they have rational souls to measure the earth and heavens, and to be repositories of multitudes of things, notions, and conclusions. We may well imagine angels to be far superior to man: the power of the Creator must far surmount the power of the creature, and must needs be infinite: for if it be limited, it is limited by himself or by some other; if by some other, he is no longer a Creator, but a creature; for that which limits him in his nature, did communicate that nature to him: not by himself, for he would not deny himself any necessary perfection: we must still conclude a reserve of power in him, that he that made these can make many more of the same kind.

2. All the power which is distinct in the creatures, must be united in God. One creature hath a strength to do this, another to do that; every creature is as a cistern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain; all are distinct streams from God. But the strength of every creature, though distinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the centre, whence those lines were drawn, the fountain whence those streams were derived. If the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the Psalmist saith (Psalms 103:20), "excelleth in strength;" how much greater must the power of a legion of angels be! How inconceivably superior the power of all those numbers of spiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God! Now, if all this particular power, which is in every angel distinct, were compacted in one angel, how would it exceed our understanding, and be above our power to form a distinct conception of it! What is thus divided in every angel, must be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Everything is in a more noble manner in the fountain, than in the streams which distil and descend from it. He that is the Original of all those distinct powers, must be the seat of all power without distinction: in him is the union of all without division; what is in them as a quality, is in him as his essence. Again, if all the powers of several creatures, with all their principal qualities and vigors, both of beasts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one subject; as if one lion had the strength of all the lions that ever were; or, if one elephant had the strength of all the elephants that ever were; nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and stinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vast strength; but if the strength of all those thus gathered into one of every kind should be lodged in one sole creature, one man, would it not be a strength too big for our conception? Or, suppose one cannon had all the force of all the

cannons that ever were in the world. what a battery would it make, and, as it were, shake the whole frame of heaven and earth! All this strength must be much more incomprehensible in God; all is united in him. If it were in one individual created nature, it would still be but a finite power in a finite nature: but in God it is infinite and immense.

Reason 2. If there, were not an incomprehensible power in God, he would not be infinitely perfect. God is the first Being; it can only be said of him, Est, he is. All other things are nothing to him; "less than nothing and vanity" (Isaiah 40:17), and "reputed as nothing" (Daniel 4:30). All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and strength, are counted as if they were not; just in comparison with Him and his being, as a little mote in the sun-beams: God, therefore, is a pure Being. Any kind of weakness whatsoever is a defect, a degree of not being; so far as anything wants this or that power, it may be said not to be. Were there anything of weakness in God, any want of strength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be said of God, He is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of Being, and so he would not be a pure Being, there would be something of not being in him. But God being the first Being, the only original Being, he is infinitely distant from not being, and therefore infinitely distant from anything of weakness. Again, if God can know whatsoever is possible to be done by him, and cannot do it, there would be something more in his knowledge than in his power. [Note: Victorin. in Petar. Tom. I. p. 333.] What would then follow? That the essence of God would be in some regard greater than itself, and less than itself, because his knowledge and his power are his essence; his power as much his essence as his knowledge: and therefore, in regard of his knowledge, his essence would be greater; in regard of his power, his essence would be less; which is a thing impossible to be conceived in a most perfect Being. We must understand this of those things which are properly and in their own nature subjected to the Divine knowledge; for otherwise God knows more than he can do, for he knows sin, but he cannot act it, because sin belongs not to power but weakness; and sin comes under the knowledge of God, not in itself and its own nature, but as it is a defect from God, and contrary to good, which is the proper object of Divine knowledge. He knows it also not as possible to be done by himself, but as possible to be done by the creature. Again, if God were not omnipotent, we might imagine something more perfect than God: [Note: Ibid. p. 233.] for if we bar God from any one thing which in its own nature is possible, we may imagine a being that can do that thing, one that is able to effect it; and so imagine an agent greater than God, a being able to do more than God is able to do, and consequently a being more perfect than God: but no being more perfect than God can be imagined by any creature. Nothing can be called most perfect, if anything of activity be wanting to it. Active power follows the perfection of a thing, and all things are counted more noble by how much more of efficacy and virtue they possess. We count those the best and most perfect plants, that have the greatest medicinal virtue in them, and power of working upon the body for the cure of distempers. God is perfect of himself, and therefore most powerful of himself. If his perfection in wisdom and goodness be unsearchable, his power, which belongs to perfection, and without which all the other excellencies of his nature were insignificant, and could not show themselves, (as was before evidenced,) must be unsearchable also. It is by the title of Almighty he is denominated, when declared to be unsearchable to perfection (Job 11:7): "Canst thou by searching find out God, eanst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" This would be limited and searched out, if he were destitute of an active ability to do whatsoever he pleased to do, whatsoever was possible to be done. As he hath not a perfect liberty of will, if he could not will what he pleased; so he would not have a perfect activity, if he could not do what he willed.

Reason, 3. The simplicity of God manifests it. Every substance, the more spiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a simple, than in a compounded being. Angels, being spirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power. Where there is a composition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power doth still reside in the faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, he hath the faculty of motion still; but he hath lost that instrument that part whereby he did manifest and put forth that motion: but God being a pure spiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of actions arise either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from something without it. There can be no hindrance to God to do whatsoever he pleases; not in himself, because he is the most simple being, hath no contrariety in himself, is not composed of divers things; and it cannot be from anything without himself, because nothing is equal to him, much less superior. He is the greatest, the Supreme: all things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can disappoint his intentions.

Reason 4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God. Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their stupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immensity of Divine power. Miracles are such effects as have been wrought without the assistance and co-operation of natural causes, yea, contrary and besides the ordinary course of nature, above the reach of any created power. Miracles have been; and saith Bradwardine, [Note: Lib. i. cap. 1. p. 38.] to deny that ever such things were, is uncivil: it is inhuman to deny all the histories of Jews and Christians; whosoever denies miracles, must deny all possibility of miracles, and so must imagine himself fully skilled in the extent of Divine power. How was the sun suspended from its motion for some hours (Joshua 10:13); "the dead raised from the grave;" those reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diseases; and this by a word speaking? How were the famished lions bridled from exercising their rage upon Daniel, exposed to them for a prey (Daniel 6:22)? the activity of the fire curbed for the preservation of the three children (Daniel 3:10)? which proves a Deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combustible matter, when they are united, unless by quenching the fire, or removing the matter: but no created power can restrain the fire, so long as it remains so, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). It was as much miraculous that the bush should not consume, as it was natural that it should burn by the efficacy of the fire upon it. No element is so obstinate and deaf, but it bears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature: all the violence or the creature is suspended as soon as it receives his command. He that gave the original to nature, can take away the necessity of nature; [Note: Damianus, in Petar.] he presides over creatures, but is not confined to those laws he hath prescribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own, pleasure. Men dig into the bowels of nature, search into all the treasures of it, to find medicines to cure a disease, and after all their attempts it may prove labor in vain: but God, by one act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the victory of death, and rescues from the most desperate diseases. [Note: Fauch. in Acts. Vol. II. § 56.] All the miracles which were wrought by the apostles, either speaking some words or touching with the hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words or in their touches; for such virtue inherent in any created finite subject would be created and finite itself, and consequently were incapable to produce effects which required an infinite virtue, as miracles do

which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality resident in his human nature, but by the sole power of his Divinity. The flesh could only do what was proper to the flesh; but the Deity did what was proper to the Deity. "God alone doth wonders" (Psalms 136:4): excluding every other cause from producing those things. He only doth those things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural causes whatsoever. He doth not hereby put his omnipotence to any stress: it is as easy with him to turn nature out of its settled course, as it was to place it in that station it holds, and appoint it that course it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles and testimonies of the power of God producing them, and sustaining them: but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unusual, strike men with a greater admiration upon their appearance, because they are not the products of nature, but the convulsions of it. I might also add as an argument, the power of the mind of man to conceive more than hath been wrought by God in the world. And God can work whatsoever perfection the mind of man can conceive: otherwise the reaches of a created imagination and fancy would be more extensive than the power of God. His power, therefore, is far greater than the conception of any intellectual creature; else the creature would be of a greater capacity to conceive than God is to effect. The creature would have a power of conception above God's power of activity; and consequently a creature, in some respect greater than himself. Now whatsoever a creature can conceive possible to be done, is but finite in its own nature; and if God could not produce what being a created understanding can conceive possible to be done, he would be less than infinite in power, nay, he could not go to the extent of what is finite. But I have touched this before; that God can create more than he hath created, and in a more perfect way of being, as considered simply in themselves.

III. The third general thing is to declare, how the power of God appears in Creation, in Government, in Redemption.

First, In Creation. With what majestic lines doth God set for his power, in the giving being and endowments to all the creatures in the world (Job 38:1-41.)! All that is in heaven and earth is his, and shows the greatness of his power, glory, victory, and majesty (1 Chronicles 29:11). The heaven being so magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, "the firmament of his power" (Psalms 150:1); his power being more conspicuous and unavailed in that glorious arch of the world. Indeed, "God exalts by his power" (Job 36:22), that is, exalts himself by his power in all the works of his hands; in the smallest shrub, as well as the most glorious sun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we consider them not, being blinded with two frequent and customary a sight of them; yet, in the neglect of all the rest, the view of the heavens doth more affect us with astonishment at the might of God's arm: these declare his glory, and "the firmament showeth his handy work" (Psalms 19:1). And the Psalmist peculiarly calls them his heavens, and the work of his fingers (Psalms 8:3): these were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

1. His power is the first thing evident in the story of the creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). There is no appearance of anything in this declaratory preface, but of power: the characters of wisdom march after in the distinct formation of things, and animating them with suitable qualities for an universal good. By heaven and earth, is meant the whole mass of the creatures: by heaven, all the airy region, with all the host of it; by the earth, is

meant, all that which makes the entire inferior globe. [Note: Mercer. p. 7, Colossians 1:1-29; Colossians 2:1-23.] The Jews observe, that in the first of Genesis, in the whole chapter, unto the finishing the work in six days, God is called ■■■■■■, which is a name of Power, and that thirty-two times in that chapter; but after the finishing the six days' work, he is called ■■■■■■, which, according to their notion, is a name of goodness and kindness: his power is first visible in framing the world, before his goodness is visible in the sustaining and preserving it. It was by this name of Power and Almighty that he was known in the first ages of the world, not by his name, Jehovah (Exodus 6:3): "And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." Not but that they were acquainted with the name, but did not experience the intent of the name, which signified his truth in the performance of his promises; they knew him by that name as promising, but they knew him, not by that name, as performing. He would be known by his name Jehovah, true to his word, when he was about to effect the deliverance from Egypt; a type of the eternal redemption, wherein the truth of God, in performing of his first promise, is gloriously magnified. And hence it is that God is called Almighty more in the book of Job than in all the Scripture besides, I think about thirty-two times, and Jehovah but once, which is Job 12:9, unless in Job 38:1-41, when God is introduced speaking himself; which is an argument of Job's living before the deliverance from Egypt, when God was known more by his works of creation than by the performance of his promises, before the name Jehovah was formally published. Indeed, this attribute of his eternal power, is the first thing visible and intelligible upon the first glance of the eye upon the creatures (Romans 1:20). Bring a man out of the cave where he hath been nursed, without seeing anything out of the confines of it, and let him lift up his eyes to the heavens, and take a prospect of that glorious body, the sun, then cast them down to the earth, and behold the surface of it, with its green clothing; the first notion which will start up in his mind from that spring of wonders, is that of power, which he will at first adore with a religious astonishment. The wisdom of God in them is not so presently apparent, till after a more exquisite consideration of his works and knowledge of the properties of their natures, the conveniency of their situations, and the usefulness of their functions, and the order wherein they are linked together for the good of the universe.

2. By this creative power God is often distinguished from all the idols and false gods in the world. And by this title he sets forth himself when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world (Psalms 135:5-6): "He is great above all gods," for "he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth." Upon this is founded all the worship he challengeth in the world, as his peculiar, glory (Revelation 4:11): "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and power, for thou hast created all things." And (Revelation 10:6) "I have made the earth, and created man upon it." "I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isaiah 45:12). What is the issue (Isaiah 45:16)? "They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols." And the weakness of idols is expressed by this title. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth" (Jeremiah 10:11). "The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things" (Jeremiah 10:16) What is not that God able to do, that hath created so great a world? How doth the power of God appear in creation?

1st. In making the world of nothing. When we say, the world was made of nothing, we mean, that there was no matter existent for God to work upon, but what he raised himself in the first act of creation. In this regard, the power of God in creation surmounts his power in providence. Creation

supposeth nothing, providence supposeth something in being. Creation intimates a creature making, providence speaks a thing already made, and capable of government, and in government. God uses second causes to bring about his purposes.

1. The world was made of nothing. The earth which is described as the first matter, without any form or ornament, without any distinction or figures, was of God's forming in the bulk, before he did adorn it with his pencil (Genesis 1:1-2). God, in the beginning, creating the heaven and the earth, includes two things: First. That those were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things. Secondly. That God begun the creation of the world from those things. [Note: Suarez, Vol. III. p. 33.] Therefore before the heavens and the earth there was nothing absolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation passed upon it. It could not be eternal, because nothing can be eternal but God; it must therefore have a beginning. If it had a beginning from itself, then it was before it was. If it acted in the making itself before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing, can act nothing: the action of anything supposeth the existence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made, then, by another, and that Maker is God. It is necessary that the First Original of things was from nothing: when we see one thing to arise from another, we must suppose an original of the first of each kind; as, when we see a tree spring up from a seed, we know that seed came out of the bowels of another tree; it had a parent, it had a master; we must come to some first, or else we run into an endless maze: we must come to some first tree, some first seed that had no cause of the same kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. Creation doth suppose a production from nothing; because, if you suppose a thing without any real or actual existence, it is not capable of any other production than from nothing: nothing must be supposed before the world, or we must suppose it eternal, and that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God. [Note: Suarez, Vol. III. p. 6.] The creation of spiritual substances, such as angels and souls, evince this; those things that are purely spiritual, and consist not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they rose up from nothing. If spiritual things arose from nothing, much more may corporeal, because they are of a lower nature than spiritual; and he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing. As bodily things are more imperfect than spiritual, so their creation may be supposed easier than that of spiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this visible fabric, as there was to erect such an excellent order as the glorious cherubims.

2. This creation of things from nothing speaks an infinite power. The distance between nothing and being hath been alway counted so great, that nothing but an Infinite Power can make such distances meet together, either for nothing to pass into being, or being to return to nothing. To have a thing arise from nothing, was so difficult a text to those that were ignorant of the Scripture, that they knew not how to fathom it, and therefore laid it down as a certain rule, that of nothing, nothing is made; which is true of a created power, but not of an uncreated and Almighty Power. A greater distance cannot be imagined than that which is between nothing and something; that which hath no being, and that which hath; and a greater power cannot be imagined than that which brings something out of nothing. We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing; but we must remain swallowed up in admiration of the Cause that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and measures of greatness and power. [Note: Amyrald Morale. Tom. I. p. 252.] The further anything is from being, the more immense must that

power be which brings it into being: it is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one can give being to the smallest spire of grass. To imagine, therefore, so small a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of dust, to be made of nothing, would stupefy any creature in the consideration of it, much more to behold the heavens, with all the troop of stars; the earth, with all its embroidery; and the sea, with all her inhabitants of fish; and man, the noblest creature of all, to arise out of the womb of mere emptiness. Indeed, God had not acted as an almighty Creator, if he had stood in need of any materials but of his own framing: it had been as much as his Deity was worth, if he had not had all within the compass of his own power that was necessary to operation; if he must have been beholden to something without himself, and above himself, for matter to work upon: had there been such a necessity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and, consequently, not God.

3. In this the power of God exceeds the power of all natural and rational agents. Nature, or the order of second causes, hath a vast power; the sun generates flies and other insects, but of some matter, the slime of the earth or a dunghill; the sun and the earth bring forth harvests of corn, but from seed first sown in the earth; fruits are brought forth, but from the sap of the plant; were there no seed or plants in the earth, the power of the earth would be idle, and the influence of the sun insignificant; whatsoever strength either of them had in their nature, must be useless without matter to work upon. All the united strength of nature cannot produce the least thing out of nothing; it may multiply and increase things, by the powerful blessing God gave it at the first erecting of the world, but it cannot create. The word which signifies creation, used in Genesis 1:1, is not ascribed to any second cause, but only to God; a word, in that sense, as incommunicable to anything else as the action it signifies. Rational creatures can produce admirable pieces of art from small things, yet still out of matter created to their hands. Excellent garments may be woven, but from the entrails of a small silkworm. Delightful and medicinal spirits and essences maybe extracted, by ingenious chemists, but out of the bodies of plants and minerals. No picture can be drawn without colors; no statue engraven without stone; no building erected without timber, stones, and other materials: nor can any man raise a thought without some matter framed to his hands, or cast into him. Matter is, by nature, formed to the hands of all artificers; they bestow a new figure upon it, by the help of instruments, and the product of their own wit and skill, but they create not the least particle of matter; when they want it, they must be supplied or else stand still, as well as nature, for none of them, or all together, can make the least mite or atom: and when they have wrought all that they can, they will not want some to find a flaw and defect in their work. God, as a Creator, hath the only prerogative to draw what he pleases from nothing, without any defect, without any imperfection: he can raise what matter he please; ennoble it with what form he pleases. Of nothing, nothing can be made, by any created agent: but the omnipotent Architect of the world is not under the same necessity, nor is limited to the same rule, and tied by so short a tedder as created nature, or an ingenious, yet feeble artificer.

2d. It appears, in raising such variety of creatures from this barren womb of nothing, or from the matter which he first commanded to appear out of nothing. Had there been any pre-existent matter, yet the bringing forth such varieties and diversities of excellent creatures, some with life, some with sense, and others with reason superadded to the rest, and those out of indisposed and undigested matter, would argue an infinite power resident in the first Author of this variegated fabric. From this matter be formed that glorious sun, which every day displays its glory, scatters its

beams, clears the air, ripens our fruits, and maintains the propagation of creatures in the world. From this matter he lighted those torches which he set in the heaven to qualify the darkness of the night: from this he compacted those bodies of light, which, though they seem to us as little sparks, as if they were the glow-worms of heaven, yet some of them exceed in greatness this globe of the earth on which we live and the highest of them hath so quick a motion, that some tell us they run, in the space of every hour, 42,000,000 of leagues. From the same matter he drew the earth on which we walk; from thence he extracted the flowers to adorn it, the hills to secure the valleys, and the rocks to fortify it against the inundations of the sea; and on this dull and sluggish element he bestowed so great a fruitfulness, to maintain, feed, and multiply so many seeds of different kinds, and conferred upon those little bodies of seeds a power to multiply their kinds, in conjunction with the fruitfulness of the earth, to many thousands. From this rude matter, the slime or dust of the earth, he kneaded the body of man, and wrought so curious a fabric, fit to entertain a soul of a heavenly extraction, formed by the breath of God (Genesis 2:7). He brought light out of thick darkness, and living creatures, fish and fowl, out of inanimate waters (Genesis 1:20), and gave a power of spontaneous motion to things arising from that matter which had no living motion. To convert one thing into another, is an evidence of infinite power, as well as creating things of nothing; for the distance between life and not life is next to that which is between being and not being. God first forms matter out of nothing, and then draws upon, and from this indisposed chaos, many excellent portraitures. Neither earth nor sea were capable of producing living creatures without an infinite power working upon it, and bringing into it such variety and multitude of forms; and this is called, by some, mediate creation, as the producing the chaos, which was without form and void, is called immediate creation. Is not the power of the potter admirable in forming, out of tempered clay, such varieties of neat and curious vessels, that, after they are fashioned and past the furnace, look as if they were not of any lain to the matter they are formed of? and is it not the same with the glass-maker, that, from a little melted jelly of sand and ashes, or the dust of flint, can blow up so pure a body as glass, and in such varieties of shapes? and is not the power of God more admirable, because infinite in speaking out so beautiful a world out of nothing, and such varieties of living creatures from matter utterly indisposed, in its own nature, for such forms?

3d. And this conducts to a third thing, wherein the power of God appears, in that he did all this with the greatest ease and facility.

1. Without instruments. As God made the world without the advice, so without the assistance, of any other: "He stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself" (Isaiah 44:24). He had no engine, but his word; no pattern or model, but himself. What need can he have of instruments, that is able to create what instruments he pleases? Where there is no resistance in the object, where no need of preparation or instrumental advantage in the agent; there the actual determination of the will is sufficient to a production. What instrument need we to the thinking of a thought, or an act of our will? Men, indeed, cannot act anything without tools; the best artificer must be beholden to something else for his noblest works of art. The carpenter cannot work without his rule, and axe, and saw, and other instruments; the watch-maker cannot act without his file and pliers; but in creation, there is nothing necessary to God's bringing forth a world, but a simple act of his will, which is both the principal cause, and instrumental. He had no scaffolds to rear it, no engines to polish it, no hammers or mallets to God and work it together. It is a miserable error to measure the actions of an Infinite Cause by the imperfect model of a finite,

since, by his own “power and out-stretched arm, he made the heaven and the earth” (Jeremiah 32:17). What excellency would God have in his work above others, if he needed instruments, as feeble men do? [Note: Gassend.] Every artificer is counted more admirable, that can frame curious works with the less matter, fewer tools, and assistances. God uses instruments in his works of providence, not for necessity, but for the display of his wisdom in the management of them; yet those instruments were originally framed by him without instruments. Indeed, some of the Jews thought the angels were the instruments of God in creating man, and that those words, “Let us make man in our own image” (Genesis 1:26), were spoken to angels. But certainly the Scripture, which denies God any counsellor in the model of creation (Isaiah 40:12-14), doth not join any instrument with him in the operation, which is everywhere ascribed to himself “without created assistance” (Isaiah 45:18). It was not to angels God spake in that affair; if so, man was made after the image of angels, if they were companions with God in that work; but it is everywhere said, that “Man was made after the image of God” (Genesis 1:27). Again, the image wherein man was created, was that of dominion over the lower creatures, as appears Genesis 1:26, which we find not conferred upon angels; and it is not likely that Moses should introduce the angels, as God’s privy counsel, of whose creation he had not mentioned one syllable. “Let us make man,” rather signifies the Trinity, and not spoken in a royal style, as some think. Which of the Jewish kings wrote in the style, We? That was the custom of later times; and we must not measure the language of Scripture by the style of Europe, of a far later date than the penning the history of the creation. If angels were his counsellors in the creation of the material world, what instrument had he in the creation of angels? If his own wisdom were the director, and his own will the producer of the one; why should we not think, that he acted by his sole power in the other? It is concluded by most, that the power of creation cannot be derived to any creature, it being a work of omnipotency; the drawing something out from nothing, cannot be communicated without a communication of the Deity itself. The educating things from nothing exceeds the capacity of any creature, and the creature is of too feeble a nature to be elevated to so high a degree. It is very unreasonable to think, that God needed any such aid.

If an instrument were necessary for God to create the world, then he could not do it without that instrument: if he could not, he were not then all-sufficient in himself, if he depended upon anything without himself, for the production or consummation of his works. And it might be inquired, how that instrument came into being; if it begun to be, and there was a time when it was not, it must have its being from the power of God; and then, why could not God as well create all things without an instrument, as create that instrument without an instrument? For there was no more power necessary to a producing the whole without instruments, than to produce one creature without an instrument. No creature can, in its own nature, be an instrument of creation. If any such instrument were used by God, it must be elevated in a miraculous and supernatural way; and what is so an instrument, is, in effect, no instrument; for it works nothing by its own nature, but from an elevation by a superior nature, and beyond its own nature. All that power in the instrument is truly the power of God, and not the power of the instrument; and, therefore, what God doth by an instrument, he could do as well without. If you should see one apply straw to iron, for the cutting of it, and effect it, you would not call the straw an instrument in that action, because there was nothing in the nature of the straw to do it. It was done wholly by some other force, which might have done it as well without the straw as with it. The narrative of the creation in Genesis, removes any instrument from God. The plants which are preserved and propagated by the influence of the

sun, were created the day before the sun, viz. on the “third day,” whereas, the light was collected into the body of the sun on the “fourth day” (Genesis 1:11; Genesis 1:16); to show, that though the plants do instrumentally owe their yearly beauty and preservation to the sun, yet they did not in any manner owe their creation to the instrumental heat and vigor of it.

2. God created the world by a word, by a simple act of his will. The whole creation is wrought by a word; “God said, Let there be light;” and “God said, Let there be a firmament.” [Note: Genesis 1:3; Genesis 1:5, &c. throughout the whole chapter.] Not that we should understand it of a sensible word, but understand it of a powerful order of his own will, which is expressed by the Psalmist in the nature of a command (Psalms 33:9): “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;” and (Psalms 148:5), “He commanded, and they were created.” At the same instant that he willed them to stand forth, they did stand forth. The efficacious command of the Creator was the original of all things: the insensibility of nothing obeyed the act of his will. Creation is therefore entitled a calling (Romans 4:17): “He calls those things which are not, as if they were.” To create is no more with God, than to call; and what he calls, presents itself before him in the same posture that he calls it. He did with more ease make a world, than we can form a thought. It is the same ease to him to create worlds, as to decree them; there needs no more than a resolve to have things wrought at such a time, and they will be, according to his pleasure. This will is his power; “Let there be light,” is the precept of his will; and “there was light,” is the effect of his precept. By a word, was the matter of the heavens and the earth framed; by a word, things separate themselves from the rude mass into their proper forms; by a word, light associates itself into one body, and forms a sun; by a word, are the heavens, as it were, bespangled with stars, and the earth dressed with flowers; by a word, is the world both ceiled and floored: one act of his will, formed the world, and perfected its beauty. All the variety and several exploits of his power were not caused by distinct words or acts of power. God uttered not distinct words for distinct species; as, let there be an elephant, and let there be a lion; but as he produced those various creatures out of one matter, so by one word. By one single command, those varieties of creatures, with their clothing, ornaments, distinct notes, qualities, functions, were brought forth (Genesis 1:11): by one word, all the seeds of the earth, with their various virtues: by one word, all the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air, in their distinct natures, instincts, colors (Genesis 1:20): by one word, all the beasts of the field, with their varieties (Genesis 1:24). Heaven and earth, spiritual and corporeal creatures, mortal and immortal, the greater and the less, visible and invisible, were formed with the same ease: [Note: Augus.] a word made the least, and a word made the greatest. It is as little difficulty to him to produce the highest angel, as the lightest atom. It is enough for the existence of the stateliest cherubim, for God only to will his being. It was enough for the forming and fixing the sun, to will the compacting of light into one body. The creation of the soul of man is expressed by inspiration (Genesis 2:7); to show, that it is as easy with God to create a rational soul, as for man to breathe. [Note: Theodoret.] Breathing is natural to man, by a communication of God’s goodness; and the creation of the soul is as easy to God, by virtue of his Almighty word. As there was no proportion between nothing and being, so there was as little proportion between a word and such glorious effects. A mere voice, coming from an Omnipotent will, was capable to produce such varieties, which angels and men have seen in all ages of the world, and this without weariness. What labor is there in willing? what pain could there be in speaking a word? (Isaiah 40:28), “The Creator of the ends of the earth is not weary.” And though he be said to rest after the creation, it is to be meant a rest from work, not a repose from weariness. So great is the power of

God, that without any matter, without any instruments, he could create many worlds, and with the same ease as he made this.

4th. I might add also, the appearance of this power in the instantaneous production of things. The ending of his word was not only the beginning, but the perfection of every thing he spake into being; not several words to several parts and members, but one word, one breath of his mouth, one act of his will, to the whole species of the creatures, and to every member in each individual. Heaven and earth were created in a moment; six days went to their disposal; and that comely order we observe in the world was the work of a week: the matter was formed as soon as God had spoken the word; and in every part of the creation, as soon as God spake the word, "Let it be so" (Genesis 1:1-31.), the answer immediately is, "It was so;" which notes the present standing up of the creature according to the act of his will: and, therefore, [Note: Peirs, p. 111.] one observes, that "Let there be light, and there was light;" in the Hebrew are the same words, without any alteration of letter or point, only the conjunctive particle added, **וַיְהִי** **וַיִּהְיֶה** **וַיִּהְיֶה** **וַיִּהְיֶה** "Let there be light, and let there be light," to show, that the same instant of the speaking the Divine word, was the appearance of the creature: so great was the authority of his will.

Secondly, We are to show God's power in the Government of the world. As God decreed from eternity the creation of things in time, so he decreed from eternity the particular ends of creatures, and their operation respecting those ends. Now, as there was need of his power to execute his decree of creation, there is also need of his power to execute his decree about the manner of government. [Note: Suarez, Vol. I. lib. iii. cap. 10.] All government is an act of the understanding, will, and power. Prudence to design belongs to the understanding; the election of the means belongs to the will; and the accomplishment of the whole is an act of power. It is a hard matter to determine which is most necessary: wisdom stands in as much need of power to perfect, as power doth of wisdom, to model and draw out a scheme; though wisdom directs, power must effect. Wisdom and power are distinct things among men: a poor man in a cottage may have more prudence to advise, than a privy counsellor; and a prince more power to act, than wisdom to conduct. A pilot may direct though he be lame, and cannot climb the masts, and spread the sails: but God is wanting in nothing; neither in wisdom to design, nor in will to determine, nor in power to accomplish. His wisdom is not feeble, nor his power foolish: a feeble wisdom could not act what it would, and a foolish power would act more than it should. The power expressed in his government is shadowed forth in the living creatures, which are God's instruments in it. It is said, "Every one of them had four faces" (Ezekiel 1:10); that of a man to signify wisdom; of a lion, eagle, the strongest among birds, to signify their courage and strength to perform their offices. This power is evident in the natural, moral, gracious government. There is a natural providence, which consists in the preservation of all things, propogation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends. Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men. Gracious government, as respecting the Church.

First, His power is evident in natural government.

1. In preservation. God is the great Father of the world, to nourish it as well as create it. [Note: Daille, in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. p. 102.] Man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for their food; and herbs would wither and perish, if the earth were not watered with fruitful showers. This some of the heathens acknowledged, in their worshipping God under the image of an ox, a

useful creature, by reason of its strength, to which we owe so much of our food in corn. Hence, God is styled the “Preserver of man and beast” (Psalms 36:6). Hence, the Jews called God, [Note: ■■■■] Place; because he is the subsistence of all things. By the same word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being so much a term of time. As they were “created by his word,” they are supported by his word (Hebrews 1:3). The same powerful fiat, “Let the earth bring forth grass” (Genesis 1:11), when the plants peeped upon man out of nothing, is expressed every spring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The resurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleasure of all things to the eye; the watering the valleys from the mountain Springs; the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth; every draught that the beasts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the sustenance of man and beast, is ascribed to the “opening of his hand,” the diffusing of his power (Psalms 104:27, &c.), as much as the first creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature: whence the plants, which are so serviceable, are called “the trees of the Lord” (ver. 16), of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himself. The whole Psalm is but the description of his preserving, as the first of Genesis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have so many thousand years remained in the power of understanding and willing. By this power things distant in their natures have been joined together; a spiritual soul and a dusty body knit in a marriage knot. By this power the heavenly bodies have for so many ages rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order: by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the first creation. What an amazing sight would it be to see a man hold a pillar of the Exchange upon one of his fingers? What is this to the power of God, “who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heaven with a span, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance” (Isaiah 40:12)? The preserving the earth from the violence of the sea is a plain instance of this power. [Note: Daille Melange, Part II. p. 457.] How is that raging element kept pent within those lists where he first lodged it; continues its course in its channel without overflowing the earth, and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter; and to be immediately under the air, because it is heavier than that thinner element. Who restrains this natural quality of it, but that God that first formed it? The word of command at first, “Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further,” keeps those waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be useful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its passage? How fruitless sometimes is all the art of man to send it to its proper channel, when once it hath spread its mighty waves over some countries, and trampled part of the inhabited earth under its feet? It hath triumphed in its victory, and withstood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that doth bridle it from spreading itself over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifest, he hath set but a weak and small bank against it. Though he hath bounded it in some places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in most places by feeble sand. How often is it seen in every stormy motion, when the waves boil high and roll furiously, as if they would swallow up all the neighboring houses upon the shore; when they come to touch those sandy limits, they bow their heads, fall flat, and sink into the lap whence they were raised, and seem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but must split themselves at so weak an obstacle! Can the sand be thought to be the cause of this? The weakness of it gives no footing to such a thought. Who can apprehend, that an enraged army

should retire upon the opposition of a straw in an infant's hand? Is it the nature of the water? Its retirement is against the natural quality of it; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always see it spread itself. No cause can be rendered in nature; it is a standing monument of the power of God in the preservation of the world, and ought to be more taken notice of by us in this island, surrounded with it, than by some other countries in the world.

(1.) We find nothing hath power to preserve itself. Doth not every creature upon earth require the assistance of some other for its maintenance? "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow up without water" (Job 8:11)? Can man or beast maintain itself without grain from the bowels of the earth? Would not every man tumble into the grave, without the aid of other creatures to nourish him? Whence do these creatures receive that virtue of supplying him nourishment, but from the sun and earth? and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things? And should he but slack his hand, how soon would they and all their qualities perish, and the links of the world fall in pieces, and dash one another into their first chaos and confusion! All creatures indeed have an appetite to preserve themselves; they have some knowledge of the outward means for their preservation; so have irrational animals a natural instinct, as well as men have some skill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful. But what thing in the world can preserve itself by an inward influx into its own being? All things want such a power without God's fiat, "Let it be so:" nothing but is destitute of such a power for its own preservation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were there any true power for such a work, what need of so many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preserved by them? No created thing hath a power to preserve any decayed being. Who can lay claim to such a virtue, as to recall a withering flower to its former beauty, to raise the head of a drooping plant, or put life into a gasping worm when it is expiring; or put impaired vitals into their former posture? Not a man upon earth, nor an angel in heaven, can pretend to such a virtue; they may be spectators, but not assisters, and are, in this case, physicians of no value.

(2.) It is, therefore, the same Power preserves things which at first created them. The creature doth as much depend upon God, in the first instant of its being, for its preservation, as it did, when it was nothing, for its production and creation into being: as the continuance of a thought of our mind depends upon the power of our mind, as well as the first framing of that thought. [Note: Lessius de Perfect. Divin. p. 69.] There is a little difference between creating and preserving power, as there is between the power of mine eye to begin an act of vision and continue that act of vision, as to cast my eye upon an object and continue it upon that object: as the first act is caused by the eye, so the duration of the act is preserved by the eye; shut the eye, and the act of vision perishes; divert the eye from that object, and that act of vision is exchanged for another. And, therefore, the preservation of things is commonly called a continual creation: and certainly it is no less, if we understand it of a preservation by an inward influence into the being of things. It is one and the same action invariably continued, and obtaining its force every moment; the same action whereby he created them of nothing, and which every moment hath a virtue to produce a thing out of nothing, if it were not yet extant in the world: it remains the same without any diminution throughout the whole time wherein anything doth remain in the world. [Note: Lessius de Snm. Bon. pp. 580–582.] For all things would return to nothing, if God did not keep them up in the elevation and state to which he at first raised them by his creative power (Acts 17:28): "In him we live, and move, and have our being." By him, or by the same Power whence we derived our being, are our

lives maintained: as it was his Almighty Power whereby we were, after we had been nothing, so it is the same power whereby we now are, after he hath made us something. Certainly all things have no less a dependence on God than light upon the sun, which vanisheth and hides its head upon the withdrawing of the sun. And should God suspend that powerful Word, whereby he erected the frame of the world, it would sink down to what it was, before he commanded it to stand up. There needs no new act of power to reduce things to nothing, but the cessation of that Omnipotent influx. When the appointed time set them for their being comes to a period, they faint and bend down their heads to their dissolution; they return to their elements, and perish (Psalms 104:29): "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." That which was nothing cannot remain on this side nothing, but by the same Power that first called it out of nothing. As when God withdrew his concurring power from the fire, its quality ceased to act upon the three children: so if he withdraws his sustaining power from the creature, its nature will cease to be.

2. It appears in propagation. That powerful word (Genesis 1:22-23), "Increase and multiply," pronounced at the first creation, hath spread itself over every part of the world; every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individuals and single creatures have been multiplied, to cover the face of the earth in their continued successions! What a world of plants spring up from the womb of a dry earth, moistened by the influence of a cloud, and hatched by the beams of the sun! How admirable an instance of his propagating power is it, that from a little seed a massy root should strike into the bowels of the earth, a tall body and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colors, should break through the surface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the seed you neither smell the scent, nor see any firmness of a tree, nor behold any of those colors which you view in the flowers that the ears produce! A power not to be imitated by any creature. How astonishing is it, that a small seed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, should spread itself into leaves, bark, fruit of a vast weight, and multiply itself into millions of seeds! What power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families, stocked the world with people! Consider the living creatures, as formed in the womb of their several kinds; every one is a wonder of power. The Psalmist instanceth in the forming and propagation of man (Psalms 139:14): "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works" The forming of the parts distinctly in the womb, the bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That so fine a structure as the body of man should be polished in "the lower parts of the earth," as he calls the womb (Psalms 139:15), in so short a time, with members of a various form and usefulness, each laboring in their several functions! Can any man give an exact account of the manner "how the bones do grow in the womb" (Ecclesiastes 11:5)? It is unknown to the father, and no less hid from the mother, and the wisest men cannot search out the depth of it. It is one of the secret works of an Omnipotent Power, secret in the manner, though open in the effect. So that we must ascribe it to God, as Job doth, "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about" (Job 10:8). Thy hands which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. The heavens are said to be the "work of God's hands," and man is here said to be no less. The forming and propagation of man from that earthy matter, is no less a wonder of power than the structure of the world from a rude and indisposed matter. A heathen philosopher descants elegantly upon it: "Dost thou understand (my son) the forming of man in the womb; who erected that noble, fabric who carved the eyes, the crystal windows of light,

and the conductors of the body; who bored the nostrils and ears, those loopholes of scents and sounds; who stretched out and knit the sinews and ligaments for the fastening of every member; who cast the hollow veins, the channels of blood; set and strengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of the body; who digged the pores, the sinks to expel the filth; who made the heart, the repository of the soul, and formed the lungs like a pipe? What mother, what father, wrought these things? No, none but the Almighty God, who made all things according to his pleasure; it is He who propagates this noble piece from a pile of dust. Who is born by his own advice; who gives stature, features, sense, wit, strength, speech, but God?" [Note: Trismegist, in Serm. Greek, in the Temple, p, 57.] It is no less a wonder, that a little infant can live so long in a dark sink, in the midst of filth, without breathing; and the eduction of it out of the womb is no less a wonder than the forming, increase, nourishment of it in that cell. A wonder, that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little creature when it springs up from such small beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have a dominion over the creatures, and propagates its kind in the same manner: all this is unaccountable without having recourse to the power of God in the government of the creatures. And to add to this wonder, consider also what multitudes of formations and births there are at one time all over the world, in every of which the finger of God is at work; and it will speak an unwearied power. It is admirable in one man, more in a town of men, still more in a greater and larger kingdom, a vaster world; there is a birth for every hour in this city, were but 168 born in a week, though the weekly bills mention more: what is this city to three kingdoms? what three kingdoms to a populous world? Eleven thousand and eighty will make one for every minute in the week; what is this to the weekly propagation in all the nations of the universe, besides the generation of all the living creatures in that space, which are the works of God's fingers as well as man? What will be the result of this, but the notion of an unconceivable, unwearied Almightiness, always active, always operating?

3. It appears in the motions of all creatures. "All things live and move in him" (Acts 17:28); by the same power that creatures have their beings, they have their motions: they have not only a being by his powerful command, but they have their minutely motion by his powerful concurrence. Nothing can act without the almighty influx of God, no more than it can exist without the creative word of God. It is true indeed, the ordering of all motions to his holy ends, is an act of wisdom; but the motion itself, whereby those ends are attained, is a work of his power.

(1). God, as the first cause, hath an influence into the motions of all second causes. As all the wheels in a clock are moved in their different motions by the force and strength of the principal and primary wheel; if there be any defect in that, or if that stand still, all the rest languish and stand idle the same moment. All creatures are his instruments, his engines, and have no spirit, but what he gives, and what he assists. Whatsoever nature works, God works in nature; nature is the instrument, God is the supporter, director, mover of nature; that which the prophet saith in another case, may be the language of universal nature: "Lord, thou hast wrought all our work in us" (Isaiah 26:12.) They are works subjectively, efficiently, as second causes; Gods works originally, concurrently. The sun moved not in the valley of Ajalon for the space of many hours, in the time of Joshua (Joshua 10:13); nor did the fire exercise its consuming quality upon the three children, in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (Daniel 3:25): he withdrew not his supporting power from their being, for then they had vanished, but his influencing power from their qualities, whereby their motion

ceased, till he returned his influential concurrence to them; which evidenceth, that without a perpetual derivation of Divine power, the sun could not run one stride or inch of its race, nor the fire devour one grain of light chaff, or an inch of straw. Nothing without his sustaining power can continue in being; nothing without his co-working power can exercise one mite of those qualities it is possessed of. All creatures are wound up by him, and his hand is constantly upon them, to keep them in perpetual motion.

(2). Consider the variety of motions in a single creature. How many motions are there in the vital parts of a man, or in any other animal, which a man knows not, and is unable to number! The renewed motion of the lungs, the systoles and diastoles of the heart; the contractions and dilations of the heart, whereby it spouts out and takes in blood; the power of concoction in the stomach;; the motion of the blood in the veins, &c., all which were not only settled by the powerful hand of God, but are upheld by the same, preserved and influenced in every distinct motion by that power that stamped them with that nature. To every one of those there is not only the sustaining power of God holding up their natures, but the motive power of God concurring to every motion; for if we move in him as well as we live in him, then every particle of our motion is exercised by his concurring power, as well as every moment of our life supported by his preserving power. What an infinite variety of motions is there in the whole world in universal nature, to all which God concurs, all which he conducts, even the motions of the meanest as well as the greatest creatures, which demonstrate the indefatigable power of the governor! It is an Infinite Power which doth act in so many varieties, whereby the souls forms every thought, the tongue speaks every word, the body exerts every action. What an Infinite Power is that which presides over the birth of all things, concurs with the motion of the sap in the tree, rivers on the earth, clouds in the air, every drop of rain, fleece of snow, crack of thunder! Not the least motion in the world, but is under an actual influence of this Almighty Mover. And lest any should scruple the concurrence of God to so many varieties of the creature's motion, as a thing utterly inconceivable, let them consider the sun, a natural image and shadow of the perfections of God; doth not the power of that finite creature extend itself to various objects at the same moment of time? How many insects doth it animate, as flies, &c., at the same moment throughout the world! How many several plants doth it erect at its appearance in the spring, whose roots lay mourning in the earth all the foregoing winter! What multitudes of spires of grass, and nobler flowers, doth it midwife in the same hour! It warms the air, melts the blood, cherishes living creatures of various kinds, in distinct places, without tiring: and shall the God of this sun be less than his creature?

(3.) And since I speak of the sun, consider the power of God in the motion of it. The vastness of the sun is computed to be, at the least, 166 times bigger than the earth, and its distance from the earth, some tell us, to be about 4,000,000 of miles; [Note: A Lapide, in 1 cap. Genesis 16:1-16. Lessius, de Perfect. Divin. pp. 90, 91.] whence it follows, that it is whirled about the world with that swiftness, that in the space of an hour it runs 1,000,000 of miles, which is as much as if it should move round about the surface of the earth fifty times in one hour; which vastness exceeds the swiftness of a bullet shot out of a cannon, which is computed to fly not above three miles in a minute: [Note: Lessius, de Providen, p. 633. Voss. de Idol. lib. ii. cap. 2.] so that the sun runs further in one hour's space, than a bullet can in 5,000, if it were kept in motion; so that if it were near the earth, the swiftness of its motion would shatter the whole frame of the world, and dash it in pieces; so that the Psalmist may well say, "It runs a race like a strong man" (Psalms 19:5). What

an incomprehensible Power is that which hath communicated such a strength and swiftness to the sun, and doth daily influence its motion; especially since after all those years of its motion, wherein one would think it should have spent itself, we behold it every day as vigorous as Adam did in Paradise, without limping, without shattering itself, or losing any thing of its natural sphits in its unwearied motion. How great must that power be, which hath kept this great body so entire, and thus swiftly moves it every day! Is it not now an argument of omnipotency, to keep all the strings of nature in tune; to wind them up to a due pitch for the harmony he intended by them; to keep things that are contrary from that confusion they would naturally fall into; to prevent those jarrings which would naturally result from their various and snarling qualities; to preserve every being in its true nature; to propagate every kind of creature; order all the operations, even the meanest of them, when there are such innumerable varieties? But let us consider, that this power or preserving things in their station and motion, and the renewing of them, is more stupendous than that which we commonly call miraculous. We call those miracles, which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it; which men wonder at, because they seldom see them, and hear of them as things rarely brought forth in the world; when the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes than in those extraordinary exertings of power. Is not more power signalized in that whirling motion of the sun every hour for so many ages, than in the suspending of its motion one day, as it was in the days of Joshua? That fire should continually ravage and consume, and greedily swallow up every thing that is offered to it, seems to be the effect of as admirable a power, as the stopping of its appetite a few moments, as in the case of the three children. Is not the rising of some small seeds from the ground, with a multiplication of their numerous posterity, an effect of as great a power, as our Saviour's feeding many thousands with a few loaves, by a secret augmentation of them? [Note: Faucher sur Act. Vol. II. p. 47.] Is not the chemical producing so pleasant and delicious a fruit as the grape, from a dry earth, insipid rain, and a sour vine, as admirable a token of Divine power, as our Saviour's turning water into wine? Is not the cure of diseases by the application of a simple inconsiderable weed, or a slight infusion, as wonderful in itself, as the cure of it by a powerful weed? What if it be naturally designed to heal; what is that nature, who gave that nature, who maintains that nature, who conducts it, co-operates with it? Doth it work of itself, and by its own strength? why not then equally in all, in one as well as another? Miracles, indeed, affect more, because they testify the immediate operation of God, without the concurrence of second causes; not that there is more of the power of God shining in them than in the other.

Secondly, This power is evident in moral government.

1. In the restraint of the malicious nature of the devil. Since Satan hath the power of an angel, and the malice of a devil, what safety would there be for our persons from destruction, what security for our goods from rifling, by this invisible, potent, and envious spirit, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed, by One more mighty than himself? How much doth he envy God the glory of his creation; and man, the use and benefit of it! How desirous would he be, in regard of his passion, how able in regard of his strength and subtlety, to overthrow or infect all worship, but what was directed to himself; to manage all things according to his lusts, turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houses, plunder us of the supports of nature, waste kingdoms, &c.; if he were not held in a chain, as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horse, by the Creator and Governor of the world! What remedy could be used by man against the activity of this unseen and

swift spirit? The world could not subsist under his malice; he would practise the same things upon all as he did upon Job, when he had got leave from his Governor; turn the swords of men into one another's bowels; send fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth and the cattle intended for the use of man; raise winds, to shake and tear our houses upon our heads; daub our bodies with scabs and boils, and let all the humors in our blood loose upon us. He that envied Adam a paradise, doth envy us the pleasure of enjoying its out-works. If we were not destroyed by him, we should live in a continued vexation by spectrums and apparitions, affrighting sounds and noise, as some think the Egyptians did in that three days' darkness: he would be alway winnowing us, as he desired to winnow Peter (Luke 22:31). But God over-masters his strength, that he cannot move a hair's breadth beyond his tedder; not only is he unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarenes forbidden and filthy swine without special license (Matthew 8:31). When he is cast out of one place, he walks "through dry places seeking rest" (Luke 11:24), new objects for his malicious designs,—but finding none, till God lets loose the reins upon him for a new employment. Though Satan's power be great, yet God suffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as Divine wisdom thinks fit; and the Divine power tempers the other's active malice, and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended spoil and captivity. How much stronger is God, than all the legions of hell; as he that holds a "strong man" (Luke 11:22) from effecting his purpose, testifies more ability than his adversary! How doth he lock him up for a "thousand years" (Revelation 20:3) in a pound, which he cannot leap over! and this restraint is wrought partly by blinding the devil in his designs, partly by denying him concurrence to his motion; as he hindered the active quality of the fire upon the three children, by withdrawing his power, which was necessary to the motion of it; and his power is as necessary for the motion of the devil, as for that of any other creature: sometimes he makes him to confess him against his own interest, as Apollo's oracle confessed. [Note: Cæteros deos æreos esse, &c. Grot. Verit. Rel. lib. 4.] And though when the devil was cast out of the possessed person, he publicly owned Christ to be the "Holy one of God" (Mark 1:24), to render him suspected by the people of having commerce with the unclean spirits; yet this he could not do without the leave and permission of God, that the power of Christ, in stopping his mouth and imposing silence upon him, might be evidence; and that it reaches to the gates of hell, as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the strength, as well as the wisdom of God, that "the deceived and the deceiver are his" (Job 12:16): wisdom to defeat, and power to overrule his most malicious designs, to his own glory.

2. In the restraint of the natural corruption of men. Since the impetus of original corruption runs in the blood, conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his posterity, and universally diffused in all mankind; what wreck and havoc would it make in the world, if it were not suppressed by this Divine power which presides over the hearts of men! Man is so wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man "drinks iniquity like water," being, by nature, "abominable and filthy" (Job 15:16). He greedily swallows all matter for iniquity, everything suitable to the mire and poison in his nature, and would sprout it out with all fierceness and insolence. God himself gives us the description of man's nature (Genesis 6:5), that he hath not one good imagination at any time; and the apostle from the Psalmist dilates and comments upon it (Romans 3:10, &c.) "There is none righteous; no, not one; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood," &c. This corruption is equal in all, natural in all; it is not more poisonous or more fierce in one man, than in another. The root of all men is the same; all the

branches therefore do equally possess the villanous nature of the root. No child of Adam can, by natural descent, be better than Adam, or have less of baseness, and vileness, and venom, than Adam. How fruitful would this loathsome lake be in all kind of streams! What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose itself to lock down the flood-gates of it! What rooting up of human society would there be! how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater than that of apprehenders and punishers! How would the prints of natural laws be rased out of the heart, if God should leave human nature to itself! Who can read the first chapter of Romans, verses (Romans 1:24-29), without acknowledging this truth? where there is a catalogue of those villanies which followed upon God's pulling up the sluices, and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural course! If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be overrun, his vine rooted up; the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worst of wickedness. How great is that Power that curbs, bridles, or changes as many headstrong horses at once, and every minute, as there are sons of Adam upon the earth? The "floods lift up their waves; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psalms 93:3-4); that doth hush and pen in the turbulent passions of men.

3. In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to his own ends. That must be an Omnipotent hand that grasps and contains the hearts of all men; the heart of the meanest person, as well as of the most towering angel, and turns them as he pleases, and makes them sometime ignorantly, sometime knowingly, concur to the accomplishment of his own purposes! When the hearts of men are so numerous, their thoughts so various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to those millions of hearts, and with infinite power, guided by as infinite wisdom, he draws them into what channels he pleases, for the gaining his own ends. Though the Jews had imbrued their hands in the blood of our Saviour, and their rage was yet recking-hot against his followers, God bridled their fury in the church's infancy, till it had got some strength, and cast a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apostles (Acts 2:43): "And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." Was there not the same reason in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought, to point them to the finger of God, and calm their rage? Yet did not the power of God work upon their passions in those miracles, nor stop the impetuousness of the corruption resident in their hearts. Yet now those who had the boldness to attack the Son of God and nail him to the cross, are frightened at the appearance of twelve unarmed apostles; as the sea seems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble sand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Israelites, and turn them to that point, as to lend their most costly vessels, their precious jewels, and rich garments, to supply those whom they had just before tyrannically loaded with their chains (Exodus 3:21-22)! When a great part of an army came upon Jehoshaphat, to dispatch him into another world, how doth God, in a trice, touch their hearts, and move them, by a secret instinct, at once to depart from him (1 Chron. 18:31)! as if you should see a numerous sight of birds in a moment turn wing another way, by a sudden and joint consent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a spirit fit for government, "and gave him another heart" (1 Samuel 10:9); and brought the people to submit to his yoke, who, a little before, wandered about the land upon no nobler employment than the seeking of asses. It is no small remark of the power of God, to make a number of strong and discontented persons, and desirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke of government, and submit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and unwiser than the most of them, and many

times an oppressor and invader of their rights. Upon this account David calls God “his fortress, tower, shield” (Psalms 144:2); all terms of strength in subduing the people under him. It is the mighty hand of God that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The same hand that assuageth the waves of the sea, suppresseth the tumults of the people.

Thirdly, It appears in his gracious and judicial government.

1. In his gracious government. In the deliverance of his church he is the “strength of Israel” (1 Samuel 15:29), and hath protected his little flock in the midst of wolves; and maintained their standing, when the strongest kingdoms have sunk, and the best jointed states have been broken in pieces; when judgments have ravaged countries, and torn up the mighty, as a tempestuous wind hath often done the tallest trees, which seemed to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the storm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and rose-bushes have stood firm, and been seen in their beauty next morning. The state of the church hath outlived the most flourishing monarchies, when there hath been a mighty knot of adversaries against her; when the bulls of Bashan have pushed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have sharpened their weapons, and edged their malice; when the voice was strong, and the hopes high to rase her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the strength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been passed against her, and the bowers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and skulked in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to assist, help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated; kings have brought gifts to her, and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unseen power, have been forced to court her whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have sneaked into their den, and the church hath triumphed when she hath been upon the brink of the grave. Thus did God send a mighty angel to be the executioner of Sennacherib’s army, and the protector of Jerusalem, who run his sword into the hearts of eighty thousand (2 Kings 19:35), when they were ready to swallow up his beloved city. When the knife was at the throats of the Jews, in Shushan (Esther 8:1-17.), by a, powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies. With what an outstretched arm were the Israelites freed from the Egyptian yoke (Deuteronomy 4:34)! When Pharaoh had mustered a great army to pursue them, assisted with six hundred chariots of war, the Red Sea obstructed their passage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Israelites despaired of deliverance, and the insolent Egyptian assured himself of his revenge, God stretches out his irresistible arm to defeat the enemy, and assist his people; he strikes down the wolves, and preserves the flock. God restrained the Egyptian enmity against the Israelites till they were at the brink of the Red Sea, and then lets them follow their humor, and pursue the fugitives, that his power might more gloriously shine forth in the deliverance of the one, and the destruction of the other. God might have brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those kings that had remembered the good service of Joseph to their country, but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, saffers them to be slaves, that they might by his sole power, be conquerors, which had had no appearance had there been a willing dismissal of them at the first summons (Exodus 9:16); “In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” I have permitted thee to rise up against my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mightest be an occasion for the manifestation of my power in their rescue; and whilst thou art obstinate to enslave them, I will stretch out my arm to

deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the wreck of thee and thy host in the Red Sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age, or in one part of the world, but God hath signalized his power in all kingdoms where she hath had a footing: as he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated her by one spirit, so he hath protected her by the same arm of power. When the Roman emperors bandied all their force against her, for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end than when they first attempted it; the church grew under their sword, and was hatched under the wings of the Roman eagle, which were spread to destroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge, and the waters the devil poured out to drown her did but slime the earth for a new increase of her. She hath sometimes been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath seemed to be in the grave for some days, that the power of God might be more visible in her sudden resurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her persecutors.

2. In his judicial proceedings. The deluge was no small testimony of his power, in opening the cisterns of heaven, and pulling up the sluices of the sea. He doth but call for the waters of the sea, and they “pour themselves upon the face of the earth” (Amos 9:6.) In forty days’ time the waters overtopped the highest mountains fifteen cubits (Genesis 7:17-20); and by the same power he afterwards reduced the sea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into his den. A shower of fire from heaven, upon Sodom, and the cities of the plain, was a signal display of his power, either in creating it on the sudden, for the execution of his righteous sentence, or sending down the element of fire, contrary to its nature, which affects ascent, for the punishment of rebels against the light of nature. How often hath he ruined the most flourishing monarchies, led princes away spoiled, and overthrown the mighty, which Job makes an argument of his strength (Job 12:13-14). Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals, broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to succeed in such an attempt, unless God had given them strength and motion for the executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath. How did he evidence his power, by daubing the throne of Pharaoh, and his chamber of presence, as well as the houses of his subjects, with the slime of frogs (Exodus 8:3); turning their waters into blood, and their dust into biting lice (Exodus 7:20); raising his militia of locusts against them; causing a three days’ darkness without stopping the motion of the sun; taking off their first-born, the excellency of their strength, in a night, by the stroke of the angel’s sword! He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharaoh, and presents him with a destruction where he expected a victory; brings those waves over the heads of him and his host, which stood firm as marble walls for the safety of his people; the sea is made to swallow them up, that durst not, by the order of their Governor, touch the Israelites: it only sprinkled the one as a type of baptism, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the instrument of an offensive and defensive war (Isaiah 40:23-24; “He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity.” Great monarchs have, by his power, been hurled from their thrones and their sceptres, like Venice-glasses, broken before their faces, and they been advanced that have had the least hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and set a shrub to grow up in the place; dissolved rocks, and established bubbles (Luke 1:52): “He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.”—And these things he doth magnify his power in:—

(1.) By ordering the nature of creatures as he pleases. By restraining their force, or guiding their motions. The restraint of the destructive qualities of the creatures argues as great a power as the change of their natures, yea, and a greater. The qualities of creatures may be changed by art and composition, as in the preparing of medicines; but what but a Divine Power could restrain the operation of the fire from the three children, while it retained its heat and burning quality in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace? The operation was curbed while its nature was preserved. All creatures are called his host, because he marshals and ranks them as an army to serve his purposes. The whole scheme of nature is ready to favor men when God orders it, and ready to punish men when God commissions it. He gave the Red Sea but a check, and it obeyed his voice (Psalms 106:9): "He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up;" the motion of it ceased, and the waters of it were ranged as defensive walls, to secure the march of his people: and at the motion of the hand of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the sea recovered its violence, and the walls that were framed came tumbling down upon the Egyptian's heads (Exodus 14:27). The Creator of nature is not led by the necessity of nature: he that settled the order of nature, can change or restrain the order of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. The most necessary and useful creatures he can use as instruments of his vengeance: water is necessary to cleanse, and by that he can deface a world; fire is necessary to warm, and by that he can burn a Sodom: from the water he formed the fowl (Genesis 1:21), and by that he dissolves them in the deluge; fire or heat is necessary to the generation of creatures, and by that he ruins the cities of the plain. He orders all as he pleases, to perform every tittle and punctilio of his purpose. The sea observed him so exactly, that it drowned not one Israelite, nor saved one Egyptian (Psalms 106:11). There was not one of them left. And to perfect the Israelites' deliverance, he followed them with testimonies of his power above the strength of nature. When they wanted drink, he orders Moses to strike a rock, and the rock spouts a river, and a channel is formed for it to attend them in their journey. When they wanted bread, he dressed manna for them in the heavens, and sent it to their tables in the desert. When he would declare his strength, he calls to the heavens to pour down righteousness, and to the earth to bring forth salvation (Isaiah 45:8). Though God had created righteousness or deliverance for the Jews in Babylon, yet he calls to the heavens and the earth to be assistant to the design of Cyrus, whom he had raised for that purpose, as he speaks in the beginning of the chapter (Isaiah 45:1-4). As God created man for a supernatural end, and all creatures for man as their immediate end, so he makes them, according to opportunities, subservient to that supernatural end of man, for which he created him. He that spans the heavens with his fist, can shoot all creatures like an arrow, to hit what mark he pleases. He that spread the heavens and the earth by a word, and can by a word fold them up more easily than a man can a garment (Hebrews 1:12), can order the streams of nature; cannot he work without nature as well as with it, beyond nature, contrary to nature, that can, as it were, fillip nature with his finger into that nothing whence he drew it; who can cast down the sun from his throne, clap the distinguished parts of the world together, and make them march in the same order to their confusion, as they did in their creation: who can jumble the whole frame together, and, by a word, dissolve the pillars of the world, and make the fabric he in a ruinous heap?

(2.) In effecting his purposes by small means: in making use of the meanest creatures. As the power of God is seen in the creation of the smallest creatures, and assembling so many perfections in the little body of an insect, as an ant, or spider, so his power is not less magnified in the use he makes of them. As he magnifies his wisdom, by using ignorant instruments, so he

exalts his power, by employing weak instruments in his service: the meanness and imperfection of the matter sets off the excellency of the workman; so the weakness of the instrument is no foil to the power of the principal Agent. When God hath effected things by means in the Scripture, he hath usually brought about his purposes by weak instruments. Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron a captive in it, are the instruments of the Israelites' deliverance. By the motion of Moses' rod, he works wonders in the court of Pharaoh, and summons up his judgments against him. He brought down Pharaoh's stomach for a while, by a squadron of lice and locusts, wherein Divine power was more seen, than if Moses had brought him to his own articles by a multitude of warlike troops. The fall of the walls of Jericho by the sound of rams' horns, was a more glorious character of God's power, than if Joshua had battered it down with a hundred of warlike engines (Joshua 6:20). Thus the great army of the Midianites, which lay as grasshoppers upon the ground, were routed by Gideon in the head of three hundred men; and Goliath, a giant, laid level with the ground by David, a stripling, by the force of a sling: a thousand Philistines dispatched out of the world by the jaw-bone of an ass in the hand of Samson. He can master a stout nation by an army of locusts, and render the teeth of those little insects as destructive as the teeth, yea, the strongest teeth, the cheek-teeth, of a great lion (Joel 1:6-7). The thunderbolt, which produces sometimes dreadful effects, is compacted of little atoms which fly in the air, small vapors drawn up by the sun, and mixed with other sulphurous matter and petrifying juice. Nothing is so weak, but his strength can make victorious; nothing so small, but by his power he can accomplish his great ends by it; nothing so vile, but his might can conduct to his glory; and no nation so mighty, but he can waste and enfeeble by the meanest creatures. God is great in power in the greatest things, and not little in the smallest; his power in the minutest creatures which he uses for his service, surmounts the force of our understanding.

Thirdly. The power of God appears in redemption. As our Saviour is called the Wisdom of God, so he is called the Power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). The arm of Power was lifted up as high as the designs of Wisdom were laid deep: as this way of redemption could not be contrived but by an Infinite Wisdom, so it could not be accomplished but by an Infinite Power. None but God could shape such a design, and none but God could effect it. The Divine Power in temporal deliverances, and freedom from the slavery of human oppressors, vails to that which glitters in redemption; whereby the devil is defeated in his designs, stripped of his spoils, and yoked in his strength. The power of God in creation requires not those degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation, the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, so there was nothing to oppose; no victorious devil was in that to be subdued; no thundering law to be silenced; no death to be conquered; no transgression to be pardoned and rooted out; no hell to be shut; no ignominious death upon the cross to be suffered. It had been, in the nature of the thing, an easier thing to Divine Power to have created a new world than repaired a broken, and purified a polluted one. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the first creation. And this will appear, I. In the Person redeeming. II. In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. III. In the application of redemption.

I. In the Person redeeming. First, In his conception.

1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin (Luke 1:35): "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:" which act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God; and it expresses the supernatural manner

of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and signifies not the Divine nature of Christ infusing itself into the womb of the virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the producing the human nature of Christ, and not to the nature assuming that Humanity into union with itself. The Holy Ghost, or the Third Person in the Trinity, overshadowed the virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ, and united it to the Divinity. It is, therefore, expressed by a word of the same import with that used in Genesis 1:2, "The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters," which signifies (as it were) a brooding upon the chaos, shadowing it with his wings, as hens sit upon their eggs, to form them and hatch them into animals; or else it is an allusion to the "cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). It was not such a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, such as God's bringing things into form out of the first matter, which had nothing but an obediential or passive disposition to whatsoever stamp the powerful wisdom of God should imprint upon it. So the substance of the Virgin had no active, but only a passive disposition to this work: the matter of the body was earthy, the substance of the virgin; the forming of it was heavenly, the Holy Ghost working upon that matter. And therefore when it is said, that "she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18), it is to be understood of the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, not of the substance of the Holy Ghost. The matter was natural, but the manner of conceiving was in a supernatural way, above the methods of nature. In reference to the active principle the Redeemer is called in the prophecy (Isaiah 4:2), "The branch of the Lord," in regard of the Divine hand that planted him: in respect to the passive principle, the fruit of the earth, in regard of the womb that bare him; and therefore said to be "made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). That part of the flesh of the virgin whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was refined and purified from corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold: our Saviour is therefore called, "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35), though born of the virgin: he was necessarily some way to descend from Adam. God, indeed, might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it (as he did Adam's) out of the dust of the ground: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us, because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore necessary to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. [Note: Amyrald. in Symbol. p. 103, &c.] But now, by this way of producing the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin, he was in Adam (say some) corporally, but not seminally; of the substance of Adam, or a daughter of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam: and so he is of the same nature that had sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us; which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

2. It was not convenient he should be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother: for whosoever is so born is polluted. "A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean" (Job 14:4). And our Saviour had been incapable of being a redeemer, had he been tainted with the least spot of our nature, but would have stood in need of redemption himself. Besides, it had been inconsistent with the holiness of the Divine nature, to have assumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of blessedness to all nations, was not to be subject to the curse of the law for himself; which he would have been, had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn the devil's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature

under the curse; nor could he be able to break the serpent's head, had he been tainted with the serpent's breath. Again, supposing that Almighty God by his divine power had so ordered the matter, and so perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot, that the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost, did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made, yet it was not convenient that that person, that was God blessed for ever as well as man, partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner as ours, but different, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person: which could not have been, had not a supernatural power and a Divine person been concerned as an active principle in it; besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him "the Seed of the woman" (Genesis 1:15), not of the man; and so the veracity of God had suffered some detriment: the Seed of the woman only is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent.

3. By this manner of conception the holiness of his nature is secured, and his fitness for his office is assured to us. It is now a pure and unpolluted humanity that is the temple and tabernacle of the Divinity: the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and dwells in him holily. His humanity is supernaturalized and elevated by the activity of the Holy Ghost, hatching the flesh of the virgin into man, as the chaos into a world. Though we read of some sanctified from the womb, it was not a pure and perfect holiness; it was like the light of fire mixed with smoke, an infused holiness accompanied with a natural taint: but the holiness of the Redeemer by this conception, is like the light of the sun, pure, and without spot. The Spirit of holiness supplying the place of a father in the way of creation. His fitness for his office is also assured to us; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit of a Divine person, the guilt of our sins may be imputed to him because of our nature, without the stain of sin inherent in him; because of his supernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curse without being touched by our taint. By this means our sinful nature is assumed without sin in that nature which was assumed by him: "flesh he hath, but not sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). Real flesh, but not really sinful, only by way of imputation. Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work: by ordinary laws and the course of nature a virgin could not bear a son: nothing but a supernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make so holy and perfect a conjunction. The generation of others, in an ordinary way, is by male and female: but the virgin is overshadowed by the Spirit and power of the Highest. [Note: Amyrant. sur Timole, p. 292.] Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing, the Son of God. In other generations, a rational soul is only united to a material body: but in this, the Divine nature is united with the human in one person by an indissoluble union. The Second act of power in the person redeeming, is the union of the two natures, the Divine and human. The designing indeed of this was an act of wisdom; but the accomplishing it was an act of power.

1. There is in this redeeming person a union of two natures. He is God and man in one person (Hebrews 1:8-9). "'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,'" &c. The Son is called God, having a throne for ever and ever, and the unction speaks him man: the Godhead cannot be anointed, nor hath any fellows. Humanity and Divinity are ascribed to him (Romans 1:3-4). "He was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead." The Divinity and humanity are both prophetically joined (Zechariah 12:10), "I will pour out my Spirit;" the pouring forth the

Spirit is an act only of Divine grace and power. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" the same person pours forth the Spirit as God, and is pierced as man. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Word from eternity was made flesh in time; Word and flesh in one person; a great God, and a little infant.

2. The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and a creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, Infinite Power and miserable infirmity, an immortal spirit and dying flesh, the highest Being and nothing? yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows: life incapable to die, joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity, and a reputed sinner; eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, Almightyness and weakness, omiscience and ignorance, immutability and changeableness, incomprehensibleness and comprehensibility; that which cannot be comprehended, and that which can be comprehended; that which is entirely independent, and that which is totally dependent; the Creator forming all things, and the creature made, met together to a personal union; "The word made flesh".(John 1:14), the eternal Son, the "Seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). What more miraculous, than for God to become man, and man to become God? That a person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead, should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one person, sin only excepted: a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin; God blessed forever, taking the properties of human nature, and human nature admitt(sd to a union with the properties of the Creator: the fulness of the Deity, and the emptiness of man united together (Colossians 2:9); not by a shining of the Deity upon the humanity, as the light of the sun upon the earth, but by an inhabitation or indwelling of the Deity in the humanity. Was there not need of an Infinite Power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity? If a God of earth should be advanced to, and united with the body of the sun, such an advance would evidence itself to be a work of Almighty power: the God hath nothing in its own nature to render it so glorious, no power to climb up to so high a dignity: how little would such a union be, to that we are speaking of! Nothing less than an Incomprehensible Power could effect what an Incomprehensible Wisdom did project in this affair.

3. Especially since the union is so strait. It is not such a union as is between a man and his house he dwells in, whence he goes out and to which he returns, without any alteration of himself or his house; nor such a union as is between a man and his garment, which both communicate and receive warmth from one another; nor such as is between an artificer and his instrument wherewith he works; nor such a union as one friend hath with another: all these are distant things, not one in nature, but have distinct substances. Two friends, though united by love, are distinct persons; a man and his clothes, an artificer and his instruments, have distinct subsistencies; but the humanity of Christ hath no subsistence, but in the person of Christ. The straitness of this union is expressed, and may be somewhat conceived, by the union of fire with iron; "fire pierceth through all the parts of iron, it unites itself with every particle, bestows a light, heat, purity, upon all of it; you cannot distinguish the iron from the fire, or the fire from the iron, yet they are distinct natures; so the Deity is united to the whole humanity, seasons it, and bestows an excellency upon it, yet the natures still remain distinct. And as during that union of fire with iron, the iron is incapable of rust or blackness, so is the humanity incapable of sin: and as the operation of fire is attributed to the red-hot iron (as

the iron may be said to heat, burn, and the fire may be said to cut and pierce), yet the imperfections of the iron do not affect the fire; so in this mystery, those things which belong to the Divinity are ascribed to the humanity, and those things which belong to the humanity, are ascribed to the Divinity, in regard of the person in whom those natures are united: yet the imperfections of the humanity do not hurt the Divinity.” [Note: Lessius de Perf. Divin. lib. 12. cap. 4. p. 104.] The Divinity of Christ is as really united with the humanity, as the soul with the body; the person was one, though the natures were two; so united, that the sufferings of the human nature were the sufferings of that person, and the dignity of the Divine was imputed to the human, by reason of that unity of both in one person; hence the blood of the human nature is said to be the “blood of God” (Acts 20:28). All things ascribed to the Son of God, may be ascribed to this man; and the things ascribed to this man, may be ascribed to the Son of God, as this man is the Son of God, eternal, Almighty; and it may be said, “God suffered, was crucified,” &c., for the person of Christ is but one, most simple; the person suffered, that was God and Man united, making one person. [Note: Lessius, pp. 103, 104.]

4. And though the union be so strait, yet without confusion of the natures, or change of them into one another. The two natures of Christ are not mixed, as liquors that incorporate with one another when they are poured into a vessel; the Divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the Divine; one nature doth not swallow up another, and make a third nature distinct from each of them. [Note: Lessius pp. 103, 104. Amyrald. Irenic. p. 284.] The Deity is not turned into the humanity, as air (which is next to a spirit) may be thickened and turned into water, and water may be rarified into air by the power of heat boiling it. The Deity cannot be changed, because the nature of it is to be unchangeable; it would not be Deity, if it were mortal and capable of suffering. The humanity is not changed into the Deity, for then Christ could not have been a sufferer; if the humanity had been swallowed up into the Deity, it had lost its own distinct nature, and put on the nature of the Deity, and, consequently, been incapable of suffering; finite can never, by any mixture, be changed into infinite, nor infinite into finite. This union, in this regard, may be resembled to the union of light and air, which are strictly joined; for the light passes through all parts of the air, but they are not confounded, but remain in their distinct essences as before the union, without the least confusion with one another. The Divine nature remains as it was before the union, entire in itself; only the Divine person assumes another nature to himself. [Note: Amyrald. Irenic. p. 282.] The human nature remains, as it would have done, had it existed separately from the Λόγος, except that then it would have had a proper subsistence by itself, which now it borrows from its union with the Λόγος, or, word; but that doth not belong to the constitution of its nature. Now let us consider, what a wonder of power is all this: the knitting a noble soul to a body of clay, was not so great an exploit of Almightiness, as the espousing infinite and finite together. Man is further distant from God, than man from nothing. What a wonder is it, that two natures infinitely distant, should be more intimately united than anything in the world; and yet without any confusion! that the same person should have both a glory and a grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity! That a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe and a suffering man, are such expressions of mighty power, as well as condescending love, that they astonish men upon earth, and angels in heaven.

Thirdly, Power was evident in the progress of his life; in the miracles he wrought. How often did he expel malicious and powerful devils from their habitations; hurl them from their thrones, and make them fall from heaven like lightning! How many wonders were wrought by his bare word, or a single touch! Sight restored to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; palsy members restored to the exercise of their functions; a dismiss given to many deplorable maladies; impure leprosy chased from the persons they had infected, and bodies beginning to putrefy raised from the grave. But the mightiest argument of power was his patience; that He who was, in his Divine nature, elevated above the world, should so long continue upon a dunghill, endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, be patiently subject to the reproaches and indignities of men, without displaying that justice which was essential to the Deity; and, in especial manner, daily merited by their provoking crimes. The patience of man under great affronts, is a greater argument of power, than the brawniness of his arm; a strength employed in the revenge of every injury, signifies a greater infirmity in the soul, than there can be ability in the body.

Fourthly, Divine power was apparent in his resurrection. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonas; the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions; and the restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of his power, and types of the resurrection of our Saviour. But what are those to that which was represented by them? That was a power over natural causes, a curbing of beasts, and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces; unlocked the prison doors, wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly and ribs of a leviathan. In the rescue of Daniel and Jonas, God overpowered beasts; and in this tore up the strength of the old serpent, and plucked the sceptre from the hand of the enemy of mankind. The work of resurrection, indeed, considered in itself, requires the efficacy of an Almighty power; neither man nor angel can create new dispositions in a dead body, to render it capable of lodging a spiritual soul; nor can they restore a dislodged soul, by their own power, to such a body. The restoring a dead body to life requires an infinite power, as well as the creation of the world; but there was in the resurrection of Christ, something more difficult than this; while he lay in the grave he was under the curse of the law, under the execution of that dreadful sentence, "Thou shalt die the death." His resurrection was not only the re-tying the marriage knot between his soul and body, or the rolling the stone from the grave; but a taking off an infinite weight, the sin of mankind, which lay upon him. So vast a weight could not be removed without the strength of an Almighty arm. It is, therefore, not to an ordinary operation, but an operation with power (Romans 1:4), and such a power wherein the glory of the Father did appear (Romans 6:4); "Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," that is, the glorious power of God. As the Eternal generation is stupendous, so is his resurrection, which is called, a new begetting of him (Acts 13:33). It is a wonder of power, that the Divine and human nature should be joined; and no less wonder that his person should surmount and rise up from the curse of God, under which he lay. The apostle, therefore, adds one expression to another, and heaps up a variety, signifying thereby that one was not enough to represent it (Ephesians 1:19); "Exceeding greatness of power, and working of mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." It was an hyperbole of power, the excellency of the mightiness of his strength: the loftiness of the expressions seems to come short of the apprehension he had of it in his soul.

II. This power appears in the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. The Divine power will appear, if you consider, 1. The nature of the doctrine. 2. The instruments employed in it. 3. The means they used to propagate it. 4. The success they had.

1. The nature of the doctrine. (1.) It was contrary to the common received reason of the world. The philosophers, the masters of knowledge among the Gentiles, had maxims of a different stamp from it. Though they agreed in the being of a God, yet their notions of his nature were confused and embroiled with many errors; the unity of God was not commonly assented unto; they had multiplied deities according to the fancies they had received from some of a more elevated wit and refined brain than others. Though they had some notion of mediators, yet they placed in those seats their public benefactors, men that had been useful to the world, or their particular countries, in imparting to them some profitable invention. To discard those, was to charge themselves with ingratitude to them, from whom they had received signal benefits, and to whose mediation, conduct, or protection, they ascribed all the success they had been blessed with in their several provinces, and to charge themselves with folly for rendering an honor and worship to them so long. Could the doctrine of a crucified Mediator, whom they had never seen, that had conquered no country for them, never enlarged their territories, brought to light no new profitable invention for the increase of their earthly welfare, as the rest had done, be thought sufficient to balance so many of their reputed heroes? How ignorant were they in the foundations of the true religion! The belief of a Providence was staggering; nor had they a true prospect of the nature of virtue and vice; yet they had a fond opinion of the strength of their own reason, and the maxims that had been handed down to them by their predecessors, which Paul (1 Timothy 6:20) entitles, a “science falsely so called,” either meant of the philosophers or the Gnostics. They presumed that they were able to measure all things by their own reason; whence, when the apostle came to preach the doctrine of the Gospel at Athens, the great school of reason in that age, they gave him no better a title than that of a babbler (Acts 17:18), and openly mocked him (Acts 17:32); a seed gatherer, [Note: Σπερμιολογος] one that hath no more brain or sense than a fellow that gathers up seeds that are spilled in a market, or one that hath a vain and empty sound, without sense or reason, like a foolish mountebank; so slightly did those rationalists of the world think of the wisdom of heaven. That the Son of God should veil himself in a mortal body, and suffer a disgraceful death in it, were things above the ken of reason. Besides, the world had a general disesteem of the religion of the Jews, and were prejudiced against anything that came from them; whence the Romans, that used to incorporate the gods of other conquered nations in their capital, never moved to have the God of Israel worshipped among them. Again, they might argue against it with much fleshly reason: here is a crucified God, preached by a company of mean and ignorant persons, what reason can we have to entertain this doctrine, since the Jews, who, as they tell us, had the prophecies of him, did not acknowledge him? Surely, had there been such predictions, they would not have crucified, but crowned their King, and expected from him the conquest of the earth under their power. What reason have we to entertain him, whom his own nation, among whom he lived, with whom he conversed so unanimously, by the vote of the rulers as well as the rout, rejected? It was impossible to conquer minds possessed with so many errors, and applauding themselves in their own reason, and to render them capable of receiving revealed truths without the influence of a Divine power.

(2.) It was contrary to the customs of the world. The strength of custom in most men, surmounts the strength of reason, and men commonly are so wedded to it, that they will be sooner divorced from anything than the modes and patterns received from their ancestors. The endeavoring to change customs of an ancient standing, hath begotten tumults and furious mutinies among nations, though the change would have been much for their advantage. This doctrine struck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies, wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their ancestors, confirmed by the customary observance of many ages, rooted in their minds and established by their laws (Acts 17:13); "This fellow persuadeth us to worship God contrary to the law;" against customs, to which they ascribed the happiness of their states, and the prosperity of their people, and would put, in the place of this religion they would abolish, a new one instituted by a man, whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a cross, as an impostor, blasphemer, and seditious person. It was a doctrine that would change the customs of the Jews, who were intrusted with the oracles of God. It would bury forever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moses, from that God, who had, with a mighty hand, brought them out of Egypt, consecrated their law with thunders and lightnings from Mount Sinai, at the time of its publication, backed it with severe sanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderness and their Canaan, and had continued it for so many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments sent upon them when they neglected and slighted it; and with what great success they were followed when they valued and observed it; and how they had abhorred the Author of this new religion, who had spoken slightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an easy matter to divorce them from that worship, upon which were entailed, as they imagined, their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the dearest regard with mankind? The Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions than the heathen were to their vain superstitions. This doctrine of the gospel was of that nature, that the state of religion, all over the earth, must be overturned by it; the wisdom of the Greeks must vail to it, the idolatry of the people must stoop to it, and the profane customs of men must moulder under the weight of it. Was it an easy matter for the pride of nature to deny a customary wisdom, to entertain a new doctrine against the authority of their ancestors, to inscribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the rest of the world? Nothing can be of greater esteem with men, than the credit of their lawgivers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and prosperity of themselves: hence the minds of men were sharpened against it. The Greeks, the wisest nation, slighted it as foolish; the Jews, the religious nation, stumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of ancient prophecies and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmest eye may behold the difficulty to change custom, a second nature it is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, stop the course of the sun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the color of Europe. Custom dips men in as durable a dye as nature. The difficulties of carrying it on against the Divine religion of the Jew, and rooted custom of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an Almighty power. And in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

(3.) It was contrary to the sensuality of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. How much the Gentiles were overgrown with base and unworthy lusts at the time of the publication of the gospel, needs no other memento than the apostle's discourse (Romans 1:1-32.). As there was no error but prevailed upon their minds, so there was no brutish affection but was wedded to their hearts. The doctrine proposed to them was not easy; it flattered not the sense, but checked the stream of

nature. It thundered down those three great engines whereby the devil had subdued the world to himself: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life:" not only the most sordid affections of the flesh, but the more refined gratifications of the mind: it stripped nature both of devil and man; of what was commonly esteemed great and virtuous. That which was the root of their fame, and the satisfaction of their ambition, was struck at by this axe of the gospel. The first article of it ordered them to deny themselves, not to presume upon their own worth; to lay their understandings and wills at the foot of the cross, and resign them up to one newly crucified at Jerusalem: honors and wealth were to be despised, flesh to be tamed, the cross to be borne, enemies to be loved, revenge not to be satisfied, blood to be spilled, and torments to be endured for the honor of One they never saw, nor ever before heard of; who was preached with the circumstances of a shameful death, enough to affright them from the entertainment: and the report of a resurrection and glorious ascension were things never heard of by them before, and unknown in the world, that would not easily enter into the belief of men: the cross, disgrace, self-denial, were only discoursed of in order to the attainment of an invisible world, and an unseen reward, which none of their predecessors ever returned to acquaint them with; a patient death, contrary to the pride of nature, was published as the way to happiness and a blessed immortality: the dearest lusts were to be pierced to death for the honor of this new Lord. Other religions brought wealth and honor; this struck them off from such expectations, and presented them with no promise of anything in this life, but a prospect of misery; except those inward consolations to which before they had been utter strangers, and had never experimented. It made them to depend not upon themselves, but upon the sole grace of God. It decried all natural, all moral idolatry, things as dear to men as the apple of their eyes. It despoiled them of whatsoever the mind, will, and affections of men, naturally lay claim to, and glory in. It pulled self up by the roots, unmanned carnal man, and debased the principle of honor and self-satisfaction, which the world counted at that time noble and brave. In a word, it took them off from themselves, to act like creatures of God's framing; to know no more than he would admit them, and do no more than he did command them. How difficult must it needs be to reduce men, that placed all their happiness in the pleasures of this life, from their pompous idolatry and brutish affections, to this mortifying religion! What might the world say? Here is a doctrine will render us a company of pining animals: farewell generosity, bravery, sense of honor, courage in enlarging the bounds of our country, for an ardent charity to the bitterest of our enemies. Here is a religion will rust our swords, canker our arms, dispirit what we have hitherto called virtue, and annihilate what hath been esteemed worthy and comely among mankind. Must we change conquest for suffering, the increase of our reputation for self-denial, the natural sentiment of self-preservation for affecting a dreadful death? How impossible was it that a crucified Lord, and a crucifying doctrine should be received in the world without the mighty operation of a divine power upon the hearts of men! And in this also the almighty power of God did notably shine forth.

2. Divine power appeared in the instruments employed for the publishing and propagating the gospel; who were (1.) Mean and worthless in themselves: not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred: so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed nothing but their nets; without any credit and reputation in the world; without comeliness and strength; as unfit to subdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war: not learned doctors, bred up at the feet of the famous Rabbins at Jerusalem, whom Paul calls "the princes of the world" (1 Corinthians 2:8); nor nursed up in the school of

Athens, under the philosophers and orators of the time: not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee; naturally skilled in no language but their own, and no more exact in that than those of the same condition in any other nation: ignorant of everything but the language of their lakes, and their fishing trade; except Paul, called some time after the rest to that employment: and after the descent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in everything but the doctrine they were commanded to publish; for the council, before whom they were summoned, proved them to be so, which increased their wonder at them (Acts 4:13). Had it been published by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them. They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness overpowered strength. The conquest of the east by Alexander was not so admirable as the enterprise of these poor men. He attempted his conquest with the hands of a warlike nation, though, indeed, but a small number of thirty thousand against multitudes, many hundred thousands of the enemies; yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to slaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuousness. Besides, he was bred up to such enterprises, had a learned education under the best philosopher, and a military education under the best commander, and a natural courage to animate him. These instruments had no such advantage from nature; the heavenly treasure was placed in those earthen vessels, as Gideon's lamps in empty pitchers (Judges 7:16), that the excellency, or hyperbole, of the power, might be of God (2 Corinthians 4:7), and the strength of his arm be displayed in the infirmity of the instruments. They were destitute of earthly wisdom, and therefore despised by the Jews, and derided by the Gentiles; the publishers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been veiled under the gifts of the creature.

(2.) Therefore a Divine power suddenly spirited them, and fitted them for so great a work. Instead of ignorance, they had the knowledge of the tongues; and they that were scarce well skilled in their own dialect, were instructed on the sudden to speak the most flourishing languages in the world, and discourse to the people of several nations the great things of God (Acts 2:11). Though they were not enriched with any worldly wealth, and possessed nothing, yet they were so sustained that they wanted nothing in any place where they came; a table was spread for them in the midst of their bitterest enemies. Their fearfulness was changed into courage, and they that a few days before skulked in corners for fear of the Jews (John 20:19), speak boldly in the name of that Jesus, whom they had seen put to death by the power of the rulers and the fury of the people: they reproach them with the murder of their Master, and outbrave that great people in the midst of their temple, with the glory of that person they had so lately crucified (Acts 2:23; Acts 3:13). Peter, that was not long before qualmed at the presence of a maid, was not daunted at the presence of the council, that had their hands yet reeking with the blood of his Master; but being filled with the Holy Ghost, seems to dare the power of the priests and Jewish governors, and is as confident in the council chamber, as he had been cowardly in the high-priest's hall (Acts 4:9), &c., the efficacy of grace triumphing over the fearfulness of nature. Whence should this ardor and zeal, to propagate a doctrine that had already borne the scars of the peoples' fury be, but from a mighty Power, which changed those bares into lions, and stripped them of their natural cowardice to clothe them with a Divine courage; making them in a moment both wise and magnanimous, alienating them from any

consultations with flesh and blood? As soon as ever the Holy Ghost came upon them as a mighty rushing wind, they move up and down for the interest of God; as fish, after a great clap of thunder, are roused, and move more nimbly on the top of the water; therefore, that which did so fit them for this undertaking, is called by the title of “power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

3. The Divine power appears in the means whereby it was propagated.

(1.) By means different from the methods of the world. Not by force of arms, as some religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horse hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an Alcoran in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apostles bore not this doctrine through the world upon the points of their swords; they presented a bodily death where they would bestow an immortal life. They employed not troops of men in a warlike posture, which had been possible for them after the gospel was once spread; they had no ambition to subdue men unto themselves, but to God; they coveted not the possessions of others; designed not to enrich themselves; invaded not the rights of princes, nor the liberties and properties of the people: they rifled them not of their estates, nor scared them into this religion by a fear of losing their worldly happiness. The arguments they used would naturally drive them from an entertainment of this doctrine, rather than allure them to be proselytes to it: their design was to change their hearts, not their government; to wean them from the love of the world, to a love of a Redeemer; to remove that which would ruin their souls. It was not to enslave them, but ransom them; they had a warfare, but not with carnal weapons, but such as were “mighty through God for the pulling down strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4); they used no weapons but the doctrine they preached. Others that have not gained conquests by the edge of the sword and the stratagems of war, have extended their opinions to others by the strength of human reason, and the insinuations of eloquence. by the apostles had as little flourish in their tongues, as edge upon their swords: their preaching was “not with the enticing words of man's wisdom” (1 Corinthians 2:4); their presence was mean, and their discourses without varnish; their doctrine was plain, a “crucified Christ;” a doctrine unlaced, ungarnished, untoothsome to the world; but they had the demonstration of the Spirit, and a mighty power for their companion in the work. The doctrine they preached, viz. the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, are called the powers, not of this world, but “of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:5). No less than a supernatural power could conduct them in this attempt, with such weak methods in human appearance.

(2.) Against all the force, power, and wit of the world. The division in the eastern empire, and the feeble and consuming state of the western, contributed to Mahomet's success. [Note: Daille. Sermon. 15. p. 57.] But never was Rome in a more flourishing condition: learning, eloquence, wisdom, strength, were at the highest pitch. Never was there a more diligent watch against any innovations; never was that state governed by more severe and suspicious princes, than at the time when Tiberius and Nero held the reins. No time seemed to be more unfit for the entrance of a new doctrine than that age, wherein it begun to be first published; never did any religion meet with that opposition from men. Idolatry hath been often settled without any contest; but this hath suffered the same fate with the institutor of it, and endured the contradictions of sinners against itself: and those that published it, were not only without any worldly prop, but exposed themselves to the hatred and fury, to the racks and tortures, of the strongest powers on earth. It never set foot in any place, but the country was in an uproar (Acts 19:28); swords were drawn to destroy it; laws made to suppress it; prisons provided for the professors of it; fires kindled to consume them, and

executioners had a perpetual employment to stifle the progress of it. Rome, in its conquest of countries, changed not the religion, rites, and modes of their worship: they altered their civil government, but left them to the liberty of their religion, and many times joined with them in the worship of their peculiar gods; and sometime imitated them at Rome, instead of abolishing them in the cities they had subdued. But all their councils were assembled, and their force was bandied “against the Lord, and against his Christ;” and that city that kindly received all manner of superstitions, hated this doctrine with an irreconcilable hatred. It met with reproaches from the wise, and fury from the potentates; it was derided by the one as the greatest folly, and persecuted by the other as contrary to God and mankind; the one were afraid to lose their esteems by the doctrine, and the other to lose their authority by a sedition they thought a change of religion would introduce. The Romans, that had been conquerors of the earth, feared intestine commotions, and the falling asunder the links of their empire: scarce any of their first emperors, but had their swords dyed red in the blood of the Christians. The flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries the statesmen with all their craft, and the mighty with all their strength, joined together to extirpate it: though many members were taken off by the fires, yet the church not only lived, but flourished, in the furnace. Converts were made by the death of martyrs; and the flames which consumed their bodies, were the occasion of firing men's hearts with a zeal for the profession of it. Instead of being extinguished, the doctrine shone more bright, and multiplied under the sickles that were employed to cut it down. God ordered every circumstance so, both in the persons that published it, the means whereby, and the time when, that nothing but his power might appear in it, without anything to dim and darken it.

4. The Divine power was conspicuous in the great success it had under all these difficulties. Multitudes were prophesied of to embrace it; whence the prophet Isaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Christ (Isaiah 53:1-12.), calls upon the church to enlarge her tents, and “lengthen out her cords” to receive those multitudes of children that should call her mother (Isaiah 54:2-3); for she should “break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed should inherit the Gentiles” the idolaters and persecutors should list their names in the muster-roll of the church. Presently, after the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven upon the apostles, you find the hearts of three thousand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine; who were a little before so far from having a favorable thought of it, that some of them at least, if not all, had expressed their rage against it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the Author of it (Acts 2:41-42): but in a moment they were so altered, that they breathe out affections instead of fury; neither the respect they had to their rulers, nor the honor they bore to their priests; not the derisions of the people, nor the threatening of punishment, could stop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of discouragements. How wonderful is it that they should so soon, and by such small means, pay a reverence to the servants, who had none for the Master! that they should hear them with patience, without the same clamor against them as against Christ, “Crucify them, crucify them” but, that their hearts should so suddenly be inflamed with devotion to him dead, whom they so much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the most famous cities; in Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of Christians first began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Ephesus, the seat of a noted idol. In less than twenty years, there was never a province of the Roman empire, and scarce any part of the known world, but was stored with the professors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them sprinkled in every corner, whose “faith was spoken of throughout the world”

(Romans 1:8). The court of Nero, that monster of mankind, and the cruelest and sordidest tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of sincere votaries to it; there were “saints in Coesar’s house” while Paul was under Nero’s chain (Php 4:1-23.); and it maintained its standing, and and flourished in spite of all the force of hell, two hundred and fifty years before any sovereign prince espoused it. The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and subdued their bodies; these vanquished hearts and wills, and brought the most beloved thoughts under the yoke of Christ: so much did this doctrine overmaster the consciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke, than others at their liberty; and counted it more a glory to die for the honor of it, than to live in the profession of it. Thus did our Saviour reign and gather subjects in the midst of his enemies; in which respect, in the first discovery of the gospel, he is described as “a mighty Conqueror” (Revelation 6:2), and still conquering in the greatness of his strength. How great a testimony of his power is it, that from so small a cloud should rise so glorious a sun, that should chase before it the darkness and power of hell; triumph over the idolatry, superstition, and profaneness of the world! This plain doctrine vanquished the obstinacy of the Jews, baffled the understanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, threw the devil not only out of bodies, but hearts; tore up, the foundation of his empire, and planted the cross, where the devil had for many ages before established his standard. How much more than a human force is illustrious in this whole conduct! Nothing in any age of the world can parallel it: it being so much against the methods of nature, the disposition of the world, and (considering the resistance against it) seems to surmount even the works of creation. Never were there, in any profession, such multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of sobriety, acuteness, and wisdom, that exposed themselves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the most terrifying shapes for the honor of this doctrine. To conclude, this should be often meditated upon to form our understandings to a full assent to the gospel, and the truth of it; the want of which consideration of power, and the customariness of an education in the outward profession of it, is the ground of all the profaneness under it, and apostasy from it; the disesteem of the truth it declares, and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a prospect and sense of the impressions of Divine power in it, the more we shall have a reverence of the Divine precepts.

III. The third thing is, the power of God appears in the application of redemption, as well as in the Person redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption: 1. In the planting grace. 2. In the pardon of sin. 3. In the preserving grace.

First, In the planting grace. There is no expression which the Spirit of God hath thought fit in Scripture to resemble this work to, but argues the exerting of a Divine power for the effecting of it. When it is expressed by light, it is as much as the power of God in the creating the sun; when by regeneration, it is as much as the power of God in forming an infant, and fashioning all the parts of a man; when it is called resurrection, it is as much as the rearing of a body again out of putrified matter; when it is called creation, it is as much as erecting a comely world out of mere nothing, or an inform and uncomely mass. As we could not contrive the death of Christ for our redemption, so we cannot form our souls to the acceptance of it; the infinite efficacy of grace is as necessary for the one, as the infinite wisdom of God was for laying the platform of the other. It is by his power we have whatsoever pertains to godliness as well as life (2 Peter 1:3); he puts his fingers upon the handle of the lock, and turns the heart to what point he pleases; the action whereby he performs this, is expressed by a word of force; “He hath snatched us from the power of darkness:” [Note:

Colossians 1:19. [ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ.] the action whereby it is performed manifests it. In reference to this power, it is called creation, which is a production from nothing; and conversion is a production from something more incapable of that state, than mere nothing is of being. There is greater distance between the terms of sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, than between the terms of nothing and being; the greater the distance is, the more power is required to the producing any thing. As in miracles, the miracle is the greater, where the change is the greater; and the change is the greater, where the distance is the greater. As it was a more signal mark of power to change a dead man to life, than to change a sick man to health; so that the change here being from a term of a greater distance, is more powerful than the creation of heaven and earth. Therefore, whereas creation is said to be wrought by his hands, and the heavens by his fingers, or his word; conversion is said to be wrought by his arm (Isaiah 53:1). In creation, we had an earthly; by conversion, a heavenly state: in creation, nothing is changed into something; in conversion, hell is transformed into heaven, which is more than the turning nothing into a glorious angel. In that thanksgiving of our Saviour, for the revelation of the knowledge of himself to babes, the simple of the world, he gives the title to his Father, of "Lord of heaven and earth" (Matthew 11:5); intimating it to be an act of his creative and preserving power; that power whereby he formed heaven and earth, hath preserved the standing, and governed the motions of all creatures from the beginning of the world. It is resembled to the most magnificent act of divine power that God ever put forth, viz. that "in the resurrection of our Saviour" (Ephesians 1:19); wherein there was more than an ordinary impression of might. It is not so small a power as that whereby we speak with tongues, or whereby Christ opened the mouths of the dumb, and the ears of the deaf, or unloosed the cords of death from a person. It is not that power whereby our Saviour wrought those stupendous miracles when he was in the world: but that power which wrought a miracle that amazed the most knowing angels, as well as ignorant man; the taking off the weight of the sin of the world from our Saviour, and advancing him in his human nature to rule over the angelic host, making him head of principalities and powers; as much as to say, as great as all that power which is displayed in our redemption, from the first foundation to the last line in the superstructure. It is, therefore, often set forth with an emphasis, as "Excellency of power" (2 Corinthians 4:7), and "Glorious power" (2 Peter 1:3): "to glory and virtue," we translate it, but it is διὰ δόξης, through glory and virtue, that is, by a glorious virtue or strength. The instrument whereby it is wrought, is dignified with the title of power. The gospel which God useth in this great affair is called "The power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16), and the "Rod of his strength" (Psalms 110:2); and the day of the gospel's appearance in the heart is emphatically called, "The day of power" (Psalms 110:3); wherein he brings down strong-holds and towering imaginations. And, therefore, the angel Gabriel, which name signifies the power of God, was always sent upon those messages which concerned the gospel, as to Daniel, Zacharias, Mary. [Note: Grotius in Luke 1:19.] The gospel is the power of God in a way of instrumentality, but the almightiness of God is the principal in a way of efficiency. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ; but the power of Christ is the mover of that sceptre. The gospel is not as a bare word spoken, and proposing the thing; but as backed with a higher efficacy of grace; as the sword doth instrumentally cut, but the arm that wields it gives the blow, and makes it successful in the stroke. But this gospel is the power of God, because he edgeth this by his own power, to surmount all resistance, and vanquish the greatest malice of that man he designs to work upon. The power of God is conspicuous,

1. In turning the heart of man against the strength of the inclinations of nature. In the forming of man of the dust of the ground as the matter contributed nothing to the action whereby God formed it, so it had no principle of resistance contrary to the design of God; but in converting the heart, there is not only wanting a principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of corrupt nature is alarmed to combat against the power of his grace. When the gospel is presented, the understanding is not only ignorant of it, but the will perverse against it; the one doth not relish, and the other doth not esteem, the excellency of the object. The carnal wisdom in the mind contrives against it, and the rebellious will puts the orders in execution against the counsel of God, which requires the invincible power of God to enlighten the dark mind, to know what it slights; and the fierce will, to embrace what it loathes. The stream of nature cannot be turned, but by a power above nature; it is not all the created power in heaven and earth can change a swine into a man, or a venomous toad into an holy and illustrious angel. Yet this work is not so great, in some respect, as the stilling the fierceness of nature, the silencing the swelling waves in the heart, and the casting out those brutish affections which are born and grow up with us. There would be no, or far less, resistance in a mere animal, to be changed into a creature of a higher rank, than there is in a natural man to be turned into a serious Christian. There is in every natural man a stoutness of heart, a stiff neck, unwillingness to good, forwardness to evil; Infinite Power quells this stoutness, demolisheth these strongholds, turns this wild ass in her course, and routs those armies of turbulent nature against the grace of God. To stop the floods of the sea is not such an act of power, as to turn the tide of the heart. This power hath been employed upon every convert in the world; what would you say, then, if you knew all the channels in which it hath run since the days of Adam? If the alteration of one rocky heart into a pool of water be a wonder of power, what then is the calming and sweetening by his word those 144,000 of the tribes of Israel, and that numberless multitude of all nations and people that shall stand "before the throne" (Revelation 7:9), which were all naturally so many raging seas? Not one converted soul from Adam to the last that shall be in the end of the world, but is a trophy of the Divine conquest. None were pure volunteers, nor listed themselves in his service, till he put forth his strong arm to draw them to him. No man's understanding, but was chained with darkness, and fond of it; no man but had corruption in his will, which was dearer to him than anything else which could be proposed for his true happiness. These things are most evident in Scripture and experience.

2. As it is wrought against the inclinations of nature, so against a multitude of corrupt habits rooted in the souls of men. A distemper in its first invasion may more easily be cured, than when it becomes chronical and inveterate. The strength of a disease, or the complication of many, magnifies the power of the physician, and efficacy of the medicine that tames and expels it. What power is that which hath made men stoop, when natural habits have been grown giants by custom; when the putrefaction of nature hath engendered a multitude of worms; when the ulcers are many and deplorable; when many cords, wherewith God would have bound the sinner, have been broken, and (like Sampson the wicked heart hath gloried in its strength, and grown more proud, that it hath stood like a strong fort against those batteries, under which others have fallen flat; every proud thought, every evil habit captivated, serves for matter of triumph to the "power of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5). What resistance will a multitude of them make, when one of them is enough to hold the faculty under its dominion, and intercept its operations? So many customary habits, so many old natures, so many different strengths added to nature, every one of them standing as a barricado against the way of grace; all the errors the understanding is possessed

with, think the gospel folly; all the vices the will is filled with, count it the fetter and band. Nothing so contrary to man, as to be thought a fool; nothing so contrary to man, as to enter into slavery. It is no easy matter to plant the cross of Christ upon a heart guided by many principles against the truth of it, and biased by a world of wickedness against the holiness of it. Nature renders a man too feeble and indisposed, and custom renders a man more weak and unwilling to change his hue (Jeremiah 13:23). To dispossess man then of his self-esteem and self-excellency; to make room for God in the heart, where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself; to hurl down the pride of nature; to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross; to make desires of self-advancement sink into a zeal for the glorifying of God, and an overruling design for his honor, is not to be ascribed to any but an outstretched arm wielding the sword of the Spirit. To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with a contempt of him; to have a sense of his power, an eye to his glory, admiring thoughts of his wisdom, a faith in his truth, that had lower thoughts of him and all his perfections, than he had of a creature; to have a hatred of his habitual lusts, that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loath them as much as he loved them; to cherish the duties he hated; to live by faith in, and obedience to, the Redeemer, who was before so heartily under the conduct of Satan and self; to chase the acts of sin from his members, and the pleasing thoughts of sin from his mind; to make a stout wretch willingly fall down, crawl upon the ground, and adore that Saviour whom before he out-dared, is a triumphant act of Infinite Power that can subdue all things to itself, and break those multitudes of locks and bolts that were upon us.

3. Against a multitude of temptations and interests. The temptations rich men have in this world are so numerous and strong, that the entrance of one of them into the kingdom of heaven, that is, the entertainment of the gospel, is made by our Saviour an impossible thing with men, and procurable only by the power of God (Luke 18:24-26). The Divine strength only can separate the world from the heart, and the heart from the world. There must be an incomprehensible power to chase away the devil, that had so long, so strong a footing in the affections; to render the soil he had sown with so many tares and weeds, capable of good grain; to make spirits that had found the sweetness of worldly prosperity, wrapt up all their happiness in it, and not only bent down, but—as it were—buried in earth and mud, to be loosened from those beloved cords, to disrelish the earth for a crucified Christ; I say, this must be the effect of an almighty power.

4. The manner of conversion shows no less the power of God. There is not only an irresistible force used in it, but an agreeable sweetness. The power is so efficacious, that nothing can vanquish it; and so sweet, that none did ever complain of it. The Almighty virtue displays itself invincibly, yet without constraint; compelling the will without offering violence to it, and making it cease to be will: not forcing it, but changing it: not dragging it, but drawing it; making it will where before it pilled; removing the corrupt nature of the will, without invading the created nature and rights of the faculty; not working in us against the physical nature of the will, but working it “to will” (Php 2:13). This work is therefore called creation, resurrection, to skew its irresistible power; it is called illumination, persuasion, drawing, to spew the suitableness of its efficacy to the nature of the human faculties: it is a drawing with cords, which testifies an invincible strength; but, with cords of love, which testifies a delightful conquest. It is hard to determine whether it be more powerful than sweet, or more sweet than powerful. It is no mean part of the power of God to twist together victory and pleasure; to give a blow as delightful as strong, as pleasing to the sufferer, as it is sharp to the

sinner.

Secondly, The power of God, in the application of redemption, is evident in the pardoning a sinner.

1. In the pardon itself. The power of God is made the ground of his patience; or the reason why he is patient, is, because he would “shew his power” (Romans 9:22). It is apart of magnanimity to pass by injuries: as weaker stomachs cannot concoct the tougher food, so weak minds cannot digest the harder injuries: he that passes over a wrong is superior to his adversary that does it. When God speaks of his own name as merciful he speaks first of himself as powerful (Exodus 34:6), “The Lord, The Lord God,” that is, The Lord, the strong Lord, Jehovah, the strong Jehovah. Let the power of my Lord be great, saith Moses, when he prays for the forgiveness of the people: [Note: Numbers 14:17. ψωθτω, be exalted. Sept. Strength, &c.] the word jigdal is written with a great jod, or a jod above the other letters. The power of God in pardoning is advanced beyond an ordinary strain, beyond the creative strength. In the creation, he had power over the creatures; in this, power over himself: in creation, not himself, but the creatures were the object of his power; in that, no attribute of his nature could article against his design. In the pardon of a sinner, after many overtures made to him and refused by him, God exerciseth a power over himself; for the sinner path dishonored God, provoked his justice, abused his goodness, done injury to all those attributes which are necessary to his relief: it was not so in creation, nothing was incapable of disobliging God from bringing it into being. The dust, which was the matter of Adam’s body, needed only the extrinsic power of God to form it into a man, and inspire it with a living soul: it had not rendered itself obnoxious to Divine justice, nor was capable to excite any disputes between his perfections. But after the entrance of sin, and the merit of death, thereby there was a resistance in justice to the free remission of man: God was to exercise a power over himself, to answer his justice, and pardon the sinner; as well as a power over the creature, to reduce the run away and rebel. Unless we have recourse to the infiniteness of God’s power, the infiniteness of our guilt will weigh us down: we must consider not only that we have a mighty guilt to press us, but a mighty God to relieve us. In the same act of his being our righteousness, he is our strength: “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Isaiah 45:24).

2. In the sense of pardon. When the soul hath been wounded with the sense of sin, and its iniquities have stared it in the face, the raising the soul from a despairing condition, and lifting it above those waters which terrified it, to cast the light of comfort, as well as the light of grace, into a heart covered with more than an Egyptian darkness, is an act of his infinite and creating power (Isaiah 57:19); “I create the fruit of the lips; Peace.” Men may wear out their lips with numbering up the promises of grace and arguments of peace, but all will signify no more, without a creative power, than if all men and angels should call to that white upon the wall to shine as splendidly as the sun. God only can create Jerusalem, and every child of Jerusalem a rejoicing (Isaiah 45:18). A man is no more able to apply to himself any word of comfort, under the sense of sin, than he is able to convert himself, and turn the proposals of the word into gracious affections in his heart. To restore the joy of salvation, is, in David’s judgment, an act of sovereign power, equal to that of creating a clean heart (Psalms 51:10; Psalms 51:12). Alas! it is a state like to that of death; as infinite power can only raise from natural death, so from a spiritual death; also from a comfortless death: “In his favor there is life;” in the want of his favor there is death. The power of God hath so placed light in the sun, that all creatures in the world, all the torches upon earth, kindled together, cannot make it day, if that doth not rise; so all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, are not

competent surgeons for a wounded spirit. The cure of our spiritual ulcers, and the pouring in balm, is an act of sovereign creative power: it is more visible in silencing a tempestuous conscience than the power of our Saviour was in the stilling the stormy winds and the roaring waves. As none but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so none but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

Thirdly, This power is evident in the preserving grace. As the providence of God is a manifestation of his power in a continued creation, so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of his power in a continued regeneration. To keep a nation under the yoke, is an act of the same power that subdued it. It is this that strengthens men in suffering against the fury of hell (Colossians 1:13); it is this that keeps them from falling against the force of hell—the Father's hand (John 10:29). His strength abates and moderates the violence of temptations; his staff sustains his people under them; his might defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under a believer's feet. The counterworkings of indwelling corruption, the reluctances of the flesh against the breathings of the spirit, the fallacy of the senses, and the roivings of the mind, have ability quickly to stifle and extinguish grace, if it were not maintained by that powerful blast that first imbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than was in planting it (2 Peter 1:3); no less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in engrafting the word of faith (2 Thessalonians 1:11). The apostle well understood the necessity and efficacy of it in the preservation of faith, as well as in the first infusion, when he expresses himself in those terms of a greatness or hyperbole of power, "His mighty power," or the power of his might (Ephesians 1:19). The salvation he bestows, and the strength whereby he effects it, are joined together in the prophet's song (Isaiah 12:2): "The Lord is my strength and my salvation." And indeed, God doth more magnify his power in continuing a believer in the world, a weak and half-rigged vessel, in the midst of so many sands wheron it might split, so many rocks whereon it might dash, so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, than if he did immediately transport him into heaven, and clothe him with a perfect sanctified nature.—To conclude, what is there, then, in the world which is destitute of notices of Divine power? Every creature affords us the lesson; all acts of Divine government are the marks of it. Look into the word, and the manner of its propagation instructs us in it; your changed natures, your pardoned guilt, your shining comfort, your quelled corruptions, the standing of your staggering graces, are sufficient to preserve a sense, and to prevent a forgetfulness, of this great attribute, so necessary for your support, and conducing so much to your comfort.

Use I. Of information and instruction.

Instruct. 1. If incomprehensible and infinite power belongs to the nature of God, then Jesus Christ hath a divine nature, because the acts of power proper to God are ascribed to him. This perfection of omnipotence doth unquestionably pertain to the Deity, and is an incommunicable property, and the same with the essence of God: he, therefore, to whom this attribute is ascribed, is essentially God. This is challenged by Christ, in conjunction with eternity (Revelation 1:8); "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." This the Lord Christ speaks of himself. He who was equal with God, proclaims himself by the essential title of the Godhead, part of which he repeats again (Revelation 1:11), and this is the person which "walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," the person that "was dead and now lives" (Revelation 1:17-18), which cannot possibly be meant of the Father, the First Person, who can never come under the denomination of having been dead.

Being, therefore, adorned with the same title, he hath the same Deity; and though his omnipotence be only positively asserted (Revelation 1:8), yet, his eternity being asserted (Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:17), it inferreth his immense power; for he that is eternal, without limits of time, must needs be conceived powerful, without any dash of infirmity. Again, when he is said to be a child born, and a son given, in the same breath he is called the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6). It is introduced as a ground of comfort to the church, to preserve their hopes in the accomplishment of the promises made to them before. They should not imagine him to have only the infirmity of a man, though he was veiled in the appearance of a man. No, they should look through the disguise of his flesh, to the might of his Godhead. The attribute of mighty is added to the title of God, because the consideration of power is most capable to sustain the drooping church in such a condition, and to prop up her hopes. It is upon this account he saith of himself, "Whatsoever things the Father doth, those also doth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). In the creation of heaven, earth, sea, and the preservation of all creatures, the Son works with the same will, wisdom, virtue, power, as the Father works: not as two may concur in an action in a different manner, as an agent and an instrument, a carpenter and his tools, but in the same manner of operation, $\delta\upsilon\omicron\omega\varsigma$, which we translate likeness, which doth not express so well the emphasis of the word. There is no diversity of action between us; what the Father doth, that I do by the same power, with the same easiness in every respect; there is the same creative, productive, conservative power in both of us; and that not in one work that is done, ad extra, but in all, in whatsoever the Father doth. In the same manner, not by a delegated, but natural and essential power, by one undivided operation and manner of working.

1st. The creation, which is a work of Omnipotence, is more than once ascribed to him. This he doth own himself; the creation of the earth, and of man upon it; the stretching out the heavens by his hands, and the forming of "all the hosts of them by his command" (Isaiah 45:12). He is not only the Creator of Israel, the church (Isaiah 45:12), but of the whole world, and every creature on the face of the earth, and in the glories of the heavens; which is repeated also Isaiah 45:18, where, in this act of creation, he is called God himself, and speaks of himself in the term Jehovah; and swears by himself (Isaiah 45:23). What doth he swear? "That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." Is this Christ? Yes, if the apostle may be believed, who applies it to him (Romans 14:11) to prove the appearance of all men before the judgment-seat of Christ, whom the prophet calls (Isaiah 45:15) "a God that hides himself;" and so he was a hidden God when obscured in our fleshly infirmities. He was in conjunction with the Father when the sea received his decree, and the foundations of the earth were appointed; not as a spectator, but as an artificer, for so the word in Proverbs 8:30, signifies, "as one brought up with him;" it signifies also, "a cunning workman" (Song of Solomon 7:1). He was the east, or the sun, from whence sprang all the light of life and being to the creature; so the word $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\prime$ (Isaiah 45:22), which is translated, "before his works of old," is rendered by some, and signifies the east as well as before: but if it notes only his existence before, it is enough to prove his Deity. The Scripture doth not only allow him an existence before the world, but exalts him as the cause of the world: a thing may precede another that is not the cause of that which follows; a precedency in age doth not entitle one brother, or thing, the cause of another: but our Saviour is not only ancients than the world, but is the Creator of the world (Hebrews 1:10-11). "Who laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands." So great an eulogy cannot be given to one destitute of omnipotence; since the distance between being and not being is so vast a gulf that cannot be surmounted and stepped

over, but by an Infinite Power: he is the first and the last, that called the “generations from the beginning” (Isaiah 41:4), and had an almighty voice to call them out of nothing. In which regard he is called the “everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6), as being the efficient of creation; as God is called the Father of the rain, or as father is taken for the inventor of an art; as Jubal, the first framer and inventor of music, is called “the father of such as handle the harp” (Genesis 4:21). And that Person is said to “make the sea, and form the dry land by his hands” (Psalms 95:5-6) against whom we are exhorted not to harden our hearts, which is applied to Christ by the apostle (Hebrews 3:8); in Hebrews 3:3, he is called “a great King,” and “a great God our Maker:” The places wherein the creation is attributed to Christ, those that are the antagonists of his Deity, would evade by understanding them of the new, or evangelical, not of the first, old material creation: but what appearance is there for such a sense? Consider,

(1) That of Hebrews 1:10-11, it is spoken of that earth and heavens which were in the beginning of time; it is that earth shall perish, that heaven that shall be folded up, that creation that shall grow old towards a decay; that is, only the visible and material creation: the spiritual shall endure forever; it grows not old to decay, but grows up to a perfection; it sprouts up to its happiness, not to its detriment. The same Person creates that shall destroy, and the same world is created by him that shall be destroyed by him, as well as it subsisted by virtue of his omnipotency.

(2.) Can that also (Hebrews 1:2), “By whom also he made the worlds,” speaking of Christ, bear the same plea? It was the same Person by whom “God spake to us in these last times,” the same Person which he hath constituted “Heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:” and the particle also, intimates it to be a distinct act from his speaking or prophetic office, whereby he restored and new created the world, as well as the rightful foundation God had to make him “Heir of all things.” It refers likewise, not to the time of Christ’s speaking upon earth, but to something past, and some thing different from the publication of the gospel: it is not “doth make,” which had been more likely if the apostle had meant only the new creation; but “hath made,” [Note: ■πο^ς■σεν] referring to time long since past, something done before his appearance upon earth as a Prophet: “By whom also he made the worlds,” or ages, all things subjected to, or measured by time; which must be meant according to the Jewish phrase of this material visible world: so they entitle God in their Liturgy, the “Lord of Ages,” that is, the Lord of the world, and all ages and revolutions of the world, from the creation to the last period of time. If anything were in being before this frame of heaven and earth, and within the compass of time, it received being and duration from the Son of God. The apostle would give an argument to prove the equity of making him Heir of all things as Mediator, because he was the framer of all things as God. He may well be the Heir or Lord of angels as well as men, who created angels as well as men: all things were justly under his power as Mediator, since they derived their existence from him as Creator.

(3.) But what evasion can there be for that (Colossians 1:16)? “By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him.” He is said to be the Creator of material and visible things, as well as spiritual and invisible; of things in heaven, which needed no restoration, as well as things on earth, which were polluted by sin, and stood in need of a new creation. How could the angels belong to the new creation, who had never put off the honor and purity of the first? Since they never divested themselves of their original integrity, they could not be reinvested with that which they never lost. Besides, suppose the holy angels be one way or other reduced as

parts of the new creation, as being under the mediatory government of our Saviour, as their Head, and in regard of their confirmation by him in that happy state. In what manner shall the devils be ranked among new creatures? They are called principalities and powers as well as the angels, and may come under the title of things invisible: that they are called principalities and powers is plain (Ephesians 6:12): "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." Good angels are not there meant, for what war have believers with them, or they with believers? They are the guardians of them, since Christ hath taken away the enmity between our Lord and theirs, in whose quarrel they were engaged against us: and since the apostle, speaking of "all things created by him," expresseth it so, that it cannot be conceived he should except anything; how come the finally impenitent and unbelievers, which are things in earth, and visible, to be listed here in the roll of new creatures? None of these can be called new creatures, because they are subjected to the government of Christ; no more than the earth and sea, and the animals in it, are made new creatures, because they are all under the dominion of Christ and his providential government. Again, the apostle manifestly makes the creation he here speaks of, to be the material, and not the new creation; for that he speaks of afterwards as a distinct act of our Lord Jesus, under the title of Reconciliation (Colossians 1:20-21), which was the restoration of the world, and the satisfying for that curse that lay upon it. His intent is here to show that not an angel in heaven, nor a creature upon earth, but was placed in their several degrees of excellency by the power of the Son of God, who, after that act of creation, and the entrance of sin, was the "reconciler" of the world through the blood of his cross.

(4.) There is another place as clear (John 1:3): "All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made." The creation is here ascribed to him; affirmatively, "All things were made by him;" negatively, there was nothing made without him: and the words are emphatical, οὐδὲν ἄλλο, not one thing; excepting nothing; including invisible things, as well as things conspicuous to sense only, mentioned in the story of the creation (Genesis 1:1-31.); not only the entire mass, but the distinct parcels, the smallest worm and the highest angel, owe their original to him. And if not one thing, then the matter was not created to his hands; and his work consisted not only in the forming things from that matter: if that one thing of matter were excepted, a chief thing were excepted; if not one thing were excepted, then he created something of nothing because spirits, as angels and souls, are not made of any pre-existing or fore-created matter. How could the evangelist phrase it more extensively and comprehensively? This is a character of Omnipotency; to create the world, and everything in it, of nothing, requires an infinite virtue and power. If all things were created by Him, they were not created by him as man, because himself, as man, was not in being before the creation; if all things were made by him, then himself was not made, himself was not created; and to be existent without being made, without being created, is to be unboundedly omnipotent. And if we understand it of the new creation, as they do that will not allow him an existence in his Deity before his humanity, it cannot be true of that; for how could he regenerate Abraham, make Simeon and Anna new creatures, who "waited for the salvation of Israel," and form John Baptist, and fill him with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb (Luke 1:15), who belonged to the new creation, and was to prepare the way, if Christ had not a being before him? The evangelist alludes to, and explains the history of the creation, in the beginning, and acquaints us what was meant by God, said so often, viz. the eternal Word, and describes him in his creative power, manifested in the framing the world, before he describes him in his incarnation,

when he came to lay the foundation of the restoration of the world (John 1:14), "The Word was made flesh;" this Word who was "with God, who was God, who made all things," and gave being to the most glorious angels and the meanest creature without exception; this Word, in time, "was made flesh."

(5.) The creation of things mentioned in these Scriptures cannot be attributed to him as an instrument. As if when it is said, "God created all things by him, and by him made the worlds," we were to understand the Father to be the agent, and the Son to be a tool in his Father's hand, as an axe in the hand of a carpenter, or a file in the hand of a smith, or a servant acting by command as the organ of his master. The preposition *per*, or *δι*, doth not always signify an instrumental cause: when it is said, that the apostle gave the Thessalonians a command "by Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 4:2), was Christ the instrument, and not the Lord of that command the apostle gave? The immediate operation of Christ dwelling in the apostles, was that whereby they gave the commands to their disciples. When we are called "by God" (1 Corinthians 1:9), is he the instrumental, or principal cause of our effectual vocation? And can the will of God be the instrument of putting Paul into the apostleship, or the sovereign cause of investing him with that dignity, when he calls himself an "Apostle by the will of God" (Ephesians 1:3)? And when all things are said to be through God, as well as of him, must he be counted the instrumental cause of his own creation, counsels, and judgments (Romans 11:36)? When we "mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit" (Romans 8:13), or keep the "treasure of the word by the Holy Ghost" (2 Timothy 1:14), is the Holy Ghost of no more dignity in such acts than an instrument? Nor doth the gaining a thing by a person make him a mere instrument or inferior; as when a man gains his right in a way of justice against his adversary by the magistrate, is the judge inferior to the suppliant? If the Word were an instrument in creation, it must be a created or uncreated instrument: if created, it could not be true what the Evangelist saith, that "all things were made by him," since himself, the principal thing, could not be made by himself: if uncreated, he was God, and so acted by a Divine omnipotency, which surmounts an instrumental cause. But, indeed, an instrument is impossible in creation, since it is wrought only by an act of the Divine will. Do we need any organ to an act of volition? The efficacious will of the Creator is the cause of the original of the body of the world, with its particular members and exact harmony. It was formed "by a word, and established by a command" (Psalms 33:9); the beauty of the creation stood up at the precept of his will. Nor was the Son a partial cause; as when many are said to build a house, one works one part, and another frames another part: God created all things by the immediate operation of the Son, in the unity of essence, goodness, power, wisdom; not an extrinsic, but a connatural instrument. As the sun doth illustrate all things by his light, and quickens all things by his heat, so God created the worlds by Christ, as he was the "brightness or splendor of his glory, the exact image of his person;" which follows the declaration of his making the worlds by him (Hebrews 1:3-4), to show, that he acted not as an instrument, but one in essential conjunction with him, as light and brightness with the sun. But suppose he did make the world as a kind of instrument, he was then before the world, not bounded by time; and eternity cannot well be conceived belonging to a Being without omnipotency. He is the End, as well as the Author, of the creatures (Colossians 1:16); not only the principle which gave them being, but the sea, into whose glory they run and dissolve themselves, which consists not with the meanness of an instrument.

2d. As creation, so preservation, is ascribed to Him (Colossians 1:17). "By him all things consist." As he preceded all things in his eternity, so he establishes all things by his omnipotency, and fixes them in their several centres, that they sink not into that nothing from whence he fetched them. By him they flourish in their several beings, and observe the laws and orders he first appointed: that power of his which extracted them from insensible nothing, upholds them in their several beings with the same facility as he spake being into them, even "by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3), and by one creative continued voice, called all generations, from the beginning to the period of the world (Isaiah 41:4), and causes them to flourish in their several seasons. It is "by him kings reign, and princes decree justice," and all things are confined within the limits of government. All which are acts of an Infinite Power.

3d. Resurrection is also ascribed to Him. The body crumbled to dust, and that dust blown to several quarters of the world, cannot be gathered in its distinct parts, and new formed for the entertainment of the soul, without the strength of an infinite arm. This he will do, and more; change the vileness of an earthly body into the glory of an heavenly one; a dusty flesh into a spiritual body, which is an argument of a power invincible, to which all things cannot but stoop; for it is by such an operation, which testifies an ability "to subdue all things to himself" (Php 3:21), especially when he works it with the same ease as he did the creation, by the power of his voice. (John 5:28), "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth:" speaking them into a restored life from insensible dust, as he did into being from an empty nothing. The greatest acts of power are owned to belong to creation, preservation, resurrection. Omnipotence, therefore, is his right; and, therefore, a Deity cannot be denied to him that inherits a perfection essential to none but God, and impossible to be entrusted in, or managed by the hands of any creatures. And this is no mean comfort to those that believe in him: he is, in regard of his power, "the horn of salvation;" so Zacharias sings of him (Luke 1:69). Nor could there be any more mighty found out upon whom God could have "laid our help" (Psalms 89:19). No reason, therefore, to doubt his ability to save to the utmost, who hath the power of creation, preservation, and resurrection in his hands. His promises must be accomplished, since nothing can resist him: he hath power to fulfil his word, and bring all things to a final issue, because he is Almighty: by his outstretched arm in the deliverance of his Israel from Egypt, (for it was his arm, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33.) he showed that he was able to deliver us from spiritual Egypt. The charge of Mediator to expiate sin, vanquish hell, form a church, conduct and perfect it, are not to be effected by a person of less ability than infinite. Let this almightiness of His be the bottom, wherein to cast and fix the anchor of our hopes.

Instruct. 2. Hence may be inferred the Deity of the Holy Ghost. Works of omnipotency are ascribed to the Spirit of God: by the motion of the wings of this Spirit, as a bird over her eggs, was that rude and unshapen mass hatched into a comely world. [Note: Genesis 1:2. So the word "moved" properly signifies.] The stars,—or perhaps the angels, are meant by the "garnishing of the heavens" in the verse before the text,—were brought forth in their comeliness and dignity, as the ornaments of the upper world, by this Spirit; "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." To this Spirit Job ascribes the formation both of the body and soul, under the title of Almighty (Job 33:4), "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." Resurrection, another work of omnipotency, is attributed to him (Romans 8:11). The conception of our Saviour in the womb; the miracles that he wrought, were by the power of the Spirit in him. Power is a title belonging to him, and sometimes both are put together (1 Thessalonians 1:5, and other places).

And that great power of changing the heart, and sanctifying a polluted nature, a work greater than creation, is frequently acknowledged in the Scripture to be the peculiar act of the Holy Ghost. The Father, Son, Spirit, are one principle in creation, resurrection, and all the works of omnipotence.

Instruct. 3. Inference from the doctrine. The blessedness of God is hence evidenced. If God be Almighty, he can want nothing; all want speaks weakness. If he doth what he will, he cannot be miserable; all misery consists in those things which happen contrary to our will. There is nothing can hinder his happiness, because nothing can resist his power. Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him, nothing can strip him of what he hath, of what he is. [Note: Sabunde, Tit. 39.] If he can do whatsoever he will, he cannot want anything that he wills. He is as happy, as great, as glorious, as he will; for he hath a perfect liberty of will to will, and a perfect power to attain what he will; his will cannot be restrained, nor his power meted. It would be a defect in blessedness, to will what he were not able to do: sorrow is the result of a want of power, with a presence of will. If he could will anything which he could not effect, he would be miserable, and no longer God: he can do whatsoever he pleases, and therefore can want nothing that pleases him. [Note: Pont. Part. VI. med. 16. p. 531.] He cannot be happy, the original of whose happiness is not in himself: nothing can be infinitely happy, that is limited and bounded.

Instruct. 4. Hence is the ground for the immutability of God. As he is incapable of changing his resolves, because of his infinite wisdom, so he is incapable of being forced to any change, because of his infinite power. Being almighty, he can be no more changed from power to weakness; than, being all-wise, he can be changed from wisdom to folly; or, being omniscient, from knowledge to ignorance. He cannot be altered in his purposes, because of his wisdom; nor in the manner and method of his actions, because of his infinite strength. Men, indeed, when their designs are laid deepest, and their purposes stand firmest, yet are forced to stand still, or change the manner of the execution of their resolves, by reason of some outward accidents that obstruct them in their course; for, having not wisdom to foresee future hindrances, they have not power to prevent them, or strength to remove them, when they unexpectedly interpose themselves between their desire and performance; but no created power has strength enough to be a bar against God. By the same act of his will that he resolves a thing, he can puff away any impediments that seem to rise up against him. He that wants no means to effect his purposes, cannot be checked by anything that riseth up to stand in his way; heaven, earth, sea, the deepest places, are too weak to resist his will (Psalms 135:6). The purity of the angels will not, and the devil's malice cannot, frustrate his will; the one voluntarily obeys the beck of his hand, and the other is vanquished by the power of it. What can make him change his purposes; who (if he please) can dash the earth against the heavens in the twinkling of an eye, untying the world from its centre, clap the stars and elements together into one mass, and blow the whole creation of men and devils into nothing? Because he is almighty, therefore he is immutable.

Instruct. 5. Hence is inferred the providence of God, and his government of the world. His power, as well as his wisdom, gives him a right to govern: nothing can equal him, therefore nothing can share the command with him; since all things are his works, it is fittest they should be under his order: he that frames a work, is fittest to guide and govern it. God hath the most right to govern, because he hath knowledge to direct his power, and power to execute the results of his wisdom: he knows what is convenient to order, and hath strength to effect what he orders. As his power would be oppressive without goodness and wisdom, so his goodness and wisdom would be

fruitless without power. An artificer that hath lost his hands may direct, but cannot make an engine: a pilot that hath lost his arms may advise the way of steerage, but cannot hold the helm; something is wanting in him to be a complete governor but since both counsel and power are infinite in God, hence results an infinite right to govern, and an infinite fitness, because his will cannot be resisted, his power cannot be enfeebled or diminished; he can quicken and increase the strength of all means as he pleases. He can hold all things in the world together, and preserve them in those functions wherein he settled them, and conduct them to those ends for which he designed them. Every artificer, the more excellent he is, and the more excellency of power appears in his work, is the more careful to maintain and cherish it. Those that deny Providence, do not only ravish from him the bowels of his goodness, but strip him of a main exercise of his power, and engender in men a suspicion of weariness and feebleness in him; as though his strength had been spent in making them, that none is left to guide them. They would make him headless in regard of his wisdom, and bowelless in regard of his goodness, and armless in regard of his strength. If he did not, or were not able to preserve and provide for his creatures, his power in making them would be, in a great part, an invisible power; if he did not preserve what he made, and govern what he preserves, it would be a kind of strange and rude power, to make, and suffer it to be dashed in pieces at the pleasure of others. If the power of God should relinquish the world, the life of things would be extinguished, the fabric would be confounded, and fall into a deplorable chaos. That which is composed of so many various pieces, could not maintain its union, if here were not a secret virtue binding them together and maintaining those varieties of links. Well, then, since God is not only so good, that he cannot will anything but what is good; so wise, that he cannot err or mistake; but also so able, that he cannot be defeated or mated; he hath every way a full ability to govern the world: where those three are infinite, the right and fitness resulting from thence is unquestionable: and, indeed, to deny God this active part of his power, is to render him weak, foolish, cruel, or all.

Instruct. 6. Here is a ground for the worship of God. Wisdom and power are the grounds of the respect we give to men; they being both infinite in God, are the foundation of a solemn honor to be returned to him by his creatures. If a man makes a curious engine, we honor him for his skill; if another vanquish a vigorous enemy, we admire him for his strength: and shall not the efficacy of God's power in creation, government, redemption, enflame us with a sense of the honor of his name and perfections? We admire those princes that have vast empires, numerous armies, that have a power to conquer their enemies, and preserve their own people in peace. How much more ground have we to pay a mighty reverence to God, who, without trouble and weariness, made and manages this vast empire of the world by a word and beck! What sensible thoughts have we of the noise of thunder, the power of the sun, the storms of the sea! These things that have no understanding have struck men with such a reverence, that many have adored them as gods. What reverence and adoration doth this mighty power, joined with an infinite wisdom in God, demand at our hands! All religion and worship stands especially upon two pillars, goodness, and power in God; if either of these were defective, all religion would faint away. We can expect no entertainment with him without goodness, nor any benefit from him without power. This God prefaceth to the command to worship him, the benefit his goodness had conferred upon them, and the powerful manner of conveyance of it to them (2 Kings 17:36): "The Lord brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power, and an out-stretched arm; him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice." Because this attribute is a main foundation of prayer,

the Lord's Prayer is concluded with a doxology of it, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." As he is rich, possessing all blessings; so he is powerful, to confer all blessings on us, and make them efficacious to us. The Jews repeat many times in their prayers, some say an hundred times, ■■■■ ■■■■■■, "The King of the world;" it is both an awe and an encouragement. [Note: Capel. in 1 Timothy 1:17.] We could not, without consideration of it, pray in faith of success; nay, we could not pray at all, if his power were defective to help us, and his mercy too weak to relieve us. Who would solicit a lifeless, or he a prostrate suppliant, to a feeble arm? Upon this ability of God, our Saviour built his petitions (Hebrews 5:7): "He offered up strong cries unto Him that was able to save him from death." Abraham's faith hung upon the same string (Romans 4:21), and the captived church supplicates God to act according to the greatness of his power (Psalms 79:11). In all our addresses this is to be eyed and considered; God is able to help, to relieve, to ease me, let my misery be never so great, and my strength never so weak (Matthew 8:2): "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," was the consideration the leper had when he came to worship Christ; he was clear in his power, and therefore worshipped him, though he was not equally clear in his will. All worship is shot wrong that is not directed to, and conducted by, the thoughts of this attribute, whose assistance we need. When we beg the pardon of our sins, we should eye mercy and power; when we beg his righting us in any case where we are unjustly oppressed, we do not eye righteousness without power; when we plead the performance of his promise, we do not regard his faithfulness only without the prop of his power. As power ushers in all the attributes of God in their exercise and manifestation in the world, so should it be the butt our eyes should be fixed upon in all our acts of worship: as without his power his other attributes would be useless, so without due apprehensions of his power our prayers will be faithless and comfortless. The title in the Lord's prayer directs us to a prospect both of his goodness and power; his goodness in the word Father, his greatness, excellency, and power, in the word Heaven. The heedless consideration of the infiniteness of this perfection roots up piety in the midst of us, and makes us so careless in worship. Did we more think of that Power that raised the world out of nothing, that orders all creatures by an act of his will, that performed so great an exploit as that of our redemption, when masterless sin had triumphed over the world, we should give God the honor and adoration which so great an excellency challengeth and deserves at our hands, though we ourselves had not been the work of his hands, or the monuments of his strength; how could any creature engross to itself that reverence from us which is due to the powerful Creator, of whom it comes infinitely short in strength as well as wisdom?

Instruct. 7. From this we have a ground for the belief of the resurrection. God aims at the glory of his power, as well as the glory of any other attribute. Moses else would not have culled out this as the main argument, in his pleading with God, for the sheathing the sword which he began to draw out against them in the wilderness (Numbers 14:16): "The nations will say, Because the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which he sware to them," &c. As the finding out the particulars of the dust of our bodies discovers the vastness of his knowledge, so to raise them will manifest the glory of his power as much as creation; bodies that have mouldered away into multitudes of atoms, been resolved into the elements, passed through varieties of changes, been sometimes the matter to lodge the form of a plant, or been turned into the substance of a fish or fowl, or vaped up into a cloud, and been part of that matter which hath compacted a thunder-bolt, disposed of in places far distant, scattered by the winds, swallowed and concocted by beasts; for these to be called out from their different places of abode, to meet in one body, and

be restored to their former consistency, in a marriage union, in the “twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:22), it is a consideration that may justly amaze us, and our shallow understandings are too feeble to comprehend it. But is it not credible, since all the disputes against it maybe silenced by reflections on Infinite Power, which nothing can oppose, for which nothing can be esteemed too difficult to effect, which doth not imply a contradiction in itself? It was no less amazing to the blessed virgin to hear a message that she should conceive a Son without knowing a man; but she is quickly answered, by the angel, with a “Nothing is impossible to God” (Luke 1:34; Luke 1:37). The distinct parts off our bodies cannot be hid from his all-seeing eye, wherever they are lodged, and in all the changes they pass through, as was discoursed when the Omniscience of God was handled; shall, then, the collection of them together be too hard for his invincible power and strength, and the uniting all those parts into a body, with new dispositions to receive their several souls, be too big and bulky for that Power which never yet was acquainted with any bar? Was not the miracle of our Saviour’s multiplying the loaves, suppose it had not been by a new creation, but a collection of grain from several parts, very near as stupendous as this? Had any one of us been the only creatures made just before the matter of the world, and beheld that inform chaos covered with a thick darkness, mentioned Genesis 1:2, would not the report, that from this dark deep, next to nothing, should be raised such a multitude of comely creatures, with such innumerable varieties of members, voices, colors, motions, and such numbers of shining stars, a bright sun, one uniform body of light from this darkness, that should, like a giant, rejoice to run a race, for many thousands of years together, without stop or weariness; would not all these have seemed as incredible as the collection of scattered dust? What was it that erected the innumerable host of heaven, the glorious angels, and glittering stars, for aught we know more numerous than the bodies of men, but an act of the Divine will? and shall the power that wrought this sink under the charge of gathering some dispersed atoms, and compacting them into a human body? Can you tell how the dust of the ground was kneaded by God into the body of man, and changed into flesh, skin, hair, bones, sinews, veins, arteries, and blood, and fitted for so many several activities, when a human soul was breathed into it? [Note: Lingend. Tom. III. pp. 779, 780.] Can you imagine how a rib, taken from Adam’s side, a lifeless bone, was formed into head, hands, feet, eyes? Why may not the matter of men, which have been, be restored, as well as that which was not, be first erected? Is it harder to repair those things which were, than to create those things which were not? Is there not the same Artificer? Hath any disease or sickness abated his power? Is the Ancient of Days grown feeble? or shall the elements, and other creatures, that always yet obeyed his command, ruffle against his raising voice, and refuse to disgorge those remains of human bodies they have swallowed up in their several bowels? Did the whole world, and all the parts of it, rise at his word? and shall not some parts of the world, the dust of the dead, stand up out of the graves at a word of the same mighty efficacy? Do we not annually see those marks of power which may stun our incredulity in this concern? Do you see in a small acorn, or little seed, any such sights, as a tree with body, bark, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit—where can you find them? Do you know the invisible corners where they lurk in that little body? And yet these you afterwards view rising up from this little body, when sown in the ground, that you could not possibly have any prospect of when you rolled it in your hand, or opened its bowels. And why may not all the particulars of our bodies, however disposed as to their distinct natures invisibly to us, remain distinct, as well as if you mingle a thousand seeds together? they will come up in their distinct kinds, and preserve their distinct virtues. Again, is not the making heaven and earth, the union of

the Divine and human nature, eternity and infirmity, to make a virgin conceive a Son, bear the Creator, and bring forth the Redeemer, to form the blood of God of the flesh of a virgin, a greater work than the calling together and uniting the scattered parts of our bodies, which are all of one nature and matter? And since the power of God is manifested in pardoning innumerable sins, is not the scattering our transgressions, as far as the east is from the west, as the expression is, Psalms 103:12, and casting such numbers into the depths of the sea, which is God's power over himself, a greater argument of might than the recalling and repairing the atoms of our bodies from their various receptacles? It is not hard for them to believe this of the resurrection, that have been sensible of the weight and force of their sins, and the power of God in pardoning and vanquishing that mighty resistance which was made in their hearts against the power of his renewing and sanctifying grace. The consideration of the infinite power of God is a good ground of the belief of the resurrection. hastruct. 8. Since the power of God is so great and incomprehensible, how strange is it that it should be contemned and abused by the creatures as it is! The power of God is beaten down by some, outraged by others, blasphemed by many, under their sufferings. The stripping God of the honor of his creation, and the glory of his preservation of the world, falls under this charge: thus do they that deny his framing the world alone, or thought the first matter was not of God's creation, and such as fancied an evil principle, the author of all evil, as God is the author of all good, and so exempt from the power of God, that it could not be vanquished by him. These things have formerly found defenders in the world; but they are, in themselves, ridiculous and vain, and have no footing in common reason, and are not worthy of debate in a christian auditory. In general, all idolatry in the world did arise from the want of a due notion of this Infinite Power. The heathen thought one God was not sufficient for the managing all things in the world, and therefore they feigned several gods, that had several charges; as Ceres presided over the fruits of the earth; Esculapius over the cure of distempers; Mercury for merchandise and trade; Mars for war and battles; Apollo and Minerva for learning and ingenious arts; and Fortune for casual things. Whence doth the other sort of idolatry, the adoring our bags and gold, our dependencies on, and trusting in, creatures for help arise, but from ignorance of God's power, or mean and slender apprehensions of it? First, there is a contempt of it. Secondly, An abuse of it.

1. It is contemned in every sin, especially in obstinacy in sin. All sin whatsoever is built upon some false notion or monstrous conception of one or other of God's perfections, and in particular of this. It includes a secret and lurking imagination, that we are able to grapple with Omnipotence, and enter the lists with Almightyness; what else can be judged of the apostle's expression (1 Corinthians 10:22), "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than he?" Do we think we have an arm too powerful for that justice we provoke, and can repel that vengeance we exasperate? Do we think we are an even match for God, and are able to despoil him of his Divinity? To despise his will, violate his order, practise what he forbids with a severe threatening, and pawns his power to make it good, is to pretend to have an arm like God, and be able to thunder with a voice equal or superior to him, as the expression is (Job 40:9). All security in sin is of this strain; when men are not concerned at Divine threatenings, nor staggered in their sinful race, they intimate, that the declarations of Divine Power are but vain-glorious boastings; that God is not so strong and able as he reports himself to be; and therefore they will venture it, and dare him to try, whether the strength of his arm be as forcible as the words of his mouth are terrible in his threats; this is to believe themselves Creators, not creatures. We magnify God's power in our wants, and debase it in our rebellions; as though Omnipotence were only able to supply our

necessities, and unable to revenge the injuries we offer him.

2. This power is contemned in distrust of God. All distrust is founded in a doubting of his truth, as if he would not be as good as his word; or of his omniscience, as if he had not a memory to retain his word; or of his power, as if he could not be as great as his word. We measure the infinite power of God by the short line of our understandings, as if infinite strength were bounded within the narrow compass of our finite reason; as if he could do no more than we were able to do. How soon did those Israelites lose the remembrance of God's outstretched arm, when they uttered that atheistical speech (Psalms 78:19), "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" As if he that turned the dust of Egypt into lice, for the punishment of their oppressors, could not turn the dust of the wilderness into corn, for the support of their bodies! As if he that had miraculously rebuked the Red Sea, for their safety, could not provide bread, for their nourishment! Though they had seen the Egyptians with lost lives in the morning, in the same place where their lives had been miraculously preserved in the evening, yet they disgrace that experimental power, by opposing to it the stature of the Anakims, the strength of their cities, and the height of their walls (Numbers 13:32). And (Numbers 14:3). "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword?" As though the giants of Canaan were too strong for Him, for whom they had seen the armies of Egypt too weak. How did they contract the almightiness of God into the littleness of a little man, as if he must needs sink under the sword of a Canaanite? This distrust must arise either from a flat atheism, a denial of the being of God, or his government of the world; or unworthy conceits of a weakness in him, that he had made creatures too hard for himself; that he were not strong enough to grapple with those mighty Anakims, and give them the possession of Canaan against so great a force. Distrust of him implies either that he was always destitute of power, or that his power is exhausted by his former works, or that it is limited, and near a period: it is to deny him to be the Creator that moulded heaven and earth. Why should we, by distrust, put a slight upon that power which he hath so often expressed, and which, in the minutest works of his hands, surmount the force of the sharpest understanding?

3. It is contemned in too great a fear of man, which ariseth from a distrust of Divine power. Fear of man is a crediting the might of man with a disrepute of the arm of God, it takes away the glory of his might, and renders the creature stronger than God; and God more feeble than a mortal; as if the arm of man were a rod of iron, and the arm of God a brittle reed. How often do men tremble at the threatenings and hectorings of ruffians, yet will stand as stakes against the precepts and threatenings of God, as though he had less power to preserve us, than enemies had to destroy? With what disdain doth God speak to men infected with this humor (Isaiah 51:12-13)? "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the Son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?" To fear man that is as grass, that cannot think a thought without a Divine concurrence, that cannot breathe, but by a Divine power, nor touch a hair without license first granted from heaven; this is forgetfulness, and consequently a slight of that Infinite Power, which hath been manifested in founding the earth and garnishing the heavens. All fear of man, in the way of our duty, doth in some sort thrust out the remembrance, and discredit the great actions of the Creator. Would not a mighty prince think it a disparagement to him, if his servant should decline his command for fear of one of his subjects? and hath not the great God just cause to think himself disgraced by us, when we deny him

obedience for fear of a creature: as though he had but an infant ability too feeble to bear us out in duty, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh?

4. It is contemned by trusting in ourselves, in means, in man, more than in God. When in any distress we will try every creature refuge, before we have recourse to God; and when we apply ourselves to him, we do it with such slight and perfunctory frames, and with so much despondency, as if we despaired either of his ability or will to help us; and implore him with cooler affections than we solicit creatures: or, when in a disease we depend upon the virtue of the medicine, the ability of the physician, and reflect not upon that power that endued the medicine with that virtue, and supports the quality in it, and concurs to the operation of it. When we depend upon the activity of the means, as if they had power originally in themselves, and not derivatively; and do not eye the power of God animating and assisting them. We cannot expect relief from anything with a neglect of God, but we render it in our thoughts more powerful than God: we acknowledge a greater fulness in a shallow stream, than in an eternal spring; we do, in effect, depose the true God, and create to ourselves a new one; we assert, by such a kind of acting, the creature, if not superior, yet equal with God, and independent on him. When we trust in our own strength, without begging his assistance; or boast of our own strength, without acknowledging his concurrence, as the Assyrian; "By the strength of my hand have I done this; I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man" (Isaiah 10:13). It is, as if the axe should boast itself against him that hews therewith, and thinks itself more mighty than the arm that wields it (ver. 15), when we trust in others more than in God. Thus God upbraids those by the prophet, that sought help from Egypt, telling them (Isaiah 31:3), "The Egyptians were men, and not gods;" intimating, that by their dependence on them, they rendered them gods and not men, and advanced them from the state of creatures to that of almighty deities. It is to set a pile of dust, a heap of ashes, above Him that created and preserves the world. To trust in a creature, is to make it as infinite as God; to do that which is impossible in itself to be done. God himself cannot make a creature infinite, for that were to make him God. It is also contemned when we ascribe what we receive to the power of instruments, and not to the power of God. Men, in whatsoever they do for us, are but the tools whereby the Creator works. Is it not a disgrace to the limner to admire his pencil, and not himself; to the artificer, to admire his file and engines, and not his power? "It is not I," saith Paul, "that labor, but the grace, the efficacious grace of God, which is in me." Whatsoever good we do is from him, not from ourselves; to ascribe it to ourselves, or to instruments, is to overlook and contemn his power.

5. Unbelief of the gospel is a contempt and disowning Divine power. This perfection hath been discovered in the conception of Christ, the union of the two natures, his resurrection from the grave, the restoration of the world, and the conversion of men, more than in the creation of the world: then what a disgrace is unbelief to all that power that so severely punished the Jews for the rejecting the gospel: turned so many nations from their beloved superstitions; humbled the power of princes and the wisdom of philosophers; chased devils from their temples by the weakness of fishermen; planted the standard of the gospel against the common notions and inveterate customs of the world! What a disgrace is unbelief to this power which hath preserved Christianity from being extinguished by the force of men and devils, and kept it flourishing in the midst of sword, fire, and executioners; that hath made the simplicity of the gospel overpower the eloquence of orators, and multiplied it from the ashes of martyrs, when it was destitute of all human assistances! Not

heartily to believe and embrace that doctrine, which hath been attended with such marks of power, is a high reflection upon this Divine perfection, so highly manifested in the first publication, propagation, and preservation of it.

Secondly, The power of God is abused, as well as contemned. 1. When we make use of it to justify contradictions. The doctrine of transubstantiation is an abuse of this power. When the maintainers of it cannot answer the absurdities alleged against it, they have recourse to the power of God. It implies a contradiction, that the same body should be on earth and in heaven at the same instant of time; that it should be at the right hand of God, and in the mouth and stomach of a man; that it should be a body of flesh, and yet bread to the eye and to the taste; that it should be visible and invisible, a glorious body, and yet gnawn by the teeth of a creature; that it should be multiplied in a thousand places, and yet an entire body in every one, where there is no member to be seen, no flesh to be tasted; that it should be above us in the highest heavens, and yet within us in our lower bowels; such contradictions as these are an abuse of the power of God. Again, we abuse this power when we believe every idle story that is reported, because God is able to make it so if he pleased. We may as well believe *Æsop's Fables* to be true, that birds spake, and beasts reasoned, because the power of God can enable such creatures to such acts. God's power is not the rule of our belief of a thing without the exercise of it in matter of fact, and the declaration of it upon sufficient evidence.

2. The power of God is abused by presuming on it, without using the means he hath appointed. When men sit with folded arms, and make a confidence in his power a glorious title to their idleness and disobedience, they would have his strength do all, and his precept should move them to do nothing; this is a trust of his power against his command, a pretended glorifying his power with a slight of his sovereignty. Though God be almighty, yet, for the most part, he exerciseth his might in giving life and success to second causes and lawful endeavors. When we stay in the mouth of danger, without any call ordering us to continue, and against a door of providence opened for our rescue, and sanctuary ourselves in the power of God without any promise, without any providence conducting us; this is not to glorify the Divine might, but to neglect it, in neglecting the means which his power affords to us for our escape; to condemn it to our humors, to work miracles for us according to our wills, and against his own. [Note: Harwood, p. 13.] God could have sent a worm to be Herod's executioner when he sought the life of our Saviour, or employed an angel from heaven to have tied his hands or stopped his breath, and not put Joseph upon a flight to Egypt with our Saviour; yet had it not been an abuse of the power of God, for Joseph to have neglected the precept, and slighted the means God gave him for the preserving his own life and that of the child's? Christ himself, when the Jews consulted to destroy him, presumed not upon the power of God to secure him, but used ordinary means for his preservation, by walling no more openly, but "retiring himself into a city near the wilderness till the hour was come, and the call of his Father manifest" (John 11:53-54). A rash running upon danger, though for the truth itself, is a presuming upon, and consequently an abuse of, this power; a proud challenging it to serve our turns against the authority of his will, and the force of his precept; a not resting in his ordinate power, but demanding his absolute power to pleasure our follies and presumptions; concluding and expecting more from it than what is authorized by his will.

Instruct. 9. If infinite power be a peculiar property of God, how miserable will all wicked rebels be under this power of God! Men may break his laws, but not impair his arm; they may slight his word,

but cannot resist his power. If he swear that he will sweep a place with the besom of destruction, "as he hath thought, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand," (Isaiah 14:23-24). Rebels against an earthly prince may exceed him in strength, and be more powerful than their sovereign; none can equal God, much less exceed him. As none can exercise an act of hostility against him without his permissive will, so none can struggle from under his hand without his positive will. He hath an arm not to be moved, a hand not to be wrung aside. God is represented on his throne like a "jasper stone" (Revelation 4:3), as one of invincible power when he comes to judge; the jasper is a stone which withstands the greatest force. [Note: Grot. in loc.] Though men resist the order of his laws, they, cannot the sentence of their punishment, nor the execution of it. None can any more exempt themselves from the arm of his strength, than they can from the authority of his dominion. As they must bow to his sovereignty, so must they sink under his force. A prisoner in this world may make his escape, but a prisoner in the world to come cannot (Job 10:7). "There is none that can deliver out of thine hand." There is none to deliver when he "tears in pieces" (Psalms 50:22). His strength is uncontrollable; hence his throne is represented as a "fiery flame" (Daniel 7:9). As a spark of fire hath power to kindle one thing after another, and increase till it consumes a forest, a city, swallow up all combustible matter till it consumes a world, and many worlds, if they were in being, what power hath the tree to resist the fire, though it seems mighty, when it outbraves the winds? What man, to this day, hath been able to free himself from that chain of death God clapped upon him for his revolt? And if he be too feeble to rescue himself from a temporal, much less from an eternal death. The devils have, to this minute, groaned under the pile of wrath, without any success in delivering themselves by all their strength, which much surmounts all the strength of mankind, nor have they any hopes to work their rescue to eternity. How foolish is every sinner! Can we poor worms strut it out against Infinite Power? We cannot resist the meanest creatures when God commissions them, and puts a sword into their hands. They will not, no, not the worms, be startled at the glory of a king, when they have the Creator's warrant to be his executioners (Acts 12:23). Who can withstand him, when he commands the waves and inundations of the sea to leap over the shore; when he divides the ground in earthquakes, and makes it gape wide to swallow the inhabitants of it; when the air is corrupted to breed pestilences; when storms and showers, unseasonably falling, putrify the fruits of the earth; what created power can mend the matter, and, with a prevailing voice, say to him, What dost thou? There are two attributes God will make glister in hell to the full; his wrath and his power (Romans 9:22): "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is wrath and power: both are joined together. It is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and not only that, for then it were well for the damned creature. To have many sharp blows, and from a strong arm, this may be without putting forth the highest strength a man hath; but in this God makes it his design to make his power known and conspicuous; he takes the sword, as it were, in both hands, that he may show the strength of his arm in striking the harder blow; and therefore the apostles calls it (2 Thessalonians 1:9) "the glory of his power," which puts a sting into his wrath; and it is called (Revelation 19:15) "the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty." God will do it in such a manner as to make men sensible of his almightiness in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be, that is backed by all the strength of God! When there will be a powerful wrath, without a powerful compassion; when all his power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying; how irresistible will

be the load of such a weighty hand! How can the dust of the balance break the mighty bars, or get out of the lists of a powerful vengeance, or hope for any grain of comfort? O, that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with Omnipotence! What force can any have to resist the presence of Him, before whom rocks melt, and the heavens, at length, shall be shrivelled up as a parchment by the last fire! As the light of God's face is too dazzling to be beheld by us, so the arm of his power is too mighty to be opposed by us. His almightiness is above the reach of our potsherd strength, as his infiniteness is above the capacity of our purblind understanding. God were not omnipotent, if his power could be rendered ineffectual by any.

Use II. A second use of this point, from the consideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort. As Omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himself folded in the arms of Omnipotence? This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; "I am the Lord, your God;" therefore, that power, which is as essential to the Godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is, in the rights and extent of it, assured unto you. Nay, may we not say, it is made over more than any other, because it is that which animates every other perfection; and is the Spirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world. If God had expressed himself in particular, as, "I am a true God, a wise God, a loving God, a righteous God, I am yours;" what would all, or any of those, have signified, unless the other also had been implied, as, "I am an almighty God, I am your God?" In God's making over himself in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which, all his other grants would be insignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hands of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never use his power to injure his confiding creature; if it were in our own hands, we might use it to injure ourselves. It is a power in the hands of an indulgent Father, not a hard-hearted tyrant; it is a just power; "His right hand is full of righteousness" (Psalms 48:10); because of his righteousness he can never use it ill, and because of his wisdom he can never use it unseasonably. Men that have strength, often misplace the actings of it, because of their folly; and sometimes employ it to base ends, because of their wickedness; but this power in God is always awakened by goodness, and conducted by wisdom; it is never exercised by self-will and passion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteousness. How comfortable is it to think, that you have a God that can do what he pleases; nothing so difficult but he can effect, nothing so strong but he can overrule! You need not dread men, since you have One to restrain them; nor fear devils, since you have One to chain them; no creature but is acted by this power; no creature but must fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation; it is not weakened by his preservation of things; he yet hath a fullness of power, and a residue of Spirit; for whom should that eternal arm of the Lord be displayed, and that incomprehensible thunder of his power be shot out, but for those for whose sake and for whose comfort it is revealed in his word? In particular,

1. Here is comfort in all afflictions and distresses. Our evils can never be so great to oppress us, as his power is great to deliver us. The same power that brought a world out of a chaos, and constituted, and hath hitherto preserved, the regular motion of the stars, can bring order out of our confusions, and light out of our darkness. When our Saviour was in the greatest distress, and beheld the face of his Father frowning, while he was upon the cross, in his complaint to him, he

exerciseth faith upon his power (Matthew 27:46): "Eli, Eli: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that this, My strong, my strong; lae, is a name of power, belonging to God; he comforts himself in his power, while he complains of his frowns. Follow his pattern, and forget not that power that can scatter the clouds, as well as gather them together. The Psalmist's support in his distress, was in the creative power of God (Psalms 121:2): "My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

2. It is comfort in all strong and stirring corruptions and mighty temptations. It is by this we may arm ourselves, and "be strong in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10); by this we may conquer principalities and powers, as dreadful as hell, but not so mighty as heaven; by this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh; by this the devils that have possessed us may be cast out; the battered walls of our souls may be repaired; and the sons of Anak laid flat. That power that brought light out of darkness, and overmastered the deformity of the chaos, and set bounds to the ocean, and dried up the Red Sea by a rebuke, can quell the tumults in our spirits, and level spiritual Goliaths by his word. When the disciples heard that terrifying speech of our Saviour, concerning rich men, that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24), to entertain the gospel, which commanded self-denial; and that, because of the allurements of the world, and the strong habits in their soul; Christ refers them to the power of God (Matthew 19:26), who could expel those ill habits, and plant good ones: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." There is no resistance, but he can surmount; no strong-hold, but he can demolish; no tower, but he can level.

3. It is comfort from hence, that all promises shall be performed. Goodness is sufficient to make a promise, but power is necessary to perform a promise. Men that are honest, cannot often make good their words, because something may intervene that may shorten their ability: but nothing can disable God, without diminishing his godhead. He hath an infiniteness of power to accomplish his word, as well as an infiniteness of goodness to make and utter his word. That might whereby he made heaven and earth, and his keeping truth forever, are joined together (Psalms 146:5-6); his Father's faithfulness, and his creative power are linked together. It is upon this basis the covenant, and every part of it, is established, and stands as firm as the almightiness of God, whereby he sprung up the earth, and reared the heavens. "No power can resist his will" (Romans 9:19); "Who can disannul his purpose, and turn back his hand when it is stretched out" (Isaiah 14:27)? His word is unalterable, and his power is invincible. He could not deceive himself, for he knew his own strength when he promised: no unexpected event can change his resolution, because nothing can happen without the compass of his foresight. No created strength can stop him in his action, because all creatures are ready to serve him at his command; not the devils in hell, nor all the wicked men on earth, since he hath strength to restrain them, and an arm to punish them. What can be too hard for Him that created heaven and earth? Hence it was, that when God promised anything anciently to his people, he used often the name of the Almighty, the Lord that created heaven and earth, as that which was an undeniable answer to any objection, against anything that might be made against the greatness and stupendousness of any promise; by that name, in all his works of grace, was he known to them (Exodus 6:3). When we are sure of his will, we need not question his strength, since he never over-engaged himself above his ability. He that could not be resisted by anything in creation, nor vanquished by devils in redemption, can never want power to

glorify his faithfulness in his accomplishment of whatsoever he hath promised.

4. From this infiniteness of power in God, we have ground of assurance for perseverance. Since conversion is resembled to the works of creation and resurrection, two great marks of his strength, he doth not surely employ himself in the first of changing the heart, to let any created strength baffle that power which he began and intends to glorify. It was this might that struck off the chain, and expelled that strong one that possessed you. What, if you are too weak to keep him out of his lost possession, will God lose the glory of his first strength, by suffering his foiled adversary to make a re-entry, and regain his former usurpation? His out-stretched arm will not do less by his spiritual, than it did by his national Israel: it guarded them all the way to Canaan, and left them not to shift for themselves after he had struck off the fetters of Egypt, and buried their enemies in the Red Sea (Deuteronomy 1:31). This greatness of the Father, above all, our Saviour makes the ground of believers' continuance forever, against the blasts of hell and engines of the world (John 10:29). "My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Our keeping is not in our own weak hands, but in the hands of Him who is mighty to save. That power of God keeps us which intends our salvation. In all fears of falling away, shelter yourselves in the power of God: "He shall be holden up," saith the apostle, speaking concerning one weak in faith; and no other reason is rendered by him but this, "For God is able to make him to stand" (Romans 14:4).

5. From this attribute of the infinite power of God, we have a ground of comfort in the lowest estate of the church. Let the state of the church be never so deplorable, the condition never so desperate, that Power that created the world, and shall raise the bodies of men, can create a happy state for the church, and raise her from an overwhelming grave; though the enemies trample upon her, they cannot upon the arm that holds her, which by the least motion of it, can lift her up above the heads of her adversaries, and make them feel the thunder of that Power that none can understand: by the "blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed" (Job 4:9); they "shall be scattered as chaff before the wind." If once he "draw his hand out of his bosom," all must fly before him, or sink under him (Psalms 74:11): and when there is "none to help, his own arm sustains him, and brings salvation, and his fury doth uphold him" (Isaiah 63:5). What if the church totter under the underminings of hell? What if it hath a sad heart and wet eyes? In what a little moment can he make the night turn into day, and make the Jews, that were preparing for death in Shushan, triumph over the necks of their enemies, and march in one hour with swords in their hands, that expected the last hour "ropes about their necks" (Esther 9:1; Esther 9:5)? If Israel be pursued by Pharaoh, the sea shall open its arms to protect them: if they be thirsty, a rock shall spout out water to refresh them: if they be hungry, heaven shall be their granary for manna: if Jerusalem be besieged, and hath not force enough to encounter Sennacherib, an angel shall turn the camp into an Aceldema, a field of blood. His people shall not want deliverances, till God want a power of working miracles for their security: he is more jealous of his power, than the church can be of her safety. And if we should want other arguments to press him, we may implore him by virtue of his power: for when there is nothing in the church as a motive to him to save it, there is enough in his own name, and "the illustration of his power" (Psalms 106:8). Who can grapple with the omnipotency of that God, who is jealous of, and zealous for, the honor of it? And therefore God, for the most part, takes such opportunities to deliver, wherein his almightiness may be most conspicuous, and his counsels most admirable. He awakened not

himself to deliver Israel, till they were upon the brink of the Red Sea; nor to rescue the three children, till they were in the fiery furnace; nor Daniel, till he was in the lion's den. It is in the weakness of his creature that his strength is perfected, not in a way of addition of perfectness to it, but in a way of manifestation of the perfection of it; as it is the perfection of the sun to shine and enlighten the world, not that the sun receives an increase of light by the darting of his beams, but discovers his glory to the admiration of men, and pleasure of the world. If it were not for such occasions, the world would not regard the mightiness of God, nor know what power were in him. It traverses the stage in its fulness and liveliness upon such occasions, when the enemies are strong, and their strength edged with an intense hatred, and but little time between the contrivance and execution. It is a great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the discovery of this attribute, and that the glory of God's omnipotence, and the church's security, are so straitly linked together. It is a promise that will never be forgotten by God, and ought never to be forgotten by us, that "in this mountain the hand of the Lord shall rest" (Isaiah 25:10); that is, the power of the Lord shall abide; and Moab "shall be trodden under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." And the "plagues of Babylon shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; for strong is the Lord who judgeth her" (Revelation 18:8).

Use III. The third use is for exhortation.

1. Meditate on this power of God, and press it often upon your minds. We conclude many things of God that we do not practically suck the comfort of, for want of deep thoughts of it, and frequent inspection into it. We believe God to be true, yet distrust him; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understandings, are kept under hatches by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought forth into the open air of our souls by meditation. If we will but search our hearts, we shall find it is the power of God we often doubt of. When the heart of Ahaz and his subjects trembled at the combination of the Syrian and Israelitish kings against him, for want of a confidence in the power of God, God sends his prophet with commission to work a miraculous sign at his own choice, to rear up his fainting heart; and when he refused to ask a sign out of diffidence of that almighty Power, the prophet complains of it as an affront to his Master (Isaiah 7:12-13). Moses, so great a friend of God, was overtaken with this kind of unbelief, after all the experiments of God's miraculous acts in Egypt; the answer God gives him manifests this to be at the core: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short" (Numbers 11:23)? For want of actuated thoughts of this, we are many times turned from our known duty by the blast of a creature; as though man had more power to dismay us, than God hath to support us in his commanded way. The belief of God's power is one of the first steps to all religion; without settled thoughts of it, we cannot pray lively and believingly for the obtaining the mercies we want, or the averting the evils we fear; we should not love him, unless we are persuaded he hath a power to bless us; nor fear him, unless we were persuaded of his power to punish us. The frequent thoughts of this would render our faith more stable, and our hopes more stedfast; it would make us more feeble to sin, and more careful to obey. When the virgin staggered at the message of the angel, that she should "bear a Son," he, in his answer, turns her to the creative power of God (Luke 1:35), "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;" which seems to be in allusion to the Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep, and bringing a comely world out of a confused mass. Is it harder for God to make a virgin conceive a Son by the power of his Spirit, than to make a world? Why doth he reveal himself so often under the title of Almighty,

and press it upon us, but that we should press it upon ourselves? And shall we be forgetful of that which everything about us, everything within us, is a mark of? How come we by a power of seeing and hearing, a faculty, and act of understanding and will, but by this power framing us, this power assisting us? What though the thunder of his power cannot be understood, no more can any other perfection of his nature; shall we, therefore, seldom think of it? The sea cannot be fathomed, yet the merchant excuseth not himself from sailing upon the surface of it. We cannot glorify God without due consideration of this attribute; for his power is his glory as much as any other, and called both by the name of glory (Romans 6:4), speaking of Christ's resurrection by the glory of the Father; and also "the riches of his glory" (Ephesians 3:16). Those that have strong temptations in their course and over-pressing corruptions in their hearts, have need to think of it out of interest, since nothing but this can relieve them. Those that have experimented the working of it in their new creation, are obliged to think of it out of gratitude. It was this mighty power over himself that gave rise to all that pardoning grace already conferred, or hereafter expected; without it our souls had been consumed, the world overturned; we could not have expected a happy heaven, but have lain yelling in an eternal hell, had not the power of his mercy exceeded that of his justice, and his infinite power executed what his infinite wisdom had contrived for our redemption. How much also should we be raised in our admirations of God, and ravish ourselves in contemplating that might that can raise innumerable worlds in those infinite imaginary spaces without this globe of heaven and earth, and exceed inconceivably what he hath done in the creation of this?

2. From the pressing the consideration of this upon ourselves, let us be induced to trust God upon the account of his power. The main end of the revelation of his power to the patriarchs, and of the miraculous operations of it in Egypt, was to induce them to an entire reposing themselves in God: and the Psalmist doth scarce speak of the Divine Omnipotence without making this inference from it; and scarce exhorts to a trust in God, but backs it with a consideration of his power in creation, it being the chief support of the soul (Psalms 146:1): "Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is." That Power is invincible that drew the world out of nothing: nothing can happen to us harder than the making the world without the concurrence of instruments: no difficulty can nonplus that strength, that hath drawn all things out of nothing, or out of a confused matter next to nothing: no power can rifle what we commit to him (2 Timothy 1:12). He is all power, above the reach of all power; all other powers in the world flowing from him, or depending on him, he is worthy to be trusted, since we know him true, without ever breaking his word; and Omnipotent, never failing of his purpose; and a confidence in it is the chief act whereby we can glorify this power, and credit his arm. A strong God, and a weak faith in omnipotence, do not suit well together. Indeed, we are more engaged to a trust in Divine power than the ancient patriarchs were; they had the verbal declaration of his power, and many of them little other evidence of it, than in the creation of the world; and their faith in God being established in this first discovery of his omnipotence, drew out itself further to believe, that whatsoever God promised by his word, he was able to perform, as well as the creation of the world out of nothing; which seems to be the intendment of the apostle (Hebrews 6:3); not barely to speak of the creation of the world by God, which was a thing the Hebrews understood well enough from their ancient oracles; but to show the foundation of the patriarch's faith, viz. God making the world by his Word, and what use they made of the discovery of his power in that, to lead them to believe the promise of God concerning the Seed of the woman to be brought into the world. But we have not only the same foundation, but superadded demonstrations of this attribute in the conception of our Saviour,

the union of the two natures, the glorious redemption, the propagation of the gospel, and the new creation of the world. They relied upon the naked power of God, without those more illustrious appearances of it, which have been in the ages since, and arrived to their notice; we have the wonderful effects of that which they had but obscure expectations of.

(1.) Consider, trust in God can never be without taking in God's power as a concurrent foundation with his truth. It is the main ground of trust, and so set forth in the prophet (Isaiah 26:4); "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And the faith of the ancients so recommended (Hebrews 11:1-40.), had this chiefly for its ground; and the faith in gospel times is called a "trusting on his arm" (Isaiah 51:5.) All the attributes of God are the objects of our veneration, but they do not equally contribute to the producing trust in our hearts; his eternity, simplicity, infiniteness, ravish and astonish our minds when we consider them; but there is no immediate tendency in their nature to allure us to a confidence in him, no, not in an innocent state, much less in a lapsed and revolted condition: but the other perfections of his nature, as his holiness, righteousness, mercy, are amiable to us in regard of the immediate operations of them upon and about the creature, and so have something in their own nature to allure us to repose ourselves in him; but yet those cannot engage to an entire trust in him without reflecting upon his ability, which can only render those useful and successful to the creature. [Note: Amyrant Moral. Tom. V. p. 170.] For whatsoever bars stand in the way of his holy, righteous, and merciful proceedings toward his creatures, are not overmastered by those perfections, but by that strength of his which can only relieve us in concurrence with the other attributes. How could his mercy succor us without his arm, or his wisdom guide us without his hand, or his truth perform promises to us without his strength? As no attribute can act without it, so in our addresses to him upon the account of any particular perfection in the Godhead according to our indigency, our eye must be perpetually fixed upon this of his power, and our faith would be feeble and dispirited without eyeing this: without this, his holiness, which hates sin, would not be regarded; and his mercy, pitying a grieving sinner, would not be valued. As this power is the ground of a wicked man's fear, so it is the ground of a good man's trust. This was that which was the principal support of Abraham, not barely his promise, but his ability to make it good (Romans 4:21); and when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, the ability of God to raise him up again (Hebrews 11:19). All faith would droop, and be in the mire, without leaning upon this; all those attributes which we consider as moral in God, would have no influence upon us without this, which we consider physically in God. Though we value the kindness men may express to us in our distresses, yet we make them not the objects of our confidence, unless they have an ability to act what they express. There can be no trust in God without an eye to his power.

(2.). Sometimes the power of God is the sole object of trust. As when we have no promise to assure us of his will, we have nothing else to pitch upon but his ability; and that not his absolute power, but his ordinate, in the way of his providence; we must not trust in it so as to expect he should please our humor with fresh miracles, but rest upon his power, and leave the manner to his will. Asa, when ready to conflict with the vast Ethiopian army, pleaded nothing else but this power of God (2 Chronicles 14:11). And the three children, who had no particular promise of deliverance (that we read of) stuck to God's ability to preserve them against the king's threatening, and owned it in the face of the king, yet with some kind of inward intimations in their own spirits, that he would also deliver them (Daniel 3:17). "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning

fiery furnace.” And accordingly the fire burnt the cords that tied them, without singeing any thing else about them. But when this power hath been exercised upon like occasions, it is a precedent he hath given us to rest upon. Precedents in law are good pleas, and strong encouragements to the client to expect success in his suit. “Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them,” saith David (Psalms 22:4). And Jehoshaphat, in a case of distress (2 Chronicles 20:7), “Art not thou our God, that didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel?” When we have not any statute law and promise to plead, we may plead his power, together with the former precedents and act of it. The centurion had nothing else to act his faith upon but the power of Christ, and some evidences of it in the miracles reported of him; but he is silent in the latter, and casts himself only upon the former, acknowledging that Christ had the same command over diseases, as himself had over his soldiers (Matthew 8:10). And our Saviour, when he receives the petition of the blind men, requires no more of them in order to a cure, but a belief of his ability to perform it (Matthew 9:28). “Believe you that I am able to do this?” His will is not known but by revelation, but his power is apprehended by reason, as essentially and eternally linked with the notion of a God. God also is jealous of the honor of this attribute; and since it is so much virtually discredited, he is pleased when any do cordially own it, and entirely resign themselves to the assistance of it. Well, then, in all duties where faith is particularly to be acted, forget not this as the main prop of it: do you pray for a flourishing and triumphing grace? Consider him “as able to make all grace to abound in you” (2 Corinthians 9:8). Do you want comfort and reviving under your contritions and godly sorrow? Consider him, as he declares himself, “the high and lofty One” (Isaiah 57:15). Are you under pressing distresses? take Eliphaz’s advice to Job, when he tells him what he himself would do if he were in his case (Job 5:8), “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:” but observe under what consideration (Job 5:9) as to one “that doth great things, and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.” When you beg of him the melting your rocky hearts, the dashing in pieces your strong corruptions, the drawing his beautiful image in your soul, the quickening your dead hearts, and reviving your drooping spirits, and supplying your spiritual wants, consider him as one “able to do abundantly,” not only “above what you can ask,” but “above what you can think” (Ephesians 3:20). Faith will be spiritless, and prayer will be liveless, if power be not eyed by us in those things which cannot be done without an arm of Omnipotence.

3. This doctrine teacheth us humility and submission. The vast disproportion between the mightiness of God, and the meanness of a creature, inculcates the lesson of humility in his presence. How becoming is humility under a mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6)! What is an infant in a giant’s hand, or a lamb in a lion’s paw? Submission to irresistible power is the best policy, and the best security; this gratifies and draws out goodness, whereas murmuring and resistance exasperates and sharpens power. We sanctify his name, and glorify his strength, by falling down before it; it is an acknowledgment of his invisible strength, and our inability to match it. How low should we therefore be before him, against whose power our pride and murmuring can do no good, who can out-wrestle us in our contests, and alway overcome when he judges (Romans 3:4)!

4. This doctrine teacheth us not to fear the pride and force of man. How unreasonable is it to fear a limited, above an unbounded power! How unbecoming is the fear of man in him, who hath an interest in a strength able to curb the strongest devils! Who would tremble at the threats of a dwarf, that hath a mighty and watchful giant for his guard? If God doth but arise, his enemies arc

scattered (Psalms 68:1): the least motion makes them fly before him: it is no difficult thing for Him, that made them by a word, to unmake their designs, and shiver them in pieces by the breath of his mouth: "He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth vanity; they wither when he blows upon them, and their stock shall not take root in the earth. He can command a whirlwind to take them away as stubble" (Isaiah 40:23-24); yea, with the "shaking of his hand he makes servants to become rulers of those that were their masters" (Zechariah 2:9). Whole nations are no more in his hands than a "morning cloud," or the "dew upon the ground," or "the chaff before the wind," or the smoke against the motion of the air, which, though it appear out of a chimney like a black invincible cloud, is quickly dispersed, and becomes invisible (Hosea 13:3). How inconsiderable are the most mighty to this strength, which can puff away a whole world of proud grasshoppers, and a whole sky of daring clouds! He that by his word masters the rage of the sea, can overrule the pride and power of men. Where is the fury of the oppressor? It cannot overleap the bounds he hath set it, nor march an inch beyond the point he hath prescribed it. Fear not the confederacies of man, but "sanctify the Lord of hosts; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isaiah 8:13). To fear men is to dishonor the name of God, and regard him as a feeble Lord, and not as the Lord of hosts, who is mighty in strength, so that they that harden themselves against him shall not prosper.

5. Therefore this doctrine teacheth us the fear of God. The prophet Jeremiah counts it as an impossible thing for men to be destitute of the fear of God, When they seriously consider his name to be great and mighty (Jeremiah 10:6-7): "Thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O thou King of nations?" Shall we not tremble at his presence, who hath placed the "sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree;" that though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail (Jeremiah 5:22). He can arm the weakest creature for our destruction, and disarm the strongest creatures which appear for our preservation. He can command a hair, a crumb, a kernel, to go awry, and strangle us. He can make the heavens brass over our head, stop close the bottles of the clouds, and make the fruit of the fields droop, when there is a small distance to the harvest; he can arm men's wit, wealth, hands, against themselves; he can turn our sweet morsels into bitter, and our own consciences into devouring lions; he can root up cities by moles, and conquer the proudest by lice and worms. The omnipotence of God is not only the object of a believer's trust, but a believer's fear. It is from the consideration of this power only, that our Saviour presses his disciples, whom he entitles his friends, to fear God; which lesson he presses by a double repetition, and with a kind of asseveration, without rendering any other reason than this of the ability of God to cast into hell (Luke 12:5). We are to fear Him because he can; but bless his goodness because he will not. In regard of his omnipotence, he is to be revered, not only by mortal men, but by the blessed angels, who are past the fear of any danger by his power, being confirmed in a happy state by his unalterable grace: when they adore him for his holiness, they reverence him for his power with covered faces: the title of the "Lord of hosts" is joined in their reverential praise with that of his holiness (Isaiah 6:3), "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." How should we adore that Power which can preserve us, when devils and men conspire to destroy us! How should we stand in awe of that Power which can destroy us, though angels and men should combine to preserve us! The parts of his ways which are discovered, are sufficient motives to an humble and reverential adoration: but who can fear and adore him according to the vastness of his power, and his excellent greatness, since "the thunder of his power who can understand?"

On The Wisdom of God

ON THE WISDOM OF GOD Romans 16:27.—To God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen. This chapter being the last of this Epistle, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of particular persons, according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labor of love for the interest of God and his people. In Romans 16:17, he warns them not to be drawn aside from the gospel doctrine, which had been taught them, by the plausible pretences and insinuations which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Christ never want from the suggestions of their carnal wisdom. The brats of soul-destroying errors may walk about the world in a garb and disguise of good words and fair speeches, as it is in the 18th. verse; by “good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” And for their encouragement to a constancy in the gospel doctrine, he assures them, that all those that would dispossess them of truth, to possess them with vanity, are but Satan’s instruments, and will fall under the same captivity and yoke with their principal (Romans 16:18); “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Whence, observe,

1. All corrupters of divine truth, and troublers of the church’s peace, are no better than devils. Our Saviour thought the name, Satan, a title merited by Peter, when he breathed out an advice, as an axe at the root of the gospel, the death of Christ, the foundation of all gospel truth; and the apostle concludes them under the same character, which hinder the superstructure, and would mix their chaff with his wheat (Matthew 16:23), “Get thee behind me, Satan.” It is not, Get thee behind me, Simon, or, Get thee behind me, Peter; but “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me.” Thou dost oppose thyself to the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, to the redemption of man, and to the good of the world. As the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, so is Satan the spirit of falsehood as the Holy Ghost inspires believers with truth, so doth the devil corrupt unbelievers with error. Let us cleave to the truth of the gospel, that we may not be counted by God as part of the corporation of fallen angels, and not be barely reckoned as enemies of God, but in league with the greatest enemy to his glory in the world.

2. The Reconciler of the world will be the Subduer of Satan. The God of peace sent the Prince of peace to be the restorer of his rights, and the hammer to beat in pieces the usurper of them. As a God of truth, he will make good his promise; as a God of peace, he will perfect the design his wisdom hath laid, and begun to act. In the subduing Satan, he will be the conqueror of his instruments: he saith not, God shall bruise your troublers and heretics, but Satan: the fall of a general proves the rout of the army. Since God, as a God of peace, hath delivered his own, he will perfect the victory, and make them cease from bruising the heel of his spiritual seed.

3. Divine evangelical truth shall be victorious. No weapon formed against I shall prosper: the head of the wicked shall fall as low as the feet of the godly. The devil never yet blustered in the world, but he met at last with a disappointment: his fall hath been like lightning, sudden, certain, vanishing.

4. Faith must look back as far as the foundation promise. "The God of peace shall bruise," &c. The apostle seems to allude to the first promise (Genesis 2:15),—a promise that hath vigor to nourish the church in all ages of the world: it is the standing cordial; out of the womb of this promise all the rest have taken their birth. The promises of the Old Testament were designed for those under the New, and the full performance of them is to be expected, and will be enjoyed by them. It is a mighty strengthening to faith, to trace the footsteps of God's truth and wisdom, from the threatening against the serpent in Eden, to the bruise he received in Calvary, and the triumph over him upon Mount Olivet.

5. We are to confide in the promise of God, but leave the season of its accomplishment to his wisdom. He will "bruise Satan under your feet," therefore do not doubt it; and shortly, therefore, wait for it. Shortly it will be done, that is, quickly, when you think it may be a great way off; or shortly, that is, seasonably, when Satan's rage is hottest. God is the best judge of the seasons of distributing his own mercies, and darting out his own glory: it is enough to encourage our waiting, that it will be, and that it will be shortly; but we must not measure God's shortly by our minutes. The apostle after this, concludes with a comfortable prayer, that since they were liable to many temptations to turn their backs upon the doctrine which they had learned; yet he desires God, who had brought them to the knowledge of his truth, would confirm them in the belief of it, since it was the gospel of Christ, his dear Son, and a mystery he had been chary of and kept in his own cabinet, and now brought forth to the world in pursuance of the ancient prophecies, and now had published to all nations for that end that it might be obeyed; and concludes with a doxology, a voice of praise, to Him, who was only wise to effect his own purposes (Romans 16:25-27), "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." This doxology is interlaced with many comforts for the Romans. He explains the causes of this glory to God, power, and wisdom; power to establish the Romans in grace, which includes his will. This he proves from a divine testimony, viz., the gospel; the gospel committed to him, and preached by him, which he commends, by calling it the preaching of Christ; and describes it, for the instruction and comfort of the church from the adjuncts, the obscurity of it under the Old Testament, and the clearness of it under the New. It was hid from the former ages, and kept in silence; not simply and absolutely, but comparatively and in part; because in the Old Testament, the doctrine of salvation by Christ was confined to the limits of Judea, preached only to the inhabitants of that country: to them he gave "his statutes and his judgments, and dealt not so magnificently with any nation" (Psalms 147:19-20); but now he causes it to spring with greater majesty out of those narrow bounds, and spread its wings about the world. This manifestation of the gospel he declares, 1. from the subject, All nations. 2. From the principal efficient cause of it, The commandment and order of God. 3. The instrumental cause, The prophetic Scriptures. 4. From the end of it, The obedience of faith. [Note: Gomarus, in loc.]

Observ. 1. The glorious attributes of God bear a comfortable respect to believers. Power and wisdom are here mentioned as two props of their faith; his power here includes his goodness. Power to help, without will to assist, is a dry chip. The apostle mentions not God's power simply and absolutely considered, for that of itself is no more comfort to men, then it is to devils; but, as

considered in the gospel covenant, his power, as well as his other perfections, are ingredients in that cordial of God's being our God. We should never think of the excellencies of the Divine nature, without considering the duties they demand, and gathering the honey they present.

Observ. 2. The stability of a gracious soul depends upon the wisdom as well as the power of God. It would be a disrepute to the Almightyness of God if that should be totally vanquished which was introduced by his mighty arm, and rooted in the soul by an irresistible grace. It would speak a want of strength to maintain it, or a change of resolution, and so would be no honor to the wisdom of his first design. It is no part of the wisdom of an artificer, to let a work wherein he determined to shew the greatness of his skill, be dashed in pieces, when he hath power to preserve it. God designed every gracious soul for a piece of his workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). What, to have the skill of his grace defeated? If any soul which he hath graciously conquered should be wrested from him, what could be thought but that his power is enfeebled? If deserted by him, what could be imagined, but that he repented of his labor, and altered his counsel, as if rashly undertaken? These Romans were rugged pieces, and lay in a filthy quarry, when God came first to smooth them; for so the apostle represents them with the rest of the heathen (Romans 1:19); and would he throw them away, or leave them to the power of his enemy, after all his pains he had taken with them to fit them for his building? Did he not foresee the designs of Satan against them, what stratagems he would use to defeat his purposes and strip him of the honor of his work; and would God so gratify his enemy, and disgrace his own wisdom? The deserting of what hath been acted is a real repentance, and argues an imprudence in the first resolve and attempt. The gospel is called the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10); the fruit of it, in the heart of any person, which is a main design of it, hath a title to the same character; and shall this grace, which is the product of this gospel, and therefore the birth of manifold wisdom, be suppressed? It is at God's hand we must seek our fixedness and establishment, and act faith upon these two attributes of God. Power is no ground to expect stability, without wisdom interesting the agent in it, and finding out and applying the means for it. Wisdom is naked without power to act, and power is useless without wisdom to direct. They are these two excellencies of the Deity the apostle here pitches the hope and faith of the converted Romans upon for their stability.

Observ. 3. Perseverance of believers in grace is a gospel doctrine. "According to my gospel," my gospel ministerially, according to that gospel doctrine I have taught you in this epistle (for, as the prophets were comments upon the law, so are the epistles upon the gospel), this very doctrine he had discoursed of (Romans 8:38-39), where he tells them, that neither death nor life, the terrors of a cruel death, or the allurements of an honorable and pleasant life, nor principalities and powers, with all their subtlety and strength, nor the things we have before us, nor the promises of a future felicity, by either angels in heaven or devils in hell, not the highest angel, nor the deepest devil, is able to separate us, us Romans, "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." So that, according to my gospel, may be according to that declaration of the gospel, which I have made in this epistle, which doth not only promise the first creating grace, but the perfecting and crowning grace; for not only the being of grace, but the health, liveness, and perpetuity of grace is the fruit of the new covenant (Jeremiah 32:40.)

Observ. 4. That the gospel is the sole means of a Christian's establishment; "According to my gospel," that is, by my gospel. The gospel is the instrumental cause of our spiritual life; it is the cause also of the continuance of it; it is the seed whereby we were born, and the milk whereby we

are nourished (1 Peter 1:23); it is the “power of God to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2), and therefore to all the degrees of it (John 17:17); “Sanctify them by thy truth,” or through thy truth; by or through his truth he sanctifies us, and by the same truth he establisheth us. The first sanctification, and the progress of it, the first lineaments, and the last colors, are wrought by the gospel. The gospel, therefore, ought to be known, studied, and considered by us. It is the charter of our inheritance, and the security for our standing. The law acquaints us with our duty, but contributes nothing to our strength and settlement.

Observ. 5. The gospel is nothing else but the revelation of Christ (Romans 16:25); “According to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ;” the discovery of the mystery of redemption and salvation in and by him. It is *genitivus objecti*, that preaching wherein Christ is declared and set out, with the benefits accruing by him. This is the privilege, the wisdom of God reserved for the latter times, which the Old Testament church had only under a veil.

Observ. 6. It is a part of the excellency of the gospel that it had the Son of God for its publisher: “The preaching of Jesus Christ.” It was first preached to Adam, in Paradise, by God; and afterwards published by Christ in person, to the inhabitants of Judea. It was not the invention of man, but copied from the bosom of the Father by him that lay in his bosom. The gospel we have, is the same which our Saviour himself preached when he was in the world: he preached it not to the Romans, but the same gospel he preached is transmitted to the Romans. It, therefore, commands our respect; whoever slights it, it is as much as if he slighted Jesus Christ himself, were he in person to sound it from his own lips. The validity of a proclamation is derived from the authority of the prince that dictates it and orders it; yet the greater the person that publisheth it, the more dishonor is cast upon the authority of the prince that enjoins it, if it be contemned. The everlasting God ordained it, and the eternal Son published it.

Observ. 7. The gospel was of an eternal resolution, though of a temporary revelation (Romans 16:25); “According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” It is an everlasting gospel; it was a promise “before the world began” (Titus 1:2.) It was not a new invention, but only kept secret among the arcana, in the breast of the Almighty. It was hidden from angels, for the depths of it are not yet fully made known to them; their desire to look into it, speaks yet a deficiency in their knowledge of it (1 Peter 1:12.) It was published in paradise, but in such words as Adam did not fully understand: it was both discovered and clouded in the smoke of sacrifices: it was wrapped up in a veil under the law, but not opened till the death of the Redeemer: it was then plainly said to the cities of Judah, “Behold! your God comes!” The whole transaction of it between the Father and the Son, which is the spirit of the gospel, was from eternity; the creation of the world was in order to the manifestation of it. Let us not, then, regard the gospel as a novelty; the consideration of it, as one of God’s cabinet rarities, should enhance our estimation of it. No traditions of men, no inventions of vain wits, that pretend to be wiser than God, should have the same credit with that which bears date from eternity.

Observ. 8. That divine truth is mysterious; “According to the revelation of the mystery, Christ manifested in the flesh.” The whole scheme of godliness is a mystery. No man or angel could imagine how two natures so distant as the Divine and human should be united; how the same person should be criminal and righteous; how a just God should have a satisfaction, and sinful man a justification; how the sin should be punished, and the sinner saved. None could imagine

such a way of justification as the apostle in this epistle declares: it was a mystery when hid under the shadows of the law, and a mystery to the prophets when it sounded from their mouths; they searched it, without being able to comprehend it (1 Peter 1:10-11.) If it be a mystery, it is humbly to be submitted to: mysteries surmount human reason. The study of the gospel must not be with a yawning and careless frame. Trades, you call mysteries, are not learned sleeping and nodding: diligence is required; we must be disciples at God's feet. As it had God for the author, so we must have God for the teacher of it; the contrivance was his, and the illumination of our minds must be from him. As God only manifested the gospel, so he can only open our eyes to see the mysteries of Christ in it. In Romans 16:26 we may observe,

1. The Scriptures of the Old Testament verify the substance of the New, and the New doth evidence the authority of the Old, by the Scriptures of the prophets made known. The Old Testament credits the New, and the New illustrates the Old. The New Testament is a comment upon the prophetic part of the Old. The Old shews the promises and predictions of God, and the New shews the performance. What was foretold in the Old, is fulfilled in the New; the predictions are cleared by the events. The predictions of the Old are divine, because they are above the reason of man to foreknow; none but an infinite knowledge could foretel them, because none but an infinite wisdom could order all things for the accomplishment of them. The Christian religion hath, then, the surest foundation, since the Scriptures of the prophets, wherein it is foretold, are of undoubted antiquity, and owned by the Jews and many heathens, which are and were the great enemies of Christ. The Old Testament is therefore to be read for the strengthening of our faith. Our blessed Saviour himself draws the streams of his doctrine from the Old Testament: he clears up the promise of eternal life, and the doctrine of the resurrection, from the words of the covenant, "I am the God of Abraham," &c. (Matthew 22:32.) And our apostle clears up the doctrine of justification by faith from God's covenant with Abraham (Romans 4:1-25.) It must be read, and it must be read as it is writ: it was writ to a gospel end, it must be studied with a gospel spirit. The Old Testament was writ to give credit to the New, when it should be manifested in the world. It must be read by us to give strength to our faith, and establish us in the doctrine of Christianity. How many view it as a bare story, an almanack out of date, and regard it as a dry bone, without sucking from it the evangelical marrow! Christ is, in Genesis, Abraham's seed; in David's psalms and the prophets, the Messiah and Redeemer of the world.

2. Observe, The antiquity of the gospel is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets. It was of as ancient a date as any prophecy: the first prophecy was nothing else but a gospel charter; it was not made at the incarnation of Christ, but made manifest. It then rose up to its meridian lustre, and sprung out of the clouds, wherewith it was before obscured. The gospel was preached to the ancients by the prophets, as well as to the Gentiles by the apostles (Hebrews 4:2); "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." To them first, to us after; to them indeed more cloudy, to us more clear; but they as well as we, were evangelized, as the word signifies. The covenant of grace was the same in the writings of the prophets, and the declarations of the evangelists and apostles. Though by our Saviour's incarnation, the gospel light was clearer, and, by his ascension, the effusions of the Spirit fuller and stronger; yet the believers under the Old Testament, saw Christ in the swaddling bands of legal ceremonies, and the lattice of prophetic writings; they could not else offer one sacrifice, or read one prophecy with a faith of the right stamp. Abraham's justifying faith had Christ for its object, though it was not so explicit as ours, because the

manifestation was not so clear as ours.

3. All truth is to be drawn from Scripture. The apostle refers them here to the gospel and the prophets: the Scripture is the source of divine knowledge; not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from Scripture. Whosoever brings another doctrine, coins another Christ; nothing is to be added to what is written, nothing detracted from it. He doth not send us for truth, to the puddles of human inventions, to the enthusiasms of our brain; not to the See of Rome, no, nor to the instructions of angels; but the writings of the prophets, as they clear up the declarations of the apostles. The church of Rome is not made here the standard of truth: but the Scriptures of the prophets are to be the touch-stone to the Romans, for the trial of the truth of the gospel.

4. How great is the goodness of God! The borders of grace are enlarged to the Gentiles, and not hid under the skirts of the Jews. He that was so long the God of the Jews, is now also manifest to be the God of the Gentiles: the gospel is now made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God. Not only in a way of common providence, but special grace; in calling them to the knowledge of himself, and a justification of them by faith, he hath brought strangers to him, to the adoption of children, and lodged them under the wings of the covenant, that were before alienated from him through the universal corruption of nature. Now he hath manifested himself a God of truth, mindful of his promise in blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham. The fury of devils, and the violence of men could not hinder the propagation of the gospel: its light hath been dispersed as far as that of the sun; and that grace that founded in the Gentile's ears, hath bent many of their hearts to the obedience of it.

5. Observe that libertinism and licentiousness find no encouragement in the gospel. It was made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. The goodness of God is published, that our enmity to him may be parted with. Christ's righteousness is not offered to us to be put on, that we may roll more warmly in our lusts. The doctrine of grace commands us to give up ourselves to Christ, to be accepted through him, and to be ruled by him. Obedience is due to God, as a sovereign lord in his law; and it is due out of gratitude, as he is a God of grace in the gospel. The discovery of a further perfection in God weakens not the right of another, nor the obligation of the duty the former attribute claims at our hands. The gospel frees us from the curse, but not from the duty and service: "We are delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness" (Luke 1:74.) "This is the will of God" in the gospel, "even our sanctification." When a prince strikes off a malefactor's chains, though he deliver him from the punishment of his crime, he frees him not from the duty of a subject: his pardon adds a greater obligation than his protection did before, while he was loyal. Christ's righteousness gives us a title to heaven; but there must be a holiness to give us a fitness for heaven.

6. Observe, that evangelical obedience, or the obedience of Faith, is only acceptable to God. Obedience of faith; *genitivus speciei*, noting the kind of obedience God requires; an obedience springing from faith, animated and influenced by faith. Not obedience of faith, as though faith were the rule, and the law were abrogated; but to the law as a rule, and from faith as a principle. There is no true obedience before faith (Hebrews 11:6.) "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and therefore without faith impossible to obey him. A good work cannot proceed from a defiled mind and conscience; and without faith every man's mind is darkened, and his conscience polluted (Titus 1:15.) Faith is the band of union to Christ, and obedience is the fruit of union; we

cannot bring forth fruit without being branches (John 15:4-5), and we cannot be branches without believing. Legitimate fruit follows upon marriage to Christ, not before it (Romans 7:4.) "That you should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God." All fruit before marriage is bastard; and bastards were excluded from the sanctuary. Our persons must be first accepted in Christ, before our services can be acceptable; those works are not acceptable where the person is not pardoned, Good works flow from a pure heart; but the heart cannot be pure before faith. All the good works reckoned up in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews were from this spring; those heroes first believed and then obeyed. By faith Abel was righteous before God, without it his sacrifice had been no better than Cain's: by faith Enoch pleased God, and had a divine testimony to his obedience before his translation; by faith Abraham offered up Isaac, without which he had been no better than a murderer. All obedience hath its root in faith, and is not done in our own strength, but in the strength and virtue of another, of Christ, whom God hath set forth as our head and root.

7. Observe, faith and obedience are distinct, though inseparable "The obedience of faith." Faith, indeed, is obedience to a gospel command, which enjoins us to believe; but it is not all our obedience. Justification and sanctification are distinct acts of God; justification respects the person, sanctification the nature; justification is first in order of nature, and sanctification follows: they are distinct, but inseparable; every justified person hath a sanctified nature, and every sanctified nature supposeth a justified person. So faith and obedience are distinct: faith as the principle, obedience as the product; faith as the cause, obedience as the effect; the cause and the effect are not the same. By faith we own Christ as our Lord. by obedience we regulate ourselves according to his. command. The acceptance of the relation to him as a subject, precedes the performance of our duty: by faith we receive his law, and by obedience we fulfil it. Faith makes us God's children (Galatians 3:26). Obedience manifests us to be Christ's disciples (John 15:8). Faith is the touchstone of obedience; the touchstone, and that which is tried by it, are not the same. But though they are distinct, yet they are inseparable. Faith and obedience are joined together; obedience follows faith at the heels. Faith purifies the heart, and a pure heart cannot be without pure actions. Faith unites us to Christ, whereby we partake of his life; and a living branch cannot be without fruit in its season, and "much fruit" (John 15:5), and that naturally from a "newness of spirit" (Romans 7:9); not constrained by the rigors of the law, but drawn forth from a sweetness of love; for faith works by love. The love of God is the strong motive, and love to God is the quickening principle; as there can be no obedience without faith, so no faith without obedience. After all this, the apostle ends with the celebration of the wisdom of God; "To God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ forever." The rich discovery of the gospel cannot be thought of, by a gracious soul, without a return of praise to God, and admiration of his singular wisdom.

Wise God. His power before, and his wisdom here, are mentioned in conjunction (in which his goodness is included, as interested in his establishing power) as the ground of all the glory and praise God hath from his creatures.

Only wise. As Christ saith (Matthew 19:17), "None is good, but God;" so the apostle saith, None wise, but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity, so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom; yea, the glorious angels themselves (Job 4:18). Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself. Be glory, through Jesus Christ. As God is only known in and by Christ, so he must

be only worshipped and celebrated in and through Christ. In him we must pray to him, and in him we must praise him. As all mercies flow from God through Christ to us, so all our duties are to be presented to God through Christ. In the Greek, verbatim, it runs thus: "To the alone wise God, through Jesus Christ, to him be glory forever." But we must not understand it, as if God were wise by Jesus Christ, but that thanks is to be given to God through Christ; because in and by Christ God hath revealed his wisdom to the world. The Greek hath a repetition of the article **■**, and expressed in the translation, "To him be glory." Beza expungeth this article, but without reason, for **■** is as much as **■** **■**, "to him;" and joining this, "the only wise God" with ver. 25, "to him that is of power to establish you;" reading it thus, "To him that is of power to establish you, the only wise God," leaving the rest in a parenthesis, it runs smoothly, "to him be glory, through Jesus Christ," And Crellius, the Socinian, observes, that this article **■**, which some leave out, might be industriously inserted by the apostle, to shew that the glory we ascribe to God is also given to Christ. We may observe, that neither in this place, nor any where in Scripture, is the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints, associated with God or Christ in the glory ascribed to them. In the words there Isaiah 1:1-31. An appropriation of wisdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures; "only wise God." 2. A glorifying him for it. The point I shall insist upon is, That wisdom is a transcendent excellency of the Divine nature. We have before spoken of the knowledge of God, and the infiniteness of it; the next attribute is the wisdom of God. Most confound the knowledge and wisdom of God together; but there is a manifest distinction between them in our conception. I shall handle it thus: I. Shew what wisdom is. Then lay down, II. Some propositions about the wisdom of God. And shew, III. That God is wise, and only wise. IV. Wherein his wisdom appears. V. The Use.

I. What wisdom is. Wisdom, among the Greeks, first signified an eminent perfection in any art or mystery; so a good statuary, engraver, or limner, was called wise, as having an excellent knowledge in his particular art. But afterwards the title of wise was appropriated to those that devoted themselves to the contemplation of the highest things that served for a foundation to speculative sciences. [Note: Amyraut. Moral. Tom. III. p. 123.] But ordinarily we count a man a wise man, when he conducts his affairs with discretion, and governs his passions with moderation, and carries himself with a due proportion and harmony in all his concerns. But in particular, wisdom consists,

1. In acting for a right end. The chiefest part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in choosing fit means, and directing them to that scope; to shoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wisest man that hath the noblest end and fittest means, so God is infinitely wise; as he is the most excellent being, so he hath the most excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himself, nothing can be his end but himself; as he is the cause of all, so he is the end of all; and he puts a true bias into all the means he useth to hit the mark he aims at: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Romans 11:36).

2. Wisdom consists in observing all circumstances for action. He is counted a wise man that lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his designs about, that hath the fullest foresight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a business he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God hath all the circumstances of things in one entire image before him; he hath a prospect of every little creek in any design. He sees what second causes will act, and when they will act this or that; yea, he determines them to such and such acts; so that it is impossible he should be mistaken, or miss of the due season of bringing

about his own purposes. As he hath more goodness than to deceive any, so he hath more understanding than to be mistaken in any thing. Hence the time of the incarnation of our blessed Saviour is called the fulness of time, the proper season for his coming. Every circumstance about Christ was timed according to the predictions of God; even so little a thing as not parting his garment, and the giving him gall and vinegar to drink; and all the blessings he showers down upon his people, according to the covenant of grace, are said to come "in his season" (Ezekiel 34:25-26).

3. Wisdom consists in willing and acting according to the right reason, according to a right judgment of things. We can never count a wilful man a wise man; but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counsels are taken and vigorously executed. The resolves and ways of God are not mere will, but will guided by the reason and counsel of his own infinite understanding (Ephesians 1:11); "Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will." The motions of the Divine will are not rash, but follow the proposals of the Divine mind; he chooses that which is fittest to be done, so that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a comeliness and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are said to be "judgment" (Deuteronomy 32:4), not mere will. Hence it appears, that wisdom and knowledge are two distinct perfections. Knowledge hath its seat in the speculative understanding, wisdom in the practical. Wisdom and knowledge are evidently distinguished as two several gifts of the Spirit in man (1 Corinthians 12:8); "To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit." Knowledge is an understanding of general rules, and wisdom is a drawing conclusions from those rules in order to particular cases. A man may have the knowledge of the whole Scripture, and have all learning in the treasury of his memory, and yet be destitute of skill to make use of them upon particular occasions, and untie those knotty questions which may be proposed to him, by a ready application of those rules. Again, knowledge and wisdom may be distinguished, in our conception, as two distinct perfections in God: the knowledge of God is his understanding of all things; his wisdom is the skilful resolving and acting of all things. And the apostle, in his admiration of him, owns them as distinct; "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33)! Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom the superstructure upon knowledge: men may have knowledge without wisdom, but not wisdom without knowledge; according to our common proverb, "The greatest clerks are not the wisest men." All practical knowledge is founded in speculation, either *secundum rem*, as in a man; or, *secundum rationem*, as in God. They agree in this, that they are both acts of the understanding; but knowledge is the apprehension of a thing, and wisdom is the appointing and ordering of things. Wisdom is the splendor and lustre of knowledge shining forth in operations, and is an act both of understanding and will; understanding in counselling and contriving, will in resolving and executing: counsel and will are linked together (Ephesians 1:11).

II. The second thing is to lay down some propositions in general, concerning the wisdom of God.

First, There is an essential and a personal wisdom of God. The essential wisdom, is the essence of God; the personal wisdom is the Son of God. Christ is called Wisdom by himself (Luke 7:35). The wisdom of God by the apostle (1 Corinthians 1:24). The wisdom I speak of belongs to the nature of God, and is considered a necessary perfection. The personal wisdom is called so, because he opens to us the secrets of God. If the Son were that wisdom whereby the Father is wise, the Son would be also the essence whereby the Father is God. If the Son were the wisdom

of the Father, whereby he is essentially wise, the Son would be the essence of the Father, and the Father would have his essence from the Son, since the wisdom of God is the essence of God; and so the Son would be the Father, if the wisdom and power of the Father were originally in the Son.

Secondly, Therefore the wisdom of God is the same with the essence of God. Wisdom in God is not a habit added to his essence, as it is in man, but it is his essence. It is like the splendor of the sun, the same with the sun itself; or like the brightness of crystal, which is not communicated to it by anything else, as the brightness of a mountain is by the beam of the sun, but it is one with the crystal itself. It is not a habit superadded to the Divine essence; that would be repugnant to the simplicity of God, and speak him compounded of divers principles; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections: if he be eternally wise, his wisdom is his essence; for there is nothing eternal but the essence of God. As the sun melts some things, and hardens others; blackens some things, and whitens others, and produceth contrary qualities in different subjects, yet it is but one and the same quality in the sun, which is the cause of those contrary operations; so the perfections of God seem to be diverse in our conceptions, yet they are but one and the same in God. [Note: Maimon. Mor. Part I. cap. 53.] The wisdom of God, is God acting prudently; as the power of God, is God acting powerfully; and the justice of God, is God acting righteously; and therefore it is more truly said, that God is wisdom, justice, truth, power, than that he is wise, just, true, &c. as if he were compounded of substance and qualities. All the operations of God proceed from one simple essence; as all the operations of the mind of man, though various, proceed from one faculty of understanding. Thirdly, Wisdom is the property of God alone: He is “only wise.” It is an honor peculiar to him. Upon the account that no man deserved the title of wise, but that it was a royalty belonging to God, [Note: Laert. lib. i. Proem.] Pythagoras would not be called Ζῷοφός, a title given to their learned men, but Φιλοσοφός. The name philosopher arose out of a respect to this transcendent perfection of God.

1. God is “only wise” necessarily. As he is necessarily God, so he is necessarily wise; for the notion of wisdom is inseparable from the notion of a Deity. When we say, God is a Spirit, is true, righteous, wise; we understand that he is transcendentally these, by an intrinsic and absolute necessity, by virtue of his own essence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by himself. God doth not make himself wise, no more than he makes himself God. As he is a necessary Being in regard of his life, so he is necessarily wise in regard of his understanding. Synesius saith, that God is essentiated; οἰστοῦσθαι, by his understanding. He places the substance of God in understanding and wisdom: wisdom is the first vital operation of God. He can no more be unwise than he can be untrue; for folly in the mind is much the same with falsity in speech. Wisdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by instructions and exercise; but the wisdom of God is his nature. As the sun cannot be without light, while it remains a sun, and as eternity cannot be without immortality, so neither can God be without wisdom as he only hath immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), not arbitrarily, but necessarily; so he only hath wisdom: not because he will be wise, but because he cannot but be wise. He cannot but contrive counsels, and exert operations, becoming the greatness and majesty of his nature.

2. Therefore “only wise” originally. God is ἀνδρακτος ἀντισοφός. Men acquire wisdom by the loss of their fairest years; but his wisdom is the perfection of the Divine nature, not the birth of study, or the growth of experience, but as necessary, as eternal, as his essence. He goes not out of himself to search wisdom: he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivance of his

purposes, than he doth their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counsel, he receives no counsel from any (Romans 11:34): "Who hath been his counsellor?" and (Isaiah 40:14) "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the path of understanding?" He is the only Fountain of wisdom to others; angels and men have what wisdom they have, by communication from him. All created wisdom is a spark of the Divine light, like that of the stars borrowed from the sun. He that borrows wisdom from another, and doth not originally possess it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wise. As God is the only Being, in regard that all other beings are derived from him, so he is only wise, because all other wisdom flows from him. He is the spring of wisdom to all; none the original of wisdom to him.

3. Therefore "only wise" perfectly. There is no cloud upon his understanding. He hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things that can fall under action; as he hath a perfect knowledge without ignorance, so he hath a beautiful wisdom without mole or wart. Men are wise, yet have not an understanding so vast as to grasp all things, nor a perspicacity so clear, as to penetrate into the depths of all being. Angels have more delightful and lively sparks of wisdom, yet so imperfect, that in regard of the wisdom of God they are charged with folly (Job 4:18). Their wisdom as well as their holiness is veiled in the presence of God. It vanisheth, as the glowing of a fire doth before the beauty of the sun, or as the light of a candle in the midst of a sunshine contracts itself, and none of its rays are seen, but in the body of the flame. The angels are not perfectly wise, because they are not perfectly knowing: the gospel, the great discovery of God's wisdom, was hid from them for ages.

4. Therefore "only wise" universally. Wisdom in one man is of one sort, in another of another sort; one is a wise tradesman, another a wise statesman, and another a wise philosopher: one is wise in the business of the world, another is wise in divine concerns. One hath not so much of plenty of one sort, but he may have a scantiness in another; one may be wise for invention, and foolish in execution; an artificer may have skill to frame an engine, and not skill to use it. The ground that is fit for olives may not be fit for vines; that will bear one sort of grain and not another. But God hath an universal wisdom, because his nature is wise; it is not limited, but hovers over everything, shines in every being. His executions are as wise as his contrivances: he is wise in his resolves, and wise in his ways: wise in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his will wills all things, and his power effects all things, so his wisdom is the universal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power: as his righteousness is the measure of the matter of his actions, so his wisdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The absolute power of God is not an unruly power: his wisdom orders all things, so that nothing is done but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to so excellent a Being: as he cannot do an unjust thing because of his righteousness, so he cannot do an unwise act, because of his infinite wisdom. Though God be not necessitated to any operation without himself, as to the creation of anything, yet supposing he will act, his wisdom necessitates him to do that which is congruous, as his righteousness necessitates him to do that which is just: so that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wisdom is the rule of his actions. We must, in our conceiving of the order, suppose wisdom antecedent to will none that acknowledges a God can have such an impious thought as to affix temerity and rashness to any of his proceedings. All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treasury of wisdom in himself. [Note: Polhill against Sherlock, p. 377.] He resolves

nothing about any of his creatures without reason; but the reason of his purposes is in himself, and springs from himself, and not from the creatures: there is not one thing that he wills but “he wills by counsel, and works by counsel” (Ephesians 1:11). Counsel writ down every line, every letter, in his eternal Book; and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wisdom and will: what was illustrious in the contrivance, glitters in the execution. His understanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will, is the result of his understanding, and therefore rational. His understanding and will join hands; there is no contest in God, will against mind, and mind against will; they are one in God, one in his resolves, and one in all his works.

5. Therefore he is “only wise” perpetually. As the wisdom of man is got by ripeness of age, so it is lost by decay of years; it is got by instruction, and lost by dotage. The perfectest minds, when in the wane, have been darkened with folly: Nebuchadnezzar, that was wise for a man, became as foolish as a brute. But the Ancient of Days is an unchangeable possessor of prudence; his wisdom is a mirror of brightness, without a defacing spot. It was “possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old” (Proverbs 8:22), and he can never be dispossessed of it in the end of his works. It is inseparable from him: the being of his Godhead may as soon cease as the beauty of his mind; “with him is wisdom” (Job 12:13); it is inseparable from him; therefore, as durable as his essence. It is a wisdom infinite, and therefore without increase or decrease in itself. The experience of so many ages in the government of the world hath added nothing to the immensity of it, as the shining of the sun since the creation of the world hath added nothing to the light of that glorious body. As ignorance never darkens his knowledge, so folly never disgraces his prudence. God infatuates men, but neither men nor devils can infatuate God; he is unerringly wise; his counsel doth not vary and flatter; it is not one day one counsel, and another day another, but it stands like an immovable rock, or a mountain of brass. “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psalms 33:11).

6. He is only wise incomprehensibly. “His thoughts are deep” (Psalms 92:5); “His judgments unsearchable, his ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33): depths that cannot be fathomed; a splendor more dazzling to our dim minds than the light of the sun to our weak eyes. The wisdom of one man may be comprehended by another, and over-comprehended; and often men are understood by others to be wiser in their actions than they understand themselves to be; and the wisdom of one angel may be measured by another angel of the same perfection. But as the essence, so the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to any creature; God is only comprehended by God. The secrets of wisdom in God are double to the expressions of it in his works (Job 11:6-7): “Canst thou, by searching, find out God?” There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works; we cannot comprehend the reason of his works, much less that of his decrees, much less that in his nature; because his wisdom, being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the highest pitch than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further testimonies of it, so neither is his wisdom, but he could furnish us with infinite expressions and pieces of his skill. As in regard of his immensity he is not bounded by the limits of place; in regard of his eternity, not measured by the minutes of time; in regard of his power, not terminated with this or that number of objects; so, in regard of his wisdom, he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working; so that in regard of the reason of his actions, as well as the glory and majesty of his nature, he dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16); and whatsoever we understand of his wisdom in creation and providence, is infinitely less than

what is in himself and his own unbounded nature. Many things in Scripture are declared chiefly to be the acts of the Divine will, yet we must not think that they were acts of mere will without wisdom, but they are represented so to us, because we are not capable of understanding the infinite reason of its acts: his sovereignty is more intelligible to us than his wisdom. We can better know the commands of a superior, and the laws of a prince, than understand the reason that gave birth to those laws. We may know the orders of the Divine will, as they are published, but not the sublime reason of his will. Though election be an act of God's sovereignty, and he hath no cause from without to determine him, yet his infinite wisdom stood not silent while mere dominion acted. Whatsoever God doth, he doth wisely, as well as sovereignly; though that wisdom which lies in the secret places of the Divine Being be as incomprehensible to us as the effects of his sovereignty and power in the world are visible, God can give a reason of his proceeding, and that drawn from himself, though we understand it not. The causes of things visible lie hid from us. Doth any man know how to distinguish the seminal virtue of a small seed from the body of it, and in what nook and corner that lies, and what that is that spreads itself in so fair a plant, and so many flowers? Can we comprehend the justice of God's proceedings in the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly? Yet as we must conclude them the fruits of an unerring righteousness, so we must conclude all his actions the fruits of an unspotted wisdom, though the concatenation of all his counsels is not intelligible to us; for he is as essentially and necessarily wise, as he is essentially and necessarily good and righteous. God is not only so wise that nothing more wise can be conceived, but he is more wise than can be imagined; something greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a foolish thing, therefore, to question that which we cannot comprehend; we should adore it instead of disputing against it; and take it for granted, that God would not order anything, were it not agreeable to the sovereignty of his wisdom, as well as that of his will. Though the reason of man proceed from the wisdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reason of man, and the wisdom of God, than between the light of the sun, and the feeble shining of the glow-worm; yet we presume to censure the ways of God, as if our purblind reason had a reach above him.

7. God is "only wise" infallibly. The wisest men meet with rubs in the way, that make them fall short of what they aim at; they often design, and fail; then begin again; and yet all their counsels end in smoke, and none of them arrive at perfection. If the wisest angels lay a plot, they may be disappointed; for though they are higher and wiser than man, yet there is One higher and wiser than they, that can check their projects. God always compasseth his end, never fails of anything he designs and aims at; all his undertakings are counsel and will; as nothing can resist the efficacy of his will, so nothing can countermine the skill of his counsel: "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord" (Proverbs 21:30). He compasseth his ends by those actions of men and devils, wherein they think to cross him; they shoot at their own mark, and hit his. Lucifer's plot, by divine wisdom, fulfilled God's purpose against Lucifer's mind. The counsel of redemption by Christ, the end of the creation of the world, rode into the world upon the back of the serpent's temptation. God never mistakes the means, nor can there be any disappointments to make him vary his counsels, and pitch upon other means than what before he had ordained. His "word that goeth forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). What is said of his word is true of his counsel; it shall prosper in the thing for which it is appointed; it cannot be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; for "as he thinks, so shall it come to pass; and as he

hath purposed, so shall it stand; the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it" (Isaiah 14:24; Isaiah 14:27)? The wisdom of the creature is a drop from the wisdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun; and, therefore, is not able to meet the wisdom of God, which is infinite and boundless. No wisdom is exempted from mistakes, but the Divine: he is wise in all his resolves, and never "calls back his words" and purposes (Isaiah 31:2).

III. The third general is to prove that God is wise. This is ascribed to God in Scripture (Daniel 2:20); "Wisdom and might are his;" wisdom to contrive, and power to effect. Where should wisdom dwell, but in the head of a Deity? and where should power triumph, but in the arm of Omnipotency? [Note: Culverwell, Light of Nature, p. 30.] All that God doth, he doth artificially, skilfully; whence he is called the "Builder of the heavens" (Hebrews 11:10), Τεχνητης an artifice and curious builder, a builder by art: and that word (Proverbs 8:30) meant of Christ; "Then I was by him as one brought up with him;" some render it, Then I was the curious artificer; and the same word, is translated, a cunning workman (Song of Solomon 7:5). For this cause, counsel is ascribed to God; [Note: Isaiah 46:10; Jeremiah 32:19. "Great in counsel" Job 12:13. "He hath counsel and understanding."] not properly, for counsel implies something of ignorance, or irresolution, antecedent to the consultation, and a posture of will afterwards, which was not before. Counsel is, properly, a laborious deliberation, and a reasoning of things; an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a discussing and reasoning of all the doubts which arise, pro re natâ, about the matter in counsel. But God hath no need to deliberate in himself what are the best means to accomplish his ends: he is never ignorant or undetermined what course he should take, as men are before they consult. But it is an expression, in condescension to our capacity, to signify that God doth nothing but with reason and understanding, with the highest prudence and for the most glorious ends, as men do after consultation and the weighing of every foreseen circumstance. Though he acts all things sovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wisely by his understanding; and there is not a decree of his will but he can render a satisfactory reason for, in the face of men and angels. As he is the cause of all things, so he hath the highest wisdom for the ordering of all things. If wisdom among men be the knowledge of divine and human things, God must be infinitely wise, since knowledge is most radiant in him; he knows what angels and men do. and infinitely more; what is known by them obscurely, is known by him clearly; what is known by man after it is done, was known by God before it was wrought. By his wisdom, as much as by anything, he infinitely differs from all his creatures, as by wisdom man differs from a brute. We cannot frame a notion of God, without conceiving him infinitely wise. We should render him very inconsiderable, to imagine him furnished with an infinite knowledge, and not have an infinite wisdom to make use of that knowledge, or to fancy him with a mighty power destitute of prudence. Knowledge without prudence, is an eye without motion; and power without discretion, is an arm without a head; a hand to act, without understanding to contrive and model; a strength to act, without reason to know how to act: it would be a miserable notion of a God, to fancy him with a brutish and unguided power. The heathens, therefore, had, and could not but have, this natural notion of God. Plato, therefore, calls him Mens; [Note: Eugub. per Philosoph. lib. i. cap. 5.] and Cleanthes used to call God Reason; and Socrates thought the title of Ζοφης too magnificent to be attributed to anything else but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wise.—Reason 1. God could not be infinitely perfect without wisdom. A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man without

reason; how can God without it be an infinitely perfect God? Wisdom is the most eminent of all virtues; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a soul without understanding. A Christian's graces want their lustre, when they are destitute of the guidance of wisdom: mercy is a feebleness, and justice a cruelty; patience a timorousness, and courage a madness, without the conduct of wisdom; so the patience of God would be cowardice, his power an oppression, his justice a tyranny, without wisdom as the spring and holiness as the rule. No attribute of God could shine with a due lustre and brightness without it. Power is a great perfection, but wisdom a greater. [Note: *Licet magnum sit posse, majus tamen est sapere.*] Wisdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants; but power is a tyrannical thing without wisdom and righteousness. The pilot is more valuable because of his skill, than the galley slave because of his strength; and the conduct of a general more estimable than the might of a private soldier. Generals are chosen more by their skill to guide, than their strength to act; what a God is a man without prudence; what a nothing would God be without it! This is the salt that gives relish to all other perfections in a creature; this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the Divine nature, and holiness is the splendor of that jewel. Now God being the first Being, possesses whatsoever is most noble in any being. If therefore wisdom, which is the most noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the highest excellency. God being the living God, as he is frequently termed in Scripture, he hath therefore the most perfect manner of living, and that must be a pure and intellectual life; being essentially living, he is essentially in the highest degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures, so he hath an infinite intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wisdom; whence some have called God, not sapientem, but super sapientem, [Note: Suarez, Vol. I. lib. i. cap. 3. p. 10.] not only wise, but above all wisdom.

Reason 2. Without infinite wisdom he could not govern the world. Without wisdom in forming the matter, which was made by Divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wisdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confusion; without wisdom the world could not have been created in the posture it is. Creation supposeth a determination of the will putting power upon acting; the determination of the will supposeth the counsel of the understanding, determining the will: no work, but supposeth understanding as well as will in a rational agent. As without skill things could not be created, so without it things cannot be governed. Reason is a necessary perfection to him that presides over all things: without knowledge there could not be in God a foundation for government, and without wisdom there could not be an exercise of government; and without the most excellent wisdom, he could not be the most excellent governor. He could not be an universal governor, without a universal wisdom; nor the sole governor without an unimitable wisdom; nor an independent governor without an original and independent wisdom; nor a perpetual governor without an incorruptible wisdom. He would not be the Lord of the world in all points, without skill to order the affairs of it. Power and wisdom are foundations of all authority and government; wisdom to know how to rule and command; power to make those commands obeyed: no regular order could issue out without the first, nor could any order be enforced without the second. A feeble wisdom, and a brutish power, seldom or never produce any good effect. Magistracy without wisdom, would be a frantic power, a rash conduct; like a strong arm when the eye is out, it strikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wisdom without power, would be like a great body without feet, [Note: Amiraute. Moral.] like the knowledge of a pilot that hath lost his arm, who, though he knows the rule of navigation, and what

course to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm: but when those two, wisdom and power, are linked together, there ariseth from both a fitness for government. There is wisdom to propose an end, and both wisdom and power employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore when God demonstrates to Job his right of government, and the unreasonableness of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urgeth upon him the consideration of those two excellencies of his nature, power and wisdom, which are expressed in his works (Job 38:1-41, Job 39:1-30, Job 40:1-24, Job 41:1-34) A prince without wisdom, is but a title without a capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government; nor could God without wisdom exercise a just dominion in the world. He hath, therefore, the highest wisdom, since he is the universal governor. That wisdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wisdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a nation or kingdom, much less a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wisdom for government must needs surmount the wisdom of all. And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed, but by One endowed with infinite discretion. [Note: Amyrald. Desart. Theol. p. 111.] Providential government can be no more without infinite wisdom, than infinite wisdom can be without Providence.

Reason 3. The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, demonstrate the wisdom of God that guides them. All things in the world work for some end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends are visible to us. As there was some prime cause, which by his power inspired them with their several instincts; so there must be some supreme wisdom, which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifests his power that endowed them, so the acting according to the rules of their nature, which they themselves understand not, manifests his wisdom in directing them. Everything that acts for an end, must know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow doth not know who shoots it, or to what end it is shot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the spring, nor the wheels that move, know the end of their motion; no man will judge a wisdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that disposed the wheels and spring, by a joint combination to produce such a motion for such an end. Doth either the sun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travels with the plant, know what plant it produceth in such a soil, what temper it should be of, what fruit it should bear, and of what color? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what use they are ordained? When it strikes up its head from the earth, doth it know what proportion of them there will be? yet it produceth all these things in a state of ignorance. The sun warms the earth, concocts the humors, excites the virtue of it, and cherishes the seeds which are cast into her lap, yet all unknown to the sun or the earth. Since, therefore, that nature, that is the immediate cause of those things doth not understand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them must be conceived to have an infinite wisdom. When things act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they understand not, and yet work harmoniously together for an end, that all of them, we are sure, are ignorant of, it mounts up our minds to acknowledge the wisdom of that Supreme Cause that hath ranged all these inferior causes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motions. according to the ideas in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act, and directs every motion according to their several natures, and therefore possessed with infinite wisdom in his own nature.

Reason 4. God is the fountain of all wisdom in the creatures, and, therefore, is infinitely wise himself. As he hath a fulness of being in himself, because the streams of being are derived to other things from him, so he hath a fulness of wisdom, because he is the spring of wisdom to angels and men. That being must be infinitely wise from whence all other wisdom derives its original; for nothing can be in the effect, which is not eminently in the cause; the cause is always more perfect than the effect. If, therefore, the creatures are wise, the Creator must be much more wise. If the Creator were destitute of wisdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the Creator. If you consider the wisdom of the spider in her web, which is both her house and net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the provision of the pismire in her repositories for corn,—the wisdom of the Creator is illustrated by them: whatsoever excellency you see in any creature, is an image of some excellency in God. The skill of the artificer is visible in the fruits of his art; a workman transcribes his spirit in the work of his hands. But the wisdom of rational creatures, as men, doth more illustrate it; all arts among men are the rays of Divine wisdom shining upon them, and, by a common gift of the Spirit, enlightening their minds to curious inventions, as (Proverbs 8:12): “I, wisdom, find out the knowledge of witty inventions;” that is, I give a faculty to men to find them out; without my wisdom all things would be buried in darkness and ignorance: whatsoever wisdom there is in the world, it is but a shadow of the wisdom of God, a small rivulet derived from him, a spark leaping out from uncreated wisdom (Isaiah 54:16): “He created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and makes the instruments.” The skill to use those weapons in warlike enterprises is from him: “I have created the waster to destroy;” it is not meant of creating their persons, but communicating to them their art; he speaks it there to expel fear from the church of all warlike reparations against them; he had given men the skill to form and use weapons, and could as well strip them of it, and defeat their purposes. The art of husbandry is a fruit of divine teaching (Isaiah 28:24-25). If those lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and easily learned by all, are discoveries of Divine wisdom, much more the nobler sciences, intellectual and political wisdom (Daniel 2:21): “He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding;” speaking of the more abstruse parts of knowledge, “The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding” (Job 32:8). Hence the wisdom which Solomon expressed in the harlot’s case (1 Kings 3:28), was, in the judgment of all Israel, the wisdom of God; that is, a fruit of Divine wisdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man’s soul is endowed, more or less, with those noble qualities; the soul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the streams be so excellent, the fountain must be fuller and clearer. The first Spirit must infinitely more possess what other spirits derive from him by creation; were the wisdom of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, collected in one spirit, it must be infinitely less than what is in the spring; for no creature can be equal to the Creator. As the highest creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, so it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wise.

IV, The fourth thing is, wherein the wisdom of God appears. It appears, 1st, In creation. 2dly, In government. 3dly, In redemption.

First, In creation. As in a musical instrument there is first the skill of the workman in the frame, then the skill of the musician in stringing it proper for such musical notes as he will express upon it, and after that the tempering of the strings, by various stops, to a delightful harmony, so is the wisdom of God seen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the several

creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:21): "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;" i. e., by the creation the world knew not God. The framing cause is there put for the effect and the work framed; because the Divine wisdom stepped forth in the creatures, to a public appearance, as if it had presented itself in a visible shape to man, giving instructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we translate (Genesis 1:1) "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," the Targum expresseth, "In wisdom God created the heaven and the earth." Both bear a stamp of this perfection on them; [Note: *Omne opus naturæ est opus intelligentiæ.*] and when the apostle tells the Romans (Romans 1:20) "The invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made," the word he uses is ποτ■µασι not ■ργοις; this signifies a work of labor, but πο■ηµα a work of skill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. The creation presents us with a prospect of the wisdom of God, as a poem doth the reader with the wit and fancy of the composer: "By wisdom he created the earth" (Proverbs 3:19), "and stretched out the heavens by discretion" (Jeremiah 10:12). There is not anything so mean, so small, but glitters with a beam of Divine skill; and the consideration of them would justly make every man subscribe to that of the psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all" (Psalms 104:24). All, the least as well as the greatest, and the meanest as well as the noblest; even those creatures which seem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c., because they fall short of those perfections which are the dowry of other animals: in these there is a footstep of Divine wisdom, since they were not produced by him at random, but determined to some particular end, and designed to some usefulness, as parts of the world in their several natures and stations. God could never have had a satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did (Genesis 1:31), had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind. It is said he was refreshed, viz. with that review (Exodus 31:17), which could not have been, if his piercing eye had found any defect in any thing which had sprung out of his hand, or an unsuitableness to that end for which he created them. He seems to do as a man that hath made a curious and polite work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the mistake: but no defect was found by the infinitely wise God upon this second examination. This wisdom of the creation appears, 1. In the variety. 2. In the beauty. 3. The fitness of every creature for its use. 4. The subordination of one creature to another, and the joint concurrence of all to one common end.

1. In the variety (Psalms 104:24): "O Lord, how manifold are thy works!" How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, shapes, figurations, colors, various smells, virtues, and qualities! and this rarity is produced from one and the same matter, as beasts and plants from the earth (Genesis 1:11; Genesis 1:24): "Let the earth bring forth living creatures; and the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind:" such diversity of fowl and fish from the water (Genesis 1:20): "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly;" such a beautiful and active variety from so dull a matter as the earth; so solid a variety from so fluid a matter as the water; so noble a piece as the body of man, with such variety of members fit to entertain a more-excellent soul as a guest, from so mean a matter as the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). This extraction of such variety of forms out of one single and dull matter, is the chemistry of Divine wisdom. It is a greater skill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious vessels of clay and earth, than of a nobler matter, as gold and silver. Again, all those varieties propagate their kind in every particular and quality of their

nature, and uniformly bring forth exact copies according to the first pattern God made of the kind (Genesis 1:11-12; Genesis 1:24). Consider, also, how the same piece of ground is garnished with plants and flowers of several virtues, fruits, colors, scents, without our being able to perceive any variety in the earth that breeds them, and not so great a difference in the roots that bear them. Add to this the diversities of birds of different colors, shapes, notes, consisting of various parts, wings like oars, to cut the air, and tails as the rudder of a ship, to guide their motion. How various, also, are the endowments of the creatures! some have vegetation, and the power of growth; others have the addition of sense, and others the excellency of reason; something wherein all agree, and something wherein all differ; variety in unity, and unity in variety: the wisdom of the workman had not been so conspicuous had there been only one degree of goodness: the greatest skill is seen in the greatest variety. The comeliness of the body is visible in the variety of members, and their usefulness to one another. What an inform thing had man been had he been all ear, or all eye! If God had made all the stars to be suns, it would have been a demonstration of his power, but, perhaps, less of his wisdom: no creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under so much heat: there was no less wisdom went to the frame of the least, than to the greatest creature. It speaks more art in a limner to paint a landscape exactly, than to draw the sun, though the sun be a more glorious body. might instance also, in the different characters and features imprinted upon the countenances of men and women, the differences of voices and statures, whereby they are distinguished from one another: these are the foundations of order and of human society, and administration of justice. What confusion would have been, if a grown-up son could not be known from his father, the magistrate from the subject, the creditor from the debtor, the innocent from the criminal! The laws God hath given to mankind could not have been put in execution: this variety speaks the wisdom of God.

2. The wisdom of the creation appears in the beauty, and order, and situation of the several creatures (Ecclesiastes 3:11): "He hath made everything beautiful in his time." As their being was a fruit of Divine power, so their order is a fruit of Divine wisdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole; so that if the particular forms of everything, the union of all for the composition of the world, and the laws which are established in the order of nature for its conservation, be considered, it would ravish us with an admiration of God. [Note: Amyraut. Moral, Vol. I. p. 257.] All the creatures are so many pictures or statues, exactly framed by line (Psalms 19:4): "Their line is gone through all the earth;" their "line," a measuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions several pieces to be exactly linked and coupled together. "Their line," that is, their harmonious proportion, and the instruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, some of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with musical instruments in their hands, signifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion. [Note: Mountag against Selden, p. 281. Plutarch calls God ἁρμονικὸς καὶ μουσικὸς he saith nothing was made without music.] The heavens speak this wisdom in their order. The revolutions of the sun and moon determine the seasons of the year, and make day and night in orderly succession. The stars beautify the heavens, and influence the earth, and keep their courses (Judges 5:20). They keep their stations without interfering with one another; and though they have rolled about for so many ages, they observe their distinct laws, and in the variety of their motions have not disturbed one another's functions. The sun is set as the heart in the midst of this great body, to afford warmth to all: and had it been set lower, it had long since turned the earth into flame and ashes: had it been placed

higher, the earth would have wanted the nourishment and refreshment necessary for it. Too much nearness had ruined the earth by parching heat, and too great a distance had destroyed the earth by starving it with cold. [Note: Charlton, *Light of Nature*, p. 57.] The sun hath also its appointed motion; had it been fixed without motion, half of the earth had been unprofitable; there had been a perpetual darkness in a moiety of it; nothing had been produced for nourishment, and so it had been rendered uninhabitable: but now, by its motion, it visits all the climates of the world, runs its circuit, so that "nothing is hid from the heat thereof" (Psalms 19:6). It imparts its virtue to every corner of the world in its daily and yearly visits. Had it been fixed, the fruits of the earth under it had been parched and destroyed before their maturity; but all those inconveniences are provided against by the perpetual motion of the sun. This motion is orderly; it makes its daily course from east to west, its yearly motion from north to south: it goes to the north, till it comes to the point God hath set it, and then turns back to the south, and gains some point every day: it never riseth nor sets in the same place one day, where it did the day before. The world is never without its light; some see it rising the same moment we see it setting. [Note: Daille, *Mel.* Part I. p. 483.] The earth also speaks the Divine wisdom; it is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling of fretwork. It is placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter, and provided as an habitation proper for those creatures which derive the matter of their bodies from it, and partake of its earthly nature; and garnished with other creatures for the profit or pleasure of man. [Note: Amyraut. *Predestin.* p. 9.] The sea also speaks the same Divine wisdom. "He strengthened the fountains of the deep, and gave the sea a decree that it should not pass his command" (Proverbs 8:28-29). He hath given it certain bounds that it should not overflow the earth (Job 28:11). It contains itself in the situation wherein God hath placed it, and doth not transgress its bounds. What if some part of a country, a little spot, hath been overflowed by it, and groaned under its waves? yet for the main, it retains the same channels wherein it was at first lodged. All creatures are clothed with an outward beauty, and endowed with an inward harmony; there is an agreement in all parts of this great body; every one is beautiful and orderly; but the beauty of the world results from all of them disposed and linked together.

3. This wisdom is seen in the fitness of everything for its end, and the usefulness of it. Divine wisdom is more illustrious in the fitness and usefulness of this great variety, than in the composure of their distinct parts: as the artificer's skill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and setting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the materials which compose the clock. After the most diligent inspection, there can be found nothing in the creation unprofitable; nothing but is capable of some service, either for the support of our bodies, recreation of our senses, or moral instruction of our minds: not the least creature but is formed, and shaped, and furnished with members and parts, in a due proportion for its end and service in the world; nothing is superfluous, nothing defective. The earth is fitted in its parts; [Note: Amyraut. *sur diverses Text.* p. 127.] the valleys are appointed for granaries, the mountains to shadow them from the scorching heat of the sun; the rivers, like veins, carry refreshment to every member of this body; plants and trees thrive on the face of the earth, and metals are engendered in the bowels of it, for materials for building, and other uses for the service of man. "There he causes the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth" (Psalms 104:14). The sea is fitted for use; it is a fish pond for the nourishment of man; a boundary for the dividing of lands and several dominions: it joins together nations far distant: a great vessel for commerce (Psalms 104:26), "there go the ships." It affords vapors to the clouds, wherewith to water the earth, which

the sun draws up, separating the finer from the salter parts, that the earth may be fruitful without being burdened with barrenness by the salt. The sea hath also its salt, its ebbs, and floods; the one as brine, the other as motion, to preserve it from putrefaction, that it may not be contagious to the rest of the world. Showers are appointed to refresh the bodies of living creatures, to open the womb of the earth, and “water the ground to make it fruitful” Psalms 104:3. The clouds, therefore, are called the chariots of God; he rides in them in the manifestation of his goodness and wisdom. Winds are fitted to purify the air, to preserve it from putrefaction, to carry the clouds to several parts, to refresh the parched earth, and assist her fruits: and also to serve for the commerce of one nation with another by navigation. [Note: Lessius.] God, in his wisdom and goodness, “walks upon the wings of the wind” (Psalms 104:3). Rivers [Note: Dame, Melan. Part II, pp, 472, 473,] are appointed to hathe the ground, and render it fresh and lively; they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, serve for commerce; they are the watering-pots of the earth, and the vessels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut those channels for the wild asses, the beasts of the desert, which are his creatures as well as the rest (Psalms 104:10; Psalms 104:12-13). Trees are appointed for the habitations of birds, shadows for the earth, nourishment for the creatures, materials for building, and fuel for the relief of man against cold. The seasons of the year have their use; the winter makes the juice retire into the earth, fortifies plants, and fixes their roots: it moistens the earth that was dried before by the heat of summer. and cleanseth and prepares it for a new fruitfulness. The spring calls out the sap in new leaves and fruit. The summer consumes the superfluous moisture, and produceth nourishment for the inhabitants of the world. [Note: Daille, Melan. II. p. 477, &c.] The day and night have also their usefulness: the day gives life to labor, and is a guide to motion and action (Psalms 104:24), “The sun ariseth, man goeth forth to his labor until the evening.” It warms the air, and quickens nature; without day the world would be a chaos, an unseen beauty. The night indeed casts a veil upon the bravery of the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us see the beauty of the world above, and discovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapestry of heaven, and the motions of the stars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labor, and refresheth the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the spirits which are scattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was wasted in the day. It takes from us the sight of flowers and plants, but it washeth their face with dew for a new appearance next morning. The length of the day and night is not without a mark of wisdom; were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moisten; and for want of action, the members would be stupified. The perpetual succession of day and night is an evidence of the Divine wisdom in tempering the travel and rest of creatures. Hence, the psalmist tells us (Psalms 74:16-17), “The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou hast prepared the light of the sun, and made summer and winter;” i. e. they are of God’s framing, not without a wise counsel and end. Hence, let us ascend to the bodies of living creatures, and we shall find every member fitted for use. What a curiosity is there in every member! Every one fitted to a particular use in their situation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole: the eye to direct; the ear to receive directions from others; the hands to act; the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it resides; and in the body, some parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to distribute and convey it to several parts for the maintenance of the whole: the heart to mint vital spirits for preserving life, and the brain to coin animal spirits for life and motion; the lungs to serve for the

cooling the heart, which else would be parched as the ground in summer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and also without the will by a natural instinct, is an admirable evidence of Divine skill in the structure of the body; so that well might the psalmist cry out (Psalms 139:14), "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" But how much more of this Divine perfection is seen in the soul! A nature, furnished with a faculty of understanding to judge of things, to gather in things that are distant, and to reason and draw conclusions from one thing to another, with a memory to treasure up things that are past, with a will to apply itself so readily to what the mind judges fit and comely, and fly so speedily from what it judges ill and hurtful. The whole world is a stage; every creature in it hath a part to act, and a nature suited to that part and end it is designed for; and all concur in a joint language to publish the glory of Divine wisdom; they have a voice to proclaim the "glory of God" (Psalms 19:1; Psalms 19:3). And it is not the least part of God's skill, in framing the creatures so, that upon man's obedience, they are the channels of his goodness; and upon man's disobedience, they can, in their natures, be the ministers of his justice for the punishing of offending creatures.

4. This wisdom is apparent in the linking of all these useful parts together, so that one is subordinate to the other for a common end. All parts are exactly suited to one another, and every part to the whole, though they are of different natures, as lines distant in themselves, yet they meet in one common centre, the good and the preservation of the universe; they are all jointed together, as the word translated framed (Hebrews 11:2) signifies; knit by fit hands and ligaments to contribute mutual beauty, strength, and assistance to one another; like so many links of a chain coupled together, that though there be a distance in place, there is a unity in regard of connection and end, there is a consent in the whole (Hosea 2:21-22). "The heavens hear the earth; and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil." The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits she bears. [Note: Daille Sermon 15. p. 170.] The air distributes light, wind and rain to the earth; the earth and the sea render to the air exhalations and vapors, and altogether charitably give to the plants and animals that which is necessary for their nourishment and refreshment. The influences of the heavens animate the earth; and the earth affords matter, in part, for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nourishment; nourishment is conveyed to them by the fruits of the earth; the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat; matter for rain and dew is raised by the heat of the sun; and the sun by its motion distributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth. So colors are made for the pleasure of the eye, sounds for the delight of the ear; light is formed, whereby the eye may see the one, and air to convey the species of colors to the eye, and sound to the ear; all things are like the wheels of a watch compacted: and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined in a marriage-knot for the public security, and subserviency to the preservation and order of the universe; as the variety of strings upon an instrument, sending forth various and distinct sounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this universal conspiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wisdom of the Creator apparent; in tuning so many contraries as the elements are, and preserving them in their order, which if once broken, the whole frame of nature would crack, and fall in pieces; all are so interwoven and inlaid together, by the Divine workmanship, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric: as every part in the body of man hath a distinct comeliness, yet there is besides, the beauty of the whole, that results from the union of divers parts exactly fashioned to one another, and linked together. By the way, Use. How much may we see of the perfection of

God in everything that presents itself to our eyes! And how should we be convinced of our unworthy neglect of ascending to him with reverend and admiring thoughts, upon the prospect of the creatures! What dull scholars are we, when every creature is our teacher, every part of the creature a lively instruction! Those things that we tread under our feet, if used by us according to the full design of their creation, would afford rich matter, not only for our heads, but our hearts. As grace doth not destroy nature, but elevate it, so neither should the fresher and fuller discoveries of Divine wisdom in redemption deface all our thoughts of his wisdom in creation. Though the greater light of the sun obscures the lesser sparkling of the stars, yet it gives way in the night to the discovery of them, that God may seen, known, and considered, in all his works of wonder, and miracles of nature. No part of Scripture is more spiritual than the Psalms; none filled with clearer discoveries of Christ in the Old Testament; yet how often do the penmen consider the creation of God, and find their meditations on him to be sweet, as considered in his works (Psalms 104:34)! "My meditation of him shall be sweet." When? why, after a short history of the goodness and wisdom of God in the frame of the world, and the species of the creatures.

Secondly. The wisdom of God appears in his government of his creatures. The regular motion of the creatures speaks for this perfection, as well as the exact composition of them. If the exquisiteness of the frame conducts us to the skill of the Contriver, the exactness of their order, according to his will and law, speaks no less the wisdom of the Governor. It cannot be thought that a rash and irrational power presides over a world so well disposed: the disposition of things hath no less characters of skill, than the creation of them. No man can hear an excellent lesson upon a lute, but must presently reflect upon the art of the person that touches it. The prudence of man appears in wrapping up the concerns of a kingdom in his mind, for the well-ordering of it; and shall not the wisdom of God shine forth, as he is the director of the world? I shall omit his government of inanimate creatures, and confine the discourse to his government of man, as rational, as sinful, as restored.

1st. In his government of man as a rational creature.

1. In the law he gives to man. Wisdom framed it, though will enacted it. The will of God is the rule of righteousness to us, but the wisdom of God is the foundation of that rule of righteousness which he prescribes us. The composure of a musician is the rule of singing to his scholars; yet the consent and harmony in that composure derives not itself from his will, but from his understanding; he would not be a musician if his composures were contrary to the rules of true harmony: so the laws of men are composed by wisdom, though they are enforced by will and authority. [Note: Castelli, Dialog. 1. 4, p. 46.] The moral law, which was the law of nature, the law imprinted upon Adam, is so framed as to secure the rights of God as supreme, and the rights of men in their distinctions of superiority and equality: it is therefore called "holy and good" (Romans 7:12); holy, as it prescribes our duty to God in his worship; good, as it regulates the offices of human life, and reserves the common interest of mankind.

(1.) It is suite to the nature of man. As God hath given a law of nature, a fixed order to inanimate creatures, so he hath given a law of reason to rational creatures: other creatures are not capable of a law differencing good and evil, because they are destitute of faculties and capacities to make distinction between them. It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God to propose any moral law to them, who had neither understanding to discern, nor will to choose. It is therefore to be

observed, that whilst Christ exhorted others to the embracing his doctrine, yet he exhorted not little children, though he took them in his arms, because, though they had faculties, yet they were not come to such a maturity as to be capable of a rational instruction. But there was a necessity for some command for the government of man; since God had made him a rational creature, it was not agreeable to his wisdom to govern him as a brute, but as a rational creature, capable of knowing his precepts, and voluntarily walking in them; and without a law, he had not been capable of any exercise of his reason in services respecting God. He therefore gives him a law, with a covenant annexed to it, whereby man is obliged to obedience, and secured of a reward. This was enforced with severe penalties, death, with all the horrors attending it, to deter him from transgression (Genesis 2:17); wherein is implied a promise of continuance of life, and all its felicities, to allure him to a mindfulness of his obligation. So perfect a hedge did Divine wisdom set about him, to keep him within the bounds of that obedience, which was both his debt and security, that wheresoever he looked, he saw either something to invite him, or something to drive him to the payment of his duty, and perseverance in it. Thus the law was exactly framed to the nature of man; man had twisted in him a desire of happiness; the promise was suited to cherish this natural desire. He had also the passion of fear; the proper object of this was any thing destructive to his being, nature, and felicity; this the threatening met with. In the whole it was accommodated to man as rational; precepts to the law in his mind, promises to the natural appetite, threatenings to the most prevailing affection, and to the implanted desires of preserving both his being and happiness in that being. These were rational motives, fitted to the nature of Adam, which was above the life God had given plants, and the sense he had given animals. The command given man in innocence was suited to his strength and power. God gave him not any command but what he had ability to observe: and since we want not power to forbear an apple in our corrupted and impotent state, he wanted not strength in his state of integrity. The wisdom of God commanded nothing but what was very easy to be observed by him, and inferior to his natural ability. It had been both unjust and unwise to have commanded him to fly up to the sun, when he had not wings; or stop the course of the sea, when he had not strength.

(2.) It is suited to the happiness and benefit of man. God's laws are not an act of mere authority respecting his own glory, but of wisdom and goodness respecting man's benefit. They are perfective of man's nature, conferring a wisdom upon him, "rejoicing his heart, enlightening his eyes" (Psalms 19:7-8), affording him both a knowledge of God and of himself. To be without a law, is for men to be as beasts, without justice and without religion: other things are for the good of the body, but the laws of God for the good of the soul; the more perfect the law, the greater the benefit. The laws given to the Jews were the honor and excellency of that nation (Deuteronomy 1:8); "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?" They were made statesmen in the judicial law, ecclesiastics in the ceremonial, honest men in the second table, and divine in the first. All his laws are suited to the true satisfaction of man, and the good of human society. Had God framed a law only for one nation, there would have been the characters of a particular wisdom; but now an universal wisdom appears, in accommodating his law, not only to this or that particular society or corporation of men, but to the benefit of all mankind, in the variety of climates and countries wherein they live; everything that is disturbing to human society is provided against; nothing is enjoined but what is sweet, rational, and useful: it orders us not to attempt anything against the life of our neighbor, the honor of his bed, propriety in his goods, and the clearness of his reputation; and, if well observed, would alter the face of the world, and make it

look with another hue. The world would be altered from a brutish to a human world; it would change lions and wolves, men of lionlike and wolfish disposition, into reason and sweetness. And because the whole law is summed up in love, it obligeth us to endeavor the preservation of one another's beings, the favoring of one another's interests, and increasing the goods, as much as justice will permit, and keeping up one another's credits, because love, which is the soul of the law, is not shown by a cessation from action, but signifies an ardor, upon all occasions, in doing good. I say, were this law well observed, the world would be another thing than it is: it would become a religious fraternity; the voice of enmity, and the noise of groans and cursings, would not be heard in our streets; peace would be in all borders; plenty of charity in the midst of cities and countries; joy and singing would sound in all habitations. Man's advantage was designed in God's laws, and doth naturally result from the observance of them. God so ordered them, by his wisdom, that the obedience of man should draw forth his goodness, and prevent those smarting judgments which were necessary to reduce the creature to order that would not voluntarily continue in the order God had appointed. The laws of men are often unjust, oppressive, cruel, sometimes against the law of nature; but an universal wisdom and righteousness glitters in the Divine law; there is nothing in it but is worthy of God, and useful for the creature; so that we may well say, with Job, "Who teaches like God?" (Job 36:22) or as some render it, "Who is a lawgiver like God?" Who can say to him, Thou hast wrought iniquity or folly among men? His precepts were framed for the preservation of man in that rectitude wherein he was created, in that likeness to God wherein he was first made, that there might be a correspondence between the integrity of the creature and the goodness of his Creator, by the obedience of man; that man might exercise his faculties in operation worthy of him, and beneficial to the world.

(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in suiting his laws to the consciences as well as the interests of all mankind (Romans 2:14); "The Gentiles do, by nature, the things contained in the law;" so great an affinity there is between the wise law and the reason of man. There is a natural beauty emerging from them, and darting upon the reasons and consciences of men, which dictates to them that this law is worthy to be observed in itself. The two main principles of the law, the love and worship of God, and doing as we would be done by, have an indelible impression in the consciences of all men in regard of the principle, though they are not suitably expressed in the practice. Where there no law outwardly published, yet every man's conscience would dictate to him that God. Was to be acknowledged, worshipped, loved, as naturally as his reason would acquaint him that there was such a being as God. This suitableness of them to the consciences of men is manifest, in that the laws of the best governed nations among the heathen have had an agreement with them. Nothing can be more exactly composed, according to the rules of right and exact reason, than this; no man but approves of something in it, yea, of the whole, when he exerciseth that dim reason which he hath. Suppose any man, not an absolute atheist, he cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of worshipping God. Grant him to be a spirit, and it will presently appear absurd to represent him by any corporeal image, and derogate from his excellency by so mean a resemblance; with the same easiness he will grant a reverence due to the name of God; that we must not serve our turn of him, by calling him to witness to a lie in a solemn oath; that as worship is due to him, so is some stated time a circumstance necessary to the performance of that worship. And as to the second table, will any man, in his right reason, quarrel with that command that engageth his inferiors to honor him, that secures his being from a violent murder, and his goods from unjust rapine? and though, by the fury of his lusts, he break the laws of wedlock himself, yet he cannot but approve of

that law, as it prohibits every man from doing him the like injury and disgrace. The suitableness of the law to the consciences of men is further evidenced by those furious reflections, and strong alarms of conscience, upon a transgression of it, and that in all parts of the world, more or less, in all men; so exactly hath Divine wisdom fitted the law to the reason and consciences of men, as one tally to another: indeed, without such an agreement, no man's conscience could have any ground for a hue and cry; nor need any man be startled with the records of it. This manifests the wisdom of God in framing his laws so that the reasons and consciences of all men do, one time or other, subscribe to it. What governor in the world is able to make any law distinct from this revealed by God, that shall reach all places, all persons, all hearts? We may add to this the extent of his commands, in ordering goodness at the root, not only in action, but affection; not only in the motion of the members, but the disposition of the soul; which suiting a law to the inward frame of man, is quite out of the compass of the wisdom of any creature.

(4.) His wisdom is seen in the encouragements he gives for the studying and observing his will (Psalms 19:11); "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward." The variety of them; there is not any particular genius in man but may find something suitable to win upon him in the revealed will of God. There is a strain of reason to satisfy the rational; of eloquence, to gratify the fanciful; of interest, to allure the selfish; of terror, to startle the obstinate. As a skilful angler stores himself with baits, according to the appetites of the sorts of fish he intends to catch, so in the word of God there are varieties of baits, according to the varieties of the inclinations of men; threatenings to work upon fear; promises to work upon love; examples of holy men set out for imitation; and those plainly; neither his threatenings nor his promises are dark, as the heathen oracles; but peremptory, as becomes a sovereign lawgiver; and plain, as was necessary for the understanding of a creature. As he deals graciously with men in exhorting and encouraging them, so he deals wisely herein, by taking away all excuse from them if they ruin the interest of their souls, by denying obedience to their Sovereign. Again, the rewards God proposeth are accommodated, not to the brutish parts of man, his carnal sense and fleshly appetite, but to the capacity of a spiritual soul, which admits only of spiritual gratifications; and cannot, in its own nature, without a sordid subjection to the humors of the body, be moved by sensual proposals. God backs his precepts with that which the nature of man longed for, and with spiritual delights, which can only satisfy a rational appetite; and thereby did as well gratify the noblest desires in man, as oblige him to the noblest service and work. [Note: Amyraut.] Indeed, virtue and holiness being perfectly amiable, ought chiefly to affect our understandings, and by them draw our wills to the esteem and pursuit of them. But since the desire of happiness is inseparable from the nature of man, as impossible to be disjoined as an inclination to descend to be severed from heavy bodies, or an instinct to ascend from light and airy substances; God serves himself of the inclination of our natures to happiness, to engender in us an esteem and affection to the holiness he doth require. He proposeth the enjoyment of a supernatural good and everlasting glory, as a bait to that insatiable longing our natures have for happiness, to receive the impression of holiness into our souls. And, besides, he doth proportion rewards according the degrees of men's industry, labor, and zeal for him; and weighs out a recompense, not only suited to, but above the service. He that improves five talents, is to be ruler over five cities; that is, a greater proportion of honor and glory than another (Luke 19:17-18); as a wise father excites the affection of his children to things worthy of praise, by varieties of recompenses according to their several actions. And it was the wisdom of the steward, in the judgment of our Saviour, to give every one the "portion that belonged to him" (Luke 12:42).

There is no part of the word wherein we meet not with the will and wisdom of God, varieties of duties, and varieties of encouragement, mingled together.

(5.) The wisdom of God is seen in fitting the revelations of his will to aftertimes, and for the preventing of the foreseen corruptions of men. The whole revelation of the mind of God is stored with wisdom in the words, connexion, sense; it looks backwards to past, and forwards to ages to come: a hidden wisdom lies in the bowels of it, like gold in a mine. The Old Testament was so composed, as to fortify the New, when God should bring it to light. The foundations of the gospel were laid in the law: the predictions of the Prophets, and figures of the law, were so wisely framed, and laid down in such clear expressions, as to be proofs of the authority of the New Testament, and convictions of Jesus' being the Messiah (Luke 24:14). Things concerning Christ were written in Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms; and do, to this day, stare the Jews so in the face, that they are fain to invent absurd and nonsensical interpretations to excuse their unbelief, and continue themselves in their obstinate blindness. And in pursuance of the efficacy of those predictions, it was a part of the wisdom of God to bring forth the translation of the Old Testament, (by the means of Ptolomy, king of Egypt, some hundreds of years before the coming of Christ) into the Greek language, the tongue then most known in the world; and why? to prepare the Gentiles, by the reading of it, for that gracious call he intended them, and for the entertainment of the gospel, which some few years after was to be published among them; that, by reading the predictions so long before made, they might more readily receive the accomplishment of them in their due time. The Scripture is written in such a manner, as to obviate errors foreseen by God to enter into the church. It may be wondered, why the universal particle should be inserted by Christ, in the giving the cup in the supper, which was not in the distributing the bread (Matthew 24:27): "Drink ye all of it;" not at the distributing the bread, "Eat you all of it;" and Mark, in his relation, tells us, "They all drank of it" (Mark 11:23). The church of Rome hath been the occasion of discovering to us the wisdom of our Saviour, in inserting that particle all, since the? were so bold to exclude the communicants from the cup by a trick of concomitancy. Christ foresaw the error, and therefore put in a little word to obviate a great invasion: and the Spirit of God hath particularly left upon record that particle, as we may reasonably suppose to such a purpose. And so, in the description of the "blessed Virgin" (Luke 1:27), there is nothing of her holiness mentioned, which is with much diligence recorded of Elizabeth (ver. 6): "Righteous, walking in all the commandments of God, blameless;" probably to prevent the superstition which God foresaw would arise in the world. And we do not find more undervaluing speeches uttered by Christ to any of his disciples, in the exercise of his office, than to her, except to Peter. As when she acquainted him with the want of wine at the marriage in Cana, she receives a slighting answer: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4) And when one was admiring the blessedness of her that bare him, he turns the discourse another way, to pronounce a blessedness rather belonging to them that "hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28); in a mighty wisdom to antidote his people against any conceit of the prevalency of the Virgin over him in heaven, in the exercise of his mediatory office.

2. As his wisdom appears in his government by his laws, so it appears in the various inclinations and conditions of men. As there is a distinction of several creatures, and several qualities in them, for the common good of the world, so among men there are several inclinations and several abilities, as donatives from God, for the common advantage of human society; as several channels cut out from the same river run several ways, and refresh several soils, one man is

qualified for one employment, another marked out by God for a different work, yet all of them fruitful to bring in a revenue of glory to God, and a harvest of profit to the rest of mankind. How unuseful would the body be, if it had but "one member" (1 Corinthians 12:19)! How unprovided would a house be, if it had not vessels of dishonor as well as of honor! The corporation of mankind would be as much a chaos, as the matter of the heavens and the earth was, before it was distinguished by several forms breathed into it at the creation. Some are inspired with a particular genius for one art, some for another; every man hath a distinct talent. If all were husbandmen, where would be the instruments to plough and reap? If all were artificers, where would they have corn to nourish themselves? All men are like vessels, and parts in the body, designed for distinct offices and functions for the good of the whole, and mutually return an advantage to one another. As the variety of gifts in the church is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and increase of the church, so the variety of inclinations and employments in the world is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and subsistence of the world by mutual commerce. What the apostle largely discourseth of the former, in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 may be applied to the other. The various conditions of men is also a fruit of Divine wisdom. Some are rich, and some poor; the rich have as much need of the poor, as the poor have of the rich; if the poor depend upon the rich for their livelihood, the rich depend upon the poor for their conveniences. Many arts would not be learned by men, if poverty did not oblige them to it; and many would faint in the learning of them, if they were not thereunto encouraged by the rich. The poor labor for the rich, as the earth sends vapors into the vaster and fuller air; and the rich return advantages again to the poor, as the clouds do the vapors in rain upon the earth. As meat would not afford a flourishing juice without bread, and bread without other food would immoderately fill the stomach, and not be well digested, so the rich would be unprofitable in the commonwealth without the poor, and the poor would be burdensome to a commonwealth without the rich. The poor could not be easily governed without the rich, nor the rich sufficiently and conveniently provided for without the poor. If all were rich, there would be no objects for the exercise of a noble part of charity: if all were poor, there were no matter for the exercise of it. Thus the Divine wisdom planted various inclinations, and diversified the conditions of men for the public advantages of the world.

2dly. God's wisdom appears, in the government of men, as fallen and sinful; or, in the government of sin. After the law of God was broke, and sin invaded and conquered the world, divine wisdom had another scene to act in, and other methods of government were necessary. The wisdom of God is then seen in ordering those jarring discords, drawing good out of evil, and honour to himself out of that which in its own nature tended to the supplanting of his glory. God being a sovereign good, would not suffer so great an evil to enter, but to serve himself of it for some greater end, for all his thoughts are full of goodness and wisdom. Now, though the permission of sin be an act of his sovereignty, and the punishment of sin be an act of his justice, yet the ordination of sin to good, is an act of his wisdom, whereby he doth dispose the evil, overrules the malice, and orders the events of it to his own purposes. Sin in itself is a disorder, and therefore God doth not permit sin for itself; for in its own nature it hath nothing of amiableness, but he wills it for some righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is his aim in all the acts of his will; he wills it not as sin, but as his wisdom can order it to some greater good than was before in the world, and make it contribute to the beauty of the order he intends. As a dark shadow is not delightful and pleasant in itself, nor is drawn by a painter for any amiableness there is in the shadow itself, but as it serves to set forth that beauty which is the main design of his art, so the glorious effects which

arise from the entrance of sin into the world, are not from the creatures evil, but the depths of divine wisdom. Particularly,

1. God's wisdom is seen in the bounding of sin; as it is said of the wrath of man, it shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath God doth restrain (Psalms 76:10). He sets limits to the boiling corruption of the heart, as he doth to the boisterous waves of the sea; "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." As God is the rector of the world, he doth so restrain sin, so temper and direct it, as that human society is preserved, which else would be overflown with a deluge of wickedness, and ruin would be brought upon all communities. The world would be a shambles, a brothel-house, if God, by his wisdom and goodness, did not set bars to that wickedness which is in the hearts of men: the whole earth would be as bad as hell. Since the heart of man is a hell of corruption, by that the souls of all men would be excited to the acting the worst villanies; since "every thought of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually" Genesis 6:5). If the wisdom of God did not stop these floodgates of evil in the hearts of men, it would overflow the world, and frustrate all the gracious designs he carries on among the sons of men. Were it not for this wisdom, every house would be filled with violence, as well as every nature is with sin. What harm would not strong and furious beasts do, did not the skill of man tame and bridle them? How often hath Divine wisdom restrained the viciousness of human nature, and let it run, not to that point they designed, but to the end he purposed! Laban's fury, and Esau's enmity against Jacob, were pent in within bounds for Jacob's safety, and their hearts overruled from an intended destruction of the good man, to a perfect amity (Genesis 31:29, and Genesis 31:32.) 2. God's wisdom is seen in the bringing glory to himself out of sin.

(1.) Out of sin itself. God erects the trophies of honor upon that which is a natural means to hinder and deface it. His glorious attributes are drawn out to our view, upon the occasion of sin, which otherwise had lain hid in his own Being. Sin is altogether black and abominable; but by the admirable wisdom of God, he hath drawn out of the dreadful darkness of sin the saving beams of his mercy, and displayed his grace in the incarnation and passion of his Son for the atonement of sin. Thus he permitted Adam's fall, and wisely ordered it, for a fuller discovery of his own nature, and a higher elevation of man's good, that "as sin reigned to death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:21). The unbounded goodness of God could not have appeared without it. His goodness in rewarding innocent obedience would have been manifested; but not his mercy, in pardoning rebellious crimes. An innocent creature is the object of the rewards of grace, as the standing angels are under the beams of grace; but not under the beams of mercy, because they were never sinful, and, consequently, never miserable. Without sin the creature had not been miserable: had man remained innocent, he had not been the subject of punishment; and without the creature's misery, God's mercy in sending his Son to save his enemies, could not have appeared. The abundance of sin is a passive occasion for God to manifest the abundance of his grace. The power of God in the changing the heart of a rebellious creature, had not appeared, had not sin infected our nature. We had not clearly known the vindictive justice of God, had no crime been committed; for that is the proper object of Divine wrath. The goodness of God could never have permitted justice to exercise itself upon an innocent creature, that was not guilty either personally or by imputation (Psalms 11:7), "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth uphold the upright." Wisdom is illustrious hereby. God suffered man to fall into a mortal disease, to shew the virtue of his own restoratives to cure sin,

which in itself is incurable by the art of any creature. And otherwise this perfection, whereby God draws good out of evil, had been utterly useless, and would have been destitute of an object wherein to discover itself. Again, wisdom, in ordering a rebellious head-strong world to its own ends, is greater than the ordering an innocent world, exactly observant of his precepts, and complying with the end of the creation. Now, without the entrance of sin, this wisdom had wanted a stage to act upon. Thus God raised the honor of this wisdom, while man ruined the integrity of his nature; and made use of the creature's breach of his divine law, to establish the honor of it in a more signal and stable manner, by the active and passive obedience of the Son of his bosom. Nothing serves God so much, as an occasion of glorifying himself, as the entrance of sin into the world; by this occasion God communicates to us the knowledge of those perfections of his nature, which had else been folded up from us in an eternal night; his justice had lain in the dark, as having nothing to punish; his mercy had been obscure, as having none to pardon; a great part of his wisdom had been silent, as having no such object to order.

(2.) His wisdom appears, in making use of sinful instruments. He uses the malice and enmity of the devil to bring about his own purposes, and makes the sworn enemy of his honor contribute to the illustrating of it against his will. This great craftsman took in his own net, and defeated the devil by the devil's malice; by turning the contrivances he had hatched and accomplished against man, against himself. He used him as a tempter, to grapple with our Saviour in the wilderness, whereby to make him fit to succor us; and as the god of this world, to conspire the wicked Jews to crucify him, whereby to render him actually the Redeemer of the world, and so make him an ignorant instrument of that divine glory he designed to ruin. It is more skill to make a curious piece of workmanship with ill-conditioned tools, than with instruments naturally fitted for the work: it is no such great wonder for a limner to draw an exact piece with a fit pencil and suitable colors, as to begin and perfect a beautiful work with a straw and water, things improper for such a design. [Note: Moulin's Serm. decad. 10. p. 231, 232.] This wisdom of God is more admirable and astonishing than if a man were able to rear a vast palace by fire, whose nature is to consume combustible matter not to erect a building. To make things serviceable contrary to their own nature, is a wisdom peculiar to the Creator of Nature. God's making use of devils, for the glory of his name, and the good of his people, is a more amazing piece of wisdom than his goodness in employing the blessed angels in his work. To promise, that the world, (which includes the god of the world, and death, and things present, let them be as evil as they will, should be ours, that is, for our good, and for his glory, is an act of goodness; but to make them serviceable to the honor of Christ, and the good of his people, is a wisdom that may well raise our highest admirations: they are for believers, as they are for the glory of Christ, and as Christ is for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 3:22). To chain up Satan wholly, and frustrate his wiles, would be an argument of Divine goodness; but to suffer him to run his risk, and then improve all his contrivances for his own glorious and gracious ends and purposes, manifests, besides his power and goodness, his wisdom also. He uses the sins of evil instruments for the glory of his justice (Isaiah 10:5-7). Thus he served himself of the ambition and covetousness of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, for the correction of his people, and punishment of his rebels, just as the Roman magistrates used the fury of lions and other wild beasts, in their theatres, for the punishment of criminals: the lions acted their natural temper in tearing those that were exposed to them for a prey; but the intent of the magistrates was to punish their crimes. The magistrate inspired not the lions with their rage, that they had from their natures; but served themselves of that natural rage to execute justice.

(3.) God's wisdom is seen in bringing good to the creature out of sin. He hath ordered sin to such an end as man never dreamt of, the devil never imagined, and sin in its own nature could never attain. Sin in its own nature tends to no good, but that of punishment, whereby the creature is brought into order. It hath no relation to the creature's good in itself, but to the creature's mischief: but God, by an act of infinite wisdom, brings good out of it to the creature, as well as glory to his name, contrary to the nature of the crime, the intention of the criminal, and the design of the tempter. God willed sin, that is, he willed to permit it, that he might communicate himself to the creature in the most excellent manner. He willed the permission of sin, as an occasion to bring forth the mystery of the incarnation and passion of our Saviour; as he permitted the sin of Joseph's brethren, that he might use their evil to a good end. He never, because of his holiness, wills sin as an end; but in regard of his wisdom he wills to permit it as a means and occasion; and thus, to draw good out of those things which are in their own nature most contrary to good, is the highest pitch of wisdom.

[1.] The redemption of man in so excellent a way, was drawn from the occasion of sin. The greatest blessing that ever the world was blessed with, was ushered in by contraities, by the lust and irregular affection of man; the first promise of the Redeemer by the fall of Adam (Genesis 3:15), and the bruising the heel of that promised Seed, by the blackest tragedy acted by wicked rebels, the treachery of Judas, and the rage of the Jews; the highest good hath been brought forth by the greatest wickedness. As God out of the chaos of rude and indigested matter framed the first creation; so from the sins of men, and malice of Satan, he hath erected the everlasting scheme of honor in a new creation of all things by Jesus Christ. The devil inspired man, to content his own fury in the death of Christ; and God ordered it to accomplish his own design of redemption in the passion of the Redeemer; the devil had his diabolical ends, and God overpowers his actions to serve his own divine ends. The person that betrayed him was admitted to be a spectator of the most private actions of our Saviour, that his innocence might be justified; to shew, that he was not afraid to have his enemies judges of his most retired privacies. While they all thought to do their own wills, Divine wisdom orders them to do God's will (Acts 2:23): "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And wherein the crucifiers of Christ sinned, in shedding the richest blood, upon their repentance they found the expiation of their crimes, and the discovery of a superabundant mercy. Nothing but the blood was aimed at by them: the best blood was shed by them; but infinite Wisdom makes the cross the scene of his own righteousness, and the womb of man's recovery. By the occasion of man's lapsed state, there was a way open to raise man to a more excellent condition than that whereinto he was put by creation: and the depriving man of the happiness of an earthly paradise, in a way of justice, was an occasion of advancing him to a heavenly felicity, in a way of grace. The violation of the old covenant occasionally introduced a better the loss of the first integrity ushered in a more stable righteousness, an everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). And the falling of the first head was succeeded by one whose standing could not but be eternal. The fall of the devil was ordered by infinite Wisdom, for the good of that body from which he fell. It is supposed by some, that the devil was the chief angel in heaven, the head of all the rest; and that he falling, the angels were left as a body without a head; and after he had politically beheaded the angels, he endeavored to destroy man, and rout him out of paradise; but God takes the opportunity to set up his Son, as the head of angels and men. And thus whilst the devil endeavored to spoil the corporation of angels, and make them a body contrary

to God, God makes angels and men one body under one head, for his service. The angels in losing a defectible head, attained a more excellent and glorious Head in another nature, which they had not before; though of a lower nature in his humanity, yet of a more glorious nature in his divinity: from whence many suppose they derive their confirming grace, and the stability of their standing. "All things in heaven and earth are gathered together in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10), **■νακεφαλα■σασθαι**, all united in him, and reduced under one head: that though our Saviour be not properly their Redeemer, for redemption supposeth captivity, yet in some sense he is their Head and Mediator: so that now the inhabitants of heaven and earth are but one family (Ephesians 3:15.) And the innumerable company of angels are parts of that heavenly and triumphant Jerusalem, and that general assembly, whereof Jesus Christ is Mediator (Hebrews 12:22; Hebrews 12:29.)

[2.] The good of a nation often, by the skill of Divine wisdom, is promoted by the sins of some men. The patriarchs' selling Joseph to the Midianites (Genesis 37:28), was without question a sin, and a breach of natural affection; yet, by God's wise ordination, it proved the safety of the whole church of God in the world, as well as the Egyptian nation (Genesis 45:5; Genesis 45:8; Genesis 50:20.) The Jews' unbelief was a step whereby the Gentiles arose to the knowledge of the gospel; as the setting of the sun in one place is the rising of it in another (Matthew 22:9.) He uses the corruptions of men instrumentally to propogate his gospel: he built up the true church by the preaching of some out of envy (Php 1:15), as he blessed Israel out of the mouth of a false prophet (Numbers 23:1-30.) How often have the heresies of men been the occasion of clearing up the truth of God, and fixing the more lively impressions of it on the hearts of believers! Neither Judah nor Tamar, in their lust, dreamt of a stock for the Redeemer; yet God gave a son from that unlawful bed, whereof "Christ came according to the flesh" (Genesis 38:29, compared with Matthew 1:3). Jonah's sin was probably the first and remote occasion of the Ninevites giving credit to his prophecy; his sin was the cause of his punishment, and his being flung into the sea might facilitate the reception of his message, and excite the Ninevites' repentance, whereby a cloud of severe judgment was blown away from them. It is thought by some, that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh, with his proclamation of destruction, he might be known by some of the mariners of that ship, from whence he was cast overboard into the sea, and might, after their voyage, be occasionally in that city, the metropolis of the nation, and the place of some of their births; and might acquaint the people, that this was the same person they had cast into the sea, by his own consent, for his acknowledged running from the presence of the Lord: for that he had told them (Jonah 1:10); and the mariner's prayer (John 1:14) evidenced it; whereupon they might conclude his message worthy of belief, since they knew from such evidences, that he had sunk into the bowels of the waters, and now saw him safe in their streets, by a deliverance unknown to them; and that therefore that power that delivered him, could easily verify his word in the threatened judgment. Had Jonah gone at first, without committing that sin, and receiving that punishment, his message had not been judged a divine prediction, but a fruit of some enthusiastic madness; his sin upon this account was the first occasion of averting a judgment from so great a city.

[3.] The good of the sinner himself is sometimes promoted by Divine wisdom ordering the sin. As God had not permitted sin to enter upon the world, unless to bring glory to himself by it; so he would not let sin remain in the little world of a believers heart, if he did not intend to order it for his good. What is done by man, to his damage and disparagement, is directed by Divine wisdom to

his advantage; not that it is the intent of the sin, or the sinner; but it is the event of the sin, by the ordination of Divine wisdom and grace. As without the wisdom of God permitting sin to enter into the world, some attributes of God had not been experimentally known, so some graces could not have been exercised; for where had there been an object for that noble zeal, in vindicating the glory of God, had it not been invaded by an enemy? The intenseness of love to him could not have been so strong, had we not an enemy to hate for his sake. Where had there been any place for that noble part of charity in holy admonitions and compassion to the souls of our neighbors, and endeavors to reduce them out of a destructive, to a happy path? Humility would not have had so many grounds for its growth and exercise, and holy sorrow had no fuel. And as without the appearance of sin there had been no exercise of the patience of God, so without afflictions, the fruits of sin, there had been no ground for the exercise of the patience of a christian, one of the noblest parts of valor. Now sin being evil, and such as cannot but be evil, hath no respect in itself to any good, and cannot work a gracious end, or anything profitable to the creature; nay it is a hindrance to any good, and, therefore, what good comes from it, is accidental; occasioned, indeed, by sin, but efficiently caused by the over-ruling wisdom of God, taking occasion thereby to display itself and the Divine goodness.

1. The sins and corruptions remaining in the heart of man, God orders for good; and there are good effects by the direction of his wisdom and grace, as the soul respects God.

(1.) God often brings forth a sensibleness of the necessity of dependence on him. The nurse often lets the child slip, that it may the better know who supports it, and may not be too venturous and confident of its own strength. Peter would trust in habitual grace, and God suffers him to fall, that he might trust more in assisting grace (Matthew 26:35 : "Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee." God leaves sometimes the brightest souls in eclipse, to manifest that their holiness, and the preservation of it, depend upon the darting out his beams upon them. As the falls of men are the effects of their coldness and remissness in acts of faith and repentance, so the fruit of these falls is often a running to him for refuge, and a deeper sensibleness where their security lies. It makes us lower our swelling sails, and come under the lee and protection of Divine grace. When the pleasures of sin answer not the expectations of a revolted creature, he reflects upon his former state, and sticks more close to God, when before God had little of his company (Hosea 2:7): "I will return to my first husband, for then it was better with me t an now." As God makes the sins of men sometimes an occasion of their conversion, so he sometimes makes them an occasion of a further conversion. Onesimus run from Philemon, and was met with by Paul, who proved an instrument of his conversion (Philemon 1:10): "My son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." His flight from his master was the occasion of his regeneration by Paul, a prisoner. The falls of believers God orders to their further stability; he that is fallen for want of using his staff, will lean more upon it to preserve himself from the like disaster. God, by permitting the lapses of men, doth often make them despair of their own strength to subdue their enemies, and rely upon the strength of Christ, wherein God hath laid up power for us, and so becomes stronger in that strength which God hath ordained for them. We are very apt to trust in ourselves, and have confidence in our own worth and strength; and God lets loose corruptions to abate this swelling humor. This was the reason of the apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7); whether it were a temptation, or corruption, or sickness, that he might be sensible of his own inability, and where the sufficiency of grace for him was placed. He that is in danger of drowning, and hath the

waves come over his head, will, with all the might he hath, lay hold upon anything near him, which is capable to save him. God lets his people sometimes sink into such a condition, that they may lay the faster hold on him who is near to all that call upon him.

(2.) God hereby raiseth higher estimations of the value and virtue of the blood of Christ. As the great reason why God permitted sin to enter into the world, was to honor himself in the Redeemer, so the continuance of sin, and the conquests it sometimes makes in renewed men, are to honor the infinite value and virtue of the Redeemer's merit, which God, from the beginning, intended to magnify the value of it, in taking off so much successive guilt; and the virtue of it, in washing away so much daily filth. The wisdom of God hereby keeps up the credit of imputed righteousness, and manifests the immense treasure of the Redeemer's merit to pay such daily debts. Were we perfectly sanctified, we should stand upon our own bottom, and imagine no need of the continual and repeated imputation of the righteousness of Christ for our justification: we should confide in inherent righteousness, and slight imputed. If God should take off all remainders of sin, as well as the guilt of it, we should be apt to forget that we are fallen creatures, and that we had a Redeemer; but the relics of sin in us mind us of the necessity of some higher strength to set us right: they mind us both of our own misery, and the Redeemer's perpetual benefit. God, by this, keeps up the dignity and honor of our Saviour's blood to the height, and therefore sometimes lets us see, to our own cost, what filth yet remains in us for the employment of that blood, which we should else but little think of, and less admire. Our gratitude is so small to God as well as man, that the first obligations are soon forgot if we stand not in need of fresh ones successively to second them; we should lose our thankful remembrance of the first virtue of Christ's blood in washing us, if our infirmities did not mind us of fresh reiterations and applications of it. Our Saviour's office of advocacy was erected especially for sins committed after a justified and renewed state (1 John 2:1). We should scarce remember we had an Advocate, and scarce make use of him without some sensible necessity; but our remainders of sin discover our impotency, and an impossibility for us either to expiate our sin, or conform to the law, which necessitates us to have recourse to that person whom God hath appointed to make up the breaches between God and us. So the apostle wraps up himself in the covenant of grace and his interest in Christ, after his conflict with sin (Romans 7:1-25. ult.), "I thank God, through Jesus Christ." Now, after such a body of death, a principle within me that sends up daily steams, yet as long as I serve God with my mind, as long as I keep the main condition of the covenant, "there is no condemnation" (Romans 8:1): Christ takes my part, procures my acceptance, and holds the band of salvation firm in his hands. The brightness of Christ's grace is set off by the darkness of our sin. We should not understand the sovereignty of his medicines, if there were no relics of sin for him to exercise his skill upon: the physician's art is most experimented, and therefore most valued in relapses, as dangerous as the former disease. As the wisdom of God brought our Saviour into temptation, that he might have compassion to us, so it permits us to be overcome by temptation, that we might have due valuations of him.

(3.) God hereby often engageth the soul to a greater industry for his gory. The highest persecutors, when they have become converts have been the greatest champions for that cause they both hated and oppressed. The apostle Paul is such an instance of this, that it needs no enlargement. By how much they have failed of answering the end of their creation in glorifying God, by so much the more they summon up all their force for such an end, after their conversion;

to restore as much as they can of that glory to God, which they, by their sin, had robbed him of. Their sins, by the order of Divine wisdom, prove whetstones to sharpen the edge of their spirits for God. Paul never remembered his persecuting fury, but he doubled his industry for the service of God, which before he trampled under his feet. The further we go back, the greater leap many times we take forward. Our Saviour, after his resurrection, put Peter upon the exercise of that love to him, which had so lately shrunk his head out of suffering (John 21:15-17); and no doubt, but the consideration of his base denial, together with a reflection upon a gracious pardon, engaged his ingenuous soul to stronger and fiercer flames of affection. A believer's courage for God is more sharpened oftentimes by the shame of his fall: he endeavors to repair the faults of his ingratitude and his disingenuity by larger and stronger steps of obedience; as a man in a fight, having been foiled by his enemy, reassumes new courage by his fall, and is many times obliged to his foil, both for his spirit and his victory. A gracious heart will, upon the very motions to sin, double its vigor, as well as by good ones: it is usually more quickened, both in its motion to God and for God, by the temptations and motions to sin which run upon it. This is another good the wisdom of God brings forth from sin.

(4.) Again, humility towards God is another good Divine wisdom brings forth from the occasion of sin. By this God beats down all good opinion of ourselves. Hezekiah was more humbled by his fall into pride, than by all the distress he had been in by Sennacherib's army (2 Chronicles 32:26). Peter's confidence before his fall, gave way to an humble modesty after it; you see his confidence (Mark 14:24). "Though all should be offended in thee, yet will not I;" and you have the mark of his modesty (John 21:17). It is not then, Lord, I will love thee to the death, I will not start from thee; but, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee:" I cannot assure myself of anything after this miscarriage; but, Lord, thou knowest there is a principle of love in me to thy name. He was ashamed, that himself who appeared such a pillar, should bend as meanly as a shrub to a temptation. The reflection upon sin lays a man as low as hell in his humiliation, as the commission of sin did in the merit. When David comes to exercise repentance for his sin, he begins it from the well-head of sin (Psalms 51:5), his original corruption, and draws down the streams of it to the last commission; perhaps he did not so seriously, humble himself for the sin of his nature all his days, so much as at that time; at least, we have not such evidences of it. And Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart; not only for the pride of his act (2 Chronicles 32:26), but for the pride in the heart, which was the spring of that pride in act, in showing his treasures to the Babylonish ambassadors. God lets sin continue in the hearts of the best in this world, and sometimes gives the reins to Satan, and a man's own corruption, to keep up a sense of the ancient sale we made of ourselves to both.

2. In regard of ourselves. Herein is the wonder of Divine wisdom, that God many times makes a sin, which meritoriously fits us for hell, a providential occasion to fit us for heaven; when it is an occasion of a more humble faith and believing humility, and an occasion of a thorough sanctification and growth in grace, which prepares us for a state of glory.

(1.) He makes use of one sin's breaking out to discover more; and so brings us to a self-aborrancy and indignation against sin, the first step towards heaven. Perhaps David, before his gross fall, thought he had no hypocrisy in him. We often find him appealing to God for his integrity, and desiring God to try him, if any guile could be found in his heart, as if he could find none himself; but his lapse into that great wickedness makes him discern much falseness in his

soul, when he desires God to renew a right spirit within him, and speaks of truth in the inward parts (Psalms 51:6; Psalms 51:10). The stirring of corruption makes all the mud at the bottom appear, which before a soul did not suspect. No man would think there were so great a cloud of smoke contained in a little stick of wood, were it not for the powerful operation of the fire, that both discovers and separates it. Job, that cursed the day of his birth, and uttered many impatient expressions against God upon the account of his own integrity; upon his recovery from his affliction, and God's close application of himself, was wrought to a greater abhorrency of himself than ever we read he was exercised in before (Job 42:6). The hostile acts of sin increase the soul's hatred of it; and the deeper our humiliations are for it, the stronger impressions of abhorrency are made upon us.

(2.) He often orders it, to make conscience more tender, and the soul more watchful. He that finds by his calamity his enemy to have more strength against him than he suspected, will double his guards, and quicken his diligence against him. A being overtaken by some sin, is, by the wisdom of God, disposed to make us more fearful of cherishing any occasion to inflame it, and watchful against every motion and start of it. By a fall, the soul hath more experience of the deceitfulness of the heart; and by observing its methods, is rendered better able to watch against them. It is our ignorance of the devices of Satan, and our own hearts, that makes us obnoxious to their surprises. A fall into one sin is often a prevention of more which lay in wait for us; as the fall of a small body into an ambush prevents the design of the enemy upon a greater: as God suffers heresies in the church, to try our faith, so he suffers sins to remain, and sometimes to break out, to try our watchfulness. This advantage he brings from them, to steel our resolutions against the same sins, and quicken our circumspection for the future against new surprises by a temptation. David's sin was ever before him (Psalms 51:3), and made his conscience cry, Blood, blood! upon every occasion: he refused the water of the well of Bethlehem (2 Samuel 23:16-17), because it was gained with the hazard of lives: he could endure nothing that had the taste of blood in it. Our fear of a thing depends much upon a trial of it: a child will not fear too near approaches to the fire till he feels the smart of it. Mortification doth not wholly suppress the motions of sin, though it doth the resolutions to commit it; but that there will be a proneness in the relics of it, to entice a man into those faults, which, upon sight of their blemishes, cost him so many tears; as great sicknesses, after the cure, are more watched, and the body humored, that a man might not fall from the craziness they have left in him, which he is apt to do if relapses are not provided against. A man becomes more careful of anything that may contribute to the resurrection of an expired disease.

(3.) God makes it an occasion of the mortification of that sin which was the matter of the fall. The liveliness of one sin, in a renewed man, many times is the occasion of the death of it. A wild beast, while kept close in a den, is secure in its life, but when it breaks out to rapine, it makes the master resolve to prevent any further mischief by the death of it. The impetuous stirring of a humor, in a disease, is sometimes critical, and a prognostic of the strength of nature against it, whereby the disease loses its strength, by its struggling, and makes room for health to take place by degrees. One sin is used by God for the destruction both of itself and others, as the flesh of a scorpion cures the biting of it. It sometimes, by wounding us, loseth its sting, and, like the bee, renders itself incapable of a second revenge. Peter, after his gross denial, never denied his Master afterwards. The sin that lay undiscovered, is, by a fall, become visible, and so more obvious to a mortifying stroke. The soul lays the faster hold on Christ and the promise, and goes out against that enemy,

in the name of that Lord of Hosts, of which he was too negligent before; and, therefore, as he proves more strong, so more successful: he hath more strength, because he hath less confidence in himself, and more in God, the prime strength of his soul. As it was with Christ, so it is with us; while the devil was bruising his heel, he was bruising his head; and while the devil is bruising our heel, the God of peace and wisdom is sometimes bruising his head, both in us and for us, so that the strugglings of sin are often as the faint groans or bitings of a beast that is ready to expire. It is just with a man, sometimes, as with a running fountain that hath mud at the bottom, when it is stirred the mud tinctures and defiles it all over; yet some of that mud hath a vent with the streams which run from it, so that, when it is re-settled at the bottom, it is not so much in quantity as it was before. God, by his wisdom, weakens the sin by permitting it to stir and defile.

(4.) Sometimes Divine wisdom makes it an occasion to promote a sanctification in all parts of the soul. As the working of one ill-humor in the body is an occasion of cashiering, not only that, but the rest, by a sound purge; as a man, that is a little cold, doth not think of the fire, but if he slips with one foot into an icy puddle, he hastens to the fire, whereby not only that part, but all the rest receive a warmth and strength upon that occasion; or, as if a person fall into the mire, his clothes are washed, and by that means cleansed, not only from the filth at present contracted, but from the former spots that were before unregarded. God, by his wisdom, brings secret sins to a discovery, and thereby cleanseth the soul of them. David's fall might be ordered as an answer to his former petition (Psalms 19:12): "Cleanse thou me from my secret sins;" and as he did earnestly pray after his fall, so no doubt but he endeavored a thorough sanctification (Psalms 51:7); "Purge me, wash me;" and that he meant not only a sanctification from that single sin, but from all, root and branch, is evident by that complaint of the flaw in his nature (ver. 5): the dross and chaff which lies in the heart is hereby discovered, and an opportunity administered of throwing it out, and searching all the corners of the heart to discover where it lay. As God sometimes takes occasion from one sin to reckon with men, in a way of justice, for others, so he sometimes takes occasion, from the commission of one sin, to bring out all the actions against the sinner, to make him, in a way of gracious wisdom, set more cordially upon the work of sanctification. A great fall sometimes hath been the occasion of a man's conversion. The fall of mankind occasioned a more blessed restoration; and the falls of particular believers oftentimes occasion a more extensive sanctification. Thus the only wise God makes poisons in nature to become medicines in a way of grace and wisdom.

(5.) Hereby the growth in grace is furthered. It is a wonder of Divine wisdom, to subtract sometimes grace from a person, and let him fall into sin, thereby to occasion the increase of habitual grace in him, and to augment it by those ways that seemed to depress it. By making sins an occasion of a more vigorous acting, the contrary grace, the wisdom of God, makes our corruptions, in their own nature destructive, to become profitable to us. Grace often breaks out more strongly afterwards, as the sun doth with its heat, after it hath been masked and interrupted with a mist: they often, through the mighty working of the Spirit, make us more humble, and "humility fits us to receive more grace from God" (James 4:6). How doth faith, that sunk under the waves, lift up its head again, and carry the soul out with a greater liveliness! What ardors of love, what floods of repenting tears, what severity of revenge, what horrors at the remembrance of the sin, what tremblings at the appearance of a second temptation! so that grace seems to be awakened to a new and more vigorous life (2 Corinthians 7:11). The broken joint is many times

stronger in the rupture than it was before. The luxuriancy of the branches of corruption is an occasion of purging, and purging is with a design to make grace more fruitful (John 15:2); "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Thus Divine wisdom doth both sharpen and brighten us by the dust of sin, and ripen and mellow the fruits of grace by the dung of corruption. Grace grows the stronger by opposition, as the fire burns hottest and clearest when it is most surrounded by a cold air; and our natural heat reassumes a new strength by the coldness of the winter. The foil under a diamond, though an imperfection in itself, increaseth the beauty and lustre of the stone. The enmity of man was a commendation of the grace of God: it occasioned the breaking out of the grace of God upon us; and is an occasion, by the wisdom and grace of God, of the increase of grace many times in us. How should the consideration of God's incomprehensible wisdom, in the management of evil, swallow us up in admiration who brings forth such beauty, such eminent discoveries of himself, such excellent good to the creature, out of the bowels of the greatest contrarieties, making dark shadows serve to display and beautify, to our apprehensions, the Divine glory! If evil were not in the world, men would not know what good is; they would not behold the lustre of Divine wisdom, as without night we could not understand the beauty of the day. Though God is not the author of sin, because of his holiness, yet he is the administrator of sin by his wisdom, and accomplisheth his own purposes, by the iniquities of his enemies, and the lapses and infirmities of his friends. Thus much for the Second, the government of man in his lapsed state, and the government of sin, wherein the wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear.

3dly. The wisdom of God appears in the government of man in his conversion and return to him. If there be a counsel in framing the lowest creature, and in the minutest passages of providence, there must needs be a higher wisdom in the government of the creature to a supernatural end, and framing the soul to be a monument of his glory. The wisdom of God is seen with more admirations, and in more varieties, by the angels, in the church than in the creation (Ephesians 3:10); that is, in forming a church out of the rubbish of the world, out of contrarieties and contradictions to him, which is greater than the framing a celestial and elementary world out of a rude chaos. The most glorious bodies in the world, even those of the sun, moon, and stars, have not such stamps of Divine skill upon them as the soul of man; nor is there so much of wisdom in the fabric and faculties of that, as in the reduction of a blind, wilful, rebellious soul, to its own happiness, and God's glory (Ephesians 1:11-12); "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be for the praise of his glory." If all things, then this, which is none of the least of his works; to the praise of the glory of his goodness in his work, and to the praise of the rule of his work, his counsel, in both the act of his will, and the act of his wisdom. The restoring of the beauty of the soul, and its fitness for its true end, speaks no less wisdom than the first draught of it in creation: and the application of redemption, and bringing forth the fruits of it, is as well an act of his prudence, as the contrivance was of his counsel. Divine wisdom appears,

1. In the subjects of conversion. His goodness reigns in the very dust, and he erects the walls and ornaments of his temple from the clay and mud of the world. He passes over the wise, and noble, and mighty, that may retend some grounds of boasting in their own natural or acquire endowments; and pitches upon the most contemptible materials, wherewith to build a spiritual tabernacle for himself (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), "the foolish, and weak things of the world;" those that are naturally most unfit for it, and most refractory to it. Herein lies the skill of an architect, to render the most knotty, crooked, and inform pieces, by his art, subservient to his main purpose.

and design. Thus God hath ordered, from the beginning of the world, contrary tempers, various humors, diverse nations, as stones of several natures. to be a building for himself, fitly framed together, and to be his own family (1 Corinthians 3:9). Who will question the skill that alters a black jet into a clear crystal, a glow-worm into a star, a lion into a lamb, and a swine into a dove? The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is any man's ability and prudence, in untying the knots and bringing it to a good issue. The more desperate the disease, the more admirable is the physician's skill in the cure. He pitches upon men for his service, who have natural dispositions to serve him in such ways as he disposeth of them, after their conversion: so Paul was naturally a conscientious man; what he did against Christ was from the dictates of an erroneous conscience, soaked in the Pharisaical interpretations of the Jewish law: he had a strain of zeal to prosecute what his depraved reason and conscience did inform him in. God pitches upon this man, and works him in the fire for his service. He alters not his natural disposition, to make him of a constitution and temper contrary to what he was before; but directs it to another object, claps in another bias into the bowl, and makes his ill-governed dispositions move in a new way of his own appointment, and guides that natural heat to the service of that interest which he was before ambitious to extirpate; as a high-mettled horse, when left to himself, creates both disturbance and danger, but under the conduct of a wise rider, moves regularly; not by a change of his natural fierceness, but a skilful management of the beast to the rider's purpose.

2. In the means of conversion. The prudence of man consists in the timing the executions of his counsels; and no less doth the wisdom of God consist in this. As he is a God of judgment or wisdom, he waits to introduce his grace into the soul in the fittest season. This attribute, Paul, in the story of his own conversion, puts a particular remark upon, which he doth not upon any other; in that catalogue he reckons up (1 Timothy 1:17), "Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." A most solemn doxology, wherein wisdom sits upon the throne above all the rest, with a special Amen to the glory of it, which refers to the timing of his mercy so to Paul, as made most for the glory of his grace, and the encouragement of others from him as the pattern. God took him at a time when he was upon the brink of hell; when he was ready to devour the new-born infant church at Damascus; when he was armed with all the authority from without, and fired with all the zeal from within, for the prosecution of his design: then God seizeth upon him, and runs him in a channel for his own honor, and his creatures' happiness. It is observable [Note: Which I have upon another occasion noted.] how God set his eye upon Paul all along in his furious course, and lets him have the reins, without putting out his hand to bridle him; yet no motion he could take, but the eye of God runs along with him: he suffered him to kick against the pricks of miracles, and the convincing discourse of Stephen at his martyrdom. There were many that voted for Stephen's death, as the witnesses that flung the stones first at him; but they are not named, only Saul, who testified his approbation as well as the rest, and that by watching the witnesses' clothes while they were about that bloody work (Acts 7:58); "the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul." Again, though multitudes were consenting to his death, yet (Acts 8:1) Saul only is mentioned. God's eye is upon him, yet he would not at that time stop his fury. He goes on further, and makes "havoc of the church" (Acts 8:3.) He had surely many more complices, but none are named (as if none regarded with any design of grace but Saul: yet God would not reach out his hand to change him, but eyes him, waiting for a fitter opportunity, which in his wisdom he did foresee. And, therefore (Acts 9:1) the Spirit of God adds a yet: "Saul yet breathing out threatenings." It was not God's time yet, but it

would be shortly. But, when Saul was putting in execution his design against the church of Damascus, when the devil was at the top of his hopes, and Saul in the height of his fury, and the Christians sunk into the depth of their fears, the wisdom of God lays hold of the opportunity, and by Paul's conversion at this season, defeats the devil, disappoints the high priests, shields his people, discharges their fears, by pulling Saul out of the devil's hands, and forming Satan's instruments to a holy activity against him.

3. The wisdom of God appears in the manner of conversion. So great a change God makes, not by a destruction, but with a preservation of, and suitableness to nature. As the devil tempts us, not by offering violence to our natures, but by proposing things convenient to our corrupt natures, so doth God solicit us to a return by proposals suited to our faculties. As he doth in nature convey nourishment to men, by means of the fruits of the earth, and produceth the fruits of the earth by the influences of heaven; the influences of heaven do not force the earth, but excite that natural virtue and strength which is in it. So God produceth grace in the soul by the means of the word, fitted to the capacity of man, as man, and proportioned to his rational faculties, as rational. It would be contrary to the wisdom of God to move man like a stone, to invert the order and privilege of that nature which he settled in creation; for then God would in vain have given man understanding and will: because, without moving man according to those faculties, they would remain unprofitable and unuseful in man. [Note: Daille sur Philip. Part I. pp. 545, 546.] God doth not reduce us to himself, as logs, by a mere force, or as slaves forced by a cudgel, to go forth to that place, and do that work which they have no stomach to: but he doth accommodate himself to those foundations he hath laid in our nature, and guides us in a way agreeable thereunto, by an action as sweet as powerful; clearing our understandings of dark principles, whereby we may see his truth, our own misery, and the seat of our happiness; and bending our wills according to this light, to desire and move conveniently to this end of our calling; efficaciously, yet agreeably; powerfully, yet without imposing on our natural faculties; sweetly, without violence, in ordering the means; but effectually, without failing, in accomplishing the end. [Note: Sanderson, Part II. p. 205.] And therefore the Scripture calleth it, teaching (John 6:45), alluring (Hosea 2:15), calling us to seek the Lord (Psalms 27:8). Teaching is an act of wisdom; alluring, an act of love; calling, an act of authority: but none of them argue a violent constraint. The principle that moves the will is supernatural; but the will, as a natural faculty, concurs in the act or motion. God doth not act in this in a way of absolute power, without an infinite wisdom, suiting himself to the nature of the things he acts upon: he doth not change the physical nature, though he doth the moral. As in the government of the world, he doth not make heavy things ascend, nor light things descend, ordinarily, but guides their motions according to their natural qualities: so God doth not strain the faculties beyond their due pitch. He lets the nature of the faculty remain, but changes the principle in it: the understanding remains understanding, and the will remains will. But where there was before folly in the understanding, he puts in a spirit of wisdom; and where there was before a stoutness in the will, he forms it to a pliability to his offers. He hath a key to fit every ward in the lock, and opens the will without injuring the nature of the will. He doth not change the soul by an alteration of the faculties, but by an alteration of something in them: not by an inroad upon them, or by mere power, or a blind instinct, but by proposing to the understanding something to be known, and informing it of the reasonableness of his precepts, and the innate goodness and excellency of his offers, and by inclining the will to love and embrace what is proposed. And things are proposed under those notions, which usually move our wills and affections. We are moved by things as they are good,

pleasant, profitable; we entertain things as they make for us, and detest things as they are contrary to us. Nothing affects us but under such qualities, and God suits his encouragements to these natural affections which are in us: his power and wisdom go hand in hand together; his power to act what his wisdom orders, and his wisdom to conduct what his power executes. He brings men to him in ways suited to their natural dispositions. The stubborn he tears like a lion, the gentle he wins like a turtle, by sweetness; he hath a hammer to break the stout, and a cord of love to draw the more pliable tempers: he works upon the more rational in a way of gospel reason; upon the more ingenuous in a way of kindness, and draws them by the cords of love. The wise men were led to Christ by a star, and means suited to the knowledge and study that those eastern nations used, which was much in astronomy: he worketh upon others by miracles accommodated to every one's sense, and so proportions the means according to the nature of the subjects he works upon.

4. The wisdom of God is apparent in his discipline and penal evils. The wisdom of human governments is seen in the matter of their laws, and in the penalties of their laws, and in the proportion of the punishment to the offence, and in the good that redounds from the punishment either to the offender, or to the community. The wisdom of God is seen in the penalty of death upon the transgression of his law; both in that it was the greatest evil that man might fear, and so was a convenient means to keep him in his due bound, and also in the proportion of it to the transgression. Nothing less could be in a wise justice inflicted upon an offender for a crime against the highest Being and the Supreme Excellency: but this hath been spoken of before in the wisdom of his laws. I shall only mention some few; it would be too tedious to run into all.

(1.) His wisdom appears in judgments, in the suiting them to the qualities of persons, and nature of sins. He deviseth evil (Jeremiah 18:11); his judgments are fruits of counsel. "He also is wise, and will bring evil" (Isaiah 31:2),—evil suitable to the person offending, and evil suitable to the offence committed: as the husbandman doth his threshing instruments to the grain: he hath a rod for the cummin, a tenderer seed, and a flail for the harder; so hath God greater judgments for the obdurate sinner, and lighter for those that have something of tenderness in their wickedness (Isaiah 28:27; Isaiah 28:29): "Because he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working;" so some understand the place, "With the froward, he will show himself froward." He proportions punishment to the sin, and writes the cause of the judgment in the forehead of the judgment itself. Sodom burned in lust, and was consumed by fire from heaven. The Jews sold Christ for thirty pence; and at the taking of Jerusalem, thirty of them were sold for a penny. So Adoni-bezek cut off the thumbs and great toes of others, and he is served in the same kind (Judges 1:7). The Babel builders designed an indissoluble union, and God brings upon them an unintelligible confusion. And in Exodus 9:9, the ashes of the furnace where the Israelites burnt the Egyptian bricks, sprinkled towards heaven, brought boils upon the Egyptian bodies, that they might feel in their own, what pain they had caused in the Israelites' flesh; and find, by the smart of the inflamed scab, what they had made the Israelites endure. The waters of the river Nilus are turned into blood, wherein they had stifled the breath of the Israelites' infants: and at last the prince, and the flower of their nobility, are drowned in the Red Sea. It is part of the wisdom of justice to proportion punishment to the crime, and the degrees of wrath to the degrees of malice in the sin. Afflictions also are wisely proportioned: God, as a wise physician, considers the nature of the humor and strength of the patient, and suits his medicines both to the one and the other (1 Corinthians 10:13).

(2.) In the seasons of punishments and afflictions. He stays till sin be ripe, that his justice may appear more equitable, and the offender more inexcusable (Daniel 9:14); he watches upon the evil to bring it upon men; to bring it in the just season and order for his righteous and gracious purpose; his righteous purpose on the enemies, and his gracious purpose on his people. Jerusalem's calamity came upon them, when the city was full of people at the solemnity of the passover, that he might mow down his enemies at once, and time their destruction to such a moment wherein they had timed the crucifixion of his Son. He watched over the clouds of his judgments, and kept them from pouring down, till his people, the Christians, were provided for, and had departed out of the city to the chambers and retiring places God had provided for them. He made not Jerusalem the shambles of his enemies, till he had made Pella, and other places, the arks of his friends. As Pliny tells us, "The evidence of God holds the sea in a calm for fifteen days, that the halcyons, little birds that frequent the shore, may build their nests, and hatch up their young." The judgment upon Sodom was suspended for some hours, till Lot was secured. God suffered not the church to be invaded by violent persecutions, till she was established in the faith: he would not expose her to so great combats, while she was weak and feeble, but gave her time to fortify herself, to be rendered more capable of bearing up under them. [Note: Daille sur 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. p. 390.] He stifled all the motions of passion the idolaters might have for their superstition, till religion was in such a condition, as rather to be increased and purified, than extinguished by opposition. Paul was secured from Nero's chains, and the nets of his enemies, till he had broke off the chain of the devil from many cities of the Gentiles, and caught them by the net of the gospel out of the sea of the world. Thus the wisdom of God is seen in the seasons of judgments and afflictions.

(3.) It is apparent in the gracious issue of afflictions and penal evils. It is a part of wisdom to bring good out of evil of punishment, as well as to bring good out of sin. The church never was so like to heaven, as when it was most persecuted by hell: the storms often cleansed it and the lance often made it more healthful. Job's integrity had not been so clear, nor his patience so illustrious, had not the devil been permitted to afflict him. God, by his wisdom, outwits Satan; when he by his temptations intends to pollute us and buffet us, God orders it to purify us; he often brings the clearest light out of the thickest darkness, makes poisons to become medicines. Death itself, the greatest punishment in this life, and the entrance into hell in its own nature, he hath by his wise contrivance, made to his people the gate of heaven, and the passage into immortality. [Note: Turretin, Sermon. p. 53.] Penal evils in a nation often end in a public advantage troubles and wars among a people are many times not destroying, but medicinal, and cure them of that degeneracy, luxury, and effeminateness, they contracted by a long peace.

(4.) This wisdom is evident in the various ends which God brings about by afflictions. The attainment of various ends by one and the same means, is the fruit of the agent's prudence. By the same affliction, the wise God corrects sometimes for some base affection, excites some sleepy grace, drives out some lurking corruption, refines the soul, and ruins the lust; discovers the greatness of a crime, the vanity of the creature, and the sufficiency in himself. The Jews bind Paul, and by the judge he is sent to Rome; while his mouth is stopped in Judea, it is opened in one of the greatest cities of the world, and his enemies unwittingly contribute to the increase of the knowledge of Christ by those chains, in that city (Acts 28:31) that triumphed over the earth. And his afflictive bonds added courage and resolution to others (Php 1:14): "Many waxing confident by my bonds;" which could not in their own nature produce such an effect, but by the order and

contrivance of Divine wisdom: in their own nature, they would rather make them disgust the doctrine he suffered for, and cool their zeal in the propagating of it, for fear of the same disgrace and hardship they saw him suffer. [Note: Daille sur Philip. Part 1. pp. 116, 117.] But the wisdom of God changed the nature of these fetters, and conducted them to the glory of his name, the encouragement of others, the increase of the gospel, and the comfort of the apostle himself (Php 1:12-13; Php 1:18). The sufferings of Paul at Rome confirmed the Philippians, a people at a distance from thence, in the doctrine they had already received at his hands. Thus God makes sufferings sometimes, which appear like judgments, to be like the viper on Paul's hand (Acts 28:6), a means to clear up innocence, and procure favor to the doctrine among those barbarians. How often hath he multiplied the church by death and massacres, and increased it by those means used to annihilate it!

(5.) The Divine wisdom is apparent in the deliverances he affords to other parts of the world, as well as to his church. There are delicate composesures, curious threads in his webs, and he works them like an artificer: a goodness wrought for them, curiously wrought (Psalms 31:19), [1.] In making the creatures subservient in their natural order to his gracious ends and purposes. He orders things in such a manner, as not to be necessitated to put forth an extraordinary power in things, which some part of the creation might accomplish. Miraculous productions would speak his power; but the ordering the natural course of things, to occasion such effects they were never intended for, is one part of the glory of his wisdom. And that his wisdom may be seen in the course of nature, he conducts the motions of creatures, and acts them in their own strength; and doth that by various windings and turnings of them, which he might do in an instant by his power, in a supernatural way. Indeed, sometimes he hath made invasions on nature, and suspended the order of their natural laws for a season, to show himself the absolute Lord and Governor of nature: yet if frequent alterations of this nature were made, they would impede the knowledge of the nature of things, and be some bar to the discovery and glory of his wisdom, which is best seen by moving the wheels of inferior creatures in an exact regularity to his own ends. He might, when his little church in Jacob's family was like to starve in Canaan, have, for their preservation, turned the stones of the country into bread; but he sends them down to Egypt to procure corn, that a way might be opened for their removal into that country; the truth of his prediction in their captivity accomplished, and a way made after the declaration of his great name, Jehovah, both in the fidelity of his word and the greatness of his power, in their deliverance from that furnace of affliction. He might have struck Goliath, the captain of the Philistine's army, with a thunderbolt from heaven, when he blasphemed his name, and scared his people; but he useth the natural strength of a stone, and the artificial motion of a sling, by the arm of David, to confront the giant, and thereby to free Judea from the ravage of a potent enemy. He might have delivered the Jews from Babylon by as strange miracles as he used in their deliverance from Egypt: he might have plagued their enemies, gathered his people into a body, and protected them by the bulwark of a cloud and a pillar of fire, against the assaults of their enemies. But he uses the differences between the Persians and those of Babylon, to accomplish his ends. How sometimes hath the veering about of the wind on a sudden been the loss of a navy, when it hath been put upon the point of victory, and driven back the destruction upon those which intended it for others! and the accidental stumbling, or the natural fierceness of a horse, flung down a general in the midst of a battle, where he hath lost his life by the throng, and his death hath brought a defeat to his army, and deliverance to the other party, that were upon the brink of ruin! Thus doth the wisdom of God link things together

according to natural order, to work out his intended preservation of a people. [2.] In the season of deliverance. The timing of affairs is a part of the wisdom of man, and an eminent part of the wisdom of God. It is in due season he sends the former and the latter rain, when the earth is in the greatest indigence, and when his influences may most contribute to the bringing forth and ripening the fruit. The dumb creatures have their meat from him in due season (Psalms 104:27): and in his due season have his darling people their deliverance. When Paul was upon his journey to Damascus with a persecuting commission, he is struck down for the security of the church in that city. The nature of the lion is changed in due season, for the preservation of the lambs from worrying. The Israelites are miraculously rescued from Egypt, when their wits were at a loss, when their danger to human understanding was unavoidable; when earth and sea refused protection, then the wisdom and power of heaven stepped in to effect that which was past the skill of the conductors of that multitude. And when the lives of the Jews lay at the stake, and their necks were upon the block at the mercy of their enemies' swords by an order from Shushan, not only a reprieve, but a triumph, arrives to the Jews, by the wisdom of God guiding the affair, whereby of persons designed to execution, they are made conquerors, and have opportunity to exercise their revenge instead of their atience, proving triumphers where they expected to be sufferers (Esther 8:9). How strangely doth God, by secret ways, bow the hearts of men and the nature of things to the execution of that which he designs, notwithstanding all the resistance of that which would traverse the security of his people! How often doth he trap the wicked in the work of their own bands, make their confidence to become their ruin, and ensnare them in those nets they wrought and laid for others (Psalms 9:16)! "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Luke 1:51), in the height of their hopes, when their designs have been laid so deep in the foundation, and knit and cemented so close in their superstructure, that no human power or wisdom could rase them down: he hath then disappointed their projects, and befooled their craft. How often hath he kept back the fire, when it hath been ready to devour; broke the arrows when they have been prepared in the bow; turned the spear into the bowels of the bearera, and wounded them at the very instant they were ready to wound Others! [3.] In suiting instruments to his purpose. He either finds them fit, or makes them on a sudden fit for his gracious ends. If he hath a tabernacle to build, he will fit a Bezaleel and an Aholiab with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in all cunning workmanship (Exodus 31:3; Exodus 31:6). If he finds them crooked pieces, he can, like a wise architect, make them straight beams for the rearing his house, and for the honor of his name. He sometimes picks out men according to their natural tempers, and employs them in his work. Jehu, a man of a furious temper, and ambitious spirit, is called out for the destruction of Ahab's house. Moses, a man furnished with all Egyptian wisdom, fitted by a generous education, prepared also by the affliction he met with in his flight, and one who had had the benefit of conversation with Jethro, a man of more than an ordinary wisdom and goodness, as appears by his prudent and religious counsel; this man is called out to be the head and captain of an oppressed people, and to rescue them from their bondage, and settle the first national church in the world. So Elijah, a high-spirited man, of a hot and angry temper, one that slighted the frowns, and undervalued the favor of princes, is set up to stem the torrent of Israelitish idolatry. So Luther, a man of the same temper, is drawn out by the same wisdom to encounter the corruptions in the church, against such opposition, which a milder temper would have sunk under. The earth, in Revelation 12:16, is made an instrument to help the woman: when the grandees of that age transferred the imperial power upon Constantine, who

became afterwards a protecting and nursing father to the church, an end which many of his favorers never designed, nor ever dreamt of: but God, by his infinite wisdom, made these several designs, like several arrows shot at rovers, meet in one mark to which he directed them, viz., in bringing forth an instrument to render peace to the world and security and increase to his church.

III. The wisdom of God doth wonderfully appear in redemption. His wisdom in creature ravisheth the eye and understanding; his wisdom in government doth no less affect a curious observer of the links and concatenation of the means; but his wisdom in redemption mounts the mind to a greater astonishment. The works of creation are the footsteps of his wisdom; the work of redemption is the face of his wisdom. A man is better known by the features of his face, than by the prints of his feet. We, with "open face," or a revealed face, "beholding the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Face, there, refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wisdom is now open, and no longer covered and veiled by the shadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious as scattered in the air before the appearance of the sun, but more gloriously in the face of the sun when it begins its race in our horizon. All the wisdom of God in creation, and government in his variety of laws, was like the light the three first days of the creation, dispersed about the world; but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the sun (Genesis 1:4; Genesis 1:16). So the light of Divine wisdom and glory was scattered about the world, and so more obscure, till the fourth divine day of the world, about the four thousandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of Righteousness, and so shone out more gloriously to men and angels. All things are weaker the thinner they are extended, but stronger the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Christ, in the dispensation by him, as well as his person, were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Some doles of wisdom were given out in creation, but the treasures of it opened in redemption, the highest degrees of it that ever God did exert in the world. Christ is therefore called the "wisdom of God," as well as the "power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24); and the gospel is called the "wisdom of God." Christ is the wisdom of God principally, and the gospel instrumentally, as it is the power of God instrumentally to subdue the heart to himself. This is wrapped up in the appointing Christ as Redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the gospel.

1. It is a hidden wisdom. In this regard God is said, in the text, to be only wise: and it is said to be a "hidden wisdom" (1 Timothy 1:17), and "wisdom in a mystery" (1 Corinthians 2:7), incomprehensible to the ordinary capacity of an angel, more than the obtruse qualities of the creatures are to the understanding of man. No wisdom of men or angels is able to search the veins of this mine, to tell all the threads of this web, or to understand all the lustre of it; they are as far from an ability fully to comprehend it, as they were at first to contrive it. That wisdom that invented it can only comprehend it. In the uncreated understanding only there is a clearness of light without any shadow of darkness. We come as short of full apprehensions of it, as a child doth of the counsel of the wisest prince. It is so hidden from us, that, without revelation, we could not have the least imagination of it; and though it be revealed to us, yet, without the help of an infiniteness of understanding, we cannot fully fathom it: it is such a tractate of divine wisdom, that the angels never before had seen the edition of it, till it was published to the world (Ephesians 3:10): "to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Now made known to them, not before; and now made known to them "in the heavenly places." They had not the knowledge of all heavenly mysteries,

though they had the possession of heavenly glory: they knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of those prophecies till the things that were prophesied of came upon the stage.

2. Manifold wisdom: so it is called. As manifold as mysterious: variety in the mystery, and mystery in every part of the variety. It was not one single act, but a variety of counsels met in it; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the salvation of man, the defeat of the apostate angels, the discovery of the blessed Trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. The means are the conjunction of two natures, infinitely distinct from one another; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality: death is made the way to life, and shame the path to glory. The weakness of the cross is the reparation of man, and the creature is made wise by the “foolishness of preaching;” fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptiness of God; the heir of hell made a son of God, by God’s taking upon him the “form of a servant;” the son of man advanced to the highest degree of honor, by the Son of God becoming of “no reputation.” It is called (Ephesians 1:8) “abundance of wisdom and prudence.” Wisdom, in the eternal counsel, contriving a way; prudence, in the temporary revelation, ordering all affairs and occurrences in the world for the attaining the end of his counsel. Wisdom refers to the mystery; prudence, to the manifestation of it in fit ways and convenient seasons. Wisdom, to the contrivance and order; prudence, to the execution and accomplishment. In all things God acted as became him, as a wise and just Governor of the world (Hebrews 2:10). Whether the wisdom of God might not have found out some other way, or whether he were, in regard of the necessity and naturalness of his justice, limited to this, is not the question; but that it is the best and wisest way for the manifestation of his glory, is out of question. This wisdom will appear in the different interests reconciled by it: in the subject, the second person in the Trinity, wherein they were reconciled: in the two natures, wherein he accomplished it; whereby God is made known to man in his glory, sin eternally condemned, and the repenting and believing sinner eternally rescued the honor and righteousness of the law vindicated both in the precept and penalty: the devil’s empire overthrown by the same nature he had overturned, and the subtilty of hell defeated by that nature he had spoiled: the creature engaged in the very act to the highest obedience and humility, that, as God appears as a God upon his throne, the creature might appear in the lowest posture of a creature, in the depths of resignation and dependence: the publication of this made in the gospel, by ways congruous to the wisdom which appeared in the execution of his counsel, and the conditions of enjoying the fruit of it, most wise and reasonable.

1. The greatest different interests are reconciled, justice in punishing, and mercy in pardoning. For man had broken the law, and plunged himself into a gulf of misery: the sword of vengeance was unsheathed by justice, for the punishment of the criminal; the bowels of compassion were stirred by mercy, for the rescue of the miserable. Justice severely beholds the sin, and mercy compassionately reflects upon the misery. Two different claims are entered by those concerned attributes: justice votes for destruction, and mercy votes for salvation. Justice would draw the sword, and drench it in the blood of the offender; mercy would stop the sword, and turn it from the breast of the sinner. Justice would edge it, and mercy would blunt it. The arguments are strong on both sides.

(1.) Justice pleads. I arraign, before thy tribunal, a rebel, who was the glorious work of thy hands, the centre of thy rich goodness, and a counterpart of thy own image; be is indeed miserable, whereby to excite thy compassion; but he is not miserable, without being criminal. Thou didst create him in a state, and with ability to be otherwise: the riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackness of his crime. He is a rebel, not by necessity, but will. What constraint was there upon him to listen to the counsels of the enemy of God? What force could there be upon him, since it is without the compass of any creature to work upon, or constrain the will? Nothing of ignorance can excuse him; the law was not ambiguously expressed, but in plain words, both as to precept and penalty; it was writ in his nature in legible characters: had he received any disgust from thee after his creation, it would not excuse his apostasy, since, as a Sovereign, thou wert not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadst provided all things richly for him; he was crowned with glory and honor: thy infinite power had bestowed upon him an habitation richly furnished, and varieties of servants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without, and whatever he viewed within himself, were several marks of thy Divine bounty, to engage him to obedience: had there been some reason of any disgust, it could not have balanced that kindness which had so much reason to oblige him: however, he had received no courtesy from the fallen angel, to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough, that one of thy creatures would have stripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this also must deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his Creator? Can he charge the difficulty of the command? No: it was rather below, than above his strength. He might rather complain that it was no higher, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger scope, and a more spacious field to move in than a precept so light; so easy, as to abstain from one fruit in the garden. What excuse can he have, that would prefer the liquorishness of his sense before the dictates of his reason, and the obligations of his creation? The law thou didst set him was righteous and reasonable; and shall righteousness and reason be rejected by the supreme and infallible reason, because the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it? What! must God abrogate his holy law, because the creature hath slighted it? What reflection will this be upon the wisdom that enacted it, and upon the equity of the command and sanction of it? Either man must suffer, or the holy law be expunged, and forever out of date. And is it not better man should eternally smart under his crime, than any dishonorable reflections of unrighteousness be cast upon the law, and of folly, and want of foresight upon the Lawgiver? Not to punish, would be to approve the devil's lie, and justify the creature's revolt. It would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a sentencing thy own wisdom as imprudent. Better man should forever bear the punishment of his offence, than God bear the dishonor of his attributes: better man should be miserable than God should be unrighteous, unwise, false, and tamely bear the denial of his sovereignty. But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor? Besides the irreparable dishonor to the law, the falsifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatenings, he would receive encouragement by such a grace to spurn more at thy sovereignty, and oppose thy holiness by running on in a course of sin with hopes of impunity. If the creature be restored, it cannot be expected that he that hath fared so well, after the breach of it, should be very careful of a future observance: his easy readmission would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou shalt soon find him cast off all moral dependence on thee. Shall he be restored without any condition, or covenant? He is a creature not to be governed without a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be so lightly past over? Is it the

stability of thy word? What reason will he have to give credit to that, which he hath found already disregarded by thyself? Thy truth in future threatenings will be of no force with him, who hath experienced thy laying it aside in the former. It is necessary, therefore, that the rebellious creature should be punished for the preservation of the honor of the law, and the honor of the Lawgiver, with all those perfections that are united in the composure of it.

(2.) Mercy doth not want a plea. It is true, indeed, the sin of man wants not its aggravations: he hath slighted thy goodness, and accepted thy enemy as his counsellor, but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was: he had a tempter, and the devil had none: he had, I acknowledge, an understanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it; yet he was mutable, and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult task that was set him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon him; yet he had a brutish part, as well as a rational, and sense as well as soul; whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual spirit. Did God create the world to suffer an eternal dishonor, in letting himself be outwitted by Satan, and his work wrested out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counsel presently sink into irreparable destruction, and the honor of an almighty and wise work be lost in the ruin of the creature? This would seem contrary to the nature of thy goodness, to make man only to render him miserable: to design him in his creation for the service of the devil, and not for the service of his Creator. What else could be the issue, if the chief work of thy hand, defaced presently after the erecting, should forever remain in this marred condition? What can be expected upon the continuance of his misery, but a perpetual hatred, and enmity of thy creature against thee? Did God in creation design his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern? Shall the curious workmanship of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be so soon defaced, and remain in that blotted condition forever? This fall thou couldst not but in the treasures of thy infinite knowledge foresee. Why hadst thou goodness then to create him in an integrity, if thou wouldst not have mercy to pity him in misery? Shall thy enemy forever trample upon the honor of thy work, and triumph over the glory of God, and applaud himself in the success of his subtilty? Shall thy creature only passively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a compassionater? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as justice? Shall justice engross all, and I never come into view? It is resolved already, that the fallen angels shall be no subjects for me to exercise myself upon; and I have now less reason than before to plead for them: they fell with a full consent of will, without any motion from another; and not content with their own apostasy they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth, as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the best part of the creation below. Shall Satan lunge the whole creation in the same irreparable ruin with himself? If the creature be restored, will he contract a boldness in sin by impunity? Hast thou not a grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as a compassion to recover him from misery? What will hinder, but that such a grace, which hath established the standing angels, may establish this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exercising myself on men, as I have been from devils, a whole species is lost; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the stage: if thou wilt quite ruin him by justice, and create another world, and another man, if he stand, thy bounty will be eminent, yet there is no room for mercy to act, unless by the commission of sin, he exposeth himself to misery; and if sin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then, if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodness, wisdom, and power; sin entering into these worlds, will be perpetually punished by justice; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, will forever be commanded silence, and lie

wrapt up in an eternal darkness. Take occasion now, therefore, to expose me to the knowledge of thy creature, since without misery, mercy can never set foot into the world. Mercy pleads, if man be ruined, the creation is in vain; justice pleads, if man be not sentenced, the law is in vain; truth backs justice, and grace abets mercy. What shall be done in this seeming contradiction? Mercy is not manifested, if man be not pardoned; justice will complain, if man be not punished.

(3.) An expedient is found out, by the wisdom of God, to answer these demands, and adjust the differences between them. The wisdom of God answers, I will satisfy your pleas. The pleas of justice shall be satisfied in punishing, and the pleas of mercy shall be received in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy for want of compassion. I will have an infinite sacrifice to content justice; and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here shall justice have punishment to accept, and mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both are preserved, and the demands of both amicably accorded in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of our crimes upon a surety, exacting a recompense from his blood by justice, and conferring life and salvation upon us by mercy without the expense of one drop of our own. Thus is justice satisfied in its severities, and mercy in its indulgences. The riches of grace are twisted with the terrors of wrath. The bowels of mercy are wound about the flaming sword of justice, and the sword of justice protects and secures the bowels of mercy. Thus is God righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust; his righteousness inviolable, and the world recoverable. Thus is a resplendent mercy brought forth in the midst of all the curses, confusions, and wrath threatened to the offender. This is the admirable temperament found out by the wisdom of God: his justice is honored in the sufferings of man's surety; and his mercy is honored in the application of the propitiation to the offender (Romans 3:24-25): "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Had we in our persons been sacrifices to justice, mercy had forever been unknown; had we been solely fostered by mercy, justice had forever been secluded; had we, being guilty, been absolved, mercy might have rejoiced, and justice might have complained; had we been solely punished, justice would have triumphed, and mercy grieved. But by this medium of redemption, neither hath ground of complaint; justice hath nothing to charge, when the punishment is inflicted; mercy hath whereof to boast when the surety is accepted. The debt of the sinner is transferred upon the surety, that the merit of the surety may be conferred upon the sinner; so that God now deals with our sins in a way of consuming justice, and with our persons in a way of relieving mercy. It is highly better, and more glorious, than if the claim of one had been granted, with the exclusion of the demand of the other; it had then been either an unrighteous mercy, or a merciless justice; it is now a righteous mercy, and a merciful justice.

2. The wisdom of God appears in the subject or person wherein these were accorded; the Second Person is the blessed Trinity. There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other person, according to the order of the persons, and the several functions of the persons, as represented in Scripture. The Father, after creation, is the lawgiver, and presents man with the image of his own holiness and the way to his creatures' happiness; but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy a felicity. Redemption was then necessary; not that it was necessary for God to redeem man, but it was necessary for man's happiness that he should be recovered. To this the Second Person is appointed, that by

communion with him, man might derive a happiness, and be brought again to God. But since man was blind in his understanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there must be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to understand, and accept of this redemption; and this work is assigned to the Third Person, the Holy Ghost.

(1.) It was not congruous that the Father should assume human nature, and suffer in it for the redemption of man. He was first in order; he was the lawgiver, and therefore to be the judge. As lawgiver, it was not convenient he should stand in the stead of the law-breaker; and as judge, it was as little convenient he should be reputed a malefactor. That he who had made a law against sin denounced a penalty upon the commission of sin, and whose part it was actually to punish the sinner, should become sin for the wilful transgressor of his law. He being the rector, how could he be an advocate and intercessor to himself? How could he be the judge and the sacrifice? a judge, and yet a mediator to himself? If he had been the sacrifice, there must be some person to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the sentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son should sit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father stand at the bar, and be responsible to the Son? That the Son should be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal? That the Father should be bruised (Isaiah 53:10) by the Son, as the Son was by the Father (Zechariah 13:7)? that the Son should awaken a sword against the Father, as the Father did against the Son? That the Father should be sent by the Son, as the Son was by the Father (Galatians 4:4)? The order of the persons in the blessed Trinity had been inverted and disturbed. Had the Father been sent, he had not been first in order; the sender is before the person sent: as the Father begets, and the son is begotten (John 1:14), so the Father sends, and the son is sent. He whose orders is to send, cannot properly send himself.

(2.) Nor was it congruous that the Spirit should be sent upon this affair. If the Holy Ghost had been sent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the Persons had also been inverted; the Spirit, then, who was third in order, had been second in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Christ, "and shew it unto us" (John 1:15). As the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, so the proper function and operation of it was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son. Had the Spirit been sent to redeem us, and the Son sent by the Father, and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us, the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as sender, had been in order before the Son; whereas, the Spirit is called "the Spirit of Christ," as sent by Christ from the "Father" (Galatians 4:6; John 15:27). But as the order of the works, so the order of the Persons is preserved in their several operations. Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption supposeth the existence and the misery of a person redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, so redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption supposeth the being of the creature, so application of redemption supposeth the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of these works, is the order of the operations of the Three Persons. Creation belongs to the Father, the first person; redemption, the second work, is the function of the Son, the second person; application, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghost, the third person. The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghost applies it. He purifies our souls to understand, believe, and love these mysteries. He forms Christ in the womb of the soul, as he did the body of Christ in the womb of the Virgin. As the Spirit of God moved upon the waters, to garnish and adorn the

world, after the matter of it was formed (Genesis 1:2), so he moves upon the heart, to supple it to a compliance with Christ, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the soul, after the foundation is laid. The Son pays the price that was due from us to God, and the Spirit is the earnest of the promises of life and glory purchased by the merit of that death. [Note: Amyraut. Moral Tom. V. pp. 478–480.] It is to be observed, that the, Father, under the dispensation of the law, proposed the commands, with the promises and threatenings, to the understandings of men; and Christ, under the dispensation of grace, when he was upon the earth, proposeth the gospel as the means of salvation, exhorts to faith as the condition of salvation; but it was neither the functions of the one or the other to display such an efficacy in the understanding and will to make men believe and obey; and, therefore, there were such few conversions in the time of Christ, by his miracles. But this work was reserved for the fuller and brighter appearance of the Spirit, whose office it was to convince the world of the necessity of a Redeemer, because of their lost condition; of the person of the Redeemer, the Son of God; of the sufficiency and efficacy of redemption, because of his righteousness and acceptation by the Father. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and presenting the objects, and then in making impression of them upon the subject he intends. And thus is the order of the Three Persons preserved.

(3.) The Second Person had the greatest congruity, in this work. He by whom God created the world was most conveniently employed in restoring the defaced world (John 1:4): who more fit to recover it from its lapsed state than he that had erected it in its primitive state (Hebrews 1:2)? He was the light of men in creation, and therefore it was most reasonable he should be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the Divine image than he that first formed it? Who fitter to speak for us to God than he who was the Word (John 1:1)? Who could better intercede with the Father than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who so fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the Heir of all things? Who fitter and better to prevail for us to have the right of children than he that possessed it by nature? We fell from being the sons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted state than the Son of God? Herein was an expression of the richer grace, because the first sin was immediately against the wisdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wisdom equal to God, that that person, who was the wisdom of God, should be made a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin against wisdom.

3. The wisdom of God is seen in the two natures of Christ, whereby this redemption was accomplished. The union of the two natures was the foundation of the union of God and the fallen creature.

1st. The union itself is admirable: “The Word is made flesh” (John 1:14), one “equal with God in the form of a servant” (Php 2:7). When the apostle speaks of “God manifested in the flesh,” he speaks “the wisdom of God in a mystery” (1 Timothy 3:16); that which is incomprehensible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never knew till they beheld it. I am sure, under the law, the figures of the cherubims were placed in the sanctuary, with their “faces looking towards the propitiatory,” in a perpetual posture of contemplation and admiration (Exodus 37:9), to which the apostle alludes (1 Peter 1:12). Mysterious is the wisdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability, with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever, in the bosom of his Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of

his mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, heaven and earth; the creature with the Creator; he that made all things, in one person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God, and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14); one with the Father in his Godhead, one with us in his manhood; the Godhead to be in him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the “Word being made flesh.”

2d. In the manner of this union. A union of two natures, yet no natural union. It transcends all the unions visible among creatures: [Note: Savana Triump, Crueis, lib. iii, cap. 7. p. 211.] it is not like the union of stones in a building, or two pieces of timber fastened together, which touch one another only in their superficies and outside, without any intimacy with one another. By such a kind of union God would not be a man: the Word could not so be made flesh. Nor is it a union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole results from the parts, and depends upon the parts: but Christ, being God, is independent upon anything. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together, for they are so incorporated as not to be distinguished from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the Divine nature are distinguishable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the soul and body, so as that the Deity is the form of the humanity, as the soul is the form of the body: for as the soul is but a part of the man, so the Divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the soul, is in a state of imperfection, without that which it is to inform, so the Divinity of Christ would have been imperfect till it had assumed the humanity, and so the perfection of an eternal Deity would have depended on a creature of time. This union of two natures in Christ is incomprehensible: and it is a mystery we cannot arrive to the top of, how the Divine nature, which is the same with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, should be united to the human nature, without its being said that the Father and the Holy Ghost were united to the flesh; but the Scripture doth not encourage any such notion; it speaks only of the Word, the person of the Word being made flesh, and in his being made flesh, distinguisheth him from the Father, as “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). The person of the Son was the term of this union.

(1.) This union doth not confound the properties of the Deity and those of the humanity. They remain distinct and entire in each other. The Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God: they are distinct, and yet united; they are conjoined, and yet unmixed: the dues of either nature are preserved. It is impossible that the majesty of the Divinity can receive an alteration. It is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity: as the soul and body are united, and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the effections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change made in the humanity, by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity, as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ’s incarnation (Exodus 3:2): the fire signifying the Divine nature, and the

bush the human. The bush is a branch springing up from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven; as the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the Divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it, but so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still: one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divine, and the weaknesses of the human. The “fulness of the Deity dwells bodily in Christ” (Colossians 2:9).

(2.) The Divine nature is united to every part of the humanity. The whole Divinity to the whole humanity; so that no part but may be said to be the member of God, as well as the blood is said to be the “blood of God” (Acts 20:28). By the same reason, it may be said, the hand of God, the eye of God, the arm of God. As God is infinitely present everywhere, so as to be excluded from no place, so is the Deity hypostatically everywhere in the humanity. not excluded from any part of it; as the light of the sun in every part of the air; as a sparkling splendor in every part of the diamond. Therefore, it is concluded, by all that acknowledge the Deity of Christ, that when his soul was separated from the body, the Deity remained united both to soul and body, as light doth in every part of a broken crystal.

(3.) Therefore, perpetually united (Colossians 2:9). The “fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.” It dwells in him, not lodges in him, as a traveller in an inn: it resides in him as a fixed habitation. As God describes the perpetuity of his presence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it (Exodus 29:44), so doth the apostle the inseparable duration of the Deity in the humanity, and the indissoluble union of the humanity with the Deity. It was united on earth; it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the Spirit came upon the apostles, were a temporary representation, not a thing united perpetually to the person of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It was a personal union. It was not an union of persons, though it was a personal union; so Davenant expounds (Colossians 2:9), Christ did not take the person of man, but the nature of man into subsistence with himself. The body and soul of Christ were not united in themselves, had no subsistence in themselves, till they were united to the person of the Son of God. If the person of a man were united to him, the human nature would have been the nature of the person so united to him, and not the nature of the Son of God (Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:16), “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, be also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” He took flesh and blood to be his own nature, perpetually to subsist in the person of the Α■ΥΟΣ, which must be by a personal union, or no way the Deity united to the humanity, and both natures to be one person. This is the mysterious and manifold wisdom of God.

3d. The end of this union.

(1.) He was hereby fitted to be a Mediator. He hath something like to man, and something like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a distance from God: if he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a distance from man. He is a true Mediator between mortal sinners and the immortal righteous One. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and

near to God by the perfections of the Divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature, as he is to God in the Divine. Nothing that belongs to the Deity, but he possesses; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with. He had both the nature which had offended, and that nature which was offended: a nature to please God, and a nature to pleasure us: a nature, whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and understood the glory due to him, and consequently the greatness of the offence, which was to be measured by the dignity of his person: and a nature whereby he might be sensible of the miseries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might both have compassion on him, and make due satisfaction for him. He had two distinct natures capable of the affections and sentiments of the two persons he was to accord; he was a just judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other. [Note: Gomb. de Relig. p. 42.] He could not have this full and perfect understanding if he did not possess the perfections of the one, and the qualities of the other; the one fitted him for “things appertaining to God” (Hebrews 5:1), and the other furnished him with a sense of the “infirmities of man” (Hebrews 4:15).

(2.) He was hereby fitted for the working out the happiness of man. A Divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God. [1.] He had a nature whereby to suffer for us, and a nature whereby to be meritorious in those sufferings. A nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his sufferings sufficient for all that embraced him. A nature, capable to be exposed to the flames of Divine wrath, and another nature, incapable to be crushed by the weight, or consumed by the heat of it: a human nature to suffer, and stand a sacrifice in the stead of man; a Divine nature to sanctify these sufferings, and fill the nostrils of God with a sweet savor, and thereby atone his wrath: the one to bear the stroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his sufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in suffering; and could he otherwise have suffered, his sufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his sufferings had not been meritoriously and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the legal sacrifices (Hebrews 9:12). Nothing less than God could have satisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing less than God could have countervailed the torments due to the offending creature. Nothing less than God could have rescued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us. [2.] He had, therefore, a nature to be compassionate to us, and victorious for us. A nature sensibly to compassionate us, and another nature, to render those compassions effectual for our relief; he had the compassions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the Divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us: a nature to disarm the devil for us, and another nature to be insensible of the working of the devil in us, and against us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental sense of our misery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquished our enemies; had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death. [3.] A nature efficaciously to instruct us. As man, he was to instruct us sensibly; as God, he was to instruct us infallibly. A nature, whereby he might converse with us, and a nature, whereby he might influence us in those converses. A human mouth to minister instruction to man, and a Divine power to imprint it with efficacy. [4.] A nature to be a pattern to us. A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his posterity: [Note: Amyraut. Morals. Tom. V. pp. 468, 469.] a Divine nature shining in the human, the image of the invisible God in the lass of our flesh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation (Colossians 1:15), “The image of

the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature” in conjunction. The virtues of the Deity are sweetened and tempered by the union with the humanity, as the beams of the son are by shining through a colored glass, which condescends more to the weakness of our eye. Thus the perfections of the invisible God, breaking through the first-born of every creature, glittering in Christ’s created state, became more sensible for contemplation by our mind, and more imitable for conformity in our practice. [5.] A nature to be a ground of confidence in our approach to God. A nature wherein we may behold him, and wherein we may approach to him. A nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to assure us; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us: but now we are allured by his human nature, and assured by his Divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was desired by us, but our guilt stifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the Divine nature would have damped our hopes of speeding; but since these two natures, so far distant, are met in a marriage-knot, we have a ground of hope, nay, an earnest, that the Creator and believing creature shall meet and converse together. And since our sins are expiated by the death of the human nature in conjunction with the Divine, our guilt, upon believing, shall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have assured us an approach to God: had he been only God, his justice would not have admitted us to approach to him; he had been too terrible for guilty persons, and too holy for polluted persons to come near to him: but by being made man, his justice is tempered, and by his being God and man, his mercy is ensured. A human nature he had, one with us, that we might be related to God, as one with him. [6.] A nature to derive all good to us. Had he not been man, we had had no share or part in him: a satisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happiness; he could not have had power to convey so great a good to us, had he been only man; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteousness, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance; as God, he is the spring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of unction, we find rivers of waters flowing to make glad the city of God. Believers are his branches, and draw sap from him, as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endless duration of it from his Divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a state to obey the law; had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us. How should this mystery be studied by us, which would afford us both admiration and content! Admiration, in the incomprehensibleness of it; contentment, in the fitness of the Mediator. By this wisdom of God we receive the props of our faith, and the fruits of joy and peace. Wisdom consists in choosing fit means, and conducting them in such a method, as may reach with good success the variety of marks which are aimed at. Thus hath the wisdom of God set forth a Mediator, suited to our wants, fitted for our supplies, and ordered so the whole affair by the union of these two natures in the person of the Redeemer, that there could be no disappointment, by all the bustle hell and hellish instruments could raise against it.

4. The wisdom of God is seen in this way of redemption, in vindicating the honor and righteousness of the law, both as to precept and penalty. The first and irreversible design of the law was obedience. The penalty of the law had only entrance upon transgression. Obedience was the design, and the penalty was added to enforce the observance of the precept (Genesis 2:17): “Thou shalt not eat;” there is the precept: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die;” there is the penalty. Obedience was our debt to the law, as creatures; punishment was due from the law to us, as sinners: we are bound to endure the penalty for our first transgression, but the penalty did

not cancel the bond of future obedience; the penalty had not been incurred without transgressing the precept; yet the precept was not abrogated by enduring the penalty. Since man so soon revolted, and by this revolt fell under the threatening, the justice of the law had been honored by man's sufferings, but the holiness and equity of the law had been honored by man's obedience. The wisdom of God finds out a medium to satisfy both: the justice of the law is preserved in the execution of the penalty; and the holiness of the law is honored in the observance of the precept. The life of our Saviour is a conformity to the precept, and his death is a conformity to the penalty; the precepts are exactly performed, and the curse punctually executed, by a voluntary observing the one, and a voluntary undergoing the other. It is obeyed, as if it had not been transgressed, and executed as if it had not been obeyed. It became the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, as the Rector of the world, to exact it (Hebrews 2:10), and it became the holiness of the Mediator to "fulfil all the righteousness of the law" (Romans 8:3; Matthew 3:15). And thus the honor of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The transgression of the law was condemned in the flesh of the Redeemer, and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in his person: and both these acts of obedience, being counted as one righteousness, and imputed to the believing sinner, render him a subject to the law, both in its perceptive and minatory part. By Adam's sinful acting we were made sinners, and by Christ's righteous acting we are made righteous (Romans 5:19): "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The law was obeyed by him, that the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). It is not fulfilled in us, or in our actions, by inherency, but fulfilled in us by imputation of that righteousness which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died for us, and rose again for us, so he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well observed for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us. This justification of a sinner, with the preservation of the holiness of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in sincerity of intention, as well as conformity in action, is the wisdom of God, the gospel wisdom which David desires to know (Psalms 51:6): "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;" or, as some render it, "the hidden things of wisdom." Not an inherent wisdom in the acknowledgments of his sin, which he had confessed before, but the wisdom of God in providing a medicine, so as to keep up the holiness of the law in the observance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the sinner. In and by this way methodized by the wisdom of God, all doubts and troubles are discharged. Naturally, if we take a view of the law to behold its holiness and justice, and then of our hearts, to see the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holiness; and after this, cast our eyes upward, and beholding a flaming sword, edged with curses and wrath; is there any matter, but that of terror, afforded by any of these? But when we behold, in the life of Christ, a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the cross of Christ, a sustaining the minatory part of the law, this wisdom of God gives a well-grounded and rational dismissal to all the horrors that can seize upon us.

5. The wisdom of God in redemption is visible in manifesting two contrary affections at the same time, and in one act: the greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. In this way he punishes the sin without ruining the sinner, and repairs the ruins of the sinner without indulging the sin. Here is eternal love and eternal hatred; a condemning the sin to what it merited, and an advancing the sinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choicest love and the deepest hatred manifested: an implacableness against the sin, and a placableness to the sinner. His hatred of sin hath been discovered in other ways: in punishing the devil without remedy;

sentencing man to an expulsion from paradise, though seduced by another; in accursing the serpent, an irrational creature, though but a misguided instrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of sin, and the sprinklings of his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified consciences confirm it. But what are all these testimonies to the highest evidence that can possibly be given in the sheathing the sword of his wrath in the heart of his Son? If a father should order his son to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to prison, seem to throw off all affection of a father for the severity of a judge, condemn his son to a horrible death, be a spectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from assuaging his misery, regard it rather with joy than sorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and stand by to see him drink it off to the bottom, dregs and all, and flash frowns in his face all the while; and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of some subjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon sealed by the blood of the son, the sufferer: all this would evidence his detestation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels i his hatred to their crime, and his love to their welfare. This did God do. He “delivered Christ up for our offences” (Romans 8:32); the Father gave him the cup (John 18:18); the Lord bruised him with pleasure (Isaiah 53:10), and that for sin. He transferred upon the shoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be restored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the sin so as to condemn it forever, and wrap it up in the curse he had threatened; and loves the sinner, believing and repenting, so as to mount him to an expectation of a happiness exceeding the first estate, both in glory and perpetuity. Instead of an earthly paradise, lays the foundation of an heavenly mansion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of misery, separates the comfortable light of the sun from the scorching heat we had deserved at his hands. Thus hath God's hatred of sin been manifested. He is at eternal defiance with sin, yet nearer in alliance with the sinner than he was before the revolt; as if man's miserable fall had endeared him to the Judge. This is the wisdom and prudence of “grace wherein God hath abounded” (Ephesians 1:9) a wisdom in twisting the happy restoration of the broken amity, with an everlasting curse upon that which made the breach, both upon sin the cause, and upon Satan the seducer to it. Thus is hatred and love, in their highest glory, manifested together: hatred to sin, in the death of Christ, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the sinner; and love to the sinner, more than if he had, by an absolute and simple bounty, bestowed upon him the possession of heaven; because the gift of his Son, for such an end, is a greater token of his boundless affections, than a reinstating man in paradise. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in redemption, consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner.

6. The wisdom of God is evident in overturning the devil's empire by the nature he had vanquished, and by ways quite contrary to what that malicious spirit could imagine. The devil, indeed, read his own doom in the first promise, and found his ruin resolved upon, by the means of the “Seed of the woman;” but by what seed was not so easily known to him. [Note: And indeed the Heathen oracles, managed by the devils, declared that they were not long to hold their sceptre in the world, but the Hebrew child should vanquish them,] And the methods whereby it was to be brought about was a mystery kept secret from the malicious devils, since it was not discovered to the obedient angels. He might know, from Isaiah 53:1-12, that the Redeemer was assured to divide the spoil with the strong, and rescue a part of the lost creation out of his hands; and that this was to be effected by making his soul an offering for sin: but could he imagine which way his soul was to be made such an offering? He shrewdly suspected Christ, just after his inauguration into his office by baptism, to be the Son of God but did he ever dream that the Messiah, by dying as a

reputed malefactor, should be a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin the devil had introduced by his subtilty? Did he ever imagine a cross should dispossess him of his crown, and that dying groans should wrest the victory out of his hands? He was conquered by that nature he had cast headlong into ruin: a woman, by his subtilty, was the occasion of our death; and a woman, by the conduct of the only wise God, brings forth the Author of our life, and the Conqueror of our enemies. The flesh of the old Adam had infected us, and the flesh of the new Adam cures us (1 Corinthians 15:21): "By man came death; by man also came the resurrection from the dead." We are killed by the old Adam, and raised by the new; as among the Israelites, a fiery serpent gave the wound, and a brazen serpent administers the cure. The nature that was deceived bruises the deceiver, and raises up the foundations of his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counsels he took to secure his possession, and loses the victory by the same means whereby he thought to preserve it. His tempting the Jews to the sin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary success to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The first death he brought upon Adam, ruined us, and the death he brought by his instruments upon the second Adam, restored us. By a tree, if one may so say, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is discharged of his power over us (Hebrews 2:14): "Through death he destroyed Him that had the power of death." And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to confirm and enlarge it; and is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains, and deprive the Creator of the world of his purposed honor. What deeper counsel could he resolve upon for his own security, than to be instrumental in the death of him, who was God, the terror of the devil himself, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with disgrace in the sight of a multitude of men? Thus did the wisdom of God shine forth in restoring us by methods seemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the suspicion of a subtle devil, whom he intended to baffle. Could he imagine that we should be healed by stripes, quickened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honor by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the sweetest honey should at once spring out of the belly of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the bosom of the living God? How wonderful is this wisdom of God! that the Seed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a stable, spending his days in affliction, misery, and poverty, without any pomp and splendor, passing some time in a carpenter's shop, with carpenter's tools (Mark 6:6), and afterwards exposed to a horrible and disgraceful death, should, by this way, pull down the gates of hell, subvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power, which he had so long exercised over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for a while in the chains of death, and arrived to a principality over the most malicious powers, by being a prisoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

7. The wisdom of God appears, in giving us this way the surest ground of comfort, and the strongest incentive to obedience. The rebel is reconciled, and the rebellion shamed; God is propitiated, and the sinner sanctified, by the same blood. What can more contribute to our comfort and confidence, than God's richest gift to us? What can more enflame our love to him, than our recovery from death by the oblation of his Son to misery and death for us? It doth as much engage our duty as secure our happiness. It presents God glorious and gracious, and therefore every way fit to be trusted in regard of the interest of his own glory in it, and in regard of the effusions of his grace by it. It renders the creature obliged in the highest manner, and so awakens his industry to the strictest and noblest obedience. Nothing so effectual as a crucified Christ to wean us from sin,

and stifle all motions of despair; a means, in regard of the justice signalized in it, to make man to hate the sin which had ruined him; and a means, in regard of the love expressed to make him delight in that law he had violated (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). The love of Christ, and therefore the love of God expressed in it, constrains us no longer to live to ourselves.

(1.) It is a ground of the highest comfort and confidence in God. Since he hath given such an evidence of his impartial truth to his threatening for the honor of his justice, we need not question but he will be as punctual to his promise for the honor of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, since he hath redeemed us in such a way as glorifies the steadiness of his veracity, as well as the severity of his justice; we may well trust him for the performance of his promise, since we have experience of the execution of his threatening; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accomplish the one, as his just truth did to inflict the other. The goodness which shone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with stronger beams in redemption. And the mercy which before the appearance of Christ was manifested in some small rivulets, diffuseth itself like a boundless ocean. That God, that was our Creator, is our Redeemer, the repairer of our breaches, and the restorer of our paths to dwell in. And the plenteous redemption from all iniquity, manifested in the incarnation and passion of the Son of God, is much more a ground of hope in the Lord than it was in past ages, when it could not be said, "The Lord hath, but the Lord shall, redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psalms 130:8). It is a full warrant to cast ourselves into his arms.

(2.) An incentive to obedience.

[1.] The commands of the gospel require the obedience of the creature. There is not one precept in the gospel which interferes with any rule in the law, but strengthens it, and represents it in its true exactness: the heat to scorch us is allayed, but the light to direct us is not extinguished. Not the least allowance to any sin is granted; not the least affection to any sin is indulged. The law is tempered by the gospel, but not nulled and cast out of doors by it: it enacts that none but those that are sanctified, shall be glorified; that there must be grace here, if we expect glory hereafter; that we must not presume to expect an admittance to the vision of God's face unless our souls be clothed with a robe of holiness (Hebrews 12:14). It requires an obedience to the whole law in our intention and purpose, and an endeavor to observe it in our actions; it promotes the honor of God, and ordains a universal charity among men; it reveals the whole counsel of God, and furnisheth men with the holiest laws.

[2.] It presents to us the exactest pattern for our obedience. The redeeming person is not only a propitiation for the sin, but a pattern to the sinner (1 Peter 2:21). The conscience of man, after the fall of Adam, approved of the reason of the law, but by the corruption of nature man had no strength to perform the law. The possibility of keeping the law, by human nature, is evidenced by the appearance and life of the Redeemer, and an assurance given that it shall be advanced to such a state as to be able to observe it: we aspire to it in this life, and have hopes to attain it in a future; and, while we are here, the actor of our redemption is the copy for our imitation. The pattern to imitate is greater than the law to be ruled by. What a lustre did his virtues cast about the world! How attractive are his graces! With what high examples for all duties has he furnished us out of the copy of his life!

[3.] It presents us with the strongest motives to obedience (Titus 2:11-12): "The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness." What chains bind us faster and closer than love? Here is love to

our nature in his incarnation; love to us, though enemies, in his death and passion; encouragements to obedience by the proffers of pardon for former rebellions. By the disobedience of man, God introduceth his redeeming grace, and engageth his creature to more ingenuous and excellent returns than his innocent state could oblige him to. In his created state he had goodness to move him, he hath the same goodness now to oblige him as a creature, and a greater love and mercy to oblige him as a repaired creature; and the terror of justice is taken off, which might envenom his heart as a criminal. In his revolted state he had misery to discourage him; in his redeemed state he hath love to attract him. Without such a way, black despair had seized upon the creature exposed to a remediless misery, and God would have had no returns of love from the best of his earthly works; but if any sparks of ingenuity be left, they will be excited by the efficacy of this argument. The willingness of God to receive returning sinners, is manifested in the highest degree; and the willingness of a sinner to return to him in duty hath the strongest engagements. He hath done as much to encourage our obedience, as to illustrate his glory. We cannot conceive what could be done greater for the salvation of our souls, and consequently what could have been done, more to enforce our observance. We have a Redeemer, as man, to copy it to us, and as God, to perfect us in it. It would make the heart of any to tremble to wound him that hath provided such a salve for our sores, and to make grace a warrant for rebellion—motives capable to form rocks into a flexibleness. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in giving us a ground to the surest confidence, and furnishing us with incentives to the greatest obedience, by the horrors of wrath, death and sufferings of our Saviour.

8. The wisdom of God is apparent in the condition he hath settled for the enjoying the fruits of redemption: and this is faith, a wise and reasonable condition and the concomitants of it—

(1.) In that it is suited to man's lapsed state and God's glory. Innocence is not required here; that had been a condition impossible in its own nature after the fall. The rejecting of mercy is now only condemning, where mercy is proposed. Had the condition of perfection in works been required, it had rather been a condemnation than redemption. Works are not demanded, whereby the creature might ascribe anything to himself, but a condition, which continues in man a sense of his apostasy, abates all aspiring pride, and makes the reward of grace, not of debt; a condition, whereby mercy is owned, and the creature emptied; flesh silenced in the dust, and God set upon his throne of grace and authority; the creature brought to the lowest debasement, and Divine glory raised to the highest pitch. the creature is brought to acknowledge mercy, and seal to justice; to own the holiness of God, in the hatred of sin; the justice of God, in the punishment of sin; and the mercy of God, in the pardoning of sin: a condition that despoils nature of all its pretended excellency; beats down the glory of man at the foot of God (1 Corinthians 1:29; 1 Corinthians 1:31). It subjects the reason and will of man to the wisdom and authority of God; it brings the creature to an unreserved submission and entire resignation. God is made the sovereign cause of all; the creature continued in his emptiness, and reduced to a greater dependence upon God than by a creation; depending upon him for a constant influx, for an entire happiness: a condition that renders God glorious in the creature, and the fallen creature happy in God; God glorious in his condescension to man, and man happy in his emptiness before God. Faith is made the condition of man's recovery, that "the lofty looks of man might be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be pulled down" (Isaiah 2:11); that every towering imagination might be levelled (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man must have all from without doors; he must not live upon himself, but upon another's

allowance. He must stand to the provision of God, and be a perpetual suitor at his gates.

(2.) A condition opposite to that which was the cause of the fall. We fell from God by an unbelief of the threatening; he recovers us by a belief of the promise; by unbelief we laid the foundation of God's dishonor; by faith, therefore, God exalts the glory of his free grace. We lost ourselves by a desire of self-dependence, and our return is ordered by way of self-emptiness. It is reasonable we should be restored in a way contrary to that whereby we fell; we sinned by a refusal of cleaving to God; it is a part of divine wisdom to restore us in a denial of our own righteousness and strength. [Note: Laud against Fisher, p. 5.] Man having sinned by pride, the wisdom of God humbles him (saith one) at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own understanding, and submit to faith, or else, forever to lose his desired felicity.

(3.) It is a condition suited to the common sentiment and custom of the world. There is more of belief than reason in the world. All instructors and masters in sciences and arts, require, first a belief in their disciples, and a resignation of their understandings and wills to them. And it is the wisdom of God to require that of man, which his own reason makes him submit to another which is his fellow-creature. He, therefore, that quarrels with the condition of faith, must quarrel with all the world, since belief is the beginning of all knowledge; [Note: Bradward, p. 28.] yea, and most of the knowledge in the world, may rather come under the title of belief, than of knowledge; for what we think we know this day, we may find from others such arguments as may stagger our knowledge, and make us doubt of that we thought ourselves certain of before: nay, sometimes we change our opinions ourselves without any instructor, and see a reason to entertain an opinion quite contrary to what we had before. And if we found a general judgment of others to vote against what we think we know, it would make us give the less credit to ourselves and our own sentiments. All knowledge in the world is only a belief, depending upon the testimony or arguings of others; for, indeed, it may be said of all men, as in Job (Job 8:9), "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." Since, therefore, belief is so universal a thing in the world, the wisdom of God requires that of us which every man must count reasonable, or render himself utterly ignorant of anything. It is a condition that is common to all religions. All religions are founded upon a belief: unless men did believe future things, they would not hope nor fear. A belief and resignation was required in all the idolatries in the world; so that God requires nothing but what a universal custom of the world gives its suffrage to the reasonableness of: indeed, justifying faith is not suited to the sentiments of men; but that faith which must precede justifying, a belief of the doctrine, though not comprehended by reason, is common to the custom of the world. [Note: Janeway. p. 88.] It is no less madness not to submit our reason to faith, than not to regulate our fancies by reason.

(4.) This condition of faith and repentance is suited to the conscience of men. The law of nature teaches us, that we are bound to believe every revelation from God, when it is made known to us and not only to assent to it as true, but embrace it as good. This nature dictates, that we are as much obliged to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him, because of his goodness. Every man's reason tells him, he cannot obey a precept, nor depend upon a promise, unless he believes both the one and the other. No man's conscience but will inform him, upon hearing the revelation of God concerning his excellent contrivance of redemption, and the way to enjoy it, that it is very reasonable he should strip off all affections to sin, lie down in sorrow, and bewail what he hath done amiss against so tender a God. Can you expect that any man that promises you a great honor or a rich donative, should demand less of you than to trust his word, bear an affection to

him, and return him kindness? Can any less be expected by a prince than obedience from a pardoned subject, and a redeemed captive? If you have injured any man in his body, estate, reputation, would you not count it a reasonable condition for the partaking of his clemency and forgiveness, to express a hearty sorrow for it, and a resolution not to fall into the like crime again? Such are the conditions of the gospel, suited to the consciences of men.

(5.) The wisdom of God appears, in that this condition was only likely to attain the end. There are but two common heads appointed by God,—Adam and Christ: by one we are made a living soul, by the other a quickening spirit: by the one we are made sinners, by the other we are made righteous. Adam fell as a head, and all his members, his whole issue and posterity, fell with him, because they proceeded from him by natural generation. But since the second Adam cannot be our head by natural generation, there must be some other way of engrafting us in him, and uniting us to him as our Head, which must be moral and spiritual; this cannot rationally be conceived to be by any other way than what is suitable to a reasonable creature, and, therefore, must be by an act of the will, consent and acceptance, and owning the terms settled for an admission to that union. And this is that we properly call faith, and, therefore, called a receiving of him (John 1:12).

[1.] Now this condition of enjoying the fruits of redemption could not be a bare knowledge; for that is but only an act of the understanding, and doth not in itself include the act of the will, and so would have united only one faculty to him, not the whole soul: but faith is an act both of the understanding and will too; and principally of the will, which doth presuppose an act of the understanding for there cannot be a persuasion in the will, without a proposition from the understanding. The understanding must be convinced of the truth and goodness of a thing, before the will can be persuaded to make any motion towards it; and, therefore, all the promises, invitations, and proffers, are suited to the understanding and will; to the understanding in regard of knowledge, to the will in regard of appetite; to the understanding as true, to the will as good; to the understanding as practical, and influencing the will.

[2.] Nor could it be an entire obedience. That, as was said before, would have made the creature have some matter of boasting, and this was not suitable to the condition he was sunk into by the fall. Besides, man's nature being corrupted, was rendered incapable to obey, and unable to have one thought of a due obedience (2 Corinthians 3:5). When man turned from God, and upon that was turned out of paradise, his return was impossible by any strength of his own; his nature was as much corrupted as his re-entrance into paradise was prohibited. That covenant, whereby he stood in the garden, required a perfection of action and intention in the observance of all the commands of God: but his fall had cracked his ability to recover happiness by the terms and condition of an entire obedience; yet man being a person governable by a law, and capable of happiness by a covenant, if God would restore him, and enter into a covenant with him, we must suppose it to have some condition, as all covenants have. That condition could not be works, because man's nature was polluted. Indeed, had God reduced man's body to the dust, and his soul to nothing, and framed another man, he might have governed him by a covenant of works: but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled. But suppose God had, by any transcendent grace, wholly purified him from the stain of his former transgression, and restored to him the strength and ability he had lost, might he not as easily have rebelled again? And so the condition would never have been accomplished, the covenant never have been performed, and happiness never have been enjoyed. There must be some other

condition then in the covenant God would make for man's security. Now faith is the most proper for receiving the promise of pardon of sin belief of those promises is the first natural reflection that a malefactor can make upon a pardon offered him, and acceptance of it is the first consequent from that belief. Hence is faith entitled a persuasion of, and embracing the promises (Hebrews 11:13, and a receiving the atonement (Romans 5:11). Thus the wisdom of God is apparent in annexing such a condition to the covenant, whereby man is restored, as answers the end of God for his glory, the state, conscience, and necessity of man, and had the greatest congruity to his recovery.

9. This wisdom of God is manifest in the manner of the publishing and propagating this doctrine of redemption.

(1.) In the gradual discoveries of it. Flashing a great light in the face of a sudden is amazing; should the sun glare in our eye in all its brightness on a sudden, after we have been in a thick darkness, it would blind us, instead of comforting us: so great a work as this must have several digestions. God first reveals of what seed the Redeeming Person should be, "the Seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15); then of what nation (Genesis 26:4); then of what tribe (Genesis 49:12),—of the tribe of Judah; then of what family,—the family of David; then what works he was to do, what sufferings to undergo. The first predictions of our Saviour were obscure. Adam could not well see the redemption in the promise for the punishment of death which succeeded in the threatening; the promise exercised his faith, and the obscurity and bodily death, his humility. The promise made to Abraham was clearer than the revelations made before, yet he could not tell how to reconcile his redemption with his exile. God supported his faith by the promise, and exercised his humility by making him a pilgrim, and keeping him in a perpetual dependence upon him in all his motions. The declarations to Moses are brighter than those to Abraham: the delineations of Christ by David, in the Psalms, more illustrious than the former: and all those exceeded by the revelations made to the prophet Isaiah, and the other prophets, according as the age did approach wherein the Redeemer was to enter into his office. God wrapped up this gospel in a multitude of types and ceremonies fitted to the infant state of the church (Galatians 4:8). An infant state is usually affected with sensible things; yet all those ceremonies were fitted to that great end of the gospel, which he would bring forth in time to the world. And the wisdom of God in them would be amazing, if we could understand the analogy between every ceremony in the law and the thing signified by it: as it cannot but affect a diligent reader to observe that little account of them we have by the apostle Paul, sprinkled in his epistles, and more largely in that to the Hebrews. As the political laws of the Jews flowed from the depth of the moral law, so their ceremonial did from the depth of evangelical counsels, and all of them had a special relation to the honor of God, and the debasing the creature. Though God formed the mass and matter of the world at the first creation at once, yet his wisdom took six days time for the disposing and adorning it. The more illustrious truths of God are not to be comprehended on a sudden by the weakness of men. Christ did not declare all truths to his disciples in the time of his life, because they were not able at that time to bear them (John 16:12): "Ye cannot bear them now;" some were reserved for his resurrection, others for the coming of the Spirit, and the full discovery of all kept back for another world. This doctrine God figured out in the law, oracled by the prophets, and unveiled by Christ and his apostles.

(2.) The wisdom of God appeared in using all proper means to render the belief of it easy.

[1.] The most minute things that were to be transacted were predicted in the ancient foregoing age, long before the coming of the Redeemer. The vinegar and gall offered to him upon the cross, the parting his garments, the not breaking of his bones, the piercing of his hands and feet, the betraying of him, the slighting of hire by the multitude, all were exactly painted and represented in variety of figures. There was light enough to good men not to mistake him, and yet not so plain as to hinder bad men from being serviceable to the counsels of God in the crucifying of him when he came.

[2.] The translation of the Old Testament from the private language of the Jews, into the most public language of the world; that translation which we call Septuagint, from Hebrew into Greek, some years before the coming of Christ, that tongue being most diffused at that time, by reason of the Macedonian empire, raised by Alexander, and the university of Athens, to which other nations resorted for learning and education. This was a preparation for the sons of Japhet to “dwell in the tents of Shem.” By this was the entertainment of the gospel facilitated; when they compared the prophetesies of the Old Testament with the declarations of the New, and found things so long predicted before they were transacted in the public view.

[3.] By ordering concurrent testimonies, as to matter of fact, that the matter of fact was not deniable. That there was such a person as Christ, that his miracles were stupendous, that his doctrine did not incline to sedition, that he affected not worldly applause, that he did suffer at Jerusalem, was acknowledged by all; not a man among the greatest enemies of Christians was found that denied the matter of fact. And this great truth, that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer, hath been with universal consent owned by all the professors of Christianity throughout the world: whatever bickerings there have been among them about some particular doctrines, they all centred in that truth of Christ’s being the Redeemer. The first publication of this doctrine was sealed by a thousand miracles, and so illustrious, that he was an utter stranger to the world that was ignorant of them.

[4.] In keeping up some principles and opinions in the world to facilitate the belief of this, or render men inexcusable for rejecting of it. The incarnation of the son of God could not be so strange to the world, if we consider the general belief of the appearances [Note: *Επιφάνειαι*] of their gods among them; that the Epicureans and others, that denied any such appearances, were counted atheists. [Note: *Dionys. Halicar, Antiq. 1. 2, p. 128.*] And Pythagoras was esteemed to be one, not of the inferior genii and lunar demons, but one of the higher gods, who appeared in a human body, for the curing and rectifying mortal life; [Note: *Iamblych. Vit. Pythag., lib. i. cap. 6, p. 44, and lib. ii. c. 19, p. 94.*] and himself tells Abaris, the Scythian, that he was *■νθρωπ■μορφος*, that he “took the flesh of man,” that men might not be astonished at him, and in a fright fly from his instructions. It was not therefore accounted an irrational thing among them, that God should be incarnate: but, indeed, the great stumbling-block was a crucified God. But had they known the holy and righteous nature of God, the malice of sin, the universal corruption of human nature, the first threatening, and the necessity of vindicating the honor of the law, and clearing the justice of God, the notion of his crucifixion would not have appeared so incredible, since they believed the possibility of an incarnation.

Another principle was that universal one of sacrifices for expiation, and rendering God propitious to man, and was practised among all nations. I remember not any wherein this custom did not

prevail; for it did even among those people where the Jews, as being no trading nation, had not any commerce; and also in America, found out in these latter ages. It was not a law of nature; no man can find any such thing written in his own heart, but a tradition from Adam. Now that among the loss of so many other doctrines that were handed down from Adam to his immediate posterity, as, in particular, that of the "Seed of the woman," which one would think a necessary appendix to that of sacrificing, this latter should be preserved as a fragment of an ancient tradition, seems to be an act of Divine wisdom, to prepare men for the entertainment of the doctrine of the great Sacrifice for the expiation of the sin of the world. And as the apostle forms his argument from the Jewish sacrifices, in the epistle to the Hebrews, for the convincing them of the end of the death of Christ, so did the ancient fathers make use of this practice of the heathen to convince them of the same doctrine.

[5.] The wisdom of God appeared in the time and circumstances of the first solemn publication of the gospel by the apostles at Jerusalem. The relation you may read in Acts 2:1-12. The Spirit was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost; a time wherein there were multitudes of Jews from all nations, not only near, but remote, that heard the great things of God spoken in the several languages of those nations where their habitations were fixed, and that by twelve illiterate men, that two or three hours before knew no language but that of their native country. It was the custom of the Jews, that dwelt among other nations, at a distance from Jerusalem, to assemble together at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost: and God pitched upon this season, that there might be witnesses of this miracle in many parts of the world: there were some of every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5); that is, of that known part of the world, so saith the text. Fourteen several nations are mentioned; and proselytes as well as Jews by birth. They are called "devout men," men of conscience, whose testimony would carry weight with it among their neighbors at their return, because of their reputation by their religious carriage. Again, this was not heard and seen by some of them at one time, and some at another, by some one hour, by others the next successively, [Note: Faucheur. in loc. pp. 294, 295.] but altogether, in a solemn assembly, that the testimony of so many witnesses at a time, might be more valid, and the truth of the doctrine appear more illustrious and undeniable. And it must needs be astonishing to them, to hear that person magnified in so miraculous a manner, who had so lately been condemned by their countrymen as a malefactor. Wisdom consists in the timing of things. And in this circumstance doth the wisdom of God appear, in furnishing the apostles with the Spirit at such a time, and bringing forth such a miracle, as the gift of tongues, on a sudden, that every nation might hear in their own language the wonder of redemption, and as witnesses at their returns into their own countries, report it to others; that the credit they had, in their several places, might facilitate the belief and entertainment of the gospel, when the apostles, or others, should arrive to those several charges and dioceses appointed for them to preach the gospel in. Had this miracle been wrought in the presence only of the inhabitants of Judea, that understood only their own language, or one or two of the neighboring tongues, it had been counted by them rather a madness than a miracle. Or had they understood all the tongues which they spoke, the news of it had spread no further than the limits of their own habitations, and had been confined within the narrow bounds of the land of Judea. But now it is carried to several remote nations, where any of those auditors then assembled had their residence. As God chose the time of the Passover for the death of Christ, that there might be the greatest number of the inhabitants of the country, as witnesses of the matter of fact, the innocence and sufferings of Christ, so he chose the time of Pentecost for the first publishing the value and

end of this blood to the world. Thus the evangelical law was given in a confluence of people from all parts and nations, because it was a covenant with all nations: and the variety of languages spoken by a company of poor Galileans, bred up at the lake of Tiberias, and in poor corners of Canaan, without the instructions of men for so great a skill, might well evidence to the hearers, that God that brought the confusion of languages first at Babel, did only work that cure of them, and combine all together at Jerusalem.

(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in the instruments he employed in the publishing the gospel. He did not employ philosophers, but fishermen; used not acquired arts, but infused wisdom and courage. This treasure was put into, and preserved in earthen vessels, that the wisdom, as well as the power of God, might be magnified. The weaker the means are which attain the end, the greater is the skill of the conductor of them. Wise princes choose men of most credit, interest, wisdom, and ability, to be ministers of their affairs, and ambassadors to others. But what were these that God chose for so great a work, as the publishing a new doctrine to the world? What was their quality but mean, what was their authority without interest? What was their ability, without eminent parts for so great a work, but what Divine grace in a special manner endowed them with? Nay, what was their disposition to it? as dull and unwieldy. Witness the frequent rebukes for their slow-heartedness, from their Master, when he conversed in the flesh with them. And one of the greatest of them, so fond of the Jewish ceremonies and Pharisaical principles, wherein he had been more than ordinarily principled, that he hated the Christian religion to extirpation, and the professors of it to death; by those ways which were out of the road of human wisdom, and would be accounted the greatest absurdity to be practised by men that have a repute for discretion, did God advance his wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25): "The foolishness of God is wiser than man." By this means it was indisputably evidenced to unbiassed minds, that the doctrine was divine. It could not rationally be imagined, that instruments destitute of all human advantages, should be able to vanquish the world, confound Judaism, overturn heathenism, chase away the devils, strip them of their temples, alienate the minds of men from their several religions, which had been rooted in them by education, and established by a long succession. It could not, I say, reasonably be imagined to be without a supernatural assistance, an heavenly and efficacious working: whereas, had God taken a course agreeable to the prudence of man, and used those that had been furnished with learning, tipped with eloquence, and armed with human authority, the doctrines would have been thought to have been of a human invention, and to be some subtle contrivance for some unworthy and ambitious end: the nothingness and weakness of the instruments manifest them to be conducted by a Divine power, and declare the doctrine itself to be from heaven. When we see such feeble instruments proclaiming a doctrine repugnant to flesh and blood, sounding forth a crucified Christ to be believed in, and trusted on, and declaiming against the religion and worship under which the Roman empire had long flourished; exhorting them to the contempt of the world, preparation for afflictions, denying themselves, and their own honors, by the hopes of an unseen reward, things so repugnant to flesh and blood; and these instruments concurring in the same story, with an admirable harmony in all parts, and sealing this doctrine with their blood; can we upon all this, ascribe this doctrine to a human contrivance, or fix any lower author of it than the wisdom of heaven? It is the wisdom of God that carries on his own designs in methods most suitable to his own greatness, and different from the customs and modes of men, that less of humanity, and more of divinity might appear.

(4.) The wisdom of God appears in the ways and manner, as well as in the instruments of its propagation, by ways seemingly contrary. You know how God had sent the Jews into captivity in Babylon, and though he struck off their chains, and restored them to their country, yet many of them had no mind to leave a country wherein they had been born and bred. The distance from the place of the original of their ancestors, and their affection to the country wherein they were born, might have occasioned their embracing the idolatrous worship of the place. Afterwards the persecutions of Antiochus scattered many of the Jews for their security into other nations; yet a great part, and perhaps the greatest, preserved their religion, and by that were obliged to come every year to Jerusalem to offer, and so were present at the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and were witnesses of the miraculous effects of it. Had they not been dispersed by persecution, had they not resided in several countries, and been acquainted with their languages, the gospel had not so easily been diffused into several countries of the world. The first persecutions also raised against the church, propagated the gospel; the scattering of the disciples enflamed their courage, and dispersed the doctrine (Acts 8:3), according to the prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 12:4): "Many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased." The flights and hurrying of men should enlarge the territories of the gospel. There was not a tribunal, but the primitive Christians were cited to; not a horrible punishment, but was inflicted upon them. Treated they were, as the dregs and offals of mankind, as the common enemies of the world; yet the flames of the martyrs brightened the doctrine, and the captivity of its professors made way for the throne of its empire. The imprisonment of the ark was the downfall of Dagon. Religion grew stronger by sufferings, and Christianity taller by injuries. What can this be ascribed to, but the conduct of a wisdom superior to that of men and devils, defeating the methods of human and hellish policy; thereby making the "wisdom of this world foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19)?

V. The Use, 1. Of Information. If wisdom be an excellency of the Divine nature; then,

1. Christ's Deity may hence be asserted. Wisdom is the emphatical title of Christ in Scripture (Proverbs 8:12-13; Proverbs 8:31), where wisdom is brought in speaking as a distinct person; ascribing counsel, and understanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itself. He is called also the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). And the ancients generally understood that place (Colossians 2:3), "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," as an assertion of the Godhead of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his knowledge; referring wisdom to his knowledge of divine things; and knowledge to his understanding of all human things. But the natural sense of the place seems to be this, that all wisdom and knowledge is displayed by Christ in the gospel; and the words, $\nu \alpha \tau \nu$, refer either to Christ, or the mystery of God spoken of, (Colossians 2:2). But the Deity of Christ, in regard of infinite wisdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things; both which are ascribed to him in Scripture. The first ascribed to him (John 1:3): "All things were made by him;" and without him was not any thing made, that was made." The second (John 5:22): "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son;" and both put together (Colossians 2:16-17). Now since he hath the government of the world, he hath the perfections necessary to so great a work. As the creation of the world, which is ascribed to him, requires an infinite power, so the government of the world requires an infinite wisdom. That he hath the knowledge of the hearts of men, was proved in handling the omniscience of God. That knowledge would be to little purpose

without wisdom to order the motions of men's hearts, and conduct all the qualities and actions of creatures, to such an end as is answerable to a wise government; we cannot think so great an employment can be without an ability necessary for it. The government of men and angels is a great part of the glory of God; and if God should entrust the greatest part of his glory in hands unfit for so great a trust, it would be an argument of weakness in God, as it is in men, to pitch upon unfit instruments for particular charges; since God hath therefore committed to him his greatest glory, the conduct of all things for the highest end, he hath a wisdom requisite for so great an end, which can be no less than infinite. If then Christ were a finite person, he would not be capable of an infinite communication; he could not be a subject wherein infinite wisdom could be lodged; for the terms finite and infinite are so distant, that they cannot commence one another; finite can never be changed into infinite, no more than infinite can into finite.

(2.) Hence we may assert the right and fitness of God for the government of the world, as he is the wisest Being. Among men, those who are excellent in judgment, are accounted fittest to preside over, and give orders to others; the wisest in a city are most capable to govern a city; or at least, though ignorant men may bear the title, yet the advice of the soundest and skilfullest heads should prevail in all public affairs: we see in nature, that the eye guides the body, and the mind directs the eye. Power and wisdom are the two arms of authority; wisdom knows the end, and directs the means; power executes the means designed for such an end. [Note: Amyraut, Moral. Tom. 1. pp. 258, 259.] The more splendid and strong those are in any, the more authority results from thence, for the conduct of others that are of an inferior orb; now God being infinitely excellent in both, his ability and right to the management of the world cannot be suspected; the whole world is but one commonwealth, whereof God is the monarch. Did the government of the world depend upon the election of men and angels, where could they itch, or where would they find perfections capable of so great a work but in the Supreme Wisdom? His wisdom hath already been apparent in those laws, whereby he formed the world into a civil society, and the Israelites into a commonwealth. The one suited to the consciences and reasons of all his subjects, and the other suited to the genius of that particular nation, drawn out of the righteousness of the moral law, and applicable to all cases that might arise among them in their government; so that Moses asserts, that the wisdom apparent in their laws enacted by God, as their chief magistrate, would render them famous among other nations, in regard of their wisdom, as well as their righteousness (Deuteronomy 4:6-7; Deuteronomy 4:9). Also, this perfection doth evidence, that God doth actually govern the world. It would not be a commendable thing for a man to make a curious piece of clock-work, and take no care for the orderly motion of it. Would God display so much of his skill in framing the heaven and earth, and none in actual guidance of them to their particular and universal ends? Did he lay the foundation in order, and fit every stone in the building, make all things in weight and measure, to let them afterwards run at hap-hazard? Would he bring forth his power to view in the creation, and let a more glorious perfection lie idle, when it had so large a field to move in? Infinite wisdom is inconsistent with inactivity. All prudence doth illustrate itself in untying the hardest knots, and disposing the most difficult affairs to a happy and successful issue. All those various arts and inventions among men which lend their assisting hand to one another, and those various employments their several geniuses lead them to, whereby they support one another's welfare, are beams and instincts of Divine wisdom in the government of the world. He that "made all things in wisdom" (Psalms 104:24), would not leave his works to act and move only according to their own folly, and idly behold them jumble together, and run counter to that end he designed them for;

we must not fancy Divine wisdom to be destitute of activity.

3. Here we may see a ground of God's patience. The most impotent persons are the most impatient, when unforeseen emergencies arise; or at events expected by them, when their feeble prudence was not a sufficient match to contest with them, or prevent them, But the wiser any man is, the more he bears with those things which seem to cross his intentions, because he knows he grasps the whole affair, and is sure of attaining the end he proposeth to himself; yet, as a finite wisdom can have but a finite patience, so an infinite wisdom possesses an infinite patience. The wise God intends to bring glory to himself, and good to some of his creatures, out of the greatest evils that can happen in the world, he beholds no exorbitant afflictions and monstrous actions, but what he can dispose to a good and glorious end, even to "work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28); and, therefore, doth not presently fall foul upon the actors, till he hath wrought out that temporary glory to himself, and good to his people which he designs. The times of ignorance God winked at, till he had brought his Son into the world, and manifested his wisdom in redemption, and when this was done he presseth men to a "speedy repentance" (Acts 17:30); that, as he forbore punishing their crimes, in order to the displaying his wisdom in the designed redemption; so when he had effected it, they must forbear any longer abusing his patience.

4. Hence appears the immutability of God in his decrees. He is not destitute of a power and strength to change his own purposes, but his infinite perfection of wisdom is a bar to his laying aside his eternal resolves and forming new ones (Isaiah 46:10); he resolves the end from the beginning, and his counsel stands; stands immovable, because it is his counsel. It is an impotent counsel, that is subject to a daily thwarting itself. Inconstant persons are accounted, by men, destitute of a due measure of prudence. If God change his mind it is either for the better or the worse; if for the better, he was not wise in his former purpose; if for the worse, he is not wise in his present resolve. No alteration can be without a reflection of weakness upon the former or present determination. God must either cease to be as wise as he was before, or begin to be wiser than he was before the change, which to think or imagine is to deny a Deity. If any man change his resolution, he is apprehensive of a flaw in his former purpose, and finds an inconvenience in it, which moves him to such a change, which must be either for want of foresight in himself, or want of a due consideration of the object of his counsel, neither of which can be imagined of God without a denial of the Deity. No, there are no blots and blemishes in his purposes and promises. Repentance, indeed, is an act of wisdom in the creature, but it presupposeth folly in his former actions, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Men are often too rash in promising; and, therefore, what they promise in haste, they perform at leisure, or not at all: they consider not before they vow, and make after-inquiries, whether they had best stand to it. The only wise God needs not any after-game: as he is sovereignly wise, he sees no cause of reversing anything, and wants not expedients for his own purpose; and as he is infinitely powerful, he hath no superior to hinder him from executing his will, and making his people enjoy the effects of his wisdom. If he had a recollection of thoughts, as man hath, and saw a necessity to mend them, he were not infinitely wise in his first decrees: as in creation he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame he had erected, and saw them so exact that he did not take up his pencil again to mend any particle of the first draught, so his promises are made with such infinite wisdom and judgment, that what he writes is irreversible and forever, as the decrees of the Medes and Persians. All the words of God are eternal because they are the births of righteousness and judgment (Hosea 2:19); "I will

betroth thee to me forever, in righteousness and judgment.” He is not of a wavering and flitting discretion: if he threatens, he wisely considers what he threatens; if he promises, he wisely considers what he promises; and therefore is immutable in both.

5. Hence it follows that God is a fit object for our trust and confidence: for God being infinitely wise, when he promises anything, he sees everything which may hinder, and everything which may promote the execution of it, so that he cannot discover anything afterwards that may move him to take up after-thoughts: he hath more wisdom than to promise anything hand over head, or anything which he knows he cannot accomplish. Though God, as true, be the object of our trust, yet God, as wise, is the foundation of our trust. We trust him in his promise; the promise was made by mercy, and it is performed by truth; but wisdom conducts all means to the accomplishment of it. There are many men, whose honesty we can confide in, but whose discretion we are diffident of: but there is no defect, either of the one or the other, which may scare us from a depending upon God in our concerns. The words of man’s wisdom the apostle entitles “enticing” (1 Corinthians 2:4), in opposition to the words of God’s wisdom, which are firm, stable, and undeniable demonstrations. As the power of God is an encouragement of trust, because he is able to effect, so the wisdom of God comes into the rank of those attributes which support our faith. To put a confidence in him, we must be persuaded, not only that he is ignorant of nothing in the world, but that he is wise to manage the whole course of nature, and dispose of all his creatures, for the bringing his purposes and his promises to their designed perfection.

6. Hence appears the necessity of a public review of the management of the world, and of a day of judgment. As a day of judgment may be inferred from many attributes of God, as his sovereignty, justice, omniscience, &c., so, among the rest, from this of wisdom. How much of this perfection will lie unveiled and obscure, if the sins of men be not brought to view, whereby the ordering the unrighteous actions of men, by his directing and over-ruling hand of providence, in subserviency to his own purposes and his people’s good, may appear in all its glory! Without such a public review, this part of wisdom will not be clearly visible; how those actions, which had a vile foundation in the hearts and designs of men, and were formed there to gratify some base lust, ambition, and covetousness, &c. were, by a secret wisdom presiding over them, conducted to amazing ends. It is a part of Divine wisdom to right itself, and convince men of the reasonableness of its laws, and the unreasonableness of their contradictions to it. The execution of the sentence is an act of justice, but the conviction of the reasonableness of the sentence is an act of wisdom, clearing up the righteousness of the proceeding; and this precedes, and the other follows (Jude 1:15); “To convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds.” that wisdom which contrived satisfaction, as well as that justice which required it, is concerned in righting the law which was enacted by it. The wisdom of a sovereign Lawgiver is engaged not to see his law vilified and trampled on, and exposed to the lusts and affronts of men, without being concerned in vindicating the honor of it. It would appear a folly to enact and publish it, if there were not a resolution to right and execute it. The wisdom of God can no more associate iniquity and happiness together, than the justice of God can separate iniquity from punishment. It would be defective, if it did always tamely bear the insolences of offenders, without a time of remark of their crimes, and a justification of the precept, rebelliously spurned at. He would be unwise, if he were unjust; unrighteousness hath no better a title in Scripture than that of folly. It is no part of Wisdom to give birth to those laws which he will always behold ineffectual, and neither vindicate his law by a due execution of the penalty, nor right

his own authority, contemned in the violation of his law, by a just revenge: besides, what wisdom would it be for the Sovereign Judge to lodge such a spokesman for himself as conscience in the soul of man, if it should be alway found speaking, and at length be found false in all that it speaks? There is, therefore, an apparent prospect of the day of account, from the consideration of this perfection of the Divine nature.

7. Hence we have a ground for a mighty reverence and veneration of the Divine Majesty. Who can contemplate the sparklings of this perfection in the variety of the works of his hands, and the exact government of all his creatures, without a raised admiration of the excellency of his Being, and a falling flat before him, in a posture of reverence to so great a Being? Can we behold so great a mass of matter, digested into several forms, so exact a harmony and temperament in all the creatures, the proportions of numbers and measures, and one creature answering the ends and designs of another, the distinct beauties of all, the perpetual motion of all things without checking one another; the variety of the nature of things, and all acting according to their nature with an admirable agreement, and all together, like different strings upon an instrument, emitting divers sounds, but all reduced to order in one delightful lesson;—I say, can we behold all this without admiring and adoring the Divine wisdom, which appears in all? And from the consideration of this, let us pass to the consideration of his wisdom in redemption, in reconciling divided interests, untying hard knots, drawing one contrary out of another; and we must needs acknowledge that the wisdom of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, is worse than nothing and vanity in comparison of this vast Ocean. And as we have a greater esteem for those that invent some excellent artificial engines, what reverence ought we to have for him that hath stamped an unimitable wisdom upon all his works! Nature orders us to give honor to our superiors in knowledge, and confide in their counsels; but none ought to be revered as much as God, since none equals him in wisdom.

8. If God be infinitely wise, it shows us the necessity of our address to him, and invocation of his Name. We are subject to mistakes, and often overseen; we are not able rightly to counsel ourselves. In some cases, all creatures are too short-sighted to apprehend them, and too ignorant to give advice proper for them, and to contrive remedies for their ease; but with the Lord there is counsel (Jeremiah 32:19), “He is great in counsel, and mighty in working;” great in counsel to advise us, mighty in working to assist us. We know not how to effect a design, or prevent an expected evil. We have an infinite Wisdom to go to, that is every way skilful to manage any business we desire, to avert any evil we fear, to accomplish anything we commit into his hands. When we know not what to resolve, he hath a counsel to “guide us” (Psalms 73:24). He is not more powerful to effect what is needful, than wise to direct what is fitting. All men stand in need of the help of God, as one man stands in need of the assistance of other men, and will not do anything without advice; and he that takes advice, deserves the title of a wise man, as well as he that gives advice. But no man needs so much the advice of another man, as all men need the counsel and assistance of God: neither is any man’s wit and wisdom so far inferior to the prudence and ability of an angel, as the wisdom of the wisest man and the most sharp-sighted angel, is inferior to the infinite wisdom of God. We see, therefore, that it is best for us to go to the fountain, and not content ourselves with the streams; to beg advice from a wisdom that is infinite and infallible, rather than from that which is finite and fallible.

Use 2. If wisdom be the perfection of the Divine Majesty, how prodigious is the contempt of it in the world? In general, all sin strikes at this attribute, and is in one part or other a degrading of it: the first sin directed its venom against this. As the devils endeavored to equal their Creator in power, so man endeavored to equal him in wisdom: both indeed scorned to be ruled by his order; but man evidently exalted himself against the wisdom of God, and aspired to be a sharer with him in his infinite knowledge; would not let him be the only wise God, but cherished an ambition to be his partner. Just as if a beam were able to imagine it might be as right as the sun; or a spark fancy it could be as full fraught with heat as the whole element of fire. Man would not submit to the infinite wisdom of God in the prohibition of one single fruit in the garden, when by the right of his sovereign authority, he might have granted him only the use of one. All presumptuous sins are of this nature; they are, therefore, called reproaches of God (Numbers 15:30), "the soul that doth ought presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord." All reproaches are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply either a weakness or unrighteousness in God: if unrighteousness, his holiness is denied; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished. In general, all sin strikes at this perfection two ways.

1. As it defaceth the wise workmanship of God. Every sin is a deforming and blemishing our own souls, which, as they are the prime creatures in the lower world, so they have greater characters of Divine wisdom in the fabric of them: but this image of God is ruined and broken by sin. Though the spoiling of it be a scorn of his holiness, it is also an affront to his wisdom; for though his power was the cause of the production of so fair a piece, yet his wisdom was the guide of his power, and his holiness the pattern whereby he wrought it. His power effected it, and his holiness was exemplified in it; but his wisdom contrived it. If a man had a curious clock or watch, which had cost him many years pains and the strength of his skill to frame it; for another, after he had seen and considered it, to trample upon it, and crush it in pieces, would argue a contempt of the artificer's skill. God hath shown infinite art in the creation of man; but sin unbeautifies man, and ravisheth his excellency. It cuts and slasheth the image of God stamped by divine wisdom, as though it were an object only of scorn and contempt. The sinner in every sin acts, as if he intended to put himself in a better posture, and in a fairer dress, than the wisdom of God hath put him in by creation.

2. In the slighting his laws. The laws of God are highly rational; they are drawn from the depths of the Divine understanding, wherein there is no uncleanness, and no defect. As his understanding apprehends all things in their true reason, so his will enjoins all things for worthy and wise ends. His laws are contrived by his wisdom for the happiness of man, whose happiness, and the methods to it, he understands better than men or angels can do. His laws being the orders of the wisest understanding, every breach of his law is a flying in the face of his wisdom. All human laws, though they are enforced by sovereign authority, yet they are, or ought to be, in the composing of them, founded upon reason, and should be particular applications of the law of nature to this or that particular emergency. The laws of God, then, who is summa ratio, are the birth of the truest reason; though the reason of every one of them may not be so clear to us. Every law, though it consists in an act of the will, yet doth presuppose an act of the understanding. The act of the Divine understanding in framing the law, must be supposed to precede the act of his will in commanding the observance of that law. So every sin against the law, is not only against the will of God commanding, but the reason of God contriving, and a cleaving to our own reason, rather than the understanding or mind of God: as if God had mistaken in making his law, and we had

more understanding to frame a better, and more conducing to our happiness: as if God were not wise enough to govern us, and prescribe what we should do, and what we should avoid; as if he designed not our welfare but our misfortune. Whereas, the precepts of God are not tyrannical edicts, or acts of mere will, but the fruits of counsel; and, therefore, every breach of them is a real declamation against his discretion and judgment, and preferring our own imaginations, or the suggestions of the devil, as our rule, before the results of Divine counsel.

While we acknowledge him wise in our opinion, we speak him foolish by our practice; when, instead of being guided by him, we will guide ourselves. No man will question, but it is a controlling Divine wisdom, to make alterations in his precepts; dogmatically, either to add some of their own, or expunge any of his: and is it not a crime of the like reflection to alter them practically? When we will observe one part of the law, and not another part; but pick and choose where we please ourselves, as our humors and carnal interest prompt us; it is to charge that part of the law with folly, which we refuse to conform unto. The more cunning any man is in sin, the more his sin is against Divine wisdom, as if he thought to outwit God. He that receives the promises of God, and the "testimony of Christ, sets to his seal, that God is true" (John 3:33). By the like strength of argument, it will undeniably follow, that he that refuseth obedience to his precepts, sets to his seal that God is foolish. Were they not rational, God would not enjoin them; and if they are rational, we are enemies to infinite wisdom, by not complying with them. If infinite prudence hath made the law, why is not every part of it observed; if it were not made with the best wisdom, why is any part of it observed? If the defacing of his image be any sin, as being a defaming his wisdom in creation, the breaking his law is no less a sin, as being a disgracing his wisdom in his administration. 'Tis upon this account, likely, that the Scripture so often counts sinners fools, since it is certainly inexcusable folly to contradict undeniable and infallible Wisdom; yet this is done in the least sin: and as he that breaks one tittle of the law, is deservedly accounted guilty of the breach of the whole (James 2:10), so he that despiseth the least stamp of wisdom in the minutest part of the law, is deservedly counted as a contemner of it, in the frame of the whole statute-book. But, in particular, the wisdom of God is affronted and invaded.

(1.) By introducing new rules and modes of worship, different from Divine institutions. Is not this a manifest reflection on this perfection of God, as though he had not been wise enough to provide for his own honor, and model his own service, but stood in need of our directions, and the caprichios of our brains? Some have observed, that it is a greater sin in worship to do that we should not, than to omit what we should perform. [Note: Strong, of The Will.] The one seems to be out of weakness, because of the high exactness of the law; and the other out of impudence, accusing the wisdom of God of imperfection, and controlling it in its institutions. At best, it seems to be an imputation of human bashfulness to the Supreme Sovereign; as if he had been ashamed to prescribe all that was necessary to his own honor, but had left something to the ingenuity and gratitude of men. Man has, ever since the foolish conceit of his old ancestor Adam, presumed he could be as wise as God; and if he who was created upright entertained such conceits, much more doth man now, under a mass of corruption, so capable to foment them. This hath been the continual practice of men; not so much to reject what once they had received as Divine, but add something of their own inventions to it. The heathens renounced not the sacrificing of beasts for the expiation of their offences (which the old world had received by tradition from Adam, and the new world, after the deluge, from Noah). But they had blended that tradition with rites of their own,

and offered creatures unclean in themselves, and not fit to be offered to an infinitely pure Being; for the distinction of clean and unclean was as ancient as Noah (Genesis 8:20), yea, before (Genesis 7:2). So the Jews did not discard what they had received from God, as circumcision, the Passover, and sacrifices; but they would mix a heap of heathenish rites with the ceremonies of Divine ordination, and practise things which he had not commanded, as well as things which he had enjoined them. And, therefore, it is observable, that when God taxeth them with sin, he doth not say, they brought in those things which he had forbidden into his worship; but those things which he had not commanded, and had given no order for, to intimate, that they were not to move a step without his rule (Jeremiah 7:31): "They have built the high palaces of Tophet, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart;" and (Leviticus 10:1); Nadab's and Abihu's strange fire was not commanded; so charging them with impudence and rashness in adding something of their own, after he had revealed to them the manner of his service, as if they were as wise as God. So loth is man to acknowledge the supremacy of Divine understanding, and be sensible of his own ignorance. So after the divulging of the gospel, the corruptors of religion did not fling off, but preserved the institutions of God, but painted and patched them up with pagan ceremonies; imposed their own dreams with as much force as the revelations of God. Thus hath the papacy turned the simplicity of the gospel into pagan pomp, and religion into politics; and revived the ceremonial law, and raked some limbs of it out of the grave, after the wisdom of God had rung her knell, and honorably interred her; and sheltered the heathenish superstitions in christian temples, after the power of the gospel had chased the devils, with all their trumpery, from their ancient habitations. Whence should this proceed, but from a partial atheism, and a mean deceit of the Divine wisdom? As though God had not understanding enough to prescribe the form of his own worship; and not wisdom enough to support it, without the crutches of human prudence. Human prudence is too low to parallel Divine wisdom; it is an incompetent judge of what is fit for an infinite Majesty. It is sufficiently seen in the ridiculous and senseless rights among the heathens; and the cruel and devilish ones fetched from them by the Jews. What work will human wisdom make with divine worship, when it will presume to be the director of it, as a mate with the wisdom of God! Whence will it take its measures, but from sense, humor and fancy? as though what is grateful and comely to a depraved reason, were as beautiful to an unspotted and Infinite Mind. Do not such tell the world, that they were of God's cabinet council, since they will take upon them to judge, as well as God, what is well-pleasing to him? Where will it have the humility to stop, if it hath the presumption to add any one thing to revealed modes of worship? How did God tax the Israelites with making idols "according to their own understanding" (Hosea 13:2)! imagining their own understandings to be of a finer make, and a perfecter mould than their Creator's; and that they had fetched more light from the chaos of their own brains, than God had from eternity in his own nature. How slight will the excuse be, God hath not forbidden this, or that, when God shall silence men with the question, Where, or when did I command this, or that? There was no addition to be made under the law to the meanest instrument God had appointed in his service. The sacred perfume was not to have one ingredient more put into it, than what God had prescribed in the composition; nor was any man upon pain of death to imitate it; nor would God endure that sacrifices should be consumed with any other fire than that which came down from heaven. So tender is God of any invasions of his wisdom and authority. In all things of this nature, whatsoever voluntary humility and respect to God they may be disguised with, there is a swelling of the fleshly mind against infinite understanding, which the apostle nauseates (Colossians 2:18). Such mixtures

have not been blessed by God: as God never prospered the mixtures of several kinds of creatures, to form and multiply a new species, as being a dissatisfaction with his wisdom as Creator; so he doth not prosper mixtures in worship, as being a conspiracy against his wisdom as a Lawgiver. The destruction of the Jews was judged by some of their doctors to be, for preferring human traditions before the written word; which they ground on (Isaiah 29:13): "Their fear for me was taught by the precepts of men." The injunctions of men were the rule of their worship, and not the prescripts of my law. [Note: Vaisin. The Talmud takes notice, that the court of Bethany was wasted three years before Jerusalem, because they preferred their own words before the words of the Law.] To conclude, such as make alterations in religion, different from the first institution, are intolerable busy bodies, that will not let God alone with his own affairs. Vain man would be wiser than his Maker, and be dabbling in that which is His sole prerogative.

2. In neglecting means instituted by God. When men have risings of heart against God's ordinances, "they reject the counsel of the Lord against themselves," or, in themselves (Luke 7:30), **ἐθ' ἑαυτοῖς**. They disannulled the wisdom of God, the spring of his ordinances. All neglects are disregards of Divine prescriptions, as impertinent and unavailable to that end for which they were appointed, as not being suited to the common dictates of reason; sometimes out of a voluntary humility, such as Peter's was, when he denied Christ's condescension to wash his feet (John 13:8), and thereby judged of the comeliness of his Master's intention and action. Such as continually neglect the great institution of the Lord's supper, out of a sense of unworthiness, are in the same rank with Peter, and do, as well as he, fall under the blame and reproof of Christ. Men would be saved, and use the means, but either means of their own appointment, or not at all the means of God's ordering. [Note: Pont. Medit. Part III. p. 366.] They would have God's wisdom and will condescend to theirs, and not theirs conformed to God's; as if our blind judgments were fittest to make the election of the paths to happiness.

Like Naaman, who, when he was ordered by the prophet, for the cure of his leprosy, to "wash seven times in Jordan," would be the prophet's director, and have him touch him with his hand; as if a patient, sick of a desperate disease, should prescribe to his skilful physician what remedies he should order for his cure, and make his own infirm reason, or his gust and palate, the rule, rather than the physician's skill. Men's inquiries are, "Who will show us any good?" They rather fasten upon any means than that which God hath ordained. [Note: Durant de Tent, pp. 403, 404.] We invert the order Divine wisdom hath established, when we would have God save us in our own way, not in his. It is the same thing as if we would have God nourish us without bread, and cure our disease without medicines, and increase our wealth without our industry, and cherish our souls without his word and ordinances. It is to demand of him an alteration of his methods, and a separation of that which he hath by his eternal judgment joined together. Therefore for a man to pray to God to save him when he will not use the means he hath appointed for salvation, when he slights the word, which is the instrument of salvation, is a contempt of the wisdom of Divine institutions. Also in omissions of prayer. When we consult not with God upon emergent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom than God's, and imply that we stand not in need of his conduct, but have ability to direct ourselves, and accomplish our ends without his guidance. Not seeking God is, by the prophet, taxed to be a reflection upon this perfection of God (Isaiah 31:1-2): "They look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord" &c. And the like charge he brings against them (Hosea 8:9): "They are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God."

3. In censuring God's revelations and actions, if they be not according to our schemes: when we will not submit to his plain will without penetrating into the unrevealed reason of it, nor adore his counsels without controlling them, as if we could correct both law and gospel, and frame a better method of redemption than that of God's contriving. Thus men slighted the wisdom of God in the gospel, because it did not agree with that philosophical wisdom and reason they had sucked in by education from their masters (1 Corinthians 1:21-22), contrary to their practice in their superstitious worship, where the oracles they thought divine were entertained with reverence, not with dispute, and though ambiguous, were not counted ridiculous by the worshipper. How foolish is man in this wherein he would be accounted wise! Adam, in innocence, was unfit to control the doctrine of God when the eye of his reason was clear; and much more are we, since the depravation of our natures. The revelations of God tower above reason in its purity, much more above reason in its mud and earthiness. The rays of Divine wisdom are too bright for our human understandings, much more for our sinful understandings. It is base to set up reason, a finite principle, against an infinite wisdom; much baser to set up a depraved and purblind reason against an all-seeing and holy wisdom. If we would have a reason for all that God speaks, and all that God acts, our wisdom must become infinite as his, or his wisdom become finite as ours. All the censures of God's revelations arise from some prejudicate opinions, or traditional maxims, that have enthroned themselves in our minds, which are made the standard whereby to judge the things of God, and receive or reject them as they agree with, or dissent from, those principles (Colossians 2:8). Hence it was that the philosophers, in the primitive times, were the greatest enemies to the gospel: and the contempt of Divine wisdom, in making reason the supreme judge of Divine revelation, was the fruitful mother of the heresies in all ages springing up in the church, and especially of that Socinianism, that daily insinuates itself into the minds of men. This is a wrong to the wisdom of God. He that censures the words or actions of another, implies that he is, in his censure, wiser than the person censured by him. It is as insupportable to determine the truth of God's plain dictates by our reason, as it is to measure the suitableness or unsuitableness of his actions by the humor of our will. We may sooner think to span the sun, or grasp a star, or see a gnat swallow a Leviathan, than fully understand the debates of eternity. To this we may refer too curious inquiries into Divine methods, and "intruding into those things which are not revealed" (Colossians 2:18). It is to affect a wisdom equal with God, and an ambition to be of his cabinet council. We are not content to be creatures, that is, to be every way below God; below him in wisdom, as well as power.

4. In prescribing God's method of acting. When we pray for a thing without a due submission to God's will; as if we were his counsellors, yea his tutors, and not his subjects, and God were bound to follow our humors, and be swayed according to the judgment of our ignorance; when we would have such a mercy which God thinks not fit to give, or have it in this method, which God designs to convey through another channel. Thus we would have the only wise God take his measures from our passions; such a controlling of God was Jonah's anger about a gourd (Jonah 4:1): "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." We would direct Him how to dispose of us; as though he, that had infinite wisdom to contrive and rear the excellent fabric of the world, had not wisdom enough, without our discretions, to place us in a sphere proper for his own ends, and the use he intends us in the universe. All the speeches of men (would I had been in such an office, had such a charge; would I had such a mercy, in such a method, or by such instruments,) are entrenchments upon God's wise disposal of affairs. This imposing upon God is a hellish

disposition, and in hell we find it. The rich man in hell, that pretends some charity for his brethren on earth, would direct God a way to prevent their ruin, by sending one from the dead to school them, as a more effectual means than "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29-30). It is a temper also to be found on earth; what else was the language of Saul's saving the Amalekites' cattle against the plain command of God (1 Samuel 15:15)? As if God in his fury had overshot himself and overlooked his altar, in depriving it of so great a booty for its service; as if it were an unwise thing in God, to lose the prey of so many stately cattle, that might make the altar smoke with their entrails, and serve to expiate the sins of the people; and therefore he would rectify that which he thought to be an oversight in God, and so magnifies his own prudence and discretion above the Divine. We will not let God act as he thinks fit, but will be directing him, and "teaching him knowledge" (Job 21:22.) As if God were a statue, an idol, that had eyes and saw not, hands, but acted not; and could be turned as an image may be, to what quarter of the heaven we please ourselves. The wisdom of God is unbiassed; he orders nothing but what is fittest for his end, and we would have our shallow brains the bias of God's acting. And will not God resent such an indignity, as a reflection upon his wisdom as well as authority, when we intimate that we have better heads than he, and that he comes short of us in understanding?

5. In murmuring and impatience. One demands a reason, why he hath this or that cross? Why he hath been deprived of such a comfort, lost such a venture, languisheth under such a sickness, is tormented with such pains, oppressed by tyrannical neighbors, is unsuccessful in such designs? In these, and such like, the wisdom of God is questioned and defamed. All impatience is a suspicion, if not a condemnation of the prudence of God's methods, and would make human feebleness and folly the rule of God's dealing with his creatures. This is a presuming to instruct God, and a reproving him for unreasonableness in his proceedings, when his dealings with us do not exactly answer our fancies and wishes; as if God, who made the world in wisdom, wanted skill for the management of his creatures in it (Job 40:2): "Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." We that are not wise enough to know ourselves, and what is needful for us; presume to have wit enough to guide God in his dealing with us. The wisdom of God rendered Job more useful to the world by his afflictions, in making him a pattern of patience, than if he had continued him in a confluence of all worldly comforts, wherein he had been beneficial only in communicating his morsels to his poor neighbors. All murmuring is a fastening error upon unerring Wisdom.

6. In pride and haughtiness of spirit. No proud man, but sets his heart "as the heart of God" (Ezekiel 27:2-3). The wisdom of God hath given to men divers offices, set them its divers places; some have more honorable charges, some meaner. Not to give that respect their offices and places call for, is to quarrel with the wisdom of God, and overturn the rank and order wherein he hath placed things. It is unfit we should affront God in the disposal of his creatures, and intimate to him by our carriage, that he had done more wisely in placing another, and that he hath done foolishly in placing this or that man in such a charge. Sometimes men are unworthy the place they fill; they may be set there in judgment to themselves and others: but the wisdom of God in his management of things, is to be honored and regarded. It is an infringing the wisdom of God, when we have a vain opinion of ourselves, and are blind to others. When we think ourselves monarchs, and treat others as worms or flies in comparison of us. He who would reduce all things to his own honor, perverts the order of the world, and would constitute another order than what the wisdom of

God hath established; and move them to an end contrary to the intention of God, and charges God with want of discretion and skill.

7. Distrust of God's promise is an impeachment of his wisdom. A secret reviling of it, as if he had not taken due consideration before he past his word; or a suspicion of his power, as if he could not accomplish his word. We trust the physician's skill with our bodies, and the lawyer's counsel with our estates; but are loath to rely upon God for the concerns of our lives. If he be wise to dispose of us, why do we distrust him? If we distrust him; why do we embrace an opinion of wisdom? Unbelief also is a contradiction to the wisdom of God in the gospel, &c., but that I have already handled in a discourse of the nature of unbelief.

Use 3. Of comfort. God hath an infinite wisdom, to conduct us in our affairs, rectify us in our mistakes, and assist us in our straits. It is an inestimable privilege to have a God in covenant with us; so wise, to communicate all good, to prevent all evil; who hath infinite ways to bring to pass his gracious intentions towards us. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33)! His judgments or decrees are incomprehensibly wise, and the ways of effecting them are as wise as his resolves effected by them. We can as little search into his methods of acting, as we can into his wisdom of resolving; both his judgments and ways are unsearchable.

1. Comfort in all straits and afflictions. There is a wisdom in inflicting them, and a wisdom in removing them. He is wise to suit his medicines to the humor of our disease, though he doth not to the humor of our wills: he cannot mistake the nature of our distemper, or the virtue of his own physic. Like a skilful physician, he sometimes prescribes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials, according to the strength of the malady, and necessity of the patient, to reduce him to health. As nothing comes from him, but what is for our good, so nothing is acted by him in a rash and temerarious way. His wisdom is as infinite as his goodness; and as exact in managing, as his goodness is plentiful in streaming out to us. He understands our griefs, weighs our necessities, and no remedies are beyond the reach of his contrivance. When our feeble wits are bewildered in a maze, and at the end of their line for a rescue, the remedies unknown to us are not unknown to God. When we know not how to prevent a danger, the wise God hath a thousand blocks to lay in the way; when we know not how to free ourselves from an oppressive evil, he hath a thousand ways of relief. He knows how to time our crosses, and his own blessings. The heart of a wise God, as well as the heart of a wise man, discerns both time and judgment (Ecclesiastes 8:5). There is as much judgment in sending them, as judgment in removing them. How comfortable is it to think, that our distresses, as well as our deliverances, are the fruits of infinite wisdom! Nothing is done by him too soon or too slow; but in the true point of time, with all its due circumstances, most conveniently for his glory and our good. How wise is God to bring the glory of our salvation out of the depths of a seeming ruin, and make the evils of affliction subservient to the good of the afflicted.

2. In temptations, his wisdom is no less employed in permitting them, than in bringing them to a good issue. His wisdom in leading our Saviour to be tempted of the devil, was to fit him for our succor; and his wisdom in suffering us to be tempted, is to fit us for his own service, and our salvation. He makes a thorn in the flesh to be an occasion of a refreshing grace to the spirit, and brings forth cordial grapes from those pricking brambles, and magnifies his grace by his wisdom,

from the deepest subtilties of hell. Let Satan's intentions be what they will, he can be for him at every turn, to outwit him in his stratagems, to baffle him in his enterprises; to make him instrumental for our good, where he designs nothing but our hurt. The Lord hath his methods of deliverance from him (2 Peter 2:9). "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

3. In denials, or delays of answers of prayer. He is gracious to hear; but he is wise to answer in an acceptable time, and succor us in a day proper for our salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). We have partial affections to ourselves, ignorance is natural to us (Romans 8:26). We ask we know not what, because we ask out of ignorance. God grants what he knows, what is fit for him to do, and fit for us to receive; and the exact season wherein it is fittest for him to bestow a mercy. As God would have us bring forth our fruit in season, so he will send forth his mercies in season. He is wise to suit his remedy to our condition, to time it so, as that we shall have an evident prospect of his wisdom in it; that more of Divine skill, and less of human, may appear in the issue. He is ready at our call; but he will not answer, till he see the season fit to reach out his hand. He is wise to prove our faith, to humble us under the sense of our own unworthiness, to wet our affections, to set a better estimate on the blessings prayed for, and that he may double the blessing, as we do our devotion: but when his wisdom sees us fit to receive his goodness, he grants what we stand in need of. He is wise to choose the fittest time, and faithful to give the best covenant mercy.

4. In all evils threatened to the church by her enemies. He hath knowledge to foresee them, and wisdom to disappoint them (Job 5:13); "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." The church hath the wisdom of God, to enter the lists with the policy of hell. He defeated the serpent in the first net he laid, and brought a glorious salvation out of hell's rubbish, and is yet as skilful to disappoint the after-game of the serpentine brood. The policy of hell, and the subtilty of the world, are no better than folly with God (1 Corinthians 3:19). All creatures are fools, as creatures, in comparison with the Creator. The angels he chargeth with folly, much more us sinners. Depraved understandings are not fit mates for a pure and unblemished mind. Pharaoh, with his wisdom, finds a grave in the sea; and Ahitophel's plots are finished in his own murder. He breaks the enemies by his power, and orders them by his skill to be a feast to his people (Psalms 74:14); "Thou breakest the head of the leviathan, and gavest him to be meat to the people in the wilderness." The spoils of the Egyptians' carcasses, cast upon the shore, served the Israelites' necessities (or were as meat to them); as being a deliverance the church might feed upon in all ages, in a wilderness condition, to maintain their faith, the vital principle of the soul. There is a wisdom superior to the subtilties of men, which laughs at their follies, and "hath them in derision" (Psalms 2:4). "There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord" (Proverbs 21:30). You never question the wisdom of an artist to use his file, when he takes it into his hand. Wicked instruments are God's axes and files; let him alone, he hath skill enough to manage them: God hath too much affection to destroy his people, and wisdom enough to beautify them by the worst tools he uses. He can make all things conspire to a perfect harmony for his own ends, and his people's good, when they see no way to escape a danger feared, or attain a blessing wanted.

Use 4. For Exhortation. I. Meditate on the wisdom of God in creation and government. How little do we think of God when we behold his works! Our sense dwells upon the surface of plants and animals, beholds the variety of their colors, and the progress in their motion; our reason studies the qualities of them; our spirits seldom take a flight to the Divine wisdom which framed them. Our

senses engross our minds from God, that we scarce have a thought free to bestow upon the Maker of them, but only on the by. The constancy of seeing things that are common stifles our admiration of God, due upon the sight of them. How seldom do we raise our souls as far as heaven, in our views of the order of the world, the revolutions of the seasons, the nature of the creatures that are common among us, and the mutual assistance they give to each other! Since God hath manifested himself in them, to neglect the consideration of them is to neglect the manifestation of God, and the way whereby he hath transmitted something of his perfections to our understanding. It renders men inexcusably guilty of not glorifying of God (Romans 1:19-20). We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures, without a blemish cast upon the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea, so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them, but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God result from them. They are exposed to our view, that something of God may be lodged in our minds; that, as our bodies extract their quintessence for our nourishment, so our minds may extract a quintessence for the Maker's praise. Though God is principally to be praised, in and for Christ, yet, as grace doth not rase out the law of nature, so the operations of grace put not the dictates of nature to silence, nor suspend the homage due to God upon our inspection of his works. God hath given full testimonies of this perfection in the heavenly bodies, dispersing their light, and distributing their influences to every part of the world; in framing men into societies, giving them various dispositions for the preservation of governments; making some wise for counsel, others martial for action; changing old empires, and raising new. Which way soever we cast our eyes, we shall find frequent occasions to cry out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33)! To this purpose, we must not only look upon the bulk and outside of his works, but consider from what principles they were raised, in what order disposed, and the exact symmetry and proportion of their parts. When a man comes into a city or temple, and only considers the surface of the buildings, they will amaze his sense, but not better his understanding, unless he considers the methods of the work, and the art whereby it was erected.

(1.) This was an end for which they were created. God did not make the world for man's use only, but chiefly for his own glory; for man's use to enjoy his creatures, and for his own glory to be acknowledged in his creatures, that we may consider his art in framing them, and his skill in disposing them, and not only gaze upon the glass without considering the image it represents, and acquainting ourselves whose image it is. The creatures were not made for themselves, but for the service of the Creator, and the service of man. Man was not made for himself, but for the service of the Lord that created him. He is to consider the beauty of the creation, that he may thereby glorify the Creator. He knows in art their excellency; the creatures themselves, do not. If, therefore, man be idle and unobservant of them, he deprives God of the glory of his wisdom, which he should have by his creatures. The inferior creatures themselves cannot observe it. If man regard it not, what becomes of it? His glory can only be handed to him by man. The other creatures cannot be active instruments of his glory, because they know not themselves, and therefore cannot render him an active praise. Man is, therefore, bound to praise God for himself, and for all his creatures, because he only knows himself, and the perfections of the creatures, and the Author both of himself and them. God created such variety, to make a report of himself to us; we are to receive the report, and to reflect it back to him. To what purpose did he make so many things, not necessary, for the support and pleasure of our lives, but that we should behold him in

them, as well as in the other? We cannot behold the wisdom of God in his own essence, and eternal ideas, but by the reflection of it in the creatures: as we cannot steadily behold the sun with our eye, but either through a glass, or by reflection of the image of it in the water. God would have us meditate on his perfections; he therefore chose the same day wherein he reviewed his work and rested from it, to be celebrated by man for the contemplation of him (Genesis 2:2-3), that we should follow his example, and rejoice, as himself did, in the frequent reviews of his wisdom and goodness in them. In vain would the creatures afford matter for this study, if they were wholly neglected. God offers something to our consideration in every creature. Shall the beams of God shine round about us, and strike our eyes, and not affect our minds? Shall we be like ignorant children, that view the pictures, or point to the letters in a book, without any sense and meaning? How shall God have the homage due to him from his works, if man hath no care to observe them? Psalms 148:1-14 is an exhortation to this. The view of them should often extract from us a wonder of the like nature of that of David's (Psalms 104:24): "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" The world was not created to be forgotten, nor man created to be unobservant of it.

(2.) If we observe not the wisdom of God in the views of the creatures, we do no more than brutes. To look upon the works of God in the world, is no higher an act than mere animals perform. The glories of heaven, and beauties of the earth, are visible to the sense of beasts and birds. A brute beholds the motion of a man, as it may see the wheels of a clock, but understands not the inward springs of motion; the end for which we move, or the soul that acts us in our motion; much less that Invisible Power which presides over the creatures, and conducts their motion. If a man do no more than this, he goes not a step beyond a brutish nature, and may very well acknowledge himself with Asaph, a foolish and ignorant beast before God (Psalms 73:22). The world is viewed by beasts, but the Author of it to be contemplated by man. Since we are in a higher rank than beasts, we owe a greater debt than beasts; not only to enjoy the creatures, as they do, but behold God in the creatures, which they cannot do. The contemplation of the reason of God in his works, is a noble and suitable employment for a rational creature: we have not only sense to perceive them, but souls to mind them. The soul is not to be without its operation: where the operation of sense ends, the work of the soul ought to begin. We travel over them by our senses, as brutes; but we must pierce further by our understandings, as men, and perceive and praise Him that lies invisible in his visible manufactures. Our senses are given us as servants to the soul, and our souls bestowed upon us for the knowledge and praise of their and our common Creator.

(3.) This would be a means to increase our humility. We should then flag our wings, and vail our sails, and acknowledge our own wisdom to be as a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun. We should have mean thoughts of the nothingness of our reason, when we consider the sublimity of the Divine wisdom. Who can seriously consider the sparks of infinite skill in the creature, without falling down at the feet of the Divine Majesty, and acknowledge himself a dark and foolish creature (Psalms 8:4-5)? When the Psalmist considered the heavens, the moon, and stars, and God's ordination and disposal of them, the use that results from it is, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" We should no more think to mate him in prudence, or set up the spark of our reason to vie with the sun. Our reason would more willingly submit to the revelation, when the characters of Divine wisdom are stamped upon it, when we find his wisdom in creation incomprehensible to us.

(4.) It would help us in our acknowledgments of God, for his goodness to us. When we behold the wisdom of God in creatures below us, and how ignorant they are of what they possess, it will cause us to reflect upon the deeper impressions of wisdom in the frame of our own bodies and souls, an excellency far superior to theirs; this would make us admire the magnificence of his wisdom and goodness, sound forth his praise for advancing us in dignity above other works of his hands, and stamping on us, by infinite art, a nobler image of himself. And by such a comparison of ourselves with the creatures below us, we should be induced to act excellently, according to the nature of our souls; not brutishly, according to the nature of the creatures God hath put under our feet.

(5.) By the contemplation of the creatures, we may receive some assistance in clearing our knowledge in the wisdom of redemption. Though they cannot of themselves inform us of it, yet since God hath revealed his redeeming grace, they can illustrate some particulars of it to us. Hence the Scripture makes use of the creatures, to set forth things of a higher orb to us: our Saviour is called a Sun, a Vine, and a Lion; the Spirit likened to a dove, fire, and water. The union of Christ and his church, is set forth by the marriage union of Adam and Eve. God hath placed in corporeal things the images of spiritual, and wrapped up in his creating wisdom the representations of his redeeming grace: whence some call the creatures, natural types of what was to be transacted in a new formation of the world, and allusions to what God intended in and by Christ.

(6.) The meditation of God's wisdom in the creatures is, in part, a beginning of heaven upon earth. No doubt but there will be a perfect opening of the model of Divine wisdom. Heaven is for clearing what is now obscure, and a full discovering of what seems at present intricate (Psalms 36:9.): In his light shall we see light: all the light in creation, government, and redemption. The wisdom of God in the new heavens, and the new earth, would be to little purpose, if that also were not to be regarded by the inhabitants of them. As the saints are to be restored to the state of Adam, and higher; so they are to be restored to the employment of Adam, and higher: but his employment was, to behold God in the creatures. The world was so soon depraved, that God had but little joy in, and man but little knowledge of his works. And since the wisdom of God in creation is so little seen by our ignorance here, would not God lose much of the glory of it, if the glorified souls should lose the understanding of it above? When their darkness shall be expelled, and their advantages improved; when the eye that Adam lost shall be fully restored, and with a greater clearness; when the creature shall be restored to its true end, and reason to its true perfection (Romans 8:21-22); when the fountains of the depths of nature and government shall be opened, knowledge shall increase, and according to the increase of our knowledge, shall the admiration of Divine wisdom increase also. The wisdom of God in creation was not surely intended to lie wholly unobserved in the greatest part of it; but since there was so little time for the full observation of it, there will be a time wherein the wisdom of God shall enjoy a resurrection, and be fully contemplated by his understanding and glorified creature.

Exhort. 2. Study and admire the wisdom of God in redemption. This is the duty of all Christians. We are not called to understand the great depth of philosophy; we are not called to a skill in the intricacies of civil government, or understand all the methods of physic; but we are called to be Christians, that is, studiers of Divine evangelical wisdom. There are first principles to be learned; but not those principles to be rested in without a further progress (Hebrews 6:1): "Therefore,

leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection.” Duties must be practised, but knowledge is not to be neglected. The study of Gospel mysteries, the harmony of Divine truths, the sparkling of Divine wisdom, in their mutual combination to the great ends of God’s glory and man’s salvation, is an incentive to duty, a spur to worship, and particularly to the greatest and highest part of worship, that part which shall remain in heaven; the admiration and praise of God, and delight in him. If we acquaint not ourselves with the impressions of the glory of Divine wisdom in it, we shall not much regard it as worthy our observance in regard of that duty. The gospel is a mystery; and, as a mystery, hath something great and magnificent in it worthy of our daily inspection; we shall find fresh springs of new wonders, which we shall be invited to adore with a religious astonishment. It will both raise and satisfy our longings. Who can come to the depths of “God manifested in the flesh?” How amazing is it, and unworthy of a slight thought, that the death of the Son of God should purchase the happy immortality of a sinful creature, and the glory of a rebel be wrought by the ignominy of so great a person! that our Mediator should have a nature whereby to covenant with his Father, and a nature whereby to be a Surety for the creature! How admirable is it, that the fallen creature should receive an advantage by the forfeiture of his happiness! How mysterious is it, that the Son of God should bow down to death upon a cross for the satisfaction of justice; and rise triumphantly out of the grave, as a declaration, that justice was contented and satisfied! that he should be exalted to heaven to intercede for us; and at last return into the world to receive us, and invest us with a glory forever with himself! Are these things worthy of a careless regard, or a blockish amazement? What understanding can pierce into the depths of the divine doctrine of the incarnation and birth of Christ; the indissoluble union of the two natures? What capacity is able to measure the miracles of that wisdom, found in the whole draught and scheme of the gospel? Doth it not merit, then, to be the object of our daily meditation? How comes it to pass, then, that we are so little curious to concern our thoughts in those wonders, that we scarce taste or sip of these delicacies? that we busy ourselves in trifles, and consider what we shall eat, and in what fashion we shall be dressed; please ourselves with the ingeniousness of a lace or feather; admire a moth-eaten manuscript, or some half-worn piece of antiquity, and think our time ill-spent in the contemplating and celebrating that wherein God hath busied himself, and eternity is designed for the perpetual expressions of? How inquisitive are the blessed angels! with what vigor do they renew their daily contemplations of it, and receive a fresh contentment from it; still learning, and still inquiring (1 Peter 1:12)! Their eye is never off the mercy-seat; they strive to see the bottom of it, and employ all the understanding they have to conceive the wonders of it. Shall the angels be ravished with it and bend themselves down to study it, who have but little interest in it in comparison of us, for whom it was both contrived and dispensed;—and shall not our pains be greater for this hidden treasure? Is not that worthy the study of a rational creature, that is worthy the study of the angelical? There must indeed be pains; it is expressed by “digging” (Proverbs 2:4). A lazy arm will not sink to the depth of a mine. The neglect of meditating on it is inexcusable, since it hath the title and character of the wisdom of God. The ancient prophets searched into it, when it was folded up in shadows, when they saw only the fringes of Wisdom’s garment (1 Peter 1:10); and shall not we, since the sun hath mounted up in our horizon, and sensibly scattered the light of the knowledge of this and the other perfections of God? As the Jewish sabbath was appointed to celebrate the perfections of God, discovered in creation, so is the Christian sabbath appointed to meditate on, and bless God, for the discovery of his perfections in redemption. Let us, therefore, receive it according to its worth: let it be our only rule to walk by. It

is worthy to be valued above all other counsels; and we should never think of it without the doxology of the apostle, "To the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever!" that our speculations may end in affectionate admirations, and thanksgivings, for that which is so full of wonders. What a little prospect should we have had of God, and the happiness of man, had not his wisdom and goodness revealed these things to us! The gospel is a marvellous light, and should not be regarded with a stupid ignorance, and pursued with a duller practice.

Exhort. 3. Let none of us be proud of, or trust in our own wisdom. Man, by affecting wisdom out of the way of God, got a crack in his head, which hath continued five thousand years and upwards, and ever since our own wisdom and "knowledge hath perverted us" (Isaiah 47:10). To be guided by this, is to be under the conduct of a blind leader, and follow a traitor and enemy to God and ourselves. Man's prudence often proves hurtful to him: he often accomplisheth his ruin, while he designs his establishment; and finds his fall, where he thought to settle his fortune: such bad eyes hath human wisdom often in its own affairs. Those that have been heightened with a conceit of their own cunning, have at last proved the greatest fools. God delights to make "foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Thus God writ folly upon the crafty brains of Ahithophel, and simplicity upon the subtle projects of Herod against our Saviour; and the devil, the prince of carnal wisdom, was befooled into a furthering our redemption by his own projects to hinder it. Carnal policy, against the prescripts of Divine wisdom, never prospers: it is like an ignis fatuus, which leads men out of the way of duty, and out of the way of security, and perverts them into the mire and dangerous precipices. When Jeroboam would coin a religion to serve his interest of state, he tore up the foundations both of his kingdom and family. The way the Jews took to prevent a fresh invasion of the Romans, by the crucifying Christ, brought the judgment more swift upon them (John 11:48). There is no man ruined here, or damned hereafter, but by his own wisdom and will. (Proverbs 3:5; Proverbs 3:7), "The fear of the Lord, and departure from evil, are inconsistent with an overweening conceit of our own wisdom;" and leaning to our own understanding, is inconsistent with a trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. It is as much a deifying ourselves, to trust to our own wit, as it is a deifying the creature to affect or confide in it, superior to God or equally with him. The true way to wisdom is to be sensible of our own folly (1 Corinthians 3:18), "If any man be wise, let him become a fool." He that distrusts his own guidance, will more securely and successfully follow the counsel of another in whom he confides. The more water, or any other liquor, is poured out of a vessel, the more air enters. The more we distrust our own wisdom, the more capable we are of the conduct of God's. Had Jehoshaphat relied upon his own policy, he might have found a defeat when he met with a deliverance; but he disowned his own skill and strength in telling God, "We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12). Let us, therefore, with Agur, disesteem our own understanding to esteem Divine. Human prudence is like a spider's web, easily blown away, and swept down by the besom of some unexpected revolution. God, by his infinite wisdom, can cross the wisdom of man, and make a man's own prudence hang in his own light. (Isaiah 29:14), "The understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

Exhort. 4. Seek to God for wisdom. The wisdom we have by nature, is like the weeds the earth brings forth without tillage. Our wisdom since the fall, is the wisdom of the serpent, without the innocency of the dove: it flows from self-love, runs into self-interest. It is the wisdom of the flesh, and a prudence to manage means for the contending our lusts. Our best wisdom is imperfect, a mere nothing and vanity, in comparison of the Divine, as our beings are in comparison of his

essence. We must go to God for a holy and innocent wisdom, and fill our cisterns from a pure fountain. The wisdom that was the glory of Solomon, was the donation of the Most High. (James 1:5), "If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The faculty of understanding is from God by nature; but a heavenly light to direct the understanding is from God by grace. Children have an understanding, but stand in need of wise masters to rectify it, and form judicious notions in it. "There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8). We must beg of God, wisdom. The gospel is the wisdom of God; the concerns of it great and mysterious, not to be known without a "new understanding" (1 John 5:20). A new understanding is not to be had but from the Creator of the first. The Spirit of God is the "searcher of the deep things of God;" the revealer of them to us, and the enlightener of our minds to apprehend them; and, therefore, called a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Ephesians 1:17). Christ is made wisdom to us, as well as righteousness; not only by imputation, but effusion. [Note: Seaman's Sermon before the Parliament.] Seek to God, therefore, for that wisdom which is like the sun, and not that worldly wisdom which is like a shadow: for that wisdom whose effects are not so outwardly glorious, but inwardly sweet, seek it from him, and seek it in his word, that is, the transcript of Divine wisdom; "through his precepts understanding is to be had" (Psalms 119:104). As the wisdom of men appears in their laws, so doth the wisdom of God in his statutes. By this means we arrive to a heavenly sagacity. If these be rejected, what wisdom can there be in us? a dream and conceit only (Jeremiah 8:1-22.): "They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Who knows how to order any concerns as he ought, or any one faculty of his soul? Therefore, desire God's direction in outward concerns, in personal, family, in private and public. He hath not only a wisdom for our salvation, but for our outward direction. He doth not only guide us in the one, and leave Satan to manage us in the other. Those that go with Saul to a witch of Endor, go to hell for craft, and prefer the wisdom of the hostile serpent before the holy counsel of a faithful Creator. If you want health in your body, you advise with a physician; if direction for your estate, you resort to a lawyer; if passage for a voyage, you address to a pilot; why not much more yourselves, your all, to a wise God? As Pliny said, concerning a wise man, "O, Sir, how many Catos are there in that wise person!" how much more wisdom than men or angels possess, is infinitely centered in the wise God!

Exhort. 5. Submit to the wisdom of God in all cases. What else was inculcated in the first precept, forbidding man to eat of the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," but that he should take heed of the swelling of his mind against the wisdom of God? It is a wisdom incomprehensible to flesh and blood; we should adore it in our minds, and resign up ourselves to it in our practice. How unreasonable are repinings against God, whereby a creature's ignorance indicts and judges a Creator's prudence! Were God weak in wisdom, and only mighty in power, we might suspect his conduct. Power without wisdom and goodness is an unruly and ruinous thing in the world. But God being infinite in one, as well as the other, we have no reason to be jealous of him, and repine against his methods; why should we quarrel with him that we are not as high, or as wealthy as others; that we have not presently the mercy we want? If he be wise, we ought to stay his time, and wait his leisure, because "he is a God of judgment" (Isaiah 30:18). Presume not to shorten the time which his discretion hath fixed; it is a folly to think to do it. By impatience we cannot hasten relief; we alienate him from us by debasing him to stand at our bar, disturb ourselves, lose the comfort of our lives, and the sweetness of his mercy. Submission to God we are in no case exempted from, because there is no case wherein God doth not direct all the acts of his will by

counsel. Whatsoever is drawn by a straight rule must be right and straight; the rule that is right in itself, is the measure of the straightness of everything else; whatsoever is wrought in the world by God, must be wise, good, righteous; because God is essentially wisdom, goodness, and righteousness.

(1.) Submit to God, in his revelations. 1. Measure them not by reason: the truths of the gospel must be received with a self-emptiness and annihilation of the creature. If our reason seems to lift up itself against revelation, because it finds no testimony for it in its own light, consider how crazy it is in natural and obvious things, and therefore sure it is not strong enough to enter into the depths of Divine wisdom: the wisdom of God in the gospel is too great an ocean to be contained or laved out by a cockleshell. It were not infinite, if it were not beyond our finite reach; our reason must as well stoop to his wisdom, as our wills to his sovereignty. How great a vanity is it for a glow-worm to boast that it is as full of light as the sun in the firmament! for reason to leave its proper sphere, is to fall into confusion, and thicken its own darkness. We should settle ourselves in the belief of the Scripture, and confirm ourselves by a meditation on those many undeniable arguments for its Divine authority,—the fulfilling of its predictions, the antiquity of the writing, the holiness of the precepts, the heavenliness of the doctrine, the glorious effects it hath produced, and doth yet produce, different from human methods of success; and submit our reason to the voice of so high a majesty. 2. Not to be too curiously inquisitive into what is not revealed. There is something hid in whatsoever is revealed. We know the Son of God was begotten from eternity, but how he was begotten, we are ignorant. We know there is a union of the Divine nature with the human, and that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily; but the manner of its inhabitation we are in a great part ignorant of. We know that God hath chosen some and refused others, and that he did it with counsel; but the reason why he chose this man and not that, we know not; we can refer it to nothing but God's sovereign pleasure. It is revealed that there will be a day wherein God shall judge the world; but the particular time is not revealed. We know that God created the world in time; but why he did not create the world millions of years before, we are, ignorant of, and our reasons would be bewildered in their too much curiosity. If we ask why he did not create it before, we may as well ask why he did create it then? And may not the same question be asked, if the world had been created millions of years before it was? That he created it in six days, and not in an instant, is revealed; but why he did not do it in a moment, since we are sure he was able to do it, is not revealed. Are the reasons of a wise man's proceedings hid from us? and shall we presume to dive into the reason of the proceedings of an only wise God, which he hath judged not expedient to discover to us? Some sparks of his wisdom he hath caused to issue out, to exercise and delight our minds; others he keeps within the centre of his own breast; we must not go about to unlock his cabinet. As we cannot reach to the utmost lines of his power, so we cannot grasp the intimate reasons of his wisdom. We must still remember, that which is finite can never be able to comprehend the reasons, motives, and methods of that which is infinite. It doth not become us to be resty, because God hath not admitted us into the debates of eternity. We are as little to be curious at what God hath hid, as to be careless of what God hath manifested. Too great an inquisitiveness beyond our line, is as much a provoking arrogance, as a blockish negligence of what is revealed, is a slighting ingratitude.

(2.) Submit to God in his precepts and methods. Since they are the results of infinite wisdom, disputes against them are not tolerable; what orders are given out by infallible Wisdom are to be

entertained with respect and reverence, though the reason of them be not visible to our purblind minds. Shall God have less respect from us than earthly princes, whose laws we observe without being able to pierce into the exact reason of them all? Since we know he hath not a will without an understanding, our observance of him must be without repining; we must not think to mend our Creator's laws, and presume to judge and condemn his righteous statutes. If the flesh rise up in opposition, we must cross its motions, and silence its murmurings; his will should be an acceptable will to us, because it is a wise will in itself. God hath no need to impose upon us and deceive us; he hath just and righteous ways to attain his glory and his creatures's good. To deceive us, would be to dishonor himself, and contradict his own nature. He cannot impose false injurious precepts, or unavailable to his subjects' happiness; not false, because of his truth; not injurious, because of his goodness; not vain, because of his wisdom. Submit, therefore, to him in his precepts, and in his methods too. The honor of his wisdom, and the interest of our happiness, call for it. Had Noah disputed with God about building an ark, and listened to the scoffs of the senseless world, he had perished under the same fate, and lost the honor of a preacher and worker of righteousness. Had not the Israelites been their own enemies, if they had been permitted to be their own guides, and returned to the Egyptian bondage and furnaces, instead of a liberty and earthly felicity in Canaan? Had our Saviour gratified the Jews by descending from the cross, and freeing himself from the power of his adversaries, he might have had that faith from them which they promised him; but it had been a faith to no purpose, because without ground; they might have believed him to be the Son of God, but he could not have been the Saviour of the world. His death, the great ground and object of faith, had been unaccomplished; they had believed a God pardoning without a consent to his justice, and such a faith could not have rescued them from falling into eternal misery. The precepts and methods of Divine wisdom must be submitted to.

(3.) Submit to God in all crosses and revolutions. Infinite Wisdom cannot err in any of his paths, or step the least hair's breadth from the way of righteousness: there is the understanding of God in every motion; an eye in every wheel, the wheel that goes over us and crusheth us. We are led by fancy more than reason: we know no more what we ask, or what is fit for us, than the mother of Zebedee's children did, when she petitioned Christ for her sons' advancement, when he came into his temporal kingdom (Matthew 20:22): the things we desire might please our fancy or appetite, but impair our health: one man complains for want of children, but knows not whether they may prove comforts or crosses: another for want of health, but knows not whether the health of his body may not prove the disease of his soul. We might lose in heavenly things, if we possess in earthly things what we long for. God, in regard of his infinite wisdom, is fitter to carve out a condition than we ourselves; our shallow reason and self-love, would wish for those things that are injurious to God, to ourselves, to the world; but God always chooses what is best for his glory, and what is best for his creatures, either in regard to themselves, or as they stand in relation to him, or to others, as parts of the world.

We are in danger from our self-love, in no danger in complying with God's wisdom: when Rachel would die, if she had no children, she had children, but death with one of them (Genesis 30:1). Good men may conclude, that whatsoever is done by God in them, or with them, is best and fittest for them; because by the covenant which makes over God to them, as their God, the conduct of his wisdom is assured to them as well as any other attribute: and, therefore, as God in every transaction appears as their God, so he appears as their wise Director, and by this wisdom he

extracts good out of evil, makes the affliction which destroys our outward comforts consume our inward defilements; and the waves which threatened to swallow up the vessel, to cast it upon the shore: and when he hath occasion to manifest his anger against his people, his wisdom directs his wrath. In judgment he hath “a work to do upon Zion;” and when that work is done, he punishes the fruit of the “stout heart of the king of Assyria” (Isaiah 10:12); as in the answers of prayer he doth give oftentimes “above what we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20), so in outward concerns he doth above what we can expect, or by our short-sightedness, conclude will be done. Let us, therefore, in all things, frame our minds to the Divine Wisdom, and say with the Psalmist (Psalms 47:4): “The Lord shall choose our inheritance and condition for us.”

Exhort. 6. Censure not God in any of his ways. Can we understand the full scope of Divine wisdom in creation, which is perfected before our eyes? Can we, by a rational knowledge, walk over the whole surface of the earth, and wade through the sea? Can we understand the nature of the heavens? Are all, or most, or the thousandth part of the particles of Divine skill, known by us, yea, or any of them thoroughly known? How can we, then, understand his deeper methods in things that are but of yesterday, that we have not had a time to view? We should not be too quick, or too rash, in our judgments of him: the best that we attain to, is but feeble conjectures at the designs of God. As there is something hid in what soever is revealed in his word, so there is something inaccessible to us in his works, as well as in his nature and Majesty. In our Saviour’s act in washing his disciples’ feet, he checked Peter’s contradiction (John 13:7): “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” God were not infinitely wise if the reason of all his acts were obvious to our shallowness. He is no profound statesman, whose inward intention can be sounded by vulgar heads at the first act he starts in his designed method. The wise God is, in this, like wise men, that have not breasts like glasses of crystal, to discover all that they intend. There are “secrets of wisdom above our reach” (Job 11:6); nay, when we see all his acts, we cannot see all the draughts of his skill in them. An unskilful hearer of a musical lesson may receive the melody with his ear, and understand not the rarities of the composition as it was wrought by the musician’s mind. Under the Old Testament there was more of Divine power, and less of his wisdom apparent in his acts: as his laws, so his acts, were more fitted to their sense. Under the New Testament there is more of wisdom, and less of power; as his laws, so his acts, are more fitted to a spiritual mind; wisdom is less discernible than power. Our wisdom, therefore, in this case, as it doth other things, consists in silence and expectation of the end and event of a work. We owe that honor to God that we do to men wiser than ourselves, to imagine he hath reason to do what he doth, though our shallowness cannot comprehend it. We must suffer God to be wiser than ourselves, and acknowledge that there is something sovereign in his ways not to be measured by the feeble reed of our weak understandings. And, therefore, we should acquiesce in his proceedings; take heed we be not found slanderers of God, but be adorers instead of censurers; and lift up our heads in admiration of him and his ways, instead of citing him to answer it at our bar. Many things in the first appearance may seem to be rash and unjust, which, in the issue, appear comely and regular. If it had been plainly spoke before that the Son of God should die, that a most holy person should be crucified, it would have seemed cruel to expose a son to misery; unjust to inflict punishment upon one that was no criminal; to join together exact goodness and physical evil; that the sovereign should die for the malefactor, and the observer of the law for the violators of it. But when the whole design is unravelled, what an admirable connexion is there of justice and mercy, love and wisdom, which before would have appeared absurd to the muddled reason of man! We

see the gardener pulling up some delightful flowers by the roots, digging up the earth, overwhelming it with dung; an ignorant person would imagine him wild, out of his wits, and charge him with spoiling his garden: but when the spring is arrived, the spectator will acknowledge his skill in his former operations. The truth is, the whole design and methods of God are not to be judged by us in this world; the full declaration of the whole contexture is reserved for the other world, to make up a part of good men's happiness in the amazing views of Divine wisdom, as well as the other perfections of his nature. We can no more perfectly understand his wisdom than we can his mercy and justice, till we see the last lines of all drawn, and the full expressions of them; we should therefore be sober and modest in the consideration of God's ways; "his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." The riches of his wisdom are past our counting, his depths not to be fathomed, yet they are depths of righteousness and equity; though the full manifestation of that equity, the grounds and methods of his proceedings are unknown to us. As we are too short fully to know God, so we are too ignorant fully to comprehend the acts of God: since he is a God of judgment, we should wait till we see the issue of his works (Isaiah 30:18). And in the meantime, with the apostle in the text, give him the glory of all, in the same expressions, "To the only wise God be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

S. Discourse II: On Practical Atheism

ON PRACTICAL ATHEISM

Psalms 14:1.—The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Practical atheism is natural to man in his depraved state, and very frequent in the hearts and lives of men. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. He regards him as little as if he had no being. He said in his heart, not with his tongue, nor in his head: he never firmly thought it, nor openly asserted it. Shame put a bar to the first, and natural reason to the second; yet, perhaps, he had sometimes some doubts whether there were a God or no. He wished there were not any, and sometimes hoped there were none at all. He could not raze out the notion of a Deity in his mind, but he neglected the fixing the sense of God in his heart, and made it too much his business to deface and blot out those characters of God in his soul, which had been left under the ruins of original nature. Men may have atheistical hearts without atheistical heads. Their reasons may defend the notion of a Deity, while their hearts are empty of affection to the Deity. Job's children may curse God in their hearts, though not with their lips. [Note: Job 1:5]

There is no God. Most understand it of a denial of the providence of God, as I have said in opening the former doctrine. He denies some essential attribute of God, or the exercise of that attribute in the world. [Note: So the Chaldee reads ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ Non potestas, denying the authority of God in the world.] He that denies any essential attribute, may be said to deny the being of God. Whosoever denies angels or men to have reason and will, denies the human and angelical nature, because understanding and will are essential to both those natures; there could neither be angel nor man without them. No nature can subsist without the perfections essential to that nature, nor God be conceived of without his. The apostle tells us (Ephesians 2:12), that the Gentiles were "without God in the world." So, in some sense, all unbelievers may be termed atheists; for rejecting the Mediator appointed by God, they reject that God who appointed him. But this is beyond the intended scope, natural atheism being the only subject; yet this is deducible from it. That the title of ■θεοι doth not only belong to those who deny the existence of God, or to those who contemn all sense of a Deity, and would root the conscience and reverence of God out of their souls; but it belongs also to those who give not that worship to God which is due to him, who worship many gods, or who worship one God in a false and superstitious manner, when they have not right conceptions of God, nor intend an adoration of him according to the excellency of his nature. All those that are unconcerned for any particular religion fall under this character: though they own a God in general, yet are willing to acknowledge any God that shall be coined by the powers under whom they live. The Gentiles were without God in the world; without the true notion of God, not without a God of their own framing. This general or practical atheism is natural to men.

1. Not natural by created, but by corrupted nature. It is against nature, as nature came out of the hand of God; but universally natural, as nature hath been sophisticated and infected by the serpent's breath. Inconsideration of God, or misrepresentation of his nature, are as agreeable to

corrupt nature, as the disowning the being of a God is contrary to common reason. God is not denied, naturâ, sed vitiis. [Note: Augustin de Civit. Dei.]

2. It is universally natural: "The wicked are estranged from the womb (Psalms 58:3). They go astray as soon as they be born: their poison is like the poison of a serpent." The wicked, (and who by his birth hath a better title?) they go astray from the dictates of God and the rule of their creation as soon as ever they be born. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent, which is radically the same in all of the same species. It is seminally and fundamentally in all men, though there may be a stronger restraint by a divine hand upon some men than upon others. This principle runs through the whole stream of nature. The natural bent of every man's heart is distant from God. When we attempt anything pleasing to God, it is like the climbing up a hill, against nature; when anything is displeasing to him, it is like a current running down the channel in its natural course; when we attempt anything that is an acknowledgment of the holiness of God, we are fain to rush, with arms in our hands, through a multitude of natural passions, and fight the way through the oppositions of our own sensitive appetite. How softly do we naturally sink down into that which sets us at a greater distance from God! There is no active, potent, efficacious sense of a God by nature. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The heart, in the singular number, as if there were but one common heart beat in all mankind, and bent, as with one pulse, with a joint consent and force to wickedness, without a sense of the authority of God in the earth, as if one heart acted every man in the world. The great apostle cites the text to verify the charge he brought against all mankind. [Note: Romans 3:9-12.] In his interpretation, the Jews, who owned one God, and were dignified with special privileges, as well as the Gentiles that maintained many gods, are within the compass of this character. The apostle leaves out the first part of the text, "The fool hath said in his heart," but takes in the latter part, and the verses following. He charges all, because all, every man of them, was under sin—"There is none that seeks God;" and, ver. 19, he adds, "What the law saith, it speaks to those that are under the law," that none should imagine he included only the Gentiles, and exempted the Jews from this description. The leprosy of atheism had infected the whole mass of human nature. No man, among Jews or Gentiles, did naturally seek God; and, therefore, all were void of any spark of the practical sense of the Deity. The effects of this atheism are not in all externally of an equal size; yet, in the fundamentals and radicals of it, there is not a hair's difference between the best and the worst men that ever traversed the world. The distinction is laid either in common grace, bounding and suppressing it; or in special grace, killing and crucifying it. It is in every one either triumphant or militant, reigning or deposed. No man is any more born with sensible acknowledgments of God, than he is born with a clear knowledge of the nature of all the stars in the heavens, or plants upon the earth. None seeks after God. [Note: Coccei.] None seek God as his rule, as his end, as his happiness, which is a debt the creature naturally owes to God. He desires no communion with God; he places his happiness in anything inferior to God; he prefers everything before him, glorifies everything above him; he hath no delight to know him; he regards not those paths which lead to him; he loves his own filth better than God's holiness; his actions are tinctured and dyed with self, and are void of that respect which is due from him to God. The noblest faculty of man, his understanding, wherein the remaining lineaments of the image of God are visible; the highest operation of that faculty, which is wisdom, is, in the judgment of the Spirit of God, devilish, whilst it is earthly and sensual; [Note: James 3:16.] and the wisdom of the best man is no better by nature; a legion of impure spirits possess it; devilish, as the devil, who, though he believe there is a God, yet acts as if there were

none, and wishes he had no superior to prescribe him a law, and inflict that punishment upon him which his crimes have merited. Hence the poison of man by nature is said to be like the poison of a serpent, [Note: Psalms 58:4.] alluding to that serpentine temptation which first infected mankind, and changed the nature of man into the likeness of that of the devil; so that, notwithstanding the harmony of the world, that presents men not only with the notice of the being of a God, but darts into their minds some remarks of his power and eternity; yet the thoughts and reasonings of man are so corrupt, as may well be called diabolical, and as contrary to the perfection of God, and the original law of their nature, as the actings of the devil are; for since every natural man is a child of the devil, and is acted by the diabolical spirit, he must needs have that nature which his father hath, and the infusion of that venom which the spirit that acts him is possessed with, though the full discovery of it may be restrained by various circumstances (Ephesians 2:2). To conclude: though no man, or at least very few, arrive to a round and positive conclusion in their hearts that there is no God, yet there is no man that naturally hath in his heart any reverence of God. In general, before I come to a particular proof, take some propositions.

Prop. I. Actions are a greater discovery of a principle than words. The testimony of works is louder and clearer than that of words; and the frame of men's hearts must be measured rather by what they do than by what they say. There may be a mighty distance between the tongue and the heart, but a course of actions is as little guilty of lying as interest is, according to our common saying. All outward impieties are the branches of an atheism at the root of our nature, as all pestilential sores are expressions of the contagion in the blood; sin is therefore frequently called ungodliness in our English dialect. Men's practices are the best indexes of their principles: the current of a man's life is the counterpart of the frame of his heart. Who can deny an error in the spring or wheels, when he perceives an error in the hand of the dial? Who can deny an atheism in the heart, when so much is visible in the life? The taste of the water discovers what mineral it is strained through. A practical denial of God is worse than a verbal, because deeds have usually more of deliberation than words; words may be the fruit of a passion, but a set of evil actions are the fruit and evidence of a predominant evil principle in the heart. All slighting words of a prince do not argue an habitual treason; but a succession of overt treasonable attempts signify a settled treasonable disposition in the mind. Those, therefore, are more deservedly termed atheists, who acknowledge a God, and walk as if there were none, than those (if there can be any such) that deny a God, and walk as if there were one. A sense of God in the heart would burst out in the life; where there is no reverence of God in the life, it is easily concluded there is less in the heart. What doth not influence a man when it hath the addition of the eyes, and censures of outward spectators, and the care of a reputation (so much the god of the world) to strengthen it and restrain the action, must certainly have less power over the heart when it is single, without any other concurrence. The flames breaking out of a house discover the fire to be much stronger and fiercer within. The apostle judgeth those of the circumcision, who gave heed to Jewish fables, to be deniers of God, though he doth not tax them with any notorious profaneness: (Titus 1:16), "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." He gives them epithets contrary to what they arrogated to themselves. [Note: Illyric.] They boasted themselves to be holy; the apostle calls them abominable: they bragged that they fulfilled the law, and observed the traditions of their fathers; the apostle calls them disobedient, or unpersuadable: they boasted that they only had the rule of righteousness, and a sound judgment concerning it; the apostle said they had a reprobate sense, and unfit for any good work; and judges against all their vain-glorious brags, that they had not a

reverence of God in their hearts; there was more of the denial of God in their works than there was acknowledgment of God in their words. Those that have neither God in their thoughts, nor in their tongues, nor in their works, cannot properly be said to acknowledge him. Where the honor of God is not practically owned in the lives of men, the being of God is not sensibly acknowledged in the hearts of men. The principle must be of the same kind with the actions; if the actions be atheistical, the principle of them can be no better.

Prop. II. All sin is founded in a secret atheism. Atheism is the spirit of every sin;—all the floods of impieties in the world break in at the gate of a secret atheism, and though several sins may disagree with one another, yet, like Herod and Pilate against Christ, they join hand in hand against the interest of God. Though lusts and pleasures be diverse, yet they are all united in disobedience to him. [Note: Titus 3:3.] All the wicked inclinations in the heart, and struggling motions, secret repinings, self-applauding confidences in our own wisdom, strength, &c., envy, ambition, revenge, are sparks from this latent fire; the language of every one of these is, I would be a Lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me. The variety of sins against the first and second table, the neglects of God, and violences against man, are derived from this in the text; first, “The fool hath said in his heart,” and then follows a legion of devils. As all virtuous actions spring from an acknowledgment of God, so all vicious actions rise from a lurking denial of him: all licentiousness goes glib down where there is no sense of God. Abraham judged himself not secure from murder, nor his wife from defilement in Gerar, if there were no fear of God there. [Note: Genesis 20:11.] He that makes no conscience of sin has no regard to the honor, and, consequently, none to the being of God. “By the fear of God men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6); by the non-regarding of God men rush into evil. Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he “knew not the Lord.” If he did not deny the being of a Deity, yet he had such an unworthy notion of God as was inconsistent with the nature of a Deity; he, a poor creature, thought himself a mate for the Creator. In sins of omission we own not God, in neglecting to perform what he enjoins; in sins of commission we set up some lust in the place of God, and pay to that the homage which is due to our Maker. In both we disown him; in the one by not doing what he commands, in the other by doing what he forbids. We deny his sovereignty when we violate his laws; we disgrace his holiness when we cast our filth before his face; we disparage his wisdom when we set up another rule as the guide of our actions than that law he hath fixed; we slight his sufficiency when we prefer a satisfaction in sin before a happiness in him alone; and his goodness, when we judge it not strong enough to attract us to him. Every sin invades the rights of God, and strips him of one or other of his perfections. It is such a vilifying of God as if he were not God; as if he were not the supreme Creator and Benefactor of the world; as if we had not our being from him; as if the air we breathed in, the food we lived by, were our own by right of supremacy, not of donation. For a subject to slight his sovereign, is to slight his royalty; or a servant his master, is to deny his superiority.

Prop. III. Sin implies that God is unworthy of a being. Every sin is a kind of cursing God in the heart; [Note: Job 1:5] an aim at the destruction of the being of God; not actually, but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break His law, would excite him to annihilate his being if it were in his power. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions against the will and glory of God; and could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed. God cannot outlive his will and his glory; God cannot have another rule but his own will, nor another end but his own

honor. Sin is called a turning the back upon God, [Note: Jeremiah 32:33.] a kicking against him, [Note: Deuteronomy 32:15.] as if he were a slighter person than the meanest beggar. What greater contempt can be shown to the meanest, vilest person, than to turn the back, lift up the heel, and thrust away with indignation? all which actions, though they signify that such a one hath a being, yet they testify also that he is unworthy of a being, that he is an unuseful being in the world, and that it were well the world were rid of him. All sin against knowledge is called a reproach of God. [Note: Numbers 15:30, Ezekiel 20:27.] Reproach is a vilifying a man as unworthy to be admitted into company. We naturally judge God unfit to be conversed with. God is the term turned from by a sinner; sin is the term turned to, which implies a greater excellency in the nature of sin than in the nature of God; and as we naturally judge it more worthy to have a being in our affections, so consequently more worthy to have a being in the world, than that infinite nature from whom we derive our beings and our all, and upon whom, with a kind of disdain, we turn our backs. Whosoever thinks the notion of a Deity unfit to be cherished in his mind by warm meditation, implies that he cares not whether he hath a being in the world or no. Now though the light of a Deity shines so clearly in man, and the stings of conscience are so smart, that he cannot absolutely deny the being of a God, yet most men endeavor to smother this knowledge, and make the notion of a God a sapless and useless thing (Romans 1:28): "They like not to retain God in their knowledge." It is said, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord" (Genesis 4:16); that is, from the worship of God. Our refusing or abhorring the presence of a man implies a carelessness whether he continue in the world or no; it is a using him as if he had no being, or as if we were not concerned in it. Hence all men in Adam, under the emblem of the prodigal, are said to go into a far country; not in respect of place, because of God's omnipresence, but in respect of acknowledgment and affection: they mind and love anything but God. And the descriptions of the nations of the world, lying in the ruins of Adam's fall, and the dregs of that revolt, is that they know not God. They forget God, as if there were no such being above them; and, indeed, he that doth the works of the devil, owns the devil to be more worthy of observance, and, consequently, of a being, than God, whose nature he forgets, and whose presence he abhors.

Prop. IV. Every sin in its own nature would render God a foolish and impure being. Many transgressors esteem their acts, which are contrary to the law of God, both wise and good: if so, the law against which they are committed, must be both foolish and impure. What a reflection is there, then, upon the Lawgiver! The moral law is not properly a mere act of God's will considered in itself, or a tyrannical edict, like those of whom it may well be said, *stat pro ratione voluntas*: but it commands those things which are good in their own nature, and prohibits those things which are in their own nature evil; and therefore is an act of his wisdom and righteousness; the result of his wise counsel, and an extract of his pure nature; as all the laws of just lawgivers, are not only the acts of their will, but of a will governed by reason and justice, and for the good of the public, whereof they are conservators. If the moral commands of God were only acts of his will, and had not an intrinsic necessity, reason and goodness, God might have commanded the quite contrary, and made a contrary law, whereby that which we now call vice, might have been canonized for virtue: He might then have forbid any worship of him, love to him, fear of his name: He might then have commanded murders, thefts, adulteries. In the first he would have untied the link of duty from the creature, and dissolved the obligations of creatures to him, which is impossible to be conceived; for from the relation of a creature to God, obligations to God, and duties upon those obligations, do necessarily result. It had been against the rule of goodness and justice to have

commanded the creature not to, love him, and fear and obey him: this had been a command against righteousness, goodness, and intrinsic obligations to gratitude. And should murder, adulteries, rapines have been commanded instead of the contrary, God would have destroyed his own creation; he would have acted against the rule of goodness and order; he had been an unjust tyrannical governor of the world: public society would have been cracked in pieces, and the world become a shambles, a brothel-house, a place below the common sentiments of a mere man. All sin, therefore, being against the law of God, the wisdom and holy rectitude of God's nature is denied in every act of disobedience. And what is the consequence of this, but that God is both foolish and unrighteous in commanding that, which was neither an act of wisdom, as a governor, nor an act of goodness, as a benefactor to his creature? As was said before, presumptuous sins are called reproaches of God (Numbers 15:30): "The soul that doth aught presumptuously reproacheth the Lord." Reproaches of men are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God must imply a charge, either of unrighteousness or ignorance: if of unrighteousness, it is a denial of his holiness; if of ignorance, it is a blemishing his wisdom. If God's laws were not wise and holy, God would not enjoin them: and if they are so, we deny infinite wisdom and holiness in God by not complying with them. As when a man believes not God when he promises, he makes him a liar (1 John 5:10); so he that obeys not a wise and holy God commanding, makes him guilty either of folly or unrighteousness. Now, suppose you knew an absolute atheist who denied the being of a God, yet had a life free from any notorious spot or defilement; would you in reason count him so bad as the other that owns a God in being, yet lays, by his course of action, such a black imputation of folly and impurity upon the God he professeth to own—an imputation which renders any man a most despicable creature?

Prop. V. Sin in its own nature endeavors to render God the most miserable being. It is nothing but an opposition to the will of God the will of no creature is so much contradicted as the will of God is by devils and men; and there is nothing under the heavens that the affections of human nature stand more point blank against, than against God. There is a slight of him in all the faculties of man; our souls are as unwilling to know him, as our wills are averse to follow him (Romans 8:7): "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, nor can be subject." It is true, God's will cannot be hindered of its effect, for then God would not be supremely blessed, but unhappy and miserable: all misery ariseth from a want of that which a nature would have, and ought to have besides, if anything could frustrate God's will, it would be superior to him: God would not be omnipotent, and so would lose the perfection of the Deity, and consequently the Deity itself; for that which did wholly defeat God's will, would be more powerful than he. But sin is a contradiction to the will of God's revelation, to the will of his precept: and therein doth naturally tend to a superiority over God, and would usurp his omnipotence, and deprive him of his blessedness. For if God had not an infinite power to turn the designs of it to his own glory, but the will of sin could prevail, God would be totally deprived of his blessedness. Doth not sin endeavor to subject God to the extravagant and contrary wills of men, and make him more a slave than any creature can be? For the will of no creature, not the meanest and most despicable creature, is so much crossed, as the will of God is by sin (Isaiah 43:24): "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins:" thou hast endeavored to make a mere slave of me by sin. Sin endeavors to subject the blessed God to the humor and lust of every person in the world.

Prop. VI. Men sometimes in some circumstances do wish the not being of God. This some think to be the meaning of the text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," that is, he wishes there were no God. Many tamper with their own hearts to bring them to a persuasion that there is no God: and when they cannot do that, they conjure up wishes that there were none. Men naturally have some conscience of sin, and some notices of justice (Romans 1:32): "They know the judgment of God," and they know the demerit of sin; "they know the judgment of God, and that they which do such things are worthy of death." What is the consequent of this but fear of punishment; and what is the issue of that fear, but a wishing the Judge either unwilling or unable to vindicate the honor of his violated law? When God is the object of such a wish, it is a virtual undeifying of him: not to be able to punish, is to be impotent; not to be willing to punish, is to be unjust: imperfections inconsistent with the Deity. God cannot be supposed without an infinite power to act, and an infinite righteousness as the rule of acting. Fear of God is natural to all men; not a fear of offending him, but a fear of being punished by him: the wishing the extinction of God has its degree in men, according to the degree of their fears of his just vengeance: and though such a wish be not in its meridian but in the damned in hell, yet it hath its starts and motions in affrighted and awakened consciences on the earth: under this rank of wishers, that there were no God, or that God were destroyed, do fall.

1. Terrified consciences, that are Magor-missabib, see nothing but matter of fear round about. As they have lived without the bounds of the law, they are afraid to fall under the stroke of his justice: fear wishes the destruction of that which it apprehends hurtful: it considers him as a God to whom vengeance belongs, as the Judge of all the earth. [Note: Psalms 94:12.] The less hopes such an one hath of his pardon, the more joy he would have to hear that his judge should be stripped of his life: he would entertain with delight any reasons that might support him in the conceit that there were no God: in his present state such a doctrine would be his security from an account: he would as much rejoice if there were no God to inflame an hell for him, as any guilty malefactor would if there were no judge to order a gibbet for him. Shame may bridle men's words, but the heart will be casting about for some arguments this way, to secure itself: such as are at any time in Spira's case, would be willing to cease to be creatures, that God might cease to be Judge. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no Elohim, no Judge;" fancying God without any exercise of his judicial authority. And there is not any wicked man under anguish of spirit, but, were it within the reach of his power, would take away the life of God, and rid himself of his fears by destroying his Avenger.

2. Debauched persons are not without such wishes sometimes: an obstinate servant wishes his master's death, from whom he expects correction for his debaucheries. As man stands in his corrupt nature, it is impossible but one time or other most debauched persons at least have some kind of velleities, or imperfect wishes. It is as natural to men to abhor those things which are unsuitable and troublesome, as it is to please themselves in things agreeable to their minds and humors; and since man is so deeply in love with sin, as to count it the most estimable good, he cannot but wish the abolition of that law which checks it, and, consequently, the change of the Lawgiver which enacted it; and in wishing a change in the holy nature of God, he wishes a destruction of God, who could not be God if he ceased to be immutably holy. They do as certainly wish that God had not a holy will to command them, as despairing souls wish that God had not a righteous will to punish them, and to wish conscience extinct for the molestations they receive from it, is to wish the power conscience represents out of the world also. Since the state of sinners is a

state of distance from God, and the language of sinners to God is, "Depart from us;" [Note: Job 21:14.] they desire as little the continuance of his being, as they desire the knowledge of his ways; the same reason which moves them to desire God's distance from them, would move them to desire God's not being: since the greatest distance would be most agreeable to them, the destruction of God must be so too; because there is no greater distance from us, than in not being. Men would rather have God not to be, than themselves under control, that sensuality might range at pleasure; he is like a "heifer sliding from the yoke" (Hosea 4:16). The cursing of God in the heart, feared by Job of his children, intimates a wishing God despoiled of his authority, that their pleasure might not be damped by his law. Besides, is there any natural man that sins against actuated knowledge, but either this or wishes that God might not see him, that God might not know his actions? And is not this to wish the destruction of God, who could not be God unless he were immense and omniscient?

3. Under this rank fall those who perform external duties only out of a principle of slavish fear. Many men perform those duties that the law enjoins, with the same sentiments that slaves perform their drudgery; and are constrained in their duties by no other considerations but those of the whip and the cudgel. Since, therefore, they do it with reluctance, and secretly murmur while they seem to obey, they would be willing that both the command were recalled, and the master that commands them were in another world. The spirit of adoption makes men act towards God as a father, a spirit of bondage only eyes him as a judge. Those that look upon their superiors as tyrannical, will not be much concerned in their welfare; and would be more glad to have their nails pared, than be under perpetual fear of them. Many men regard not the Infinite Goodness in the service of him, but consider him as cruel, tyrannical, injurious to their liberty. Adam's posterity are not free from the sentiments of their common father, till they are regenerate. You know what conceit was the hammer whereby the hellish Jael struck the nail into our first parents, which conveyed death, together with the same imagination to all their posterity (Genesis 3:5): "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Alas, poor souls! God knew what he did when he forbade you that fruit; he was jealous you should be too happy; it was cruelty in him to deprive you of a food so pleasant and delicious. The apprehension of the severity of God's commands riseth up no less in desires that there were no God over us, than Adam's apprehension of envy in God for the restraint of one tree, moved him to attempt to be equal with God: fear is as powerful to produce the one in his posterity, as pride was to produce the other in the common root. When we apprehend a thing hurtful to us, we desire so much evil to it, as may render it incapable of doing us the hurt we fear. As we wish the preservation of what we love or hope for, so we are naturally apt to wish the not being of that whence we fear some hurt or trouble. We must not understand this as if any man did formally wish the destruction of God, as God. God in himself is an infinite mirror of goodness and ravishing loveliness; he is infinitely good, and so universally good, and nothing but good; and is therefore so agreeable to a creature, as a creature, that it is impossible that the creature, while it bears itself to God as a creature, should be guilty of this, but thirst after him and cherish every motion to him. As no man wishes the destruction of any creature, as a creature, but as it may conduce to something which he counts may be beneficial to himself; so no man doth, nor perhaps can wish the cessation of the being of God, as God; for then he must wish his own being to cease also; but as he considers him clothed with some perfections, which he apprehends as injurious to him, as his holiness in forbidding sin, his justice in punishing sin; and God being judged in those

perfections, contrary to what the revolted creature thinks convenient and good for himself, he may wish God stripped of those perfections, that thereby he may be free from all fear of trouble and grief from him in his fallen state. In wishing God deprived of those, he wishes God deprived of his being; because God cannot retain his deity without a love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity; and he could not testify his love to the one, or his loathing of the other, without encouraging goodness, and witnessing his anger against iniquity. Let us now appeal to ourselves, and examine our own consciences. Did we never please ourselves sometimes in the thoughts, how happy we should be, how free in our vain pleasures, if there were no God? Have we not desired to be our own lords, without control, subject to no law but our own, and be guided by no will but that of the flesh? Did we never rage against God under his afflicting hand? Did we never wish God stripped of his holy will to command, and his righteous will to punish? &c.

Thus much for the general. For the proof of this, many considerations will bring in evidence; most may be reduced to these two generals: Man would set himself up, first, as his own rule; secondly, as his own end and happiness.

I. Man would set himself up as his own rule instead of God. This will be evidenced in this method.

1. Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him. 2. He owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing. 3. These he doth in order to the setting himself up as his own rule. 4. He makes himself not only his own rule, but he would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator.

First, Man naturally disowns the rule God sets him. It is all one to deny his royalty, and to deny his being. When we disown his authority, we disown his Godhead. It is the right of God to be the sovereign of his creatures, and it must be a very loose and trivial assent that such men have to God's superiority over them, (and consequently to the excellency of his being, upon which that authority is founded) who are scarce at ease in themselves, but when they are invading his rights, breaking his bands, casting away his cords, and contradicting his will: Every man naturally is a son of Belial, would be without a yoke, and leap over God's enclosures; and in breaking out against his sovereignty, we disown his being, as God, for to be God and sovereign are inseparable; he could not be God, if he were not supreme; nor could he be a Creator without being a Lawgiver. To be God and yet inferior to another, is a contradiction. To make rational creatures without prescribing them a law, is to make them without holiness, wisdom and goodness.

1. There is in man naturally an unwillingness to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him (Psalms 14:2): "None that did understand and seek God." The refusing instruction and casting his Word behind the back is a part of atheism. [Note: Psalms 50:17.] We are heavy in hearing the instructions either of law or gospel, [Note: Hebrews 5:11-12.] and slow in the apprehension of what we hear. The people that God had hedged in from the wilderness of the world for his own garden, were foolish and did not know God; were sottish and had no understanding of him. [Note: Jeremiah 4:22.] The law of God is accounted a strange thing; [Note: Hosea 8:12.] a thing of a different climate, and a far country from the heart of man; wherewith the mind of man had no natural acquaintance, and had no desire to have any; or they regarded it as a sordid thing: what God accounts great and valuable, they account mean and despicable. Men may show a civility to a stranger, but scarce contract an intimacy: there can be no amicable agreement between the holy will of God and the heart of a depraved creature: one is holy, the other unholy; one is universally

good, the other stark naught. The purity of the Divine rule renders it nauseous to the impurity of a carnal heart. Water and fire may as well friendly kiss each other and live together without quarrelling and hissing, as the holy will of God and the unregenerate heart of a fallen creature. The nauseating a holy rule is an evidence of atheism in the heart, as the nauseating wholesome food is of putrefied phlegm in the stomach. It is found more or less in every Christian, in the remainders, though not in a full empire. As there is a law in his mind whereby he delights in the law of God, so there is a law in his members whereby he wars against the law of God (Romans 7:22-23; Romans 7:25). How predominant is this loathing of the law of God, when corrupt nature is in its full strength, without any principle to control it! There is in the mind of such a one a darkness, whereby it is ignorant of it, and in the will a depravedness, whereby it is repugnant to it. If man were naturally willing and able to have an intimate acquaintance with, and delight in the law of God, it had not been such a signal favor for God to promise to "write the law in the heart." A man may sooner engrave the chronicle of a whole nation, or all the records of God in the Scripture upon the hardest marble with his bare finger, than write one syllable of the law of God in a spiritual manner upon his heart. For,

(1.) Men are negligent in using the means for the knowledge of God's will. All natural men are fools, who know not how to use the price God puts into their hands; [Note: Proverbs 17:16.] they put not a due estimate upon opportunities and means of grace, and account that law folly which is the birth of an infinite and holy wisdom. The knowledge of God which they may glean from creatures, and is more pleasant to the natural gust of men, is not improved to the glory of God, if we will believe the indictment the apostle brings against the Gentiles. [Note: Romans 1:21.] And most of those that have dived into the depths of nature, have been more studious of the qualities of the creatures, than of the excellency of the nature, or the discovery of the mind of God in them; who regard only the rising and motions of the star, but follow not with the wise men, its conduct to the King of the Jews. How often do we see men filled with an eager thirst for all other kind of knowledge, that cannot acquiesce in a twilight discovery, but are inquisitive into the causes and reasons of effects, yet are contented with a weak and languishing knowledge of God and his law, and are easily tired with the proposals of them! He now that nauseates the means whereby he may come to know and obey God, has no intention to make the law of God his rule. There is no man that intends seriously an end, but he intends means in order to that end: as when a man intends the preservation or recovery of his health, he will intend means in order to those ends, otherwise he cannot be said to intend his health; so he that is not diligent in using means to know the mind of God, has no sound intention to make the will and law of God his rule. Is not the inquiry after the will of God made a work by the bye, and fain to lacquey after other concerns of an inferior nature, if it hath any place at all in the soul? which is a despising the being of God. The notion of the sovereignty of God bears the same date with the notion of his Godhead; and by the same way that he reveals himself, he reveals his authority over us: whether it be by creatures without, or conscience within. All authority over rational creatures consists in commanding and directing: the duty of rational creatures in compliance with that authority consists in obeying. Where there is therefore a careless neglect of those means which convey the knowledge of God's will and our duty, there is an utter disowning of God as our Sovereign and our rule.

(2.) When any part of the mind and will of God breaks in upon men, they endeavor to shake it off: as a man would a sergeant that comes to arrest him, "they like not to retain God in their

knowledge" (Romans 1:28). "A natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God;" that is, into his affection; he pusheth them back as men do troublesome and importunate beggars: they have no kindness to bestow upon it: they thrust with both shoulders against the truth of God, when it presseth in upon them; and dash as much contempt upon it as the Pharisees did upon the doctrine our Saviour directed against their covetousness. As men naturally delight to be without God in the world, so they delight to be without any offspring of God in their thoughts. Since the spiritual palate of man is depraved, divine truth is unsavory and ungrateful to us, till our taste and relish is restored by grace: hence men damp and quench the motions of the Spirit to obedience and compliance with the dictates of God; strip them of their life and vigor, and kill them in the womb. How unable are our memories to retain the substance of spiritual truth; but like sand in a glass, put in at one part and runs out at the other! Have not many a secret wish, that the Scripture had never mentioned some truths, or that they were blotted out of the Bible, because they face their consciences, and discourage those boiling lusts they would with eagerness and delight pursue? Methinks that interruption John gives our Saviour when he was upon the reproof of their pride, looks little better than a design to divert him from a discourse so much against the grain, by telling him a story of their prohibiting one to cast out devils, because he followed not them. [Note: Mark 9:33; Mark 9:38.] How glad are men when they can raise a battery against a command of God, and raise some smart objection whereby they may shelter themselves from the strictness of it!

(3.) When men cannot shake off the notices of the will and mind of God, they have no pleasure in the consideration of them; which could not possibly be, if there were a real and fixed design to own the mind and law of God as our rule. Subjects or servants that love to obey their prince and master, will delight to read and execute their orders. The devils understand the law of God in their minds, but they loathe the impressions of it upon their wills: those miserable spirits are bound in chains of darkness, evil habits in their wills, that they have not a thought of obeying that law they know. It was an unclean beast under the law that did not chew the cud: it is a corrupt heart that doth not chew truth by meditation. A natural man is said not to know God, or the things of God; he may know them rationally, but he knows them not affectionately. A sensual soul can have no delight in a spiritual law. To be sensual and not to have the Spirit are inseparable (Jude 1:19). Natural men may indeed meditate upon the law and truth of God, but without delight in it; if they take any pleasure in it, it is only as it is knowledge, not as it is a rule; for we delight in nothing that we desire, but upon the same account that we desire it. Natural men desire to know God and some part of his will and law, not out of a sense of their practical excellency, but a natural thirst after knowledge: and if they have a delight, it is in the act of knowing, not in the object known, not in the duties that stream from that knowledge; they design the furnishing their understandings, not the quickening their affections,—like idle boys that strike fire, not to warm themselves by the heat, but sport themselves with the sparks; whereas a gracious soul accounts not only his meditation, or the operations of his soul about God and his will to be sweet, but he hath a joy in the object of that meditation. [Note: Psalms 104:34.] Many have the knowledge of God, who have no delight in him or his will. Owls have eyes to perceive that there is a sun, but by reason of the weakness of their sight have no pleasure to look upon a beam of it: so neither can a man by nature love, or delight in the will of God, because of his natural corruption. That law that riseth up in men for conviction and instruction, they keep down under the power of corruption; making their souls not the sanctuary, but prison of truth (Romans 1:18). They will keep it down in their hearts, if they cannot keep it out

of their heads, and will not endeavor to know and taste the spirit of it.

(4.) There is, further, a rising and swelling of the heart against the will of God. 1st. Internal. God's law cast against a hard heart, is like a ball thrown against a stone wall, by reason of the resistance rebounding the further from it; the meeting of a divine truth and the heart of man, is like the meeting of two tides, the weaker swells and foams. We have a natural antipathy against a divine rule, and therefore when it is clapped close to our consciences, there is a snuffing at it, high reasonings against it, corruption breaks out more strongly: as water poured on lime sets it on fire by an antiperistasis, and the more water is cast upon it, the more furiously it burns; or as the sunbeams shining upon a dunghill make the steams the thicker, and the stench the noisomer, neither being the positive cause of the smoke in the lime, or the stench in the dunghill, but by accident the causes of the eruption: (Romans 7:8), "But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, for without the law sin was dead." Sin was in a languishing posture, as if it were dead, like a lazy garrison in a city, till, upon an alarm from the adversary, it takes arms, and revives its courage; all the sin in the heart gathers together its force to maintain its standing, like the vapors of the night, which unite themselves more closely to resist the beams of the rising sun. Deep conviction often provokes fierce opposition; sometimes disputes against a divine rule end in blasphemies: (Acts 13:45), "contradicting and blaspheming" are coupled together. Men naturally desire things that are forbidden, and reject things commanded, from the corruption of nature, which affects an unbounded liberty, and is impatient of returning under that yoke it hath shaken off, and therefore rageth against the bars of the law, as the waves roar against the restraint of a bank. When the understanding is dark, and the mind ignorant, sin lies as dead; "A man scarce knows he hath such motions of concupiscence in him, he finds not the least breath of wind, but a full calm in his soul; but when he is awakened by the law, then the viciousness of nature being sensible of an invasion of its empire, arms itself against the divine law, and the more the command is urged, the more vigorously it bends its strength, and more insolently lifts up itself against it;" [Note: Thes. Salmur. De Spiritu. Servitutis Thes. 19.] he perceives more and more atheistical lusts than before; "all manner of concupiscence," more leprous and contagious than before. When there are any motions to turn to God, a reluctancy is presently perceived; atheistical thoughts bluster in the mind like the wind, they know not whence they come, nor whither they go; so unapt is the heart to any acknowledgment of God as his ruler, and any re-union with him. Hence men are said to resist the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51), to fall against it, as the word signifies, as a stone, or any ponderous body falls against that which lies in its way: they would dash to pieces, or grind to powder that very motion which is made for their instruction, and the Spirit too which makes it, and that not from a fit of passion, but an habitual repugnance; "Ye always resist," &c. 2d. External. It is a fruit of atheism in the fourth verse of this psalm, "Who eat up my people as they eat bread." How do the revelations of the mind of God meet with opposition! and the carnal world like dogs bark against the shining of the moon; so much men hate the light, that they spurn at the lanthorns that bear it; and because they cannot endure the treasure, often fling the earthen vessels against the ground wherein it is held. If the entrance of truth render the market worse for Diana's shrines, the whole city will be in an uproar. [Note: Acts 19:24; Acts 19:28-29.] When Socrates upon natural principles confuted the heathen idolatry, and asserted the unity of God, the whole cry of Athens, a learned university, is against him; and because he opposed the public received religion, though with an undoubted truth, he must end his life by violence. How hath every corner of the world steamed with the blood of those that would maintain

the authority of God in the world! The devil's children will follow the steps of their father, and endeavor to bruise the heel of divine truth, that would endeavor to break the head of corrupt lust.

(5.) Men often seem desirous to be acquainted with the will of God, not out of any respect to his will, and to make it their rule, but upon some other consideration. Truth is scarce received as truth. There is more of hypocrisy than sincerity in the pale of the church, and attendance on the mind of God. The outward dowry of a religious profession, makes it often more desirable than the beauty. Judas was a follower of Christ for the bag, not out of any affection to the divine revelation. Men sometime pretend a desire to be acquainted with the will of God, to satisfy their own passions, rather than to conform to God's will; the religion of such is not the judgment of the man, but the passion of the brute. Many entertain a doctrine for the person's sake, rather than a person for the doctrine's sake, and believe a thing because it comes from a man they esteem, as if his lips were more canonical than Scripture. The Apostle implies in the commendation he gives the Thessalonians, [Note: 1 Thessalonians 2:13.] that some receive the word for human interest, not as it is in truth the word and will of God to command and govern their consciences by its sovereign authority; or else they have the "truth of God" (as St. James speaks of the faith of Christ) "with respect of persons;" [Note: James 2:2.] and receive it not for the sake of the fountain, but of the channel; so that many times the same truth delivered by another, is disregarded, which, when dropping from the fancy and mouth of a man's own idol, is cried up as an oracle. This is to make not God, but man the rule; for though we entertain that which materially is the truth of God, yet not formally as his truth, but as conveyed by one we affect; and that we receive a truth and not an error, we owe the obligation to the honesty of the instrument, and not to the strength and clearness of our own judgment. Wrong considerations may give admittance to an unclean, as well as a clean beast into the ark of the soul. That which is contrary to the mind of God, may be entertained, as well as that which is agreeable. It is all one to such that have no respect to God, what they have, as it is all one to a sponge to suck up the foulest water or the sweetest wine, when either is applied to it.

(6.) Many that entertain the notions of the will and mind of God, admit them with unsettled and wavering affections. There is a great levity in the heart of man. The Jews that one day applaud our Saviour with hosannahs as their king, vote his crucifixion the next, and use him as a murderer. We begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Our hearts, like lute-strings, are changed with every change of weather, with every appearance of a temptation; scarce one motion of God in a thousand prevails with us for a settled abode. It is a hard task to make a signature of those truths upon our affections, which will with ease pass current with our understandings; our affections will as soon lose them, as our understandings embrace them. The heart of man is "unstable as water." [Note: Genesis 49:4, James 1:8.] Some were willing to rejoice in John's light, which reflected a lustre on their minds; but not in his heat, which would have conveyed a warmth to their hearts; and the light was pleasing to them but for a season, [Note: John 5:35.] while their corruptions lay as if they were dead, not when they were awakened. Truth may be admitted one day, and the next day rejected; as Austin saith of a wicked man, he loves the truth shining, but he hates the truth reproving. This is not to make God, but our own humor, our rule and measure.

(7.) Many desire an acquaintance with the law and truth of God, with a design to improve some lust by it; to turn the word of God to be a pander to the breach of his law. This is so far from making God's will our rule, that we make our own vile affections the rule of his law. How many forced

interpretations of Scripture have been coined to give content to the lusts of men, and the vine rule forced to bend, and be squared to men's loose and carnal apprehensions! It is a part of the instability or falseness of the heart, to "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction;" [Note: 2 Peter 3:16.] which they could not do, if they did not first wring them to countenance some detestable error or filthy crime. In Paradise the first interpretation made of the first law of God, was point blank against the mind of the Lawgiver, and venomous to the whole race of mankind. Paul himself feared that some might put his doctrine of grace to so ill a use, as to be an altar and sanctuary to shelter their presumption (Romans 6:1; Romans 6:15): "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Poisonous consequences are often drawn from the sweetest truths; as when God's patience is made a topic whence to argue against his providence, [Note: Psalms 94:1.] or an encouragement to commit evil more greedily; as though because he had not presently a revenging hand, he had not an all-seeing eye or when the doctrine of justification by faith is made use of to depress a holy life; or God's readiness to receive returning sinners, an encouragement to defer repentance till a death-bed. A liar will hunt for shelter in the reward God gave the midwives that lied to Pharaoh for the preservation of the males of Israel, and Rahab's saving the spies by false intelligence. God knows how to distinguish between grace and corruption, that may lie close together; or between some thing of moral goodness and moral evil, which may be mixed; we find their fidelity rewarded, which was a moral good; but not their lie approved, which was a moral evil. Nor will Christ's conversing with sinners, be a plea for any to thrust themselves into evil company. Christ conversed with sinners, as a physician with diseased persons, to cure them, not approve them; others with profligate persons, to receive infection from them, not to communicate holiness to them. Satan's children have studied their father's art, who wanted not perverted Scripture to second his temptations against our Saviour. [Note: Matthew 4:4-6.] How often do carnal hearts turn divine revelation to carnal ends, as the sea fresh water into salt! As men subject the precepts of God to carnal interests, so they subject the truths of God to carnal fancies. When men will allegorize the word, and make a humorous and crazy fancy the interpreter of divine oracles, and not the Spirit speaking in the word; this is to enthrone our own imaginations as the rule of God's law, and depose his law from being the rule of our reason; this is to rifle truth of its true mind and intent. 'Tis more to rob a man of his reason, the essential constitutive part of man, than of his estate; this is to refuse an intimate acquaintance with his will. We shall never tell what is the matter of a precept, or the matter of a promise, if we impose a sense upon it contrary to the plain meaning of it; thereby we shall make the law of God to have a distinct sense according to the variety of men's imaginations, and so make every man's fancy a law to himself. Now that this unwillingness to have a spiritual acquaintance with divine truth is a disowning God as our rule, and a setting up self in his stead, is evident; because this unwillingness respects truth.

1st. As it is most spiritual and holy. A fleshly mind is most contrary to a spiritual law, and particularly as it is a searching and discovering law, that would dethrone all other rules in the soul. As men love to be without a holy God in the world, so they love to be without a holy law, the transcript and image of God's holiness in their hearts; and without holy men, the lights kindled by the Father of lights. As the holiness of God, so the holiness of the law most offends a carnal heart (Isaiah 30:11): "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us, prophesy to us right things." They could not endure God as a holy one. Herein God places their rebellion, rejecting him as their rule (ver. 9), "Rebellious children, that will not hear the law of the Lord." The more pure and precious any discovery of God is, the more it is disrelished by the world: as spiritual sins are

sweetest to a carnal heart, so spiritual truths are most distasteful. The more of the brightness of the sun any beam conveys, the more offensive it is to a distempered eye.

2d. As it doth most relate to, or lead to God. The devil directs his fiercest batteries against those doctrines in the word, and those graces in the heart, which most exalt God, debase man, and bring men to the lowest subjection to their Creator; such is the doctrine and grace of justifying faith. That men hate not knowledge as knowledge, but as it directs them to choose the fear of the Lord, was the determination of the Holy Ghost long ago (Proverbs 1:29): "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Whatsoever respects God, clears up guilt, witnesses man's revolt to him, rouseth up conscience, and moves to a return to God, a man naturally runs from, as Adam did from God, and seeks a shelter in some weak bushes of error, rather than appear before it. Not that men are unwilling to inquire into and contemplate some divine truths which lie furthest from the heart, and concern not themselves immediately with the rectifying the soul: they may view them with such a pleasure as some might take in beholding the miracles of our Saviour, who could not endure his searching doctrine. The light of speculation may be pleasant, but the light of conviction is grievous; that which galls their consciences, and would affect them with a sense of their duty to God. Is it not easy to perceive, that when a man begins to be serious in the concerns of the honor of God and the duty of his soul, he feels a reluctancy within him, even against the pleas of conscience; which evidenceth that some unworthy principle has got footing in the hearts of men, which fights against the declarations of God without, and the impressions of the law of God within, at the same time when a man's own conscience takes part with it, which is the substance of the apostle's discourse, Romans 7:15-16, &c. Close discourses of the honor of God, and our duty to him, are irksome when men are upon a merry pin: they are like a damp in a mine, that takes away their breath; they shuffle them out as soon as they can, and are as unwilling to retain the speech of them in their mouths, as the knowledge of them in their hearts. Gracious speeches, instead of bettering many men, distemper them, as sometimes sweet perfumes affect a weak head with aches.

3d. As it is most contrary to self. Men are unwilling to acquaint themselves with any truth that leads to God, because it leads from self. Every part of the will of God is more or less displeasing, as it sounds harsh against some carnal interest men would set above God, or as a mate with him. Man cannot desire any intimacy with that law which he regards as a bird of prey, to pick out his right eye or gnaw off his right hand, his lust dearer than himself. The reason we have such hard thoughts of God's will is, because we have such high thoughts of ourselves. It is a hard matter to believe or will that which hath no affinity with some principle in the understanding, and no interest in our will and passions: our unwillingness to be acquainted with the will of God ariseth from the disproportion between that and our corrupt hearts; "We are alienated from the life of God in our minds" (Ephesians 4:18-19). As we live not like God, so we neither think or will as God; there is an antipathy in the heart of man against that doctrine which teaches us to deny ourselves and be under the rule of another; but whatsoever favors the ambition, lusts, and profits of men, is easy entertainable. Many are fond of those sciences which may enrich their understandings, and grate not upon their sensual delights. Many have an admirable dexterity in finding out philosophical reasons, mathematical demonstrations, or raising observations upon the records of history; and spend much time and many serious and affectionate thoughts in the study of them. In those they have not immediately to do with God, their beloved pleasures are not impaired; it is a satisfaction

to self without the exercise of any hostility against it. But had those sciences been against self, as much as the law and will of God, they had long since been rooted out of the world. Why did the young man turn his back upon the law of Christ? because of his worldly self. Why did the Pharisees mock at the doctrine of our Saviour, and not at their own traditions? because of covetous self. Why did the Jews slight the person of our Saviour and put him to death, after the reading so many credentials of his being sent from heaven? because of ambitious self, that the Romans might not come and take away their kingdom. If the law of God were fitted to the humors of self, it would be readily and cordially observed by all men: self is the measure of a world of seeming religious actions; while God seems to be the object, and his law the motive, self is the rule and end (Zechariah 7:5): "Did you fast unto me," &c.

2. As men discover their disowning the will of God as a rule by unwillingness to be acquainted with it, so they discover it, by the contempt of it after they cannot avoid the notions and some impressions of it. The rule of God is burthensome to a sinner; he flies from it as from a frightful bugbear, and unpleasant yoke: sin against the knowledge of the law is therefore called a going back from the commandment of God's lips (Job 23:12): "A casting God's word behind them," [Note: Psalms 50:17.] as a contemptible thing, fitter to be trodden in the dirt than lodged in the heart; nay it is a casting it off as an abominable thing, for so the word **שׁוּב** signifies, Hosea 8:3. "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good;" an utter refusal of God (Jeremiah 44:16): "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken." In the slight of his precepts his essential perfections are slighted. In disowning his will as a rule, we disown all those attributes which flow from his will, as goodness, righteousness, and truth. As an act of the divine understanding is supposed to precede the act of the divine will, so we slight the infinite reason of God. Every law, though it proceeds from the will of the lawgiver, and doth formally consist in an act of the will, yet it doth pre-suppose an act of the understanding. If the commandment be holy, just, and good, as it is (Romans 7:12); if it be the image of God's holiness, a transcript of his righteousness, and the efflux of his goodness; then in every reach of it, dirt is cast upon those attributes which shine in it; and a slight of all the regards he hath to his own honor, and all the provisions he makes for his creature. This atheism, or contempt of God, is more taken notice of by God than the matter of the sin itself; as a respect to God in a weak and imperfect obedience is more than the matter of the obedience itself, because it is an acknowledgment of God; so a contempt of God in an act of disobedience, is more than the matter of the disobedience. The creature stands in such an act not only in a posture of distance from God, but defiance of him; it was not the bare act of murder and adultery which Nathan charged upon David, but the atheistical principle which spirited those evil acts. The despising the commandment of the Lord was the venom of them. [Note: 2 Samuel 12:9-10.] It is possible to break a law without contempt; but when men pretend to believe there is a God, and that this is the law of God, it shows a contempt of his majesty: [Note: Claud.] men naturally account God's laws too strict, his yoke too heavy, and his limits too strait; and he that liveth in a contempt of this law, curseth God in his life. How can they believe there is a God, who despise him as a ruler? How can they believe him to be a guide, that disdain to follow him? To think we firmly believe a God without living conformable to his law, is an idle and vain imagination. The true and sensible notion of a God cannot subsist with disorder and an affected unrighteousness. This contempt is seen,

1. In any presumptuous breach of any part of his law. Such sins are frequently called in Scripture, rebellions, which are a denial of the allegiance we owe to him. By a wilful refusal of his right in one part, we root up the foundation of that rule he doth justly challenge over us; his right is as extensive to command us in one thing, as in another; and if it be disowned in one thing, it is virtually disowned in all, and the whole statute book of God is contemned (James 2:10-11): "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." A willing breaking one part, though there be a willing observance of all the other points of it, is a breach of the whole; because the authority of God, which gives sanction to the whole, is slighted: the obedience to the rest is dissembled: for the love, which is the root of all obedience, is wanting; for "love is the fulfilling the whole law." [Note: Romans 13:10.] The rest are obeyed because they cross not carnal desire so much as the other, and so it is an observance of himself, not of God. Besides, the authority of God, which is not prevalent to restrain us from the breach of one point, would be of as little force with us to restrain us from the breach of all the rest, did the allurements of the flesh give us as strong a diversion from the one as from the other; and though the command that is transgressed be the least in the whole law, yet the authority which enjoins it is the same with that which enacts the greatest: and it is not so much the matter of the command, as the authority commanding which lays the obligation.

2. In the natural averseness to the declarations of God's will and mind, which way soever they tend. Since man affected to be as God, he desires to be boundless; he would not have fetters, though they be golden ones, and conduce to his happiness. Thought the law of God be a strength to them, yet they will not (Isaiah 30:15): "In returning shall be your strength, and you would not." They would not have a bridle to restrain them from running into the pit, nor be hedged in by the law, though for their security; as if they thought it too slavish and low-spirited a thing to be guided by the will of another. Hence man is compared to a wild ass, that loves to "snuff up the wind in the wilderness at her pleasure," rather than come under the "guidance of God;" [Note: Jeremiah 2:24.] from whatsoever quarter of the heavens you pursue her she will run to the other. The Israelites "could not endure what was commanded," [Note: Hebrews 12:20.] though in regard of the moral part, agreeable to what they found written in their own nature, and to the observance whereof they had the highest obligations of any people under heaven, since God had, by many prodigies, delivered them from a cruel slavery, the memory of which prefaced the Decalogue (Exodus 20:2), "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." They could not think of the rule of their duty, but they must reflect upon the grand incentive of it in their redemption from Egyptian thralldom; yet this people were cross to God, which way soever he moved. When they were in the brick kilns, they cried for deliverance; when they had heavenly manna, they longed for their onions and garlic. In Numbers 14:3, they repent of their deliverance from Egypt, and talk of returning again to seek the remedy of their evils in the hands of their cruellest enemies, and would rather put themselves into the irons, whence God had delivered them, than believe one word of the promise of God for giving them a fruitful land; but when Moses tells them God's order, that they should turn back by the way of the Red Sea, [Note: Ver. 25.] and that God had confirmed it by an oath, that they should not see the land of Canaan, [Note: Ver. 28.] they then run cross to this command of God, and, instead of marching towards the Red Sea, which they had wished for before, they will go up to Canaan, as in spite of God and his threatening: "We will go to the place which the Lord hath promised" (ver. 40), which Moses calls a transgressing the commandment of the Lord (ver. 41). They would presume to go up, notwithstanding Moses'

prohibition, and are smitten by the Amalekites. When God gives them a precept, with a promise to go up to Canaan, they long for Egypt; when God commands them to return to the Red Sea, which was nearer to the place they longed for, they will shift sides, and go up to Canaan; [Note: Numbers 21:4-5, and Daillé, Serm. 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. Ser. 9, pp. 234, 235, 40.] and when they found they were to traverse the solitudes of the desert, they took pet against God, and, instead of thanking him for the late victory against the Canaanites, they reproach him for his conduct from Egypt, and the manna wherewith he nourished them in the wilderness. They would not go to Canaan, the way God had chosen, nor preserve themselves by the means God had ordained. They would not be at God's disposal, but complain of the badness of the way, and the lightness of manna, empty of any necessary juice to sustain their nature. They murmuringly solicit the will and power of God to change all that order which he had resolved in his counsel, and take another, conformable to their vain foolish desires; and they signified thereby that they would invade his conduct, and that he should act according to their fancy, which the psalmist calls a "tempting of God, and limiting the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41). To what point soever the declarations of God stand, the will of man turns the quite contrary way. Is not the carriage of this nation the best then in the world? a discovery of the depth of our natural corruption, how cross man is to God? And that charge God brings against them, may be brought against all men by nature, that they despise his judgments, and have a rooted abhorrency of his statutes in their soul (Leviticus 26:43). No sooner had they recovered from one rebellion, but they revolted to another; so difficult a thing it is for man's nature to be rendered capable of conforming to the will of God. The carriage of this people is but a copy of the nature of mankind, and is "written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). From this temper men are said to make "void the law of God;" [Note: Psalms 119:126.] to make it of no obligation, an antiquated and moth-eaten record. And the Pharisees, by setting up their traditions against the will of God, are said to make his law of "none effect;" to strip it of all its authority, as the word signifies, (Matthew 15:6,) κύρησαν.

3. We have the greatest slight of that will of God which is most for his honor and his greatest pleasure. It is the nature of man, ever since Adam, to do so (Hosea 6:6-7). God desired mercy and not a sacrifice; the knowledge of himself more than burnt offering; but they, like men as Adam, have transgressed the covenant, invade God's rights, and not let him be Lord of one tree. We are more curious observers of the fringes of the law than of the greater concerns of it. The Jews were diligent in sacrifices and offerings, which God did not urge upon them as principals, but as types of other things; but negligent of the faith which was to be established by him. Holiness, mercy, pity, which concerned the honor of God, as governor of the world, and were imitations of the holiness and goodness of God, they were strangers to. This is God's complaint (Isaiah 1:11-12; Isaiah 1:16-17). We shall find our hearts most averse to the observation of those laws which are eternal, and essential to righteousness; such that he could not but command, as he is a righteous Governor; in the observation of which we come nearest to him, and express his image more clearly; as those laws for an inward and spiritual worship, a supreme affection to him. God, in regard of his righteousness and holiness of his nature, and the excellency of his being, could not command the contrary to these. But this part of his will our hearts most swell against, our corruption doth most snarl at; whereas those laws which are only positive, and have no intrinsic righteousness in them, but depend purely upon the will of the Lawgiver, and may be changed at his pleasure (which the other, that have an intrinsic righteousness in them, cannot), we better comply with, than that part of his will that doth express more the righteousness of his nature;

[Note: 50:6, 17, 19.] such as the ceremonial part of worship, and the ceremonial law among the Jews. We are more willing to observe order in some outward attendances and glavinging devotions, than discard secret affections to evil, crucify inward lusts and delightful thoughts. A “hanging down the head like a bullrush” is not difficult; but the “breaking the heart,” like a potter’s vessel, to shreds and dust (a sacrifice God delights in, whereby the excellency of God and the vileness of the creature is owned), goes against the grain; to cut off an outward branch is not so hard as to hack at the root. What God most loathes, as most contrary to his will, we most love: no sin did God so severely hate, and no sin were the Jews more inclined unto, than that of idolatry. The heathen had not changed their God, as the Jews had changed their glory (Jeremiah 2:11); and all men are naturally tainted with this sin, which is so contrary to the holy and excellent nature of God. By how much the more defect there is of purity in our respects to God, by so much the more respect there is to some idol within or without us, to humor, custom, and interest, &c. Never did any law of God meet with so much opposition as Christianity, which was the design of God from the first promise to the exhibiting the Redeemer, and from thence to the end of the world. All people drew swords at first against it. The Romans prepared yokes for their neighbors, but provided temples for the idols those people worshipped; but Christianity, the choicest design and most delightful part of the will of God, never met with a kind entertainment at first in any place; Rome, that entertained all others, persecuted this with fire and sword, though sealed by greater testimonies from heaven than their own records could report in favor of their idols.

4. In running the greatest hazards, and exposing ourselves to more trouble to cross the will of God, than is necessary to the observance of it. It is a vain charge men bring against the divine precepts, that they are rigorous, severe, difficult; when, besides the contradiction to our Saviour, who tells us his “yoke is easy,” and his “burthen light,” they thwart their own calm reason and judgment. Is there not more difficulty to be vicious, covetous, violent, cruel, than to be virtuous, charitable, kind? Doth the will of God enjoin that that is not conformable to right reason, and secretly delightful in the exercise and issue? And on the contrary, what doth Satan and the world engage us in, that is not full of molestation and hazard? Is it a sweet and comely thing to combat continually against our own consciences, and resist our own light, and commence a perpetual quarrel against ourselves, as we ordinarily do when we sin? They in the Prophet (Micah 6:6-8) would be at the expense of “thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil,” if they could compass them; yea, would strip themselves of their natural affection to their first-born to expiate the “sin of their soul,” rather than to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;” things more conducive to the honor of God, the welfare of the world, the security of their souls, and of a more easy practice than the offerings they wished for. Do not men then disown God when they will walk in ways hedged with thorns, wherein they meet with the arrows of conscience, at every turn, in their sides; and slide down to an everlasting punishment, sink under an intolerable slavery, to contradict the will of God? when they will prefer a sensual satisfaction, with a combustion in their consciences, violation of their reasons, gnawing cares and weary travels before the honor of God, the dignity of their natures, the happiness of peace and health, which might be preserved at a cheaper rate, than they are at to destroy them?

5. In the unwillingness and awkwardness of the heart, when it is to pay God a service. Men “do evil with both hands earnestly,” [Note: Micah 7:3.] but do good with one hand faintly; no life in the heart, nor any diligence in the hand. What slight and loose thoughts of God doth this unwillingness

imply? It is a wrong to his providence, as though we were not under his government, and had no need of his assistance; a wrong to his excellency, as though there were no amiableness in him to make his service desirable; an injury to his goodness and power, as if he were not able or willing to reward the creatures' obedience, or careless not to take notice of it; it is a sign we receive little satisfaction in him, and that there is a great unsuitableness between him and us.

(1.) There is a kind of constraint in the first engagement. We are rather pressed to it than enter ourselves volunteers. What we call service to God is done naturally much against our wills; it is not a delightful food, but a bitter potion; we are rather haled, than run to it. There is a contradiction of sin within us against our service, as there was a contradiction of sinners without our Saviour against his doing the will of God. Our hearts are unwieldy to any spiritual service of God; we are fain to use a violence with them sometimes: Hezekiah, it is said, "walked before the Lord, with a perfect heart" (2 Kings 20:9); he walked, he made himself to walk: man naturally cares not for a walk with God; if he hath any communion with him, it is with such a dulness and heaviness of spirit as if he wished himself out of his company. Man's nature, being contrary to holiness, hath an aversion to any act of homage to God, because holiness must at least be pretended. In every duty wherein we have a communion with God, holiness is requisite: now as men are against the truth of holiness, because it is unsuitable to them, so they are not friends to those duties which require it, and for some space divert them from the thoughts of their beloved lusts. The word of the Lord is a yoke, prayer a drudgery, obedience a strange element. We are like fish, that "drink up iniquity like water," [Note: 1 Samuel 15:3; 1 Samuel 15:9; 1 Samuel 15:15; 1 Samuel 15:21.] and come not to the bank without the force of an angle; no more willing to do service for God, than a fish is of itself to do service for man. It is a constrained act to satisfy conscience, and such are servile, not son-like performances, and spring from bondage more than affection; if conscience, like a task-master, did not scourge them to duty, they would never perform it. Let us appeal to ourselves, whether we are not more unwilling to secrete, closet, hearty duty to God, than to join with others in some external service; as if those inward services were a going to the rack, and rather our penance than privilege. How much service hath God in the world from the same principle that vagrants perform their task in Bridewell! How glad are many of evasions to back them in the neglect of the commands of God, of corrupt reasonings from the flesh to waylay an act of obedience, and a multitude of excuses to blunt the edge of the precept! The very service of God shall be a pretence to deprive him of the obedience due to him. Saul will not be ruled by God's will in the destroying the cattle of the Amalekites, but by his own; and will impose upon the will and wisdom of God, judging God mistaken in his command, and that the cattle God thought fittest to be meat to the fowls, were fitter to be sacrifices on the altar. [Note: 1 Samuel 15:3; 1 Samuel 15:9; 1 Samuel 15:15; 1 Samuel 15:21.] If we do perform any part of his will, is it not for our own ends, to have some deliverance from trouble? (Isaiah 26:16): "In trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." In affliction, he shall find them kneeling in homage and devotion; in prosperity, he shall feel them kicking with contempt; they can pour out a prayer in distress, and scarce drop one when they are delivered.

(2.) There is a slowness in our service of God. We are loth to come into his presence; and when we do come, we are loth to continue with him. We pay not an homage to him heartily, as to our Lord and Governor; we regard him not as our Master, whose work we ought to do, and whose honor we ought to aim at. 1. In regard of the matter of service. When the torn, the lame, and the

sick is offered to Gods; [Note: Malachi 1:13-14.] so thin and lean a sacrifice, that you may have thrown it to the ground with a puff; so some understand the meaning of “you have snuffed at it.” Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for him, and conformable to his law. The dullest and dearest time we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes, and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our hearts to God. How few morning sacrifices hath God from many persons and families! Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments, without any thought of their Creator and Preserver, or any reflection upon his will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many reserve the dregs of their lives, their old age, to offer up their souls to God, so they reserve the dregs of the day, their sleeping time, for the offering up their service to him. How many grudge to spend their best time in the serving the will of God, and reserve for him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives; the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon! Would not any prince or governor judge a present half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? A corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a King as God is, whose name is dreadful. [Note: Malachi 1:14.] When by age men are weary of their own bodies, they would present them to God; yet grudgingly, as if a tired body were too good for him, snuffing at the command for service. God calls for our best, and we give him the worst.

2. In respect of frame. We think any frame will serve God’s turn, which speaks our slight of God as a Ruler. Man naturally performs duty with an unholy heart, whereby it becomes an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9): “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be an abomination to God.” The services which he commands, he hates for their evil frames or corrupt ends (Amos 5:21): “I hate, I despise your feast-days, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.” God requires gracious services, and we give him corrupt ones. We do not rouse up our hearts, as David called upon his lute and harp to awake (Psalms 57:8). Our hearts are not given to him; we put him off with bodily exercise. The heart is but ice to what it doth not affect, [1.] There is not that natural vigor in the observance of God, which we have in worldly business. When we see a liveliness in men in other things, change the scene into a motion towards God, how suddenly doth their vigor shrink and their hearts freeze into sluggishness! Many times we serve God as languishingly as if we were afraid he should accept us, and pray as coldly as if we were unwilling he should hear us, and take away that lust by which we are governed, and which conscience forces us to pray against; as if we were afraid God should set up his own throne and government in our hearts. How fleeting are we in divine meditation, how sleepy in spiritual exercises! but in other exercises active. The soul Both not awaken itself, and excite those animal and vital spirits, which it will in bodily recreations and sports; much less the powers of the soul: whereby it is evident we prefer the latter before any service to God. Since there is a fulness of animal spirits, why might they not be excited in holy duties as well as in other operations, but that there is a reluctancy in the soul to exercise its supremacy in this case, and perform anything becoming a creature in subjection to God as a Ruler? [2.] It is evident also in the distractions we have in his service. How loth are we to serve God fixedly one hour, nay a part of an hour, notwithstanding all the thoughts of his majesty, and the eternity of glory set before our eye! What man is there, since the fall of Adam, that served God one hour without many wanderings and unsuitable thoughts unfit for that service? How ready are our hearts to start out and unite themselves with any worldly objects that please us! [3.] Weariness in it evidenceth it. To be weary of our dulness signifies a desire, to be weary of service signifies a discontent, to be ruled by God.

How tired are we in the performance of spiritual duties, when in the vain triflings of time we have a perpetual motion! How will many willingly revel whole nights, when their hearts will flag at the threshold of a religious service! like Dagon, [Note: 1 Samuel 5:4.] lose both our heads to think, and hands to act, when the ark of God is present. Some in the Prophet wished the new moon and the Sabhath over, that they might sell their corn, and be busied again in their worldly affairs. [Note: Amos 8:5.] A slight and weariness of the Sabhath, was a slight of the Lord of the Sabhath, and of that freedom from the yoke and rule of sin, which was signified by it. The design of the sacrifices in the new moon was to signify a rest from the tyranny of sin, and a consecration to the spiritual service of God. Servants that are quickly weary of their work, are weary of the authority of their master that enjoins it. If our hearts had a value for God, it would be with us as with the needle to the loadstone; there would be upon his beck a speedy motion to him, and a fixed union with him. When the judgments and affections of the saints shall be fully refined in glory, they shall be willing to behold the face of God, and be under his government to eternity, without any weariness: as the holy angels have owned God as their sovereign near these six thousand years, without being weary of running on his errands. But, alas, while the flesh clogs us, there will be some relics of unwillingness to hear his injunctions, and weariness in performing them; though men may excuse those things by extrinsic causes, yet God's unerring judgment calls it a weariness of himself (Isaiah 43:22): "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Of this he taxeth his own people, when he tells them he would have the beasts of the field, the dragons and the owls—the Gentiles, that the Jews counted no better than such—to honor him and acknowledge him their rule in a way of duty (ver. 20, 21.)

6. This contempt is seen in a deserting the rule of God, when our expectations are not answered upon our service. When services are performed from carnal principles, they are soon cast off when carnal ends meet not with desired satisfaction. But when we own ourselves God's servants and God our Master, "our eyes will wait upon him till he have mercy on us." [Note: Psalms 123:2.] It is one part of the duty we owe to God as our Master in heaven to continue in prayer (Colossians 4:1-2); and by the same reason in all other service, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving: to watch for occasions of praise, to watch with cheerfulness for further manifestations of his will, strength to perform it, success in the performance, that we may from all draw matter of praise. As we are in a posture of obedience to his precepts, so we should be in a posture of waiting for the blessing of it. But naturally we reject the duty we owe to God, if he do not speed the blessing we expect from him. How many do secretly mutter the same as they in Job 21:15 : "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray to him?" They serve not God out of conscience to his commands, but for some carnal profit; and if God make them to wait for it, they will not stay his leisure, but cease soliciting him any longer. Two things are expressed;—that God was not worthy of any homage from them,—“What is the Almighty that we should serve him?” and that the service of him would not bring them in a good revenue or an advantage of that kind they expected. Interest drives many men on to some kind of service, and when they do not find an advance of that, they will acknowledge God no more; but like some beggars, if you give them not upon their asking, and calling you good master, from blessing they will turn to cursing. How often do men do that secretly, practically, if not plainly, which Job's wife advised him to, curse God, and cast off that disguise of integrity they had assumed! (Job 2:9): "Dost thou still retain thy integrity? curse God." What a stir, and pulling, and crying is here! Cast off all thoughts of religious service, and be at daggers drawing with that God, who for all thy service of

him has made thee so wretched a spectacle to men, and a banquet for worms. The like temper is deciphered in the Jews (Malachi 3:14), "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, that we have walked mournfully before the Lord?" What profit is it that we have regarded his statutes, and carried ourselves in a way of subjection to God, as our Sovereign, when we inherit nothing but sorrow, and the idolatrous neighbors swim in all kind of pleasures? as if it were the most miserable thing to acknowledge God? If men have not the benefits they expect, they think God unrighteous in himself, and injurious to them, in not conferring the favor they imagine they have merited; and if they have not that recompense, they will deny God that subjection they owe to him as creatures. Grace moves to God upon a sense of duty; corrupt nature upon a sense of interest. Sincerity is encouraged by gracious returns, but is not melted away by God's delay or refusal. Corrupt nature would have God at its back, and steers a course of duty by hope of some carnal profit, not by a sense of the sovereignty of God.

7. This contempt is seen in breaking promises with God. "One while the conscience of a man makes vows of new obedience, and perhaps binds himself with many an oath; but they prove like Jonah's purd, withering the next day after their birth. This was Pharaoh's temper: under a storm he would submit to God, and let Israel go; but when the storm is ended, he will not be under God's control, and Israel's slavery shall be increased. The fear of Divine wrath makes many a sinner turn his back upon his sin, and the love of his ruling lust makes him turn his back upon his true Lord. This is from the prevalency of sin, that disputes with God for the sovereignty." [Note: Reyn.] When God hath sent a sharp disease, as a messenger to bind men to their beds, and make an interruption of their sinful pleasures, their mouths are full of promises of a new life, in hope to escape the just vengeance of God: the sense of hell, which strikes strongly upon them, makes them full of such pretended resolutions when they howl upon their beds. But if God be pleased in his patience to give them a respite, to take off the chains wherewith he seemed to be binding them for destruction, and recruit their strength, they are more earnest in their sins than they were in their promises of a reformation, as if they had got the mastery of God, and had outwitted him. How often doth God charge them of not returning to him after a succession of judgments! [Note: Amos 4:6-11.] So hard it is, not only to allure, but to scourge men, to an acknowledgment of God as their Ruler!

Consider then, are we not naturally inclined to disobey the known will of God? Can we say, Lord, for thy sake we refrain the thing to which our hearts incline? Do we not allow ourselves to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, revengeful, though we know it will offend him? Have we not been peevishly cross to his declared will? run counter to him and those laws which express most of the glory of his holiness? Is not this to disown him as our rule? Did we never wish there were no law to bind us, no precept to check our idols? What is this, but to wish that God would depose himself from being our governor, and leave us to our own conduct? or else to wish that he were as unholy as ourselves, as careless of his own laws as we are; that is, that he were no more a God than we, a God as sinful and unrighteous as ourselves? He whose heart riseth against the law of God to unlay it, riseth against the Author of that law to undeify him. He that casts contempt upon the dearest thing God hath in the world, that which is the image of his holiness, the delight of his soul; that which he hath given a special charge to maintain, and that because it is holy, just, and good, would not stick to rejoice at the destruction of God himself. If God's holiness and righteousness in the beam be despised, much more will an immense goodness and holiness in the fountain be

rejected: he that wisheth a beam far from his eyes, because it offends and scorcheth him, can be no friend to the sun, from whence that beam doth issue. How unworthy a creature is man, since he only, a rational creature, is the sole being that withdraws itself from the rule of God in this earth! And how miserable a creature is he also, since, departing from the order of God's goodness, he falls into the order of his justice; and while he refuseth God to be the rule of his life, he cannot avoid him being the Judge of his punishment! It is this is the original of all sin, and the fountain of all our misery. This is the first thing man disowns, the rule which God sets him.

Secondly, Man naturally owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing. The law of God orders one thing, the heart of man desires another. There is not the basest thing in the world, but man would sooner submit to be guided by it, rather than by the holiness of God; and when anything that God commands crosses our own wills, we value it no more than we would the advice of a poor despicable beggar. How many are "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God!" [Note: 2 Timothy 3:4.] To make something which contributes to the perfection of nature, as learning, wisdom, moral virtues, our rule, would be more tolerable; but to pay that homage to a swinish pleasure, which is the right of God, is an inexcusable contempt of him. The greatest excellency in the world is infinitely below God; much more a bestial delight, which is both disgraceful and below the nature of man. If we made the vilest creature on earth our idol, it is more excusable than to be the slave of a brutish pleasure. The viler the thing is that doth possess the throne in our heart, the greater contempt it is of him who can only claim a right to it, and is worthy of it. Sin is the first object of man's election, as soon as the faculty whereby he chooses comes to exercise its power; and it is so dear to man, that it is, in the estimate of our Saviour, counted as the right hand, and the right eye, dear, precious, and useful members.

1. The rule of Satan is owned before the rule of God. The natural man would rather be under the guidance of Satan than the yoke of his Creator. Adam chose him to be his governor in Paradise. No sooner had Satan spoke of God in a way of derision (Genesis 3:1; Genesis 3:5), "Yea, hath God said," but man follows his counsel and approves of the scoff; and the greatest part of his posterity have not been wiser by his fall, but would rather ramble in the devil's wilderness, than to stay in God's fold. It is by the sin of man that the devil is become the god of the world, as if men were the electors of him to the government; sin is an election of him for a lord, and a putting the soul under his government. Those that live according to the course of the world, and are loth to displease it, are under the government of the prince of it. The greatest part of the works done in the world is to enlarge the kingdom of Satan. For how many ages were the laws whereby the greatest part of the world was governed in the affairs of religion, the fruits of his usurpation and policy? When temples were erected to him, priests consecrated to his service; the rites used in most of the worship of the world were either of his own coining, or the misapplying the rites God had ordained to himself, under the notion of a God: whence the apostle calls all idolatrous feasts the table of devils, the cup of devils, sacrifice to devils, fellowship with devils; [Note: 1 Corinthians 10:20-21.] devils being the real object of the pagan worship, though not formally intended by the worshipper; though in some parts of the Indies, the direct and peculiar worship is to the devil, that he might not hurt them. And though the intention of others was to offer to God, and not the devil, yet since the action was contrary to the will of God, he regards it as a sacrifice to devils. It was not the intention of Jeroboam to establish priests to the devil, when he consecrated them to the service of his calves, for Jehu afterwards calls them "the servants of the Lord" (2 Kings 10:23),

“See if there be here none of the servants of the Lord,” to distinguish them from the servants of Baal; signifying that the true God was worshipped under those images, and not Baal, nor any of the gods of the heathens; yet the Scripture couples the calves and devils together, and ascribes the worship given to one to be given to the other: “He ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made;” [Note: 2 Chronicles 11:15.] so that they were sacrifices to devils, notwithstanding the intention of Jeroboam and his subjects that had set them up and worshipped them, because they were contrary to the mind of God, and agreeable to the doctrine and mind of Satan, though the object of their worship in their own intention were not the devil, but some deified man or some canonized saint. The intention makes not a good action; if so, when men kill the best servants of God with a design to do God service, as our Saviour foretells, [Note: John 16:2.] the action would not be murder; yet who can call it otherwise, since God is wronged in the persons of his servants? Since most of the worship of the world, which men’s corrupt natures incline them to, is false and different from the revealed will of God, it is a practical acknowledgment of the devil, as the governor, by acknowledging and practising those doctrines, which have not the stamp of divine revelation upon them, but were minted by Satan to depress the honor of God in the world. It doth concern men, then, to take good heed, that in their acts of worship they have a divine rule; otherwise it is an owning the devil as the rule: for there is no medium; whatsoever is not from God, is from Satan. But to bring this closer to us, and consider that which is more common among us: men that are in a natural condition, and wedded to their lusts, are under the paternal government of Satan (John 8:44): “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” If we divide sin into spiritual and carnal, which division comprehends all, the devil’s authority is owned in both; in spiritual, we conform to his example, because those he commits; in carnal, we obey his will, because those he directs: he acts the one, and sets us a copy; he tempts to the other, and gives us a kind of a precept. Thus man by nature being a willing servant of sin, is more desirous to be bound in the devil’s iron chain, than in God’s silken cords. What greater atheism can there be, than to use God as if he were inferior to the devil? to take the part of his greatest enemy, who drew all others into the faction against him? to pleasure Satan by offending God, and gratify our adversary with the injury of our Creator? For a subject to take arms against his prince with the deadliest enemy both himself and prince hath in the whole world, adds a greater blackness to the rebellion.

2. The more visible rule preferred before God in the world, is man. The opinion of the world is more our rule than the precept of God; and many men’s abstinence from sin is not from a sense of the Divine will, no, nor from a principle of reason, but from an affection to some man on whom they depend, or fear of punishment from a superior; the same principle with that in a ravenous beast, who abstains from what he desires, for fear only of a stick or club. Men will walk with the herds, go in fashion with the most, speak and act as the most do. While we conform to the world, we cannot perform a reasonable service to God, nor prove, nor approve practically what the good and acceptable will of God is; the apostle puts them in opposition to one another. [Note: Romans 12:1-2.] This appears,

1. In complying more with the dictates of men, than the will of God. Men draw encouragement from God’s forbearance to sin more freely against him; but the fear of punishment for breaking the will of man lays a restraint upon them. The fear of man is a more powerful curb, to restrain men in their duty, than the fear of God; so we may please a friend, a master, a governor, we are regardless

whether we please God or no; men-pleasers are more than God-pleasers; man is more advanced as a rule, than God, when we submit to human orders, and stagger and dispute against divine. Would not a prince think himself slighted in his authority, if any of his servants should decline his commands, by the order of one of his subjects? And will not God make the same account of us, when we deny or delay our obedience, for fear of one of his creatures? In the fear of man, we as little acknowledge God for our sovereign, as we do for our comforter (Isaiah 51:12-13): "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die," &c. "and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" &c. We put a slight upon God, as if he were not able to bear us out in our duty to him, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh.

2. In observing that which is materially the will of God, not because it is his will, but the injunctions of men. As the word of God may be received, yet not as his word, so the will of God may be performed, yet not as his will; it is materially done, but not formally obeyed. An action, and obedience in that action, are two things; as when man commands the ceasing from all works of the ordinary calling on the Sabhath, it is the same that God enjoins: the cessation, or attendance of his servants on the hearing of the word, are conformable in the matter of it to the will of God; but it is only conformable in the obediencial part of the acts to the will of man, when it is done only with respect to a human precept. As God hath a right to enact his laws without consulting his creature in the way of his government, so man is bound to obey those laws, without consulting whether they be agreeable to men's laws or no. If we act the will of God because the will of our superiors concurs with it, we obey not God in that, but man, a human will being the rule of our obedience, and not the divine; this is to vilify God, and make him inferior to man in our esteem, and a valuing the rule of man above that of our Creator. Since God is the highest perfection and infinitely good, whatsoever rule he gives the creature must be good, else it cannot proceed from God. A base thing cannot be the product of an infinite excellency, and an unreasonable thing cannot be the product of an infinite wisdom and goodness; therefore, as the respecting God's will before the will of man is excellent and worthy of a creature, and is an acknowledging the excellency, goodness, and wisdom of God, so the eying the will of man before and above the will of God, is on the contrary, a denial of all those in a lump, and a preferring the wisdom, goodness, and power of man in his law, above all those perfections of God in his. Whatsoever men do that looks like moral virtue or abstinence from vices, not out of obedience to the rule God hath set, but because of custom, necessity, example, or imitation, they may, in the doing of it, be rather said to be apes than Christians.

3. In obeying the will of man when it is contrary to the will of God; as the Israelites willingly "walked after the commandment," [Note: Hosea 5:11.] not of God, but of Jeroboam in the case of the calves, and "made the king's heart glad with their lies." [Note: Hosea 7:3.] They cheered him with their ready obedience to his command for idolatry (which was a lie in itself, and a lie in them) against the commandment of God, and the warnings of the prophets, rather than cheer the heart of God with their obedience to his worship instituted by him; nay, and when God offered them to cure them their wound, their iniquity breaks out afresh; they would neither have him as a lord to rule them, nor a physician to cure them (Hosea 7:1): "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered." The whole Persian nation shrunk at once from a duty due by the light of nature to the Deity, upon a decree that "neither God or man should be petitioned to for thirty days, but only their king;" [Note: Daniel 6:1-28.] one only, Daniel, excepted against it, who

preferred his homage to God, above obedience to his prince. An adulterous generation is many times made the rule of men's professions, as is implied in those words of our Saviour (Mark 8:38): "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation:" own him among his disciples, and be ashamed of him among his enemies. Thus men are said to deny God (Titus 1:16), when they "attend to Jewish fables and the precepts of men rather than the word of God;" when the decrees or canons of fallible men are valued at a higher rate, and preferred before the writings of the Holy Ghost by his apostles. As man naturally disowns the rule God sets him, and owns any other rule than that of God's prescribing, so,

Thirdly, He doth this in order to the setting himself up as his own rule; as though our own wills, and not God's, were the true square and measure of goodness. We make an idol of our own wills, and as much as self is exalted, God is deposed; the more we esteem our own wills, the more we endeavor to annihilate the will of God; account nothing of him, the more we account of ourselves, and endeavor to render ourselves his superiors, by exalting our own wills. No prince but would look upon his authority as invaded, his royalty derided, if a subject should resolve to be a law to himself, in opposition to his known will; true piety is to hate ourselves, deny ourselves, and cleave solely to the service of God. To make ourselves our own rule, and the object of our chiefest love, is atheism. If self-denial be the greatest part of godliness, the great letter in the alphabet of religion; self-love is the great letter in the alphabet of practical atheism. Self is the great antichrist and anti-God in the world, that sets up itself above all that is called God; self-love is the captain of that black band (2 Timothy 3:2): it sits in the temple of God, and would be adored as God. Self-love begins; but denying the power of godliness, which is the same with denying the ruling power of God, ends the list. It is so far from bending to the righteous will of the Creator, that it would have the eternal will of God stoop to the humor and unrighteous will of a creature; and this is the ground of the contention between the flesh and spirit in the heart of a renewed man; flesh wars for the godhead of self, and spirit fights for the godhead of God; the one would settle the throne of the Creator, and the other maintain a law of covetousness, ambition, envy, lust, in the stead of God. The evidence of this will appear in these propositions:

1. This is natural to man as he is corrupted. What was the venom of the sin of Adam, is naturally derived with his nature to all his posterity. It was not the eating a forbidden apple, or the pleasing his palate that Adam aimed at, or was the chief object of his desire, but to live independently on his Creator, and be a God to himself (Genesis 3:5): "You shall be as gods." That which was the matter of the devil's temptation, was the incentive of man's rebellion; a likeness to God he aspired to in the judgment of God himself, an infallible interpreter of man's thoughts; "Behold, man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," in regard of self-sufficiency and being a rule to himself. The Jews understand the ambition of man to reach no further than an equality with the angelical nature; but Jehovah here understands it in another sense; God had ordered man by this prohibition not to eat of the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil;" not to attempt the knowledge of good and evil of himself, but to wait upon the dictates of God; not to trust to his own counsels, but to depend wholly upon him for direction and guidance. Certainly he that would not hold off his hand from so small a thing as an apple, when he had his choice of the fruit of the garden, would not have denied himself anything his appetite had desired, when that principle had prevailed upon him; he would not have stuck at a greater matter to pleasure himself with the displeasing of God, when for so small a thing he would incur the anger of his Creator. Thus would

he deify his own understanding against the wisdom of God, and his own appetite against the will of God. This desire of equality with God, a learned man [Note: Dr. Jackson.] thinks the apostle intimates (Php 2:6): "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" the Son's being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, implies that the robbery of sacrilege committed by our first parents, for which the Son of God humbled himself to the death of the cross, was an attempt to be equal with God, and depend no more upon God's directions, but his own conduct; which could be no less than an invasion of the throne of God, and endeavor to put himself into a posture to be his mate. Other sins, adultery, theft, &c. could not be committed by him at that time, but he immediately puts forth his hand to usurp the power of his Maker; this treason is the old Adam in every man. The first Adam contradicted the will of God to set up himself; the second Adam humbled himself, and did nothing but by the command and will of his Father. This principle wherein the venom of the old Adam lies, must be crucified to make way for the throne of the humble and obedient principle of the new Adam, or quickening Spirit; indeed sin in its own nature is nothing else but "a willing according to self, and contrary to the will of God;" lusts are therefore called the wills of the flesh and of the mind. [Note: Ephesians 2:3.] As the precepts of God are God's will, so the violation of these precepts is man's will; and thus man usurps a godhead to himself, by giving that honor to his own will which belongs to God, appropriating the right of rule to himself, and denying it to his Creator. That servant that acts according to his own will, with a neglect of his master's, refuseth the duty of a servant, and invades the right of his master. This self-love and desire of independency on God has been the root of all sin in the world. The great controversy between God and man hath been, whether he or they shall be God; whether his reason or theirs, his will or theirs, shall be the guiding principle. As grace is the union of the will of God and the will of the creature, so sin is the opposition of the will of self to the will of God; "Leaning to our own understanding," is opposed as a natural evil to "trusting in the Lord," [Note: Proverbs 3:5.] a supernatural grace. Men commonly love what is their own, their own inventions, their own fancies; therefore the ways of a wicked man are called the "ways of his own heart," [Note: Ecclesiastes 11:9.] and the ways of a superstitious man his own devices (Jeremiah 18:11): "We will walk after our own devices;" we will be a law to ourselves; and what the Psalmist saith of the tongue, Our tongues are our own, who shall control us? is as truly the language of men's hearts, Our wills are our own, who shall check us?

2. This is evident in the dissatisfaction of men with their own consciences when they contradict the desires of self. Conscience is nothing but an actuated or reflex knowledge of a superior power and an equitable law; a law impressed, and a power above it impressing it. Conscience is not the lawgiver, but the remembrancer to mind us of that law of nature imprinted upon our souls, and actuate the considerations of the duty and penalty, to apply the rule to our acts, and pass judgment upon matter of fact: it is to give the charge, urge the rule, enjoin the practice of those notions of right, as part of our duty and obedience. But man is as much displeased with the directions of conscience, as he is out of love with the accusations and condemning sentence of this officer of God: we cannot naturally endure any quick and lively practical thoughts of God and his will, and distaste our own consciences for putting us in mind of it: they therefore "like not to retain God in their knowledge," [Note: Romans 1:28.] that is, God in their own consciences; they would blow it out, as it is the candle of the Lord in them to direct them, and their acknowledgments of God, to secure themselves against the practice of its principles: they would stop all the avenues to any beam of light, and would not suffer a sparkle of divine knowledge to flutter in their minds, in

order to set up another directing rule suited to the fleshly appetite: and when they cannot atop the light of it from glaring in their faces, they rebel against it, and cannot endure to abide in its paths. [Note: Job 24:13.] He speaks not of those which had the written word, or special revelations; but only a natural light or traditional, handed from Adam: hence are all the endeavors to still it when it begins to speak, by some carnal pleasures, as Saul's evil spirit with a fit of music; or bribe it with some fits of a glavering devotion, when it holds the law of God in its commanding authority before the mind: they would we out all the impressions of it when it presses the advancement of God above self, and entertain it with no better compliment than Ahab did Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" If we are like to God in anything of our natural fabric, it is in the auperior and more spiritual part of our souls. The resistance of that which is most like to God, and instead of God in us, is a disowning of the Sovereign represented by that officer. He that would be without conscience, would be without God, whose vicegerent it is, and make the sensitive part, which conscience opposes, his lawgiver. Thus a man, out of respect to sinful self, quarrels with his natural self, and cannot comport himself in a friendly behavior to his internal implanted principles: he hates to come under the rebukes of them, as much as Adam hated to come into the presence of God, after he turned traitor against him: the bad entertainment God's deputy hath in us, reflects upon that God whose cause it pleads: it is upon no other account that men loathe the upright language of their own reasons in those matters, and wish the eternal silence of their own consciences, but as they maintain the rights of God, and would hinder the idol of self from usurping his godhead and prerogative. Though this power be part of a man's self, rooted in his nature, as essential to him and inseparable from him as the best part of his being; yet he quarrels with it, as it is God's deputy, and stickling for the honor of God in his soul, and quarrelling with that sinful self he would cherish above God. We are not displeased with this faculty barely as it exerciseth a self-reflection; but as it is God's vicegerent, and bears the mark of his authority in it. In some cases this self-reflecting act meets with good entertainment, when it acts not in contradiction to self, but suitable to natural affections. As suppose a man hath in his passion struck his child, and caused thereby some great mischief to him, the reflection of conscience will not be unwelcome to him; will work some tenderness in him, because it takes the part of self and of natural affection; but in the more spiritual concerns of God it will be rated as a busy-body.

3. Many, if not most actions, materially good in the world, are done more because they are agreeable to self, than as they are honorable to God. As the word of God may be heard not as his word, [Note: 1 Thessalonians 2:13.] but as there may be pleasing notions in it, or discourses against an opinion or party we disaffect; so the will of God may be performed, not as his will, but as it may gratify some selfish consideration, when we will please God so far as it may not displease ourselves, and serve him as our Master, so far as his command may be a servant to our humor; when we consider not who it is that commands, but how short it comes of displeasing that sin which rules in our heart, pick and choose what is least burdensome to the flesh, and distasteful to our lusts. He that doth the will of God, not out of conscience of that will, but because it is agreeable to himself, casts down the will of God, and sets his own will in the place of it; takes the crown from the head of God, and places it upon the head of self. If things are done, not because they are commanded by God, but desirable to us, it is a disobedient obedience; a conformity to God's will in regard of the matter, a conformity to our own will in regard of the motive; either as the things done are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self.

(1). As they are agreeable to natural or moral self. When men will practise some points of religion, and walk in the track of some divine precepts; not because they are divine, but because they are agreeable to their humor or constitution of nature; from the sway of a natural bravery, the bias of a secular interest, not from an ingenuous sense of God's authority, or a voluntary submission to his will; as when a man will avoid excess in drinking, not because it is dishonorable to God, but as it is a blemish to his own reputation, or an impair of the health of his body: doth this deserve the name of an observance of the divine injunction, or rather an obedience to ourselves? Or when a man will be liberal in the distribution of his charity, not with an eye to God's precept, but in compliance with his own natural compassion, or to pleasure the generosity of his nature: the one is obedience to a man's own preservation; the other an obedience to the interest or impulse of a moral virtue. It is not respect to the rule of God, but the authority of self, and, at the best, is but the performance of the material part of the divine rule, without any concurrence of a spiritual motive or a spiritual manner. That only is a maintaining the rights of God, when we pay an observance to his rule, without examining the agreeableness of it to our secular interest, or consulting with the humor of flesh and blood; when we will not decline his service, though we find it cross, and hath no affinity with the pleasure of our own nature: such an obedience as Abraham manifested in his readiness to sacrifice his son; such an obedience as our Saviour demands in cutting off the right hand. When we observe anything of divine order upon the account of its suitableness to our natural sentiments, we shall readily divide from him, when the interest of nature turns its point against the interest of God's honor; we shall fall off from him according to the change we find in our own humors. And can that be valued as a setting up the rule of God, which must be deposed upon the mutable interest of an inconstant mind? Esau had no regard to God in delaying the execution of his resolution to shorten his brother's days, though he was awed by the reverence of his father to delay it; he considered, perhaps, how justly he might lie under the imputation of hastening crazy Isaac's death, by depriving him of a beloved son. But had the old man's head been laid, neither the contrary command of God, nor the nearness of a fraternal relation, could have bound his hands from the act, no more than they did his heart from the resolution (Genesis 27:41): "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother." So many children, that expect at the death of their parents great inheritances of portions, may be observant of them, not in regard of the rule fixed by God, but to their own hopes, which they would not frustrate by a disobligement. Whence is it that many men abstain from gross sins, but in love to their reputation? Wickedness may be acted privately, which a man's own credit puts a bar to the open commission of. The preserving his own esteem may divert him from entering into a brothel house, to which he hath set his mind before, against a known precept of his Creator. As Pharaoh parted with the Israelites, so do some men with their blemishing sins; not out of a sense of God's rule, but the smart of present judgments, or fear of a future wrath. Our security then, and reputation, is set up in the place of God. This also may be, and is in renewed men, who have the law written in their hearts, that is, an habitual disposition to an agreement with the law of God; when what is done is with a respect to this habitual inclination, without eying the divine precept, which is appointed to be their rule. This also is to set up a creature, as renewed self is, instead of the Creator, and that law of his in his word, which ought to be the rule of our actions. Thus it is when men choose a moral life, not so much out of respect to the law of nature, as it is the law of God, but as it is a law become one with their souls and constitutions. There is more of self in this than consideration of

God; for if it were the latter, the revealed law of God would, upon the same reason, be received as well as his natural law. From this principle of self, morality comes by some to be advanced above evangelical dictates.

(2.) As they are agreeable to sinful self. Not that the commands of God are suited to bolster up the corruptions of men, no more than the law can be said to excite or revive sin: [Note: Romans 7:8-9.] but it is like a scandal taken, not given; an occasion taken by the tumultuousness of our depraved nature. The Pharisees were devout in long prayers, not from a sense of duty, or a care of God's honor; but to satisfy their ambition, and rake together fuel for their covetousness, [Note: Matthew 23:14; "You devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers:"] that they might have the greater esteem and richer offerings, to free by their prayers the souls of deceased persons from purgatory; an opinion that some think the Jewish synagogue had then entertained, [Note: Gerrard in loc.] since some of their doctors have defended such a notion. Men may observe some precepts of God to have a better conveniency to break others. Jehu was ordered to cut off the house of Ahab. The service he undertook was in itself acceptable, but corrupt nature misacted that which holiness and righteousness commanded. God appointed it to magnify his justice, and check the idolatry that had been supported by that family; Jehu acted it to satisfy his revenge and ambition: he did it to fulfil his lust, not the will of God who enjoined him: Jehu applauds it as zeal; and God abhors it as murder, and therefore would avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu (Hosea 1:4). Such kind of services are not paid to God for his own sake, but to ourselves for our lusts' sake.

4. This is evident in neglecting to take God's direction upon emergent occasions. This follows the text, "None did seek God." When we consult not with him, but trust more to our own will and counsel, we make ourselves our own governors and lords independent upon him; as though we could be our own counsellors, and manage our concerns without his leave and assistance; as though our works were in our own hands, and not in the "hands of God." [Note: Ecclesiastes 9:1.] that we can by our own strength and sagacity direct them to a successful end without him. If we must "acquaint ourselves with God" before we decree a thing, [Note: Job 22:28.] then to decree a thing without acquainting God with it, is to prefer our purblind wisdom before the infinite wisdom of God: to resolve without consulting God, is to depose God and deify self, our own wit and strength. We would rather, like Lot, follow our own humor and stay in Sodom, than observe the angel's order to go out of it.

6. As we account the actions of others to be good or evil, as they suit with, or spurn against our fancies and humors. Virtue is a crime, and vice a virtue, as it is contrary or concurrent with our humors. Little reason have many men to blame the actions of others, but because they are not agreeable to what they affect and desire; we would have all men take directions from us, and move according to our beck, hence that common speech in the world, Such an one is an honest friend. Why? because he is of their humor, and lackeys according to their wills. Thus we make self the measure and square of good and evil in the rest of mankind, and judge of it by our own fancies, and not by the will of God, the proper rule of judgment. Well then, let us consider: Is not this very common? are we not naturally more willing to displease God than displease ourselves, when it comes to a point that we must do one or other? Is not our own counsel of more value with us, than conformity to the will of the Creator? Do not our judgments often run counter to the judgment of God? Have his laws a greater respect from us, than our own humors? Do we scruple

the staining his honor when it comes in competition with our own? Are not the lives of most men a pleasing themselves, without a repentance that ever they displeased God? Is not this to undeify God, to deify ourselves, and disown the propriety he hath in us by the right of creation and beneficence? We order our own ways by our own humors, as though we were the authors of our own being, and had given ourselves life and understanding. This is to destroy the order that God hath placed between our wills and his own, and a lifting up of the foot above the head; it is the deformity of the creature. The honor of every rational creature consists in the service of the First Cause of his being; as the welfare of every creature consists in the orders and proportionable motion of its members, according to the law of its creation. He that moves and acts according to a law of his own, offers a manifest wrong to God, the highest wisdom and chiefest good; disturbs the order of the world; nulls the design of the righteousness and holiness of God. The law of God is the rule of that order he would have observed in the world; he that makes another law his rule, thrusts out the order of the Creator, and establishes the disorder of the creature. But this will yet be more evident, in the fourth thing.

Fourthly, Man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator. We are willing God should be our benefactor, but not our ruler; we are content to admire his excellency and pay him a worship, provided he will walk by our rule. "This commits a riot upon his nature, To think him to be what we ourselves "would have him, and wish him to be" (Psalms 50:21), we would amplify his mercy and contract his justice; we would have his power enlarged to supply our wants, and straitened when it goes about to revenge our crimes; we would have him wise to defeat our enemies, but not to disappoint our unworthy projects; we would have him all eye to regard our indigence, and blind not to discern our guilt; we would have him true to his promises, regardless of his precepts, and false to his threatenings; we would new mint the nature of God according to our models, and shape a God according to our own fancies, as he made us at first according to his own image;" instead of obeying him, we would have him obey us; instead of owning and admiring his perfections, we would have him strip himself of his infinite excellency, and clothe himself with a nature agreeable to our own. This is not only to set up self as the law of God, but to make our own imaginations the model of the nature of God. [Note: Decay of Christian Piety, p. 169, somewhat changed.] Corrupted man takes a pleasure to accuse or suspect the actions of God: we would not have him act conveniently to his nature; but act what doth gratify us, and abstain from what distastes us. Man is never well but when he is impeaching one or other perfection of God's nature, and undermining his glory, as if all his attributes must stand indicted at the bar of our purblind reason: this weed shoots up in the exercise of grace. Peter intended the refusal of our Saviour's washing his feet, as an act of humility, but Christ understands it to be a prescribing a law to himself, a correcting his love (John 13:8-9). This is evidenced,

1. In the strivings against his law. How many men imply by their lives, that they would have God deposed from his government, and some unrighteous being step into his throne; as if God had or should change his laws of holiness into laws of licentiousness: as if he should abrogate his old eternal precepts, and enact contrary ones in their stead? What is the language of such practices, but that they would be God's lawgivers and not his subjects? that he should deal with them according to their own wills, and not according to his righteousness? that they could make a more holy, wise, and righteous law than the law of God? that their imaginations, and not God's righteousness, should be the rule of his doing good to them? (Jeremiah 9:18): "They have

forsaken my law, and walked after the imaginations of their own heart.” When an act is known to be a sin, and the law that forbids it acknowledged to be the law of God, and after this we persist in that which is contrary to it, we tax his wisdom as if he did not understand what was convenient for us; “we would teach God knowledge;” [Note: Job 21:22.] it is an implicit wish that God had laid aside the holiness of his nature, and framed a law to pleasure our lusts. When God calls for weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth upon approaching judgments, then the corrupt heart is for joy and gladness, eating of flesh and drinking of wine, because to-morrow they should die; [Note: Isaiah 22:12-13.] as if God had mistaken himself when he ordered them so much sorrow, when their lives were so near an end; and had lost his understanding when he ordered such a precept: disobedience is therefore called contention (Romans 2:8): “Contentious, and obey not the truth:” contention against God, whose truth it is that they disobey; a dispute with him, which hath more of wisdom in itself, and conveniency for them, his truth of their imaginations. The more the love, goodness, and holiness of God appears in any command, the more are we naturally averse from it, and cast an imputation on him, as if he were foolish, unjust, cruel, and that we could have advised and directed him better. The goodness of God is eminent to us in appointing a day for his own worship, wherein we might converse with him, and he with us, and our souls be refreshed with spiritual communications from him; and we rather use it for the ease of our bodies, than the advancement of our souls, as if God were mistaken and injured his creature, when he urged the spiritual part of duty. Every disobedience to the law is an implicit giving law to him, and a charge against him that he might have provided better for his creature.

2. In disapproving the methods of God’s government of the world. If the counsels of Heaven roll not about according to their schemes, instead of adoring the unsearchable depths of his judgments, they call him to the bar, and accuse him, because they are not fitted to their narrow vessels, as if a nut-shell could contain an ocean. As corrupt reason esteems the highest truths foolishness, so it counts the most righteous ways unequal. Thus we commence a suit against God., as though he had not acted righteously and wisely, but must give an account of his proceedings at our tribunal. This is to make ourselves God’s superiors, and resume to instruct him better in the government of the world; as though God hindered himself and the world, in not making us of his privy council, and not ordering his affairs according to the contrivances of our dim understandings. Is not this manifest in our immoderate complaints of God’s dealings with his church, as though there were a coldness in God’s affections to his church, and a glowing heat towards it only in us? Hence are those importunate desires for things which are not established by any promise, as though we would overrule and over persuade God to comply with our humor. We have an ambition to be God’s tutors and direct him in his counsels: “Who hath been his counsellor?” saith the apostle. [Note: Romans 11:34.] Who ought not to be his counsellor? saith corrupt nature. Men will find fault with God in what he suffers to be done according to their own minds, when they feel the bitter fruit of it. When Cain had killed his brother, and his conscience racked him, how saucily and discontentedly doth he answer God! (Genesis 4:9), “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Since thou dost own thyself the rector of the world, thou shouldst have preserved his person from my fury; since thou dost accept his sacrifice before my offering, preservation was due as well as acceptance. If this temper be found on earth, no wonder it is lodged in hell. That deplorable person under the sensible stroke of God’s sovereign justice, would oppose his nay to God’s will (Luke 16:30): “And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead they will repent.” He would presume to prescribe more effectual means than

Moses and the prophets, to inform men of the danger they incurred by their sensuality. David was displeased, it is said (2 Samuel 6:8), when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, not with Uzzah, who was the object of his pity, but with God, who was the inflicter of that punishment. When any of our friends have been struck with a rod, against our sentiments and wishes, have not our hearts been apt to swell in complaints against God, as though he disregarded the goodness of such a person, did not see with our eyes, and measure him by our esteem of him? as if he should have asked our counsel, before he had resolved, and managed himself according, to our will, rather than his own. If he be patient to the wicked, we are apt to tax his holiness, and accuse him as an enemy to his own law. If he inflict severity upon the righteous, we are ready to suspect his goodness, and charge him to be an enemy to his affectionate creature. If he spare the Nimrods of the world, we are ready to ask, "Where is the God of judgment?" [Note: Malachi 2:17.] If he afflict the pillars of the earth, we are ready to question, where is the God of mercy? It is impossible, since the depraved nature of man, and the various interests and passions in the world, that infinite power and wisdom can act righteously for the good of the universe, but he will shake some corrupt interest or other upon the earth; so various are the inclinations of men, and such a weather-cock judgment hath every man in himself, that the divine method he applauds this day, upon a change of his interest, he will cavil at the next. It is impossible for the just orders of God to please the same person many weeks, scarce many minutes together. God must cease to be God, or to be holy, if he should manage the concerns of the world according to the fancies of men. How unreasonable is it thus to impose laws upon God! Must God revoke his own orders? govern according to the dictates of his creature? Must God, who hath only power and wisdom to sway the sceptre, become the obedient subject of every man's humor, and manage everything to serve the design of a simple creature? This is not to be God, but to set the creature in his throne: though this be not formally done, yet that it is interpretatively and practically done, is every hour's experience.

3. In impatience in our particular concerns. It is ordinary with man to charge God in his complaints in the time of affliction. Therefore it is the commendation the Holy Ghost gives to Job (ch. 1:22), that in all this, that is, in those many waves that rolled over him, he did not charge God foolishly, he never spake nor thought anything unworthy of the majesty and righteousness of God; yet afterwards we find him warping; he nicknames the affliction to be God's oppression of him, and no act of his goodness (10:3): "Is it good for thee, that thou shouldst oppress?" He seems to charge God with injustice, for punishing him when he was not wicked, for which he appeals to God: "Thou knowest that I am not wicked" (ver. 7), and that God acted not like a Creator (ver. 8). If our projects are disappointed, what fretfulness against God's management are our hearts racked with! How do uncomely passions bubble upon us, interpretatively at least wishing that the arms of his power had been bound, and the eye of his omniscience been hoodwinked, that we might have been left to our own liberty and designs? and this oftentimes when we have more reason to bless him than repine at him. The Israelites murmured more against God in the wilderness, with manna in their mouths, than they did at Pharaoh in the brick-kilns, with their garlic and onions between their teeth. Though we repine at instruments in our afflictions, yet God counts it a reflection upon himself. The Israelites speaking against Moses, was, in God's interpretation, a rebellion against himself: [Note: Numbers 16:41, compared with 17:10.] and rebellion is always a desire of imposing laws and conditions upon those against whom the rebellion is raised. The sottish dealings of the vine-dressers in Franconia with the statue of St. Urban, the protector of the vines, upon his own day, is an emblem of our dealing with God: if it be a clear day and portend a prosperous vintage,

they honor the statue and drink healths to it; if it be a rainy day, and presage a scantiness, they daub it with dirt in indignation. We cast out our mire and dirt against God when he acts cross to our wishes, and flatter him when the wind of his providence joins itself to the tide of our interest. Men set a high price upon themselves, and are angry God values them not at the same rate, as if their judgment concerning themselves were more piercing than his. This is to disannul God's judgment, and condemn him and count ourselves righteous, as 'tis Job 40:8. This is the epidemical disease of human nature; they think they deserve caresses instead of rods, and upon crosses are more ready to tear out the heart of God, than reflect humbly upon their own hearts. When we accuse God, we applaud ourselves, and make ourselves his superiors, intimating that we have acted more righteously to him than he to us, which is the highest manner of imposing laws upon him; as that emperor accused the justice of God for snatching him out of the world too soon. [Note: *Coelum suspiciens vitam, &c. Vita Titi. c. 10.*] What a high piece of practical atheism is this, to desire that infinite wisdom should be guided by our folly, and asperse the righteousness of God rather than blemish our own! Instead of silently submitting to his will and adoring his wisdom, we declaim against him, as an unwise and unjust governor: we would invert his order, make him the steward and ourselves the proprietors of what we are and have: we deny ourselves to be sinners, and our mercies to be forfeited.

4. It is evidenced in envying the gifts and prosperities of others. Envy hath a deep tincture of practical atheism, and is a cause of atheism. [Note: Because wicked men flourish in the world. *Solicitor nullos esse putare Deos.*] We are unwilling to leave God to be the proprietor and do what he will with his own, and as a Creator to do what he pleases with his creatures. We assume a liberty to direct God what portions, when and how, he should bestow upon his creatures. We would not let him choose his own favorites, and pitch upon his own instruments for his glory; as if God should have asked counsel of us how he should dispose of his benefits. We are unwilling to leave to his wisdom the management of his own judgments to the wicked, and the dispensation of his own love to ourselves. This temper is natural: it is as ancient as the first age of the world. Adam envied God a felicity by himself, and would not spare a tree that he had reserved as a mark of his sovereignty. The passion that God had given Cain to employ against his sin, he turns against his Creator. He was wroth with God and with Abel; [Note: *Genesis 4:5.*] but envy was at the root, because his brother's sacrifice was accepted and his refused. How could he envy his accepted person, without reflecting upon the Acceptor of his offering? Good men have not been free from it. Job questions the goodness of God, that he should shine upon the counsel of the wicked (*Job 10:3*). Jonah had too much of self, in fearing to be counted a false prophet, when he came with absolute denunciations of wrath; [Note: *Jonah 4:2.*] and when he could not bring a volley of destroying judgments upon the Ninevites, he would shoot his fury against his Master, envying those poor people the benefit, and God the honor of his mercy; and this after he had been sent into the whale's belly to learn humiliation, which, though he exercised there, yet those two great branches of self-pride and envy were not lopped off from him in the belly of hell; and God was fain to take pains with him, and by a gourd scarce makes him ashamed of his peevishness. Envy is not like to cease till all atheism be cashiered, and that is in heaven. This sin is an imitation of the devil, whose first sin upon earth was envy, as his first sin in heaven was pride. It is a wishing that to ourselves, which the devil asserted as his right, to give the kingdoms of the world to whom he pleased: [Note: *Luke 4:6.*] it is an anger with God, because he hath not given us a patent for government. It utters the same language in disparagement of God, as Absalom did in reflection on

his father: If I were king in Israel, justice should be better managed; if I were Lord of the world, there should be more wisdom to discern the merits of men, and more righteousness in distributing to them their several portions. Thus we impose laws upon God, and would have the righteousness of his will submit to the corruptions of ours, and have him lower himself to gratify our minds, rather than fulfil his own. We charge the Author of those gifts with injustice, that he hath not dealt equally; or with ignorance, that he hath mistook his mark. In the same breath that we censure him by our peevishness, we would guide him by our wills. This is an unreasonable part of atheism. If all were in the same state and condition, the order of the world would be impaired. Is God bound to have a care of thee, and neglect all the world besides? "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?" [Note: Job 18:4.] Joseph had reason to be displeased with his brothers, if they had muttered because he gave Benjamin a double portion, and the rest a single. It was unfit that they, who had deserved no gift at all, should prescribe him rules how to dispense his own doles; much more unworthy it is to deal so with God; yet this is too rife.

5. It is evidenced in corrupt matter or ends of prayer and praise. When we are importunate for those things that we know not whether the righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of God can grant, because he hath not discovered his will in any promise to bestow them, we would then impose such conditions on God, which he never obliged himself to grant; when we pray for things not so much to glorify God, which ought to be the end of prayer, as to gratify ourselves. We acknowledge, indeed, by the act of petitioning, that there is a God; but we would have him ungod himself to be at our beck, and debase himself to serve our turns. When we desire those things which are repugnant to those attributes whereby he doth manage the government of the world; when, by some superficial services, we think we have gained indulgence to sins, which seems to be the thought of the strumpet, in her paying her vows, to wallow more freely in the mire of her sensual pleasures—"I have peace-offerings with me; this day I have paid my vows, I have made my peace with God, and have entertainment for thee;" [Note: Proverbs 7:14.] or when men desire God to bless them in the commission of some sin, as when Balak and Balaam offered sacrifices, that they might prosper in the cursing of the Israelites (Numbers 25:1, &c.) So for a man to pray to God to save him, while he neglects the means of salvation appointed by God, or to renew him when he slights the word, the only instrument to that purpose; this is to impose laws upon God, contrary to the declared will and wisdom of God, and to desire him to slight his own institutions. When we come into the presence of God with lusts reeking in our hearts, and leap from sin to duty. we would impose the law of our corruption on the holiness of God. While we pray "the will of God may be done," self-love wishes its own will may be performed, as though God should serve our humors, when we will not obey his precepts. And when we make vows under any affliction, what is it often but a secret contrivance to bend and flatter him to our conditions? We will serve him if he will restore us; we think thereby to compound the business with him, and bring him down to our terms.

6. It is evidenced in positive and bold interpretations of the judgments of God in the world. To interpret the judgments of God to the disadvantage of the sufferer, unless it be an unusual judgment, and have a remarkable hand of God in it, and the sin be rendered plainly legible in the affliction, is a. presumption of this nature. When men will judge the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices, greater sinners than others, and themselves righteous, because no drops of it were dashed upon them; or when Shimei, being of the house of Saul, shall judge according to his own interest, and desires David's flight upon Absalom's rebellion to be a

punishment for invading the rights of Saul's family, and depriving him of the succession in the kingdom, [Note: 2 Samuel 16:5.] as if he had been of God's privy council, when he decreed such acts of justice in the world. Thus we would fasten our own wills as a law or motive upon God, and interpret his acts according to the motions of self. Is it not too ordinary, when God sends an affliction upon those that bear ill-will to us, to judge it to be a righting of our cause, to be a fruit of God's concern for us in revenging our wrongs, as if we "had heard the secrets of God," or, as Eliphaz saith, "had turned over the records of heaven?" (Job 15:8.) This is a judgment according to self-love, not a divine rule; and imposeth laws upon heaven, implying a secret wish that God would take care only of them, make our concerns his own, not in ways of kindness and justice, but according to our fancies; and this is common in the profane world, in those curses they so readily spit out upon any affront, as if God were bound to draw his arrows and shoot them into the heart of all their offenders at their beck and pleasure.

7. It is evidenced, in mixing rules for the worship of God with those which have been ordered by him. Since men are most prone to live by sense, it is no wonder that a sensible worship, which affects their outward sense with some kind of amazement, is dear to them, and spiritual worship most loathsome. Pompous rites have been the great engine wherewith the devil hath deceived the souls of men, and wrought them to a nauseating the simplicity of divine worship, as unworthy the majesty and excellency of God. [Note: 2 Corinthians 11:3.] Thus the Jews would not understand the glory of the second temple in the presence of the Messiah, because it had not the pompous grandeur of that of Solomon's erecting. Hence in all ages men have been forward to disfigure God's models, and dress up a brat of their own; as though God had been defective in providing for his own honor in his institutions, without the assistance of his creature. This hath always been in the world; the old world had their imaginations, and the new world hath continued them. The Israelites in the midst of miracles, and under the memory of a famous deliverance, would erect a calf. The Pharisees, that sate in Moses' chair, would coin new traditions, and enjoin them to be as current as the law of God. [Note: Matthew 13:6.] Papists will be blending the christian appointments with pagan ceremonies, to please the carnal fancies of the common people. "Altars have been multiplied" under the knowledge of the law of God. [Note: Hosea 8:12.] Interest is made the balance of the conveniency of God's injunctions. Jeroboam fitted a worship to politic ends, and posted up calves to prevent his subjects revolting from his sceptre, which might be occasioned by their resort to Jerusalem, and converse with the body of the people from whom they were separated. [Note: 1 Kings 12:27.] Men will be putting in their own dictates with God's laws, and are unwilling he should be the sole Governor of the world without their counsel; they will not suffer him to be Lord of that which is purely and solely his concern. How often hath the practice of the primitive church, the custom wherein we are bred, the sentiments of our ancestors, been owned as a more authentic rule in matters of worship, than the mind of God delivered in his Word! It is natural by creation to worship God; and it is as natural by corruption for man to worship him in a human way, and not in a divine; is not this to impose laws upon God, to esteem ourselves wiser than he? to think him negligent of his own service, and that our feeble brains can find out ways to accommodate his honor, better than himself hath done? Thus do men for the most part equal their own imaginations to God's oracles: as Solomon built a high place to Moloch and Chemoch, upon the Mount of Olives, to face on the east part Jerusalem and the temple; [Note: 1 Kings 11:7.] this is not only to impose laws on God, but also to make self the standard of them.

8. It is evidenced, in suiting interpretations of Scripture to their own minds and humors. Like the Lacedæmonians, that dressed the images of their gods according to the fashion of their own country, we would wring Scripture to serve our own designs, and judge the law of God by the law of sin, and make the serpentine seed in us to be the interpreter of divine oracles: this is like Belshazzar to drink healths out of the sacred vessels. As God is the author of his law and word, so he is the best interpreter of it; the Scripture having an impress of divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness, must be regarded according to that impress, with a submission and meekness of spirit and reverence of God in it; but when, in our inquiries into the word, we inquire not of God, but consult flesh and blood, the temper of the times wherein we live, or the satisfaction of a party we side withal, and impose glosses upon it according to our own fancies, it is to put laws upon God, and make self the rule of him. He that interprets the law to bolster up some eager appetite against the will of the lawgiver, ascribes to himself as great an authority as he that enacted it.

9. In falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will grateth upon us, and crosseth ours. They will walk with him as far as he pleaseth them, and leave him upon the first distaste, as though God must observe their humors more than they his will. Amos must be suspended from prophesying, because the "land could not bear his words," and his discourses condemned their unworthy practices against God. [Note: Amos 7:10.] The young man came not to receive directions from our Saviour, but expected a confirmation of his own rules, rather than an imposition of new. [Note: Mark 10:17; Mark 10:22.] He rather cares for commendations than instructions, and upon the disappointment turns his back; "he was sad," that Christ would not suffer him to be rich, and a Christian together; and leaves him because his command was not suitable to the law of his covetousness. Some truths that are at a further distance from us, we can hear gladly; but when the conscience begins to smart under others, if God will not observe our wills, we will, with Herod, be a law to ourselves. [Note: Mark 6:20; Mark 6:27.] More instances might be observed.—Ingratitude is a setting up self, and an imposing laws on God. It is as much as to say, God did no more than he was obliged to do; as if the mercies we have were an act of duty in God, and not of bounty.—Insatiable desires after wealth: hence are those speeches (James 4:13), "We will go into such a city, and buy and sell, &c. to get gain;" as though they had the command of God, and God must lacquey after their wills. When our hearts are not contented with any supply of our wants, but are craving an overplus for our lust; when we are unsatisfied in the midst of plenty, and still like the grave, cry, Give, give.—Incorrigibleness under affliction, &c.

II. The second main thing: As man would be a law to himself, so he would be his own end and happiness in opposition to God. Here four things shall be discoursed on. 1. Man would make himself his own end and happiness. 2. He would make anything his end and happiness rather than God. 3. He would make himself the end of all creatures. 4. He would make himself the end of God.

First, Man would make himself his own end and happiness. As God ought to be esteemed the first cause, in point of our dependence on him, so he ought to be our last end, in point of our enjoyment of him. When we therefore trust in ourselves, we refuse him as the first cause; and when we act for ourselves, and expect a blessedness from ourselves, we refuse him as the chiefest good, and last end, which is an undeniable piece of atheism; for man is a creature of a higher rank than others in the world, and was not made as animals, plants, and other works of the divine power, materially to glorify God, but a rational creature, intentionally to honor God by obedience to his rule, dependence on his goodness, and zeal for his glory. It is, therefore, as much a slighting of God, for

man, a creature, to set himself up as his own end, as to regard himself as his own law. For the discovery of this, observe that there is a three-fold self-love.

1. Natural, which is common to us by the law of nature with other creatures, inanimate as well as animate, and so closely twisted with the nature of every creature, that it cannot be dissolved but with the dissolution of nature itself. It consisted not with the wisdom and goodness of God to create an unnatural nature, or to command anything unnatural, nor doth he; for when he commands us to sacrifice ourselves, and dearest lives for himself, it is not without a promise of a more noble state of being in exchange for what we lose. This self-love is not only commendable, but necessary, as a rule to measure that duty we owe to our neighbor, whom we cannot love as ourselves, if we do not first love ourselves. God having planted this self-love in our nature, makes this natural principle the measure of our affection to all mankind of the same blood with ourselves.

2. Carnal self-love: when a man loves himself above God, in opposition to God, with a contempt of God; when our thoughts, affections, designs, centre only in our own fleshly interest, and rifle God of his honor, to make a present of it to ourselves: thus the natural self-love, in itself good, becomes criminal by the excess, when it would be superior and not subordinate to God.

3. A gracious self-love: when we love ourselves for higher ends than the nature of a creature, as a creature dictates, viz. in subserviency to the glory of God. This is a reduction of the revolted creature to his true and happy order; a Christian is therefore said to be "created in Christ to good works." [Note: Ephesians 1:10.] As all creatures were created, not only for themselves, but for the honor of God; so the grace of the new creation carries a man to answer this end, and to order all his operations to the honor of God, and his well-pleasing. The first is from nature, the second from sin, the third from grace; the first is implanted by creation, the second the fruit of corruption, and the third is by the powerful operation of grace. This carnal self love is set up in the stead of God as our last end; like the sea, which all the little and great streams of our actions run to and rest in. And this Isaiah 1:1-31. Natural. It sticks as close to us as our souls; it is as natural as sin, the foundation of all the evil in the world. As self-aborrancy is the first stone that is laid in conversion, so an inordinate self-love was the first inlet to all iniquity. As grace is a rising from self to centre in God, so is sin a shrinking from God into the mire of a carnal selfishness; since every creature is nearest to itself and next to God, it cannot fall from God, but must immediately sink into self; [Note: More, Dial. 2. § 17. p. 274.] and, therefore, all sins are well said to be branches or modifications of this fundamental passion. What is wrath, but a defence and strengthening self against the attempts of some real or imaginary evil? Whence springs envy, but from a self-love, grieved at its own wants in the midst of another's enjoyment, able to supply it? What is impatience, but a regret that self is not provided for at the rate of our wish, and that it hath met with a shock against supposed merit? What is pride, but a sense of self-worth, a desire to have self of a higher elevation than others? What is drunkenness, but a seeking a satisfaction for sensual self in the spoils of reason? No sin is committed as sin, but as it pretends a self-satisfaction. Sin, indeed, may well be termed a man's self, because it is, since the loss of original righteousness, the form that overspreads every part of our souls. The understanding assents to nothing false but under the notion of true, and the will embraceth nothing evil but under the notion of good; but the rule whereby we measure the truth and goodness of proposed objects, is not the unerring Word, but the inclinations of self, the gratifying of which is the aim of our whole lives. Sin and self are all one: what is called a living to sin in one place, [Note: Romans 6:1-23.] is called a living to self in

another: "That they that live should not live unto themselves." [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15.] And upon this account it is that both the Hebrew word, חָטָא, and the Greek word, ἁμαρτάνειν, used in Scripture to express sin, properly signify to miss the mark, and swerve from that white to which all our actions should be directed, viz. the glory of God. When we fell to loving ourselves, we fell from loving God; and, therefore, when the Psalmist saith (Psalms 14:2), there were none that sought God, viz. as the last end; he presently adds, "They are all gone aside," viz. from their true mark, and therefore become filthy. 2. Since it is natural, it is also universal. [Note: Psalms 14:1.] The not seeking God is as universal as our ignorance of him. No man in a state of nature but hath it predominant; no renewed man on this side heaven but hath it partially. The one hath it flourishing, the other hath it struggling. If to aim at the glory of God as the chief end, and not to live to ourselves, be the greatest mark of the restoration of the divine image, [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15] and a conformity to Christ, who glorified not himself, [Note: Hebrews 1:5.] but the Father; [Note: John 17:4.] then every man, wallowing in the mire of corrupt nature, pays a homage to self, as a renewed man is biassed by the honor of God. The Holy Ghost excepts none from this crime (Php 2:21): "All seek their own." It is rare for them to look above or beyond themselves. Whatsoever may be the immediate subject of their thoughts and inquiries, yet the utmost end and stage is their profit, honor, or pleasure. Whatever it be that immediately possesses the mind and will, self sits like a queen, and sways the sceptre, and orders things at that rate, that God is excluded, and can find no room in all his thoughts (Psalms 10:4): "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts." The whole little world of man is so overflowed with a deluge of self, that the dove, the glory of the Creator, can find no place where to set its foot; and if ever it gain the favor of admittance, it is to disguise and be a vassal to some carnal project, as the glory of God was a mask for the murdering his servants. It is from the power of this principle that the difficulty of conversion ariseth: as there is no greater pleasure to a believing soul than the giving itself up to God, and no stronger desire in him, than to have a fixed and unchangeable will to serve the designs of his honor; so there is no greater torment to a wicked man, than to part with his carnal ends, and lay down the Dagon of self at the feet of the ark. Self love and self-opinion in the Pharisees waylaid all the entertainment of truth (John 5:44): "They sought honor one of another, and not the honor which comes from God." It is of so large an extent, and so insinuating nature, that it winds itself into the exercise of moral virtues, mixeth with our charity (Matthew 6:2), and finds nourishment in the ashes of martyrdom (1 Corinthians 13:3). This making ourselves our end will appear in a few things.

1. In frequent self-applauses, and inward overweening reflections. Nothing more ordinary in the natures of men, than a dotage on their own perfections, acquisitions, or actions in the world: "Most think of themselves above what they ought to think" (Romans 12:3-4.) Few think of themselves so meanly as they ought to think: this sticks as close to us as our skin; and as humility is the beauty of grace, this is the filthiest soil of nature. Our thoughts run more delightfully upon the track of our own perfections, than the excellency of God; and when we find anything of a seeming worth, that may make us glitter in the eyes of the world, how cheerfully do we grasp and embrace ourselves! When the grosser profanenesses of men have been discarded, and the floods of them dammed up, the head of corruption, whence they sprang, will swell the higher within, in self-applauding speculations of their own reformation, without acknowledgment of their own weaknesses, and desires of divine assistance to make a further progress. "I thank God I am not like this publican;" [Note: Luke 18:11.] a self-reflection, with a contempt rather than compassion to his neighbor, is

frequent in every Pharisee. The vapors of self-affections, in our clouded understandings, like those in the air in misty mornings, alter the appearance of things, and make them look bigger than they are. This is thought by some to be the sin of the fallen angels, who, reflecting upon their own natural excellency superior to other creatures, would find a blessedness in their own nature, as God did in his, and make themselves the last end of their actions. It is from this principle we are naturally so ready to compare ourselves rather with those that are below us, than with those that are above us; and often think those that are above us inferior to us, and secretly glory that we are become none of the meanest and lowest in natural or moral excellencies. How far were the gracious penmen of the Scripture from this, who, when possessed and directed by the Spirit of God, and filled with a sense of him, instead of applauding themselves, publish upon record their own faults to all the eyes of the world! And if Peter, as some think, dictated the Gospel which Mark wrote as his amanuensis, it is observable that his crime in denying his Master is aggravated in that Gospel in some circumstances, and less spoken of his repentance than in the other evangelists: "When he thought thereon, he wept;" [Note: Mark 14:72.] but in the other, "He went out and wept bitterly." [Note: Matthew 26:75, Luke 22:2.] This is one part of atheism and self-idolatry, to magnify ourselves with the forgetfulness, and to the injury of our Creator.

2. In ascribing the glory of what we do or have to ourselves, to our own wisdom, power, virtue, &c. How flaunting is Nebuchadnezzar at the prospect of Babylon, which he had exalted to be the head of so great an empire! (Daniel 4:30): "Is not this great Babylon that I have built? For," &c. He struts upon the battlements of his palace, as if there were no God but himself in the world, while his eye could not but see the heavens above him to be none of his own framing, attributing his acquisitions to his own arm, and referring them to his own honor, for his own delight; not for the honor of God, as a creature ought, nor for the advantage of his subjects, as the duty of a prince. He regards Babylon as his heaven, and himself as his idol, as if he were all, and God nothing. An example of this we have in the present age. But it is often observed, that God vindicates his own honor, brings the most heroical men to contempt and unfortunate ends, as a punishment of their pride, as he did here (Daniel 4:31): "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven," &c. This was Herod's crime, to suffer others to do it: [Note: Sanderson's Sermons.] he had discovered his eloquence actively, and made himself his own end passively, in approving the flatteries of the people, and offered not with one hand to God the glory he received from his people with the other. [Note: Acts 12:22-23.] Samosatenus is reported to put down the hymns which were sung for the glory of God and Christ, and caused songs to be sung in the temple for his own honor. When anything succeeds well, we are ready to attribute it to our own prudence and industry: if we meet with a cross, we fret against the stars and fortune, and second causes, and sometimes against God: as they curse God as well as their king (Isaiah 8:21), not acknowledging any defect in themselves. The Psalmist, by his repetition of, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory" (Psalms 115:1), implies the naturality of this temper, and the difficulty to cleanse our hearts from those self-reflections. If it be angelical to refuse an undue glory stolen from God's throne (Revelation 22:8-9), it is diabolical to accept and cherish it. To seek our own glory is not glory (Proverbs 25:27). It is vile, and the dishonor of a creature, who by the law of his creation is referred to another end. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract from God.

3. In desires to have self-pleasing doctrines. When we cannot endure to hear anything that crosses the flesh; though the wise man tells us, it is better to hear the “rebuke of the wise, than the song of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:5). If Hanani the seer reprove king Asa for not relying on the Lord, his passion shall be armed for self against the prophet, and arrest him a prisoner (2 Chronicles 16:10). If Micaiah declare to Ahab the evil that shall befall him, Amon the governor shall receive orders to clap him up in a dungeon. Fire doth not sooner seize upon combustible matter than fury will be kindled, if self be but pinched. This interest of lustful self barred the heart of Herodias against the entertainment of the truth, and caused her savagely to dip her hands in the blood of the Baptist, to make him a sacrifice to that inward idol. [Note: Mark 6:18-19; Mark 6:28.]

4. In being highly concerned for injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God. How will the blood rise in us, when our honor and reputation is invaded, and scarce reflect upon the dishonor God suffers in our sight and hearing! Violent passions will transform us into Boanerges in the one case, and our unconcernedness render us Gallios in the other. We shall extenuate that which concerns God, and aggravate that which concerns ourselves. Nothing but the death of Jonathan, a first-born and a generous son, will satisfy his father Saul, when the authority of his edict was broken by his tasting of honey, though he had recompensed his crime committed in ignorance by the purchase of a gallant victory. But when the authority of God was violated in saving the Amalekites’ cattle, against the command of a greater sovereign than himself, he can daub the business, and excuse it with a design of sacrificing. He was not so earnest in hindering the people from the breach of God’s command, as he was in vindicating the honor of his own: [Note: 1 Samuel 15:21.] he could hardly admit of an excuse to save his own honor; but in the concerns of God’s honor, pretend piety, to cloak his avarice. And it is often seen, when the violation of God’s authority, and the stain of our own reputation are coupled together, we are more troubled for what disgraces us than for what dishonors God. When Saul had thus transgressed, he is desirous that Samuel would turn again to preserve his own honor before the elders, rather than grieved that he had broken the command of God (ver. 30).

5. In trusting in ourselves. When we consult with our own wit and wisdom, more than inquire of God, and ask leave of him: as the Assyrian (Isaiah 10:13), “By the strength of my hands I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent.” When we attempt things in the strength of our own heads, and parts, and trust in our own industry, without application to God for direction, blessing, and success, we affect the privilege of the Deity, and make gods of ourselves. The same language in reality with Ajax in Sophocles: “Others think to overcome with the assistance of the gods, but I hope to gain honor without them.” Dependence and trust is an act due from the creature only to God. Hence God aggravates the crime of the Jews in trusting in Egypt (Isaiah 31:3), “the Egyptians are men and not gods.” Confidence in ourselves is a defection from God (Jeremiah 17:5). And when we depart from and cast off God to depend upon ourselves, which is but an arm of flesh, we choose the arm of flesh for our God; we rob God of that confidence we ought to place in him, and that adoration which is due to him, and build it upon another foundation; not that we are to neglect the reason and parts God hath given us, or spend more time in prayer than in consulting about our own affairs, but to mix our own intentions in business, with ejaculations to heaven, and take God along with us in every motion: but certainly it is an idolizing of self, when we are more diligent in our attendance on our own wit, than fervent in our recourses to God.

6. The power of sinful self, above the efficacy of the notion of God, is evident in our workings for carnal self against the light of our own consciences. When men of sublime reason, and clear natural wisdom, are voluntary slaves to their own lusts, row against the stream of their own consciences, serve carnal self with a disgraceful and disturbing drudgery, making it their God, sacrificing natural self, all sentiments of virtue, and the quiet of their lives, to the pleasure, honor, and satisfaction of carnal self: this is a prostituting God in his deputy, conscience, to carnal affections, when their eyes are shut against the enlightenings of it, and their ears deaf to its voice, but open to the least breath and whisper of self; a debt that the creature owes supremely to God. Much more might be said, but let us see what atheism lurks in this, and how it entrencheth upon God.

1. It is usurping God's prerogative. It is God's prerogative to be his own end, and act for his own glory; because there is nothing superior to him in excellency and goodness to act for: he had not his being from anything without himself, whereby he should be obliged to act for anything but himself. To make ourselves then our last end, is to corrival God in his being the supreme good, and blessedness to himself: as if we were our own principle, the author of our own being, and were not obliged to a higher power than ourselves, for what we are and have. To direct the lines of all our motions to ourselves, is to imply that they first issued only from ourselves. When we are rivals to God in his chief end, we own or desire to be rivals to him in the principle of his being: this is to set ourselves in the place of God. All things have something without them, and above them as their end; all inferior creatures act for some superior order in the rank of creation; the lesser animals are designed for the greater, and all for man: man, therefore, for something nobler than himself. To make ourselves therefore our own end, is to deny any, superior, to whom we are to direct our actions. God alone being the supreme Being, can be his own ultimate end: for if there were anything higher and better than God, the purity and righteousness of his own nature would cause him to act for and toward that as his chiefest mark: this is the highest sacrilege, to alienate the proper good and rights of God, and employ them for our own use; to steal from him his own honor, and put it into our own cabinets; like those birds that ravished the sacrifice from the altar and carried it to their own nests. [Note: Sabunde, Tit. 140.] When we love only ourselves, and act for no other end but ourselves, we invest ourselves with the dominion which is the right of God, and take the crown from his head. For as the crown belongs to the king, so to love his own will, to will by his own will and for himself, is the property of God; because he hath no other will, no other end above him to be the rule and scope of his actions. When therefore we are by self-love transformed wholly into ourselves, we make ourselves our own foundation, without God and against God; when we mind our own glory and praise, we would have a royal state equal with God, who created all things for himself. [Note: Proverbs 16:4.] What can man do more for God than he naturally doth for himself, since he doth all those things for himself which he should do for God? We own ourselves to be our own creators and benefactors, and fling off all sentiments of gratitude to him.

2. It is a vilifying of God. When we make ourselves our end, it is plain language that God is not our happiness; we postpone God to ourselves, as if he were not an object so excellent and fit for our love as ourselves are (for it is irrational to make that our end, which is not God, and not the chiefest good); it is to deny him to be better than we, to make him not to be so good as ourselves, and so fit to be our chiefest good as ourselves are; that he hath not deserved any such

acknowledgment at our hands by all that he hath done for us: we assert ourselves his superiors by such kind of acting, though we are infinitely more inferior to God than any creature can be to us. Man cannot dishonor God more than by referring that to his own glory, which God made for his own praise, upon account whereof he only hath a right to glory and praise, and none else. He thus “changeth the glory of the incorruptible God into a corruptible image;” [Note: Romans 1:23.] a perishing fame and reputation, which extends but little beyond the limits of his own habitation; or if it doth, survives but a few years, and perishes at last with the age wherein he lived.

3. It is as much as in us lies a destroying of God. By this temper we destroy that God that made us, because we destroy his intention and his honor. God cannot outlive his will and his glory: because he cannot have any other rule but his own will, or any other end but his own honor. The setting up self as our end puts a nullity upon the true Deity; by paying to ourselves that respect and honor which is due to God, we make the true God as no God. Whosoever makes himself a king of his prince's rights and territories, manifests an intent to throw him out of his government. To choose ourselves as our end is to undeify God, since to be the last end of a rational creature is a right inseparable from the nature of the Deity; and therefore not to set God, but self always before us, is to acknowledge no being but ourselves to be God.

Secondly. The second thing, Man would make anything his end and happiness rather than God. An end is so necessary in all our actions, that he deserves not the name of a rational creature that proposeth not one to himself. This is the distinction between rational creatures and others; they act with a formal intention, whereas other creatures are directed to their end by a natural instinct, and moved by nature to what the others should be moved by reason: when a man, therefore, acts for that end which was not intended him by the law of his creation, nor is suited to the noble faculties of his soul, he acts contrary to God, overturns his order, and merits no better a title than that of an atheist. A man may be said two ways to make a thing his last end and chief good.

1. Formally. When he actually judges this or that thing to be his chiefest good, and orders all things to it. So man doth not formally judge sin to be good, or any object which is the incentive of sin to be his last end: this cannot be while he hath the exercise of his rational faculties.

2. Virtually and implicitly. When he loves anything against the command of God, and prefers in the stream of his actions the enjoyment of that, before the fruition of God, and lays out more strength and expends more time in the gaining that, than answering the true end of his creation. when he acts so as if something below God could make him happy without God, or that God could not make him happy without the addition of something else. Thus the glutton makes a god of his dainties; the ambitious man of his honor; the incontinent man of his lust; and the covetous man of his wealth; and consequently esteems them as his chiefest good, and the most noble end, to which he directs his thoughts: thus he vilifies and lessens the true God, which can make him happy, in a multitude of false gods, that can only render him miserable. He that loves pleasure more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his pleasure. He that loves his belly more than God, says in his heart there is no God but his belly: their happiness is not accounted to lie in that God that made the world, but in the pleasure or profit they make their god. In this, though a created object be the immediate and subordinate term to which we turn, yet principally and ultimately, the affection to it terminates in self. Nothing is naturally entertained by us, but as it affects our sense or mingles with some promise of advantage to us. This is seen,

1. In the fewer thoughts we have of God than of anything else. Did we apprehend God to be our chiefest good and highest end, should we grudge him the pains of a few days' thoughts upon him? Men in their travels are frequently thinking upon their intended stage: but our thoughts run upon new acquisitions to increase our wealth, rear up our families, revenge our injuries, and support our reputation: trifles possess us; but "God is not in all our thoughts;" [Note: Psalms 10:4.] seldom the sole object of them. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engageth the whole heart to God, and bars anything else from engrossing it: but what strangers are God and the souls of most men! Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relations wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in: hence it is, as one observes, that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with an admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems, than of any other kind. [Note: Jackson, Book I. c. 14, p. 48.] The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God; but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal. [Note: Hosea 2:8.] Like Venus in the Poet, we forsake heaven to follow some Adonis.

2. In the greedy pursuit of the world. [Note: Quod quisque præ cæteris petit, summum judicat bonum. Boet. lib. iii. p. 24.] When we pursue worldly wealth or worldly reputation with more vehemency than the riches of grace, or the favor of God;—when we have a foolish imagination, that our happiness consists in them, we prefer earth before heaven, broken cisterns which can hold no water, before an ever-springing fountain of glory and bliss; and, as though there were a defect in God, cannot be content with him as our portion, without an addition of something inferior to him;—when we make it our hopes, and say to the wedge, "Thou art my confidence;" and rejoice more because it is great, and because "our hand hath gotten much, than in the privilege of communion with God and the promise of an everlasting fruition of him;" [Note: Job 31:24-25.] this is so gross, that Job joins it with the idolatry of the sun and moon, which he purgeth himself of (31:26). And the apostle, when he mentions covetousness or covetous men, passes it not over without the title of idolatry to the vice, and idolater to the person; [Note: Colossians 3:5.] in that it is a preferring clay and dirt as an end more desirable than the original of all goodness, in regard of affection and dependence.

3. In a strong addictedness to sensual pleasures (Php 3:19). Who make their "belly their god;" subjecting the truths of God to the maintenance of their luxury. In debasing the higher faculties to project for the satisfaction of the sensitive appetite as their chief happiness, whereby many render themselves no better than a rout of aublimated brutes among men, and gross atheists to God. When men's thoughts run also upon inventing new methods to satisfy their bestial appetite, forsaking the pleasures which are to be had in God, which are the delights of angels, for the satisfaction of brutes. This is an open and unquestionable refusal of God for our end, when our rest is in them, as if they were the chief good, and not God.

4. In paying a service, upon any success in the world, to instruments more than to God, their sovereign Author. When "they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag." [Note: Habakkuk 1:16.] Not that the Assyrian did offer a sacrifice to his arms, but ascribed to them what was due only to God, and appropriated the victory to his forces and arms. The prophet alludes to those that worshipped their warlike instruments, whereby they had attained great victories; and

those artificers who worshipped the tools by which they had purchased great wealth, in the stead of God; preferring them as the causes of their happiness, before God who governs the world. And are not our affections, upon the receiving of good things, more closely fixed to the instruments of conveyance, than to the chief Benefactor, from whose coffers they are taken? Do we not more delight in them, and hug them with a greater endearedness, as if all our happiness depended on them, and God were no more than a bare spectator? Just as if when a man were warmed by a beam, he should adore that and not admire the sun that darts it out upon him.

5. In paying a respect to man more than God. When in a public attendance on his service, we will not laugh, or be garish, because men see us; but our hearts shall be in a ridiculous posture, playing with feathers and trifling fancies, though God see us; as though our happiness consisted in the pleasing of men, and our misery in a respect to God. There is no fool that saith in his heart, There is no God, but he sets up something in his heart as a god. This is,

1. A debasing of God, (1.) In setting up a creature. It speaks God less amiable than the creature, short of those perfections which some silly, sordid thing, which hath engrossed their affections, is possessed with; as if the cause of all being could be transcended by his creature, and a vile lust could equal, yea, surmount the loveliness of God. It is to say to God, as the rich to the poor (James 2:3), "Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool;" it is to sink him below the mire of the world, to order him to come down from his glorious throne, and take his place below a contemptible creature, which, in regard of its infinite distance, is not to be compared with him. It strips God of the love that is due to him by the right of his nature and the greatness of his dignity; and of the trust that is due to him, as the First Cause and the chiefest good, as though he were too feeble and mean to be our blessedness. This is intolerable, to make that which is God's footstool, the earth, to climb up into his throne; to set that in our heart which God hath made even below ourselves and put under our feet; to make that which we trample upon to dispose of the right God hath to our hearts. [Note: Neremberg de Adorat. p. 30.] It is worse than if a queen should fall in love with the little image of the prince in the palace, and slight the beauty of his person; and as if people should adore the footsteps of a king in the dirt, and turn their backs upon his presence. (2.) It doth more debase him to set up a sin, a lust, a carnal affection as our chief end. To steal away the honor due to God, and appropriate it to that which is no work of his hands, to that which is loathsome in his sight, hath disturbed his rest, and wrung out his just breath to kindle a hell for its eternal lodging, a God-dishonoring and a soul-murdering lust, is worse than to prefer Barabbas before Christ. The baser the thing, the worse is the injury to him with whom we would associate it. If it were some generous principle, a thing useful to the world, that we place in an equality with, or a superiority above him, though it were a vile usage, yet it were not altogether so criminal; but to gratify some unworthy appetite with the displeasure of the Creator, something below the rational nature of man, much more infinitely below the excellent majesty of God, is a more unworthy usage of him. To advance one of the most virtuous nobles in a kingdom as a mark of our service and subjection, is not so dishonorable to a despised prince as to take a scabby beggar or a rotten carcase to place in his throne. Creeping things, abominable beasts, the Egyptian idols, cats and crocodiles, were greater abominations, and a greater despite done to God, than the image of jealousy at the gate of the altar. [Note: Ezekiel 8:5-6; Ezekiel 8:10.] And let not any excuse themselves, that it is but one lust or one creature which is preferred as the end: is not he an idolater that worships the sun or moon, one idol, as well as he that worships the whole host of

heaven? The inordinacy of the heart to one lust may imply a stronger contempt of him, than if a legion of lusts did possess the heart. It argues a greater disesteem, when he shall be slighted for a single vanity. The depth of Esau's profaneness in contemning his birth-right, and God in it, is aggravated by his selling it for one morsel of meat, [Note: Hebrews 12:16.] and that none of the daintiest, none of the costliest—a mess of pottage; implying, had he parted with it at a greater rate, it had been more tolerable, and his profaneness more excusable. And it is reckoned as a high aggravation of the corruption of the Israelite judges (Amos 2:6), that they sold the poor for a pair of shoes; that is, that they would betray the cause of the poor for a bribe of no greater value than might purchase them a pair of shoes. To place any one thing as our chief end, though never so light, doth not excuse. He that will not stick to break with God for a trifle, a small pleasure, will leap the hedge upon a greater temptation. Nay, and if wealth, riches, friends, and the best thing in the world, our own lives, be preferred before God, as our chief happiness and end but one moment, it is an infinite wrong, because the infinite goodness and excellency of God is denied; as though the creature or lust we love, or our own life, which we prefer in that short moment before him, had a goodness in itself, superior to, and more desirable than the blessedness in God. And though it should be but one minute, and a man in all the period of his days, both before and after that failure, should actually and intentionally prefer God before all other things; yet he doth him an infinite wrong, because God in every moment is infinitely good, and absolutely desirable, and can never cease to be good, and cannot have the least shadow or change in him and his perfections.

2. It is a denying of God (Job 31:26-28): "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in its brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the Lord above." This denial of God is not only the act of an open idolater, but the consequent of a secret confidence, and immoderate joy in worldly goods. This denial of God is to be referred to ver. 24, 25. When a man saith to gold, "Thou art my confidence," and rejoices because his wealth is great; he denies that God which is superior to all those, and the proper object of trust. Both idolatries are coupled here together; that which hath wealth and that which hath those glorious creatures in heaven for its object. And though some may think it a light sin, yet the crime being of deeper guilt, a denial of God, deserves a severer punishment, and falls under the sentence of the just Judge of all the earth, under that notion which Job intimates in those words, "This also were an iniquity to be punished by the Judge." The kissing the hand to the sun, moon, or any idol, was an external sign of religious worship among those and other nations. This is far less than an inward hearty confidence, and an affectionate trust. If the motion of the hand be, much more the affection of the heart to an excrementitious creature, or a brutish pleasure, is a denial of God, and a kind of an abjuring of him, since the supreme affection of the soul is undoubtedly and solely the right of the Sovereign Creator, and not to be given in common to others, as the outward gesture may in a way of civil respect. Nothing that is an honor peculiar to God can be given to a creature, without a plain exclusion of God to be God; it being a disowning the rectitude and excellency of his nature. If God should command a creature such a love, and such a confidence in anything inferior to him, he would deny himself his own glory, he would deny himself to be the most excellent being. Can the Romanists be free from this, when they call the cross *spem unicam*, and say to the Virgin, *In te Domina speravi*, as Bonaventure? &c. Good reason, therefore, have worldlings and sensualists, persons of immoderate fondness to anything in the world, to reflect upon themselves; since though they own the being of God, they are guilty of so great disrespect to him, that cannot be excused

from the title of an unworthy atheism; and those that are renewed by the spirit of God, may here see ground of a daily humiliation for the frequent and too common excursions of their souls in creature confidences and affections, whereby they fall under the charge of an act of practical atheism, though they may be free from a habit of it.

Thirdly, Man would make himself the end of all creatures. Man would sit in the seat of God, and set his heart as the heart of God, as the Lord saith of Tyrus (Ezekiel 28:2). What is the consequence of this, but to be esteemed the chief good and end of other creatures? a thing that the heart of God cannot but be set upon, it being an inseparable right of the Deity, who must deny himself if he deny this affection of the heart. Since it is the nature of man, derived from his root, to desire to be equal with God, it follows that he desires no creature should be equal with him, but subservient to his ends and his glory. He that would make himself God, would have the honor proper to God. He that thinks himself worthy of his own supreme affection, thinks himself worthy to be the object of the supreme affection of others. Whosoever counts himself the chiefest good and last end, would have the same place in the thoughts of others. Nothing is more natural to man than a desire to have his own judgment the rule and measure of the judgments and opinions of the rest of mankind. He that sets himself in the place of the prince, doth, by that act, challenge all the prerogatives and dues belonging to the prince; and apprehending himself fit to be a king, apprehends himself also worthy of the homage and fealty of the subjects. He that loves himself chiefly, and all other things and persons for himself, would make himself the end of all creatures. It hath not been once or twice only in the world that some vain princes have assumed to themselves the title of gods, and caused divine adorations to be given to them, and altars to smoke with sacrifices for their honor. What hath been practised by one, is by nature seminally in all; we would have all pay an obedience to us, and give to us the esteem that is due to God. This is evident,

1. In pride. When we entertain a high opinion of ourselves, and act for our own reputes, we dispossess God from our own hearts; and while we would have our fame to be in every man's mouth, and be admired in the hearts of men, we would chase God out of the hearts of others, and deny his glory a residence anywhere else, that our glory should reside more in their minds than the glory of God; that their thoughts should be filled with our achievements, more than the works and excellency of God, with our image, and not with the divine. Pride would paramount God in the affections of others, and juggle God out of their souls; and by the same reason that man doth thus in the place where he lives, he would do so in the whole world, and press the whole creation from the service of their true Lord, to his own service. Every proud man would be counted by others as he counts himself, the highest, chiefest piece of goodness, and be adored by others, as much as he adores and admires himself. No proud man, in his self-love, and self admiration, thinks himself in an error; and if he be worthy of his own admiration, he thinks himself worthy of the highest esteem of others, that they should value him above themselves, and value themselves only for him. What did Nebuchadnezzar intend by setting up a golden image, and commanding all his subjects to worship it, upon the highest penalty he could inflict, but that all should aim only at the pleasing his humor?

2. In using the creatures contrary to the end God has appointed. God created the world and all things in it, as steps whereby men might ascend to a prospect of him, and the acknowledgment of his glory; and we would use them to dishonor God, and gratify ourselves: he appointed them to supply our necessities, and support our rational delights, and we use them to cherish our sinful

lusts. We wring groans from the creature in diverting them from their true scope to one of our own fixing, when we use them not in his service, but purely for our own, and turn those things he created for himself, to be instruments of rebellion against him to serve our turns, and hereby endeavor to defeat the ends of God in them, to establish our own ends by them: this is a high dishonor to God, a sacrilegious undermining of his glory, [Note: Sabunde, Tit. 200. p. 352.] to reduce what God hath made to serve our own glory and our own pleasure; it perverts the whole order of the world, and directs it to another end than what God hath constituted, to another intention contrary to the intention of God; and thus man makes himself a God by his own authority. As all things were made by God, so they are for God; but while we aspire to the end of the creation, we deny and envy God the honor of being Creator; we cannot make ourselves the chief end of the creatures against God's order, but we imply thereby that we were their first principle; for if we lived under a sense of the Creator of them while we enjoy there for our use, we should return the glory to the right owner. This is diabolical; though the devil, for his first affecting an authority in heaven, has been hurled down from the state of an angel of light into that of darkness, vileness, and misery, to be the most accursed creature living, yet he still aspires to mate God, contrary to the knowledge of the impossibility of success in it. Neither the terrors he feels, nor the future torments he doth expect, do a jot abate his ambition to be competitor with his Creator; how often hath he, since his first sin, arrogated to himself the honor of a God from the blind world, and attempted to make the Son of God, by a particular worship, count him as the "chiefest good and benefactor of the world!" [Note: Matthew 4:9.] Since all men by nature are the devil's children, the serpent's seed, they have something of this venom in their natures, as well as others of his qualities. We see that there may be, and is a prodigious atheism, lurking under the belief of a God; the devil knows there is a God, but acts like an atheist; and so do his children.

Fourthly, Man would make himself the end of God. This necessarily follows upon the former; whosoever makes himself his own law and his own end in the place of God, would make God the subject in making himself the sovereign; he that steps into the throne of a prince, sets the prince at his footstool; and while he assumes the prince's prerogative, demands a subjection from him. The order of the creation has been inverted by the entrance of sin. [Note: Pascal, Pens. § 30, p. 294.] God implanted an affection in man with a double aspect, the one to pitch upon God, the other to respect ourselves; but with this proviso, that our affection to God should be infinite, in regard of the object, and centre in him as the chiefest happiness and highest end. Our affections to ourselves should be finite, and refer ultimately to God as the original of our being; but sin hath turned man's affections wholly to himself, whereas he should love God first, and himself in order to God; he now loves himself first, and God in order to himself; love to God is lost, and love to self hath usurped the throne. As God by "creation put all things under the feet of man," [Note: Psalms 8:6.] reserving the heart for himself, man by corruption hath dispossessed God of his heart, and put him under his own feet. We often intend ourselves when we pretend the honor of God, and make God and religion a stale to some designs we have in hand; our Creator a tool for our own ends. This is evident,

1. In our loving God, because of some self-pleasing benefits distributed by him. There is in men a kind of natural love to God, but it is but a secondary one, because God gives them the good things of this world, spreads their table, fills their cup, stuffs their coffers, and doth them some good turns by unexpected providences; this is not an affection to God for the unbounded excellency of his

own nature, but for his beneficence, as he opens his hand for them; an affection to themselves, and those creatures, their gold, their honor, which their hearts are most fixed upon, without a strong spiritual inclination that God should be glorified by them in the use of those mercies. It is rather a disowning of God, than any love to him, because it postpones God to those things they love him for; this would appear to be no love, if God should cease to be their benefactor, and deal with them as a judge; if he should change his outward smiles into afflicting frowns, and not only shut his hand, but strip them of what he sent them. The motive of their love being expired, the affection raised by it must cease for want of fuel to feed it; so that God is beholden to sordid creatures of no value (but as they are his creatures) for most of the love the sons of men pretend to him. The devil spake truth of most men, though not of Job, when he said (Job 1:9): "They love not God for naught;" but while he makes a hedge about them and their families, whilst he blesseth the works of their hands, and increaseth their honor in the land. It is like Peter's sharp reproof of his Master, when he spake of the ill-usage, even to death, he was to meet with at Jerusalem: "This shall not be unto thee." It was as much out of love to himself, as zeal for his Master's interest, knowing his Master could not be in such a storm without some drops lighting upon himself. All the apostasies of men in the world are witnesses to this; they fawn whilst they may have a prosperous profession, but will not bear one chip of the cross for the interest of God; they would partake of his blessings, but not endure the prick of a lance for him, as those, that admired the miracles of our Saviour, and shrunk at his sufferings. A time of trial discovers these mercenary souls to be more lovers of themselves than their Maker. This is a pretended love of friendship to God, but a real love to a lust, only to gain by God. A good man's temper is contrary: "Quench hell, burn heaven," said a holy man, "I will love and fear my God."

2. It is evident, in abstinence from some sins, not because they offend God, but because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption, or a bar to something men hunt after in the world. When temperance is cherished not to honor God, but preserve a crazy carcass; prodigality forsaken, out of a humor of avarice; uncleanness forsaken, not out of a hatred of lust, but love to their money; declining a denial of the interest and truth of God, not out of affection to them, but an ambitious zeal for their own reputation. There is a kind of conversion from sin, when God is not made the term of it (Jeremiah 4:1): "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, saith the Lord." [Note: Trap, on Gen. p. 148.] When we forbear sin as dogs do the meat they love: they forbear not out of a hatred of the carrion, but fear of the cudgel; these are as wicked in their abstaining from sin, as others are in their furious committing it. Nothing of the honor of God and the end of his appointments is indeed in all this, but the conveniences self gathers from them. Again, many of the motives the generality of the world uses to their friends and relations to draw them from vices, are drawn from self, and used to prop up natural or sinful self in them. Come, reform yourself, take other courses, you will smut your reputation and be despicable; you will destroy your estate, and commence a beggar; your family will be undone, and you may rot in a prison: not laying close to them the duty they owe to God, the dishonor which accrues to him by their unworthy courses, and the ingratitude to the God of their mercies; not that the other motives are to be laid aside and slighted. Mint and cummin may be tithed, but the weightier concerns are not to be omitted; but this shows that self is the bias, not only of men in their own course, but in their dealings with others; what should be subordinate to the honor of God, and the duty we owe to him, is made superior.

3. It is evident, in performing duties merely for a selfish interest: making ourselves the end of religious actions, paying a homage to that, while we pretend to render it to God (Zechariah 7:5): "Did you at all fast unto me, even unto me?" Things ordained by God may fall in with carnal ends affected by ourselves; and then religion is not kept up by any interest of God in the conscience, but the interest of self in the heart: we then sanctify not the name of God in the duty, but gratify ourselves: God may be the object, self is the end; and a heavenly object is made subservient to a carnal design. Hypocrisy passes a compliment on God, and is called flattery (Psalms 78:36): "They did flatter him with their lips," &c. They gave him a parcel of good words for their own preservation. Flattery, in the old notion among the heathens, is a vice more peculiar to serve our own turn and purvey for the belly: they knew they could not subsist without God, and therefore gave him a parcel of good words, that he might spare them, and make provision for them. Israel is an empty vine, [Note: Hosea 10:1.] a vine, say some, with large branches and few clusters, but bring forth fruit to himself: while they professed love to God with their lips, it was that God should promote their covetous designs, and preserve their wealth and grandeur; [Note: Ezekiel 33:31.] in which respect a hypocrite may be well termed a religious atheist, an atheist masked with religion. The chief arguments which prevail with many men to perform some duties and appear religious, are the same that Hamor and Shechem used to the people of their city to submit to circumcision, viz. the engrossing of more wealth (Genesis 34:21-22): "If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours?" This is seen,

(1.) In unwieldiness to religious duties where self is not concerned. With what lively thoughts will many approach to God, when a revenue may be brought in to support their own ends! But when the concerns of God only are in it, the duty is not the delight, but the clog; such feeble devotions, that warm not the soul, unless there be something of self to give strength and heat to them. Jonah was sick of his work, and run from God, because he thought he should get no honor by his message: God's mercy would discredit his prophecy. [Note: Jonah 4:2.] Thoughts of disadvantage cut the very sinews of service. You may as well persuade a merchant to venture all his estate upon the inconstant waves without hopes of gain, as prevail with a natural man to be serious in duty, without expectation of some warm advantage. "What profit should we have if we pray to him?" is the natural question (Job 21:15). "What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?" (Job 35:3). I shall have more good by my sin than by my service. It is for God that I dance before the ark, saith David, therefore I will be more vile (2 Samuel 6:22). It is for self that I pray, saith a natural man, therefore I will be more warm and quick. Ordinances of God are observed only as a point of interest, and prayer is often most fervent, when it is least godly, and most selfish; carnal ends and affections will pour out lively expressions. If there be no delight in the means that lead to God, there is no delight in God himself; because love is appetitus unionis, a desire of union; and where the object is desirable, the means that brings us to it would be delightful too.

(2.) In calling upon God only in a time of necessity. How officious will men be in affliction, to that God whom they neglect in their prosperity! "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired after God, and they remembered that God was their rock" (Psalms 78:34). They remembered him under the scourge, and forgot him under his smiles: they visit the throne of grace, knock loud at heaven's gates, and give God no rest for their early and importunate devotions when under distress: but when their desires are answered, and the rod removed, they

stand aloof from him, and rest upon their own bottom, as Jeremiah 2:31 : “We are lords; we will come no more unto thee.” When we have need of him, he shall find us clients at his gate; and when we have served our turn, he hears no more of us: like Noah’s dove sent out of the ark, that returned to him when she found no rest on the earth, but came not back when she found a footing elsewhere. How often do men apply themselves to God, when they have some business for him to do for them! And then too, they are loth to put it solely into his hand to manage it for his own honor; but they presume to be his directors, that he may manage it for their glory. Self spurs men onto the throne of grace; they desire to be furnished with some mercy they want, or to have the clouds of some judgments which they fear blown over: this is not affection to God, but to ourselves: as the Romans worshipped a quartan ague as a goddess, and Timorem and Pallorem, fear and paleness, as gods; not out of any affection they had to the disease or the passion, but for fear to receive any hurt by them. Again, when we have gained the mercy we need, how little do we warm our souls with the consideration of that God that gave it, or lay out the mercy in his service! We are importunate to have him our friend in our necessities, and are ungratefully careless of him, and his injuries he suffers by us or others. When he hath discharged us from the rock where we stuck, we leave him, as having no more need of him, and able to do well enough without him; as if we were petty gods ourselves, and only wanted a lift from him at first. This is not to glorify God as God, but as our servant; not an honoring of God, but a self-seeking: he would hardly beg at God’s door, if he could pleasure himself without him.

(3.) In begging his assistance to our own projects. When we lay the plot of our own affairs, and then come to God, not for counsel but blessing, self only shall give us counsel how to act; but because we believe there is a God that governs the world, we will desire him to contribute success. God is not consulted with till the counsel of self be fixed; then God must be the executor of our will. Self must be the principal, and God the instrument to hatch what we have contrived. It is worse when we beg of God to favor some sinful aim; the Psalmist implies this (Psalms 66:18): “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Iniquity regarded as the aim in prayer, renders the prayer successless, and the suppliant an atheist, in debasing God to back his lust by his holy providence. The disciples had determined revenge; and because they could not act it without their Master, they would have him be their second in their vindictive passion (Luke 9:55): “Call for fire from heaven.” We scarce seek God till we have modelled the whole contrivance in our own brains, and resolved upon the methods of performance; as though there were not a fulness of wisdom in God to guide us in our resolves, as well as power to breathe success upon them.

(4.) In impatience upon the refusal of our desires. How often do men’s spirits rise against God, when he steps not in with the assistance they want! If the glory of God swayed more with them than their private interest, they would let God be judge of his own glory, and rather magnify his wisdom than complain of his want of goodness. Selfish hearts will charge God with neglect of them, if he be not as quick in their supplies as they are in their desires; like those in Isaiah 58:3, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?” When we aim at God’s glory in our importunities, we shall fall down in humble submissions when he denies us; whereas self riseth up in bold expostulations, as if God were our servant, and had neglected the service he owed us, not to come at our call. We over-value the satisfactions of self above the honor of God. Besides, if what we desire be a sin, our impatience at a refusal is more intolerable: it is an anger, that God will not lay aside his

holiness to serve our corruption.

(5.) In the actual aims men have in their duties. In prayer for temporal things, when we desire health for our own ease, wealth for our own sensuality, strength for our revenge, children for the increase of our family, gifts for our applause; as Simon Magus did the Holy Ghost: or, when some of those ends are aimed at, this is to desire God not to serve himself of us, but to be a servant to our worldly interest, our vain glory, the greatening of our names, &c. In spiritual mercies begged for; when pardon of sin is desired only for our own security from eternal vengeance; sanctification desired only to make us fit for everlasting blessedness; peace of conscience, only that we may lead our lives more comfortably in the world; when we have not actual intentions for the glory of God, or when our thoughts of God's honor are overtopped by the aims of self-advantage: not but that as God hath pressed us to those things by motives drawn from the blessedness derived to ourselves by them, so we may desire them with a respect to ourselves; but this respect must be contained within the due banks, in subordination to the glory of God, not above it, nor in an equal balance with it. [Note: Gurnall, Part III. p. 337.] That which is nourishing or medicinal in the first or second degree, is in the fourth or fifth degree mere destructive poison. Let us consider it seriously; though a duty be heavenly, doth not some base end smut us in it? [1.] How is it with our confessions of sin? Are they not more to procure our pardon, than to shame ourselves before God, or to be freed from the chains that hinder us from bringing him the glory for which we were created; or more to partake of his benefits, than to honor him in acknowledging the rights of his justice? Do we not bewail sin as it hath ruined us, not as it opposed the holiness of God? Do we not shuffle with God, and confess one sin, while we reserve another; as if we would allure God by declaring our dislike of one, to give us liberty to commit wantonness with another; not to abhor ourselves, but to daub with God. [2.] Is it any better in our private and family worship? Are not such assemblies frequented by some, where some upon whom they have a dependence may eye them, and have a better opinion of them, and affection to them? If God were the sole end of our hearts, would they not be as glowing under the sole eye of God, as our tongues or carriages are seemingly serious under the eye of man? Are not family duties performed by some that their voices may be heard, and their reputation supported among godly neighbors? [3.] Is not the charity of many men tainted with this end—self, [Note: Matthew 6:1.] as the Pharisees were, while they set the miserable object before them, but not the Lord; bestowing alms not so much upon the necessities of the people, as the friendship we owe them for some particular respects; or casting our bread upon those waters which stream down in the sight of the world, that our doles may be visible to them, and commended by them; or when we think to oblige God to pardon our transgressions, as if we merited it and heaven too at his hands, by bestowing a few pence upon indigent persons? And [4.] Is it not the same with the reproofs of men? Is not heat and anger carried out with full sail when our worldly interest is prejudiced and becalmed in the concerns of God? Do not many masters reprove their servants with more vehemency for the neglect of their trade and business, than the neglect of divine duties; and that upon religious arguments, pretending the honor of God that they may mind their own interest? But when they are negligent in what they owe to God, no noise is made, they pass without rebuke; is not this to make God and religion a stale to their own ends? It is a part of atheism not to regard the injuries done to God, as Tiberius, [Note: *Dei injuriæ. Deo curæ.*] “Let God's wrongs be looked to or cared for by himself.” [5.] Is it not thus in our seeming zeal for religion? as Demetrius and the craftsmen at Ephesus cried up aloud the greatness of Diana of the Ephesians, not out of any true zeal they had for her,

but their gain, which was increased by the confluence of her worshippers, and the sale of her own shrines (Acts 19:24; Acts 19:28).

4. In making use of the name of God to countenance our sin. When we set up an opinion that is a friend to our lusts, and then dig deep into the Scripture to find crutches to support it, and authorize our practices; when men will thank God for what they have got by unlawful means, fathering the fruit of their cheating craft, and the simplicity of their chapmen upon God; crediting their cozenage by his name, as men do brass money, with a thin plate of silver, and the stamp and image of the prince. The Jews urge the law of God for the crucifying his Son (John 19:7): "We have a law, and by that law he is to die," and would make him a party in their private revenge. Thus often when we have faltered in some actions, we wipe our mouths, as if we sought God more than our own interest, prostituting the sacred name and honor of God, either to hatch or defend some unworthy lust against his word. [Note: Sanderson's Sermons. Part II. p. 158.] Is not all this a high degree of atheism?

1. It is a vilifying God, an abuse of the highest good. Other sins subject the creature and outward things to them, but acting in religious services for self, subjects not only the highest concerns of men's souls, but the Creator himself to the creature, nay, to make God contribute to that which is the pleasure of the devil, a greater slight than to cast the gifts of a prince to a herd of nasty swine. It were more excusable to serve ourselves of God upon the higher accounts, such that materially conduce to his glory; but it is an intolerable wrong to make him and his ordinances caterers for our own bellies, as they did: [Note: Hosea 8:13. Vid. Coec. in locum.] they sacrificed the ■■■■■ of which the offerer might eat, not out of any reference to God, but love to their gluttony; not to please him, but feast themselves. The belly was truly made the god, when God was served only in order to the belly; as though the blessed God had his being, and his ordinances were enjoined to pleasure their foolish and wanton appetites; as though the work of God were only to patronize unrighteous ends, and be as bad as themselves, and become a pander to their corrupt affections.

2. Because it is a vilifying of God, it is an undeifying or dethroning God. It is an acting as if we were the lords, and God our vassal; a setting up those secular ends in the place of God, who ought to be our ultimate end in every action; to whom a glory is as due, as his mercy to us is utterly unmerited by us. He that thinks to cheat and put the fool upon God by his pretences, doth not heartily believe there is such a being. He could not have the notion of a God, without that of omniscience and justice; an eye to see the cheat, and an arm to punish it. The notion of the one would direct him in the manner of his services, and the sense of the other would scare him from the cherishing his unworthy ends. He that serves God with a sole respect to himself, is prepared for any idolatry; his religion shall warp with the times and his interest; he shall deny the true God for an idol, when his worldly interest shall advise him to it, and pay the same reverence to the basest image, which he pretends now to pay to God; as the Israelites were as real for idolatry under their basest princes, as they were pretenders to the true religion under those that were pious. Before I come to the use of this, give me leave to evince this practical atheism by two other considerations.

1. Unworthy imaginations of God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God:" that is, he is not such a God as you report him to be; this is meant by their being "corrupt," in the second verse,

corrupt being taken for playing the idolaters (Exodus 32:7). We cannot comprehend God; if we could, we should cease to be finite; and because we cannot comprehend him, we erect strange images of him in our fancies and affections. And since guilt came upon us, because we cannot root out the notions of God, we would debase the majesty and nature of God, that we may have some ease in our consciences, and lie down with some comfort in the sparks of our own kindling. This is universal in men by nature. "God is not in all his thoughts;" [Note: Psalms 10:4.] not in any of his thoughts, according the excellency of his nature and greatness of his majesty. As the heathen did not glorify God as God, so neither do they conceive of God as God; they are all infected with some one or other ill opinion of him, thinking him not so holy, powerful, just, good, as he is, and as the natural force of the human understanding might arrive to. We join a new notion of God in our vain fancies, and represent him not as he is, but as we would have him to be, fit for our own use, and suited to our own pleasure. We set that active power of imagination on work, and there comes out a god (a calf) whom we own for a notion of God. Adam cast him into so narrow a mould, as to think that himself, who had newly sprouted up by his almighty power, was fit to be his cor rival in knowledge, and had vain hopes to grasp as much as infiniteness; if he, in his first declining, begun to have such a conceit, it is no doubt but we have as bad under a mass of corruption. When holy Agur speaks of God, he cries out that he had not "the understanding of a man, nor the knowledge of the holy;" [Note: Proverbs 30:2-3.] he did not think rationally of God, as man might by his strength at his first creation. There are as many carved images of God as there are minds of men, and as monstrous shapes as those corruptions into which they would transform him. Hence sprang,

1. Idolatry. Vain imaginations first set afloat and kept up this in the world. Vain imaginations of the God "whose glory they changed into the image of corruptible man." [Note: Romans 1:21-23.] They had set up vain images of him in their fancy, before they set up idolatrous representations of him in their temples; the likening him to those idols of wood and stone, and various metals, were the fruit of an idea erected in their own minds. This is a mighty debasing the Divine nature, and rendering him no better than that base and stupid matter they make the visible object of their adoration; equalling him with those base creatures they think worthy to be the representations of him. Yet how far did this crime spread itself in all corners of the world, not only among the more barbarous and ignorant, but the more polished and civilized nations! Judea only, where God had placed the ark of his presence, being free from it, in some intervals of time only after some sweeping judgment. And though they vomited up their idols under some sharp scourge, they licked them up again after the heavens were cleared over their heads: the whole book of Judges makes mention of it. And though an evangelical light hath chased that idolatry away from a great part of the world, yet the principle remaining coins more spiritual idols in the heart, which are brought before God in acts of worship.

2. Hence all superstition received its rise and growth. When we mint a god according to our own complexion, like to us in mutable and various passions, soon angry and soon appeased, it is no wonder that we invent ways of pleasing him after we have offended him, and think to expiate the sin of our souls by some melancholy devotions and self-chastisements. Superstition is nothing else but an unscriptural and unrevealed dread of God. [Note: Δεισιδαιμονία] When they imagined him a rigorous and severe master, they cast about for ways to mitigate him whom they thought so hard to be pleased: a very mean thought of him, as if a slight and pompous devotion could as

easily bribe and flatter him out of his rigors, as a few good words or baubling rattles could please and quiet little children; and whatsoever pleased us, could please a God infinitel above us. Such narrow conceits had the Philistines, when they thought to still the anger of the God of Israel, whom they thought they possessed in the ark, with the present of a few golden mice. [Note: 1 Samuel 6:3-4.] All the superstition this day living in the world is built upon this foundation: so natural it is to man to pull God down to his own imaginations, rather than raise his imaginations up to God. Hence doth arise also the diffidence of his mercy, though they repent; measuring God by the contracted models of their own spirits; as though his nature were as difficult to pardon their offences against him, as they are to remit wrongs done to themselves.

3. Hence springs all presumption, the common disease of the world. All the wickedness in the world, which is nothing else but presuming upon God, rises from the ill interpretations of the goodness of God, breaking out upon them in the works of creation and providence. The corruption of man's nature engendered by those notions of goodness a monstrous birth of vain imaginations; not of themselves primarily, but of God; whence arose all that folly and darkness in their minds and conversations (Romans 1:20-21). They glorified him not as God, but, according to themselves, imagined him good that themselves might be bad; fancied him so indulgent, as to neglect his own honor for their sensuality. How doth the unclean person represent him to his own thoughts, but as a goat; the murderer as a tiger; the sensual person as a swine; while they fancy a God indulgent to their crimes without their repentance! As the image on the seal is stamped upon the wax, so the thoughts of the heart are printed upon the actions. God's patience is apprehended to be an approbation of their vices, and from the consideration of his forbearance, they fashion a god that they believe will smile upon their crimes. They imagine a god that plays with them; and though he threatens doth it only to scare, but means not as he speaks. A god they fancy like themselves, that would do as they would do, not be angry for what they count a light offence (Psalms 50:21): "Thou thoughtest I was such a one as thyself;" that God and they were exactly alike as two tallies. "Our wilful misapprehensions of God are the cause of our misbehavior in all his worship. Our slovenly and lazy services tell him to his face what slight thoughts and apprehensions we have of him." [Note: Gurnal. Part II. pp. 245, 246.] Compare these two together. Superstition ariseth from terrifying misapprehensions of God: presumption from self pleasing thoughts. One represents him only rigorous, and the other careless. One makes us over-officious in serving him by our own rules; and the other over-bold in offending him according to our humors. The want of a true notion of God's justice makes some men slight him; and the want of a true apprehension of his goodness makes others too servile in their approaches to him. One makes us careless of duties, and the other makes us look on them rather as physic than food; an unsupportable penance, than a desirable privilege. In this case hell is the principle of duty performed to heaven. The superstitious man believes God hath scarce mercy to pardon; the presumptuous man believes he hath no such perfection as justice to punish. The one makes him insignificant to what he desires, kindness and goodness; the other renders him insignificant to what he fears, his vindictive justice. What between the idolater, the superstitious, the presumptuous person, God should look like no God in the world. These unworthy imaginations of God are likewise,

2. A vilifying of him. Debasing the Creator to be a creature of their own fancies; putting their own stamp upon him; and fashioning him not according to that beautiful image he impressed upon them by creation; but the defaced image they inherit by their fall, and which is worse, the image of

the devil which spread itself over them at their revolt and apostasy. Were it possible to see a picture of God, according to the fancies of men, it would be the most monstrous being, such a God that never was, nor ever can be. We honor God when we have worthy opinions of him suitable to his nature; when we conceive of him as a being of unbounded loveliness and perfection. We detract from him when we ascribe to him such qualities as would be a horrible disgrace to a wise and good man as injustice and impurity. Thus men debase God when they invert his order, and would create him according to their image, as he first created them according to his own; and think him not worthy to be a God, unless he fully answer the mould they would cast him into, and be what is unworthy of his nature. Men do not conceive of God as he would have them; but he must be what they would have him, one of their own shaping.

1. This is worse than idolatry. The grossest idolater commits not a crime so heinous, by changing his glory into the image of creeping things and senseless creatures, as the imagining God to be as one of our sinful selves, and likening him to those filthy images we erect in our fancies. One makes him an earthly God, like an earthly creature; the other fancies him an unjust and impure God, like a wicked creature. One sets up an image of him in the earth, which is his footstool; the other sets up an image of him in the heart, which ought to be his throne.

2. It is worse than absolute atheism, or a denial of God. "Dignius credimus non esse, quodcunque non ita fuerit, ut esse deberet," [Note: Tertul, cont. Maxim. Lib. I. Cap. 2.] was the opinion of Tertullian. It is more commendable to think him not to be, than to think him such a one as is inconsistent with his nature. Better to deny his existence, than deny his perfection. No wise man but would rather have his memory rot, than be accounted infamous, and would be more obliged to him that should deny that ever he had a being in the world, than to say he did indeed live, but he was a sot, a debauched person, and a man not to be trusted. When we apprehend God deceitful in his promises, unrighteous in his threatenings, unwilling to pardon upon repentance, or resolved to pardon notwithstanding impenitency: these are things either unworthy of the nature of God, or contrary to that revelation he hath given of himself. Better for a man never to have been born than be forever miserable; so better to be thought no God, than represented impotent or negligent, unjust or deceitful; which are more contrary to the nature of God than hell can be to the greatest criminal. In this sense perhaps the apostle affirms the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:12) to be such as are "without God in the world;" as being more atheists in adoring God under such notions as they commonly did, than if they had acknowledged no God at all.

3. This is evident by our natural desire to be distant from him, and unwillingness to have any acquaintance with him. Sin set us first at a distance from God; and every new act of gross sin estrangeth us more from him, and indisposeth us more for him: it makes us both afraid and ashamed to be near him. Sensual men were of this frame that Job discoursed of (ch. 21:7–9, 14, 15). Where grace reigns, the nearer to God the more vigorous the motion; the nearer anything approaches to us, that is the object of our desires, the more eagerly do we press forward to it: but our blood riseth at the approaches of anything to which we have an aversion. We have naturally a loathing of God's coming to us or our return to him: we seek not after him as our happiness; and when he offers himself, we like it not, but put a disgrace upon him in choosing other things before him. God and we are naturally at as great a distance, as light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell. The stronger impression of God anything hath, the more we fly from it. The glory of God in reflection upon Moses' face scared the Israelites; they, who had desired God to speak to them

by Moses, when they saw a signal impression of God upon his countenance, were afraid to come near him, as they were before unwilling to come near to God. [Note: Exodus 34:30.] Not that the blessed God is in his own nature a frightful object; but our own guilt renders him so to us, and ourselves indisposed to converse with him; as the light of the sun is as irksome to a distempered eye, as it is in its own nature desirable to a sound one. The saints themselves have had so much frailty, that they have cried out, that they were undone, if they had any more than ordinary discoveries of God made unto them; as if they wished him more remote from them. Vileness cannot endure the splendor of majesty, nor guilt the glory of a judge.

We have naturally, 1. No desire of remembrance of him, 2. Or converse with him, 3. Or thorough return to him, 4. Or close imitation of him: as if there were not any such being as God in the world; or as if we wished there were none at all; so feeble and spiritless are our thoughts of the being of a God.

1. No desire for the remembrance of him. How delightful are other things in our minds! How burdensome the memorials of God, from whom we have our being! With what pleasure do we contemplate the nature of creatures, even of flies and toads, while our minds tire in the search of Him, who hath bestowed upon us our knowing and meditating faculties! Though God shows himself to us in every creature, in the meanest weed as well as the highest heavens, and is more apparent in them to our reasons than themselves can be to our sense; yet though we see them, we will not behold God in them: we will view them to please our sense, to improve our reason in their natural perfections; but pass by the consideration of God's perfections so visibly beaming from them. Thus we play the beasts and atheists in the very exercise of reason, and neglect our Creator to gratify our sense, as though the pleasure of that were more desirable than the knowledge of God. The desire of our souls is not towards his name and the remembrance of him, [Note: Isaiah 26:8.] when we set not ourselves in a posture to feast our souls with deep and serious meditations of him; have a thought of him, only by the bye and away, as if we were afraid of too intimate acquaintance with him. Are not the thoughts of God rather our invaders than our guests; seldom invited to reside and take up their home in our hearts? Have we not, when they have broke in upon us, bid them depart from us, [Note: Job 22:17.] and warned them to come no more upon our ground; sent them packing as soon as we could, and were glad when they were gone? And when they have departed, have we not often been afraid they, should return again upon us, and therefore looked about for other inmates, things not good, or if good, infinitely below God, to possess the room of our hearts before any thoughts of him should appear again? Have we not often been glad of excuses to shake off resent thoughts of him, and when we have wanted real ones, found out pretences to keep God and our hearts at a distance? Is not this a part of atheism, to be so unwilling to employ our faculties about the giver of them, to refuse to exercise them in a way of a grateful remembrance of him; as though they were none of his gift, but our own acquisition; as though the God that truly gave them had no right to them, and he that thinks on us every day in a way of providence, were not worthy, to be thought on by us in a way of special remembrance? Do not the best, that love the remembrance of him, and abhor this natural averseness, find, that when they would think of God, many things tempt them and turn them to think elsewhere? Do they not find their apprehensions too feeble, their motions too dull, and the impressions too slight? This natural atheism is spread over human nature.

2. No desire of converse with him. The word “remember” in the command for keeping holy the Sabhath-day, including all the duties of the day, and the choicest of our lives, implies our natural unwillingness to them, and forgetfulness of them. God’s pressing this command with more reasons than the rest, manifests that man hath no heart for spiritual duties. No spiritual duty, which sets us immediately face to face with God, but in the attempts of it we find naturally a resistance from some powerful principle; so that every one may subscribe to the speech of the apostle, that “when we would do good, evil is present with them.” No reason of this can be rendered, but the natural temper of our souls, and an affecting a distance from God under any consideration: for though our guilt first made the breach, yet this aversion to a converse with him steps up without any actual reflections upon our guilt, which may render God terrible to us as an offended judge. Are we not often also, in our attendance upon him, more pleased with the modes of worship which gratify our fancy, than to have our souls inwardly delighted with the object of worship himself? This is a part of our natural atheism. To cast such duties off by total neglect, or in part, by affecting a coldness in them, is to cast off the fear of the Lord. [Note: Job 15:4.] Not to call upon God, and not to know him, are one and the same thing (Jeremiah 10:25). Either we think there is no such Being in the world, or that he is so slight a one, that he deserves not the respect he calls for; or so impotent and poor, that he cannot supply what our necessities require.

3. No desire of a thorough return to him. The first man fled from him after his defection, though he had no refuge to fly to but the grace of his Creator. Cain went from his presence, would be a fugitive from God rather than a suppliant to him; when by faith in, and application of the promised Redeemer, he might have escaped the wrath to come for his brother’s blood, and mitigated the sorrows he was justly sentenced to bear in the world. Nothing will separate prodigal man from communing with swine; and make him return to his father, but an empty trough: have we but husks to feed on, we shall never think of a father’s presence. It were well if our sores and indigence would drive us to him; but when our strength is devoured, we will not “return to the Lord our God, nor seek him for all this.” [Note: Hosea 7:10.] Not his drawn sword, as a God of judgment, nor his mighty power, as a Lord, nor his open arms, as the Lord their God, could move them to turn their eyes and their hearts towards him. The more he invites us to partake of his grace, the further we run from him to provoke his wrath: the louder God called them by his prophets, the closer they stuck to their Baal. [Note: Hosea 11:2.] We turn our backs when he stretches out his hand, stop our ears when he lifts up his voice. We fly from him when he courts us, and shelter ourselves in any bush from his merciful hand that would lay hold upon us; nor will we set our faces towards him, till our way be hedged up with thorns, and not a gap left to creep out any by-way. [Note: Hosea 2:6-7.] Whosoever is brought to a return, puts the Holy Ghost to the pain of striving; he is not easily brought to a spiritual subjection to God, nor persuaded to a surrender at a summons, but sweetly overpowered by storm, and victoriously drawn into the arms of God. God stands ready, but the heart stands off; grace is full of entreaties, and the soul full of excuses; Divine love offers, and carnal selflove rejects. Nothing so pleases us as when we are farthest from him; as if anything were more amiable, anything more desirable, than himself.

4. No desire of any close imitation of him. When our Saviour was to come as a refiner’s fire, to purify the sons of Levi, the cry, is, “Who shall abide the day of his coming?” (Malachi 3:2-3.) Since we are alienated from the life of God, we desire no more naturally to live the life of God, than a toad, or any other animal, desires to live the life of a man. No heart that knows God but hath a holy

ambition to imitate him. No soul that refuseth him for a copy, but is ignorant of his excellency. Of this temper is all mankind naturally, Man in corruption is as loth to be like God in holiness, as Adam, after his creation, was desirous to be like God in knowledge; his posterity are like their father, who soon turned his back upon his original copy. What can be worse than this? Can the denial of his being be a greater injury than this contempt of him; as if he had not goodness to deserve our remembrance, nor amiableness fit for our converse; as if he were not a Lord fit for our subjection, nor had a holiness that deserved our imitation? For the use of this:—

Use I. It serves for information.

1: It gives us occasion to admire the wonderful patience and mercy of God. How many millions of practical atheists breathe every day in his air, and live upon his bounty who deserve to be inhabitants in hell, rather than possessors of the earth! An infinite holiness is offended, an infinite justice is provoked; yet an infinite patience forbears the punishment, and an infinite goodness relieves our wants: the more we had merited his justice and forfeited his favor, the more is his affection enhanced, which makes his hand so liberal to us. At the first invasion of his rights, he mitigates the terror of the threatening which was set to defend his law, with the grace of a promise to relieve and recover his rebellious creature. [Note: Genesis 3:15.] Who would have looked for anything but tearing thunders, sweeping judgments, to raze up the foundations of the apostate world? But oh, how great are his bowels to his aspiring competitors! Have we not experimented his contrivances for our good, though we have refused him for our happiness? Has he not opened his arms, when we spurned with our feet; held out his alluring mercy, when we have brandished against him a rebellious sword? Has he not entreated us while we have invaded him, as if he were unwilling to lose us, who are ambitious to destroy ourselves? Has he yet denied us the care of his providence, while we have denied him the rights of his honor, and would appropriate them to ourselves? Has the sun forborne shining upon us, though we have shot our arrows against him? Have not our beings been supported by his goodness, while we have endeavored to climb up to his throne; and his mercies continued to charm us, while we have used them as weapons to injure him? Our own necessities might excite us to own him as our happiness, but he adds his invitations to the voice of our wants. Has he not promised a kingdom to those that would strip him of his crown, and proclaimed pardon upon repentance to those that would take away his glory? and hath so twisted together his own end, which is his honor, and man's true end, which is his salvation, that a man cannot truly mind himself and his own salvation, but he must mind God's glory; and cannot be intent upon God's honor, but by the same act he promotes himself and his own happiness? so loth is God to give any just occasion of dissatisfaction to his creature, as well as dishonor to himself. All those wonders of his mercy are enhanced by the heinousness of our atheism; a multitude of gracious thoughts from him above the multitude of contempts from us. [Note: Psalms 106:7.] What rebels in actual arms against their prince, aiming at his life, ever found that favor from him; to have all their necessities richly afforded them, without which they would starve, and without which they would be unable to manage their attempts, as we have received from God? Had not God had riches of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, and infinite riches too, the despite the world had done him, in refusing him as their rule, happiness, and end, would have emptied him long ago. [Note: Romans 2:4.]

2. It brings in a justification of the exercise of his justice. If it gives us occasion loudly to praise his patience, it also stops our mouths from accusing any acts of his vengeance. What can be too

sharp a recompense for the despising and disgracing so great a Being? The highest contempt merits the greatest anger; and when we will not own him for our happiness, it is equal we should feel the misery of separation from him. If he that is guilty of treason deserves to lose his life, what punishment can be thought great enough for him that is so disingenuous as to prefer himself before a God so infinitely good, and so foolish as to invade the rights of one infinitely powerful? It is no injustice for a creature to be forever left to himself, to see what advantage he can make of that self he was so busily employed to set up in the place of his Creator. The soul of man deserves an infinite punishment for despising an infinite good; and it is not unequitable, that that self which man makes his rule and happiness above God, should become his torment and misery by the righteousness of that God whom he despised.

3. Hence ariseth a necessity of a new state and frame of soul, to alter an atheistical nature. We forget God; think of him with reluctancy; have no respect to God in our course and acts: this cannot be our original state. God, being infinitely good, never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; he never intended to dethrone himself for the work of his hands, or that the creature should have any other end than that of his Creator: as the apostle saith, in the case of the Galatians' error (Galatians 5:8), "This persuasion came not of Him that called you;" so this frame comes not from him that created you: how much, therefore, do we need a restoring principle in us! Instead of ordering ourselves according to the will of God, we are desirous to "fulfil the wills of the flesh:" [Note: <Ephesians 2:3.] there is a necessity of some other principle in us to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh. We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God, while our serpentine nature and devilish habits remain in us, than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall abides powerfully in him. Our nature and will must be changed, that our actions may regard God as our end, that we may delightfully meditate on him, and draw the motives of our obedience from him. Since this atheism is seated in nature, the change must be in our nature; since our first aspirings to the rights of God were the fruits of the serpent's breath which tainted our nature, there must be a removal of this taint, whereby our natures may be on the side of God against Satan, as they were before on the side of Satan against God. There must be a supernatural principle before we can live a supernatural life, i. e. live to God, since we are naturally alienated from the life of God: the aversion of our natures from God, is as strong as our inclination to evil; we are disgusted with one, and pressed with the other; we have no will, no heart, to come to God in any service. This nature must be broken in pieces and new moulded, before we can make God our rule and our end: while men's "deeds are evil" they cannot comply with God; O much less while their natures are evil till this be done, all the service a man performs riseth from some "evil imagination of the heart, which is evil, only evil, and that continually;" [Note: Genesis 6:5.] from wrong notions of God, wrong notions of duty, or corrupt motives. All the pretences of devotion to God are but the adoration of some golden image. Prayers to God for the ends of self are like those of the devil to our Saviour, when he asked leave to go into the herd of swine: the object was right, Christ; the end was the destruction of the swine, and the satisfaction of their malice to the owners; there is a necessity then that depraved ends should be removed, that that which was God's end in our framing, may be our end in our acting, viz. his glory, which cannot be without a change of nature. We can never honor him supremely whom we do not supremely love; till this be, we cannot glorify God as God, though we do things by his command and order; no more, than when God employed the devil in afflicting Job. [Note: Job 1:1-22.] His performance

cannot be said to be good, because his end was not the same with God's; he acted out of malice, what God commanded out of sovereignty, and for gracious designs; had God employed an holy angel in his design upon Job, the action had been good in the affliction, because his nature was holy, and therefore his ends holy; but bad in the devil, because his ends were base and unworthy.

4. We may gather from hence, the difficulty of conversion, and mortification to follow thereupon. What is the reason men receive no more impression from the voice of God and the light of his truth, than a dead man in the grave doth from the roaring thunder, or a blind mole from the light of the sun? It is because our atheism is as great as the deadness of the one, or the blindness of the other. The principle in the heart is strong to shut the door both of the thoughts and affections against God. If a friend oblige us, we shall act for him as for ourselves; we are won by entreaties; soft words overcome us; but our hearts are as deaf as the hardest rock at the call of God; neither the joys of heaven proposed by him can allure us, nor the flashed terrors of hell affright us to him, as if we conceived God unable to bestow the one or execute the other: the true reason is, God and self contest for the deity. The law of sin is, God must be at the footstool; the law of God is, sin must be utterly deposed. Now it is difficult to leave a law beloved for a law long ago discarded. The mind of man will hunt after anything; the will of man embrace anything: upon the proposal of mean objects the spirit of man spreads its wings, flies to catch them, becomes one with them but attempt to bring it under the power of God, the wings flag, the creature looks lifeless, as though there were no spring of motion in it; it is as much crucified to God, as the holy apostle was to the world. The sin of the heart discovers its strength the more God discovers the "holiness of his will." [Note: Romans 7:9-12.] The love of sin hath been predominant in our nature, has quashed a love to God, if not extinguished it. Hence also is the difficulty of mortification. This is a work tending to the honor of God, the abasing of that inordinately aspiring humor in ourselves. If the nature of man be inclined to sin, as it is, it must needs be bent against anything that opposes it. It is impossible to strike any true blow at any lust till the true sense of God be re-entertained in the soil where it ought to grow. Who can be naturally willing to crucify what is incorporated with him—his flesh? what is dearest to him—himself? Is it an easy thing for man, the competitor with God, to turn his arms against himself, that self should overthrow its own empire, lay aside all its pretensions to, and designs for, a godhead; to hew off its own members, and subdue its own affections? It is the nature of man to "cover his sin," to hide it in his bosom, [Note: Job 31:33. "If I cover my transgressions, as Adam."] not to destroy it; and as unwillingly part with his carnal affections, as the legion of devils were with the man that had been long possessed; and when he is forced and fired from one, he will endeavor to espouse some other lust, as those devils desired to possess swine, when they were chased from their possession of that man.

5. Here we see the reason of unbelief. That which hath most of God in it, meets with most aversion from us; that which hath least of God, finds better and stronger inclinations in us. What is the reason that the heart of man is more unwilling to embrace the gospel, than acknowledge the equity of the law? because there is more of God's nature and perfection evident in the gospel than in the law; besides, there is more reliance on God, and distance from self, commanded in the gospel. The law puts a man upon his own strength, the gospel takes him off from his own bottom; the law acknowledges him to have a power in himself, and to act for his own reward; the gospel strips him of all his proud and towering thoughts, [Note: 2 Corinthians 10:5.] brings him to his due place, the foot of God; orders him to deny himself as his own rule, righteousness, and end, "and henceforth

not to live to himself.” [Note: 2 Corinthians 5:15.] This is the true reason why men are more against the gospel than against the law; because it doth more deify God, and debase man. Hence it is easier to reduce men to some moral virtue than to faith; to make men blush at their outward vices, but not at the inward impurity of their natures. Hence it is observed, that those that asserted that all happiness did arise from something in a man’s self, as the Stoics and Epicureans did, and that a wise man was equal with God, were greater enemies to the truths of the gospel than others (Acts 17:18), because it lays the axe to the root of their principal opinion, takes the one from their self-sufficiency, and the other from their self-gratification; it opposeth the brutish principle of the one, which placed happiness in the pleasures of the body, and the more noble principle of the other, which placed happiness in the virtue of the mind; the one was for a sensual, the other for a moral self; both disowned by the doctrine of the gospel.

6. It informs us, consequently, who can be the Author of grace and conversion, and every other good work. No practical atheist ever yet turned to God, but was turned by God; and not to acknowledge it to God is a part of this atheism, since it is a robbing God of the honor of one of his most glorious works. If this practical atheism be natural to man ever since the first taint of nature in Paradise, what can be expected from it, but a resisting of the work of God, and setting up all the forces of nature against the operations of grace, till a day of power dawn and clear up upon the soul? [Note: Psalms 110:3.] Not all the angels in heaven, or men upon earth, can be imagined to be able to persuade a man to fall out with himself; nothing can turn the tide of nature, but a power above nature. God took away the sanctifying Spirit from man, as a penalty for the first sin; who can regain it but by his will and pleasure? who can restore it, but he that removed it? Since every man hath the same fundamental atheism in him by nature, and would be a rule to himself and his own end, he is so far from dethroning himself, that all the strength of his corrupted nature is alarmed up to stand to their arms upon any attempt God makes to regain the fort. The will is so strong against God, that it is like many wills twisted together (Ephesians 2:3), “Wills of the flesh;” we translate it the “desires of the flesh;” like many threads twisted in a cable, never to be snapped asunder by a human arm; a power and will above ours, can only untwist so many wills in a knot. Man cannot rise to an acknowledgment of God without God; hell may as well become heaven, the devil be changed into an angel of light. The devil cannot but desire happiness; he knows the misery into which he is fallen, he cannot be desirous of that punishment he knows is reserved for him. Why doth he not sanctify God, and glorify his Creator, wherein there is abundantly more pleasure than in his malicious course? Why doth he not petition to recover his ancient standing? he will not; there are chains of darkness upon his faculties; he will not be otherwise than he is; his desire to be god of the world sways him against his own interest, and out of love to his malice, he will not sin at a less rate to make a diminution of his punishment. Man, if God utterly refuseth to work upon him, is no better; and to maintain his atheism would venture a hell. How is it possible for a man to turn himself to that God against whom he hath a quarrel in his nature; the most rooted and settled habit in him being to set himself in the place of God? An atheist by nature can no more alter his own temper, and engrave in himself the divine nature, than a rock can carve itself into the statue of a man, or a serpent that is an enemy to man could or would raise itself to the nobility of the human nature. That soul that by nature would strip God of his rights, cannot, without a divine power, be made conformable to him, and acknowledge sincerely and cordially the rights and glory of God.

7. We may here see the reason why there can be no justification by the best and strongest works of nature. Can that which hath atheism at the root justify either the action or person? What strength can those works have which have neither God's law for their rule, nor his glory for their end? that are not wrought by any spiritual strength from him, nor tend with any spiritual affection to him? Can these be a foundation for the most holy God to pronounce a creature righteous? They will justify his justice in condemning, but cannot sway his justice to an absolution. Every natural man in his works picks and chooses; he owns the will of God no further than he can wring it to suit the law of his members, and minds not the honor of God, but as it jostles not with his own glory and secular ends. Can he be righteous that prefers his own will and his own honor before the will and honor of the Creator? However men's actions may be beneficial to others, what reason hath God to esteem them, wherein there is no respect to him, but themselves; whereby they dethrone him in their thoughts, while they seem to own him in their religious works? Every day reproves us with something different from the rule; thousands of wanderings offer themselves to our eyes: can justification be expected from that which in itself is matter of despair?

8. See here the cause of all the apostasy in the world. Practical atheism was never conquered in such; they are still "alienated from the life of God," and will not live to God, as he lives to himself and his own honor. [Note: Ephesians 4:17-18.] They loathe his rule, and distaste his glory; are loth to step out of themselves to promote the ends of another; find not the satisfaction in him as they do in themselves; they will be judges of what is good for them and righteous in itself, rather than admit of God to judge for them. When men draw back from truth to error, it is to such opinions which may serve more to foment and cherish their ambition, covetousness, or some beloved lust that disputes with God for precedency, and is designed to be served before him (John 12:42-43): "They love the praise of men more than the praise of God." A preferring man before God was the reason they would not confess Christ, and God in him.

9. This shows us the excellency of the gospel and christian religion. It sets man in his due place, and gives to God what the excellency of his nature requires. It lays man in the dust from whence he was taken, and sets God upon that throne where he ought to sit. Man by nature would annihilate God and deify himself; the gospel glorifies God and annihilates man. In our first revolt we would be like him in knowledge; in the means he hath provided for our recovery, he designs to make us like him in grace; the gospel shows ourselves to be an object of humiliation, and God to be a glorious object for our imitation. The light of nature tells us there is a God; the gospel gives us a more magnificent report of him; the light of nature condemns gross atheism, and that of the gospel condemns and conquers spiritual atheism in the hearts of men.

Use II. Of exhortation.

First, Let us labor to be sensible of this atheism in our nature, and be humbled for it. How should we lie in the dust, and go bowing under the humbling thoughts of it all our days! Shall we not be sensible of that whereby we spill the blood of our souls, and give a stab to the heart of our own salvation? Shall we be worse than any creature, not to bewail that which tends to our destruction? He that doth not lament it, cannot challenge the character of a Christian, hath nothing of the divine life and love planted in his soul. Not a man but shall one day be sensible, when the eternal God shall call him out to examination, and charge his conscience to discover every crime, which will then own the authority whereby it acted; when the heart shall be torn open, and the secrets of it

brought to public view; and the world and man himself shall see what a viperous brood of corrupt principles and ends nested in his heart. Let us, therefore, be truly sensible of it, till the consideration draw tears from our eyes and sorrow from our souls; let us urge the thoughts of it upon our hearts till the core of that pride be eaten out, and our stubbornness changed into humility; till our heads become waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, and be a spring of prayer to God to change the heart, and mortify the atheism in it; and consider what a sad thing it is to be a practical atheist: and who is not so by nature?

1. Let us be sensible of it in ourselves. Have any of our hearts been a soil wherein the fear and reverence of God hath naturally grown? Have we a desire to know him, or a will to embrace him? Do we delight in his will, and love the remembrance of his name? Are our respects to him, as God, equal to the speculative knowledge we have of his nature? Is the heart, wherein he hath stamped his image, reserved for his residence? Is not the world more affected than the Creator of the world; as though that could contribute to us a greater happiness than the Author of it? Have not creatures as much of our love, fear, trust, nay, more, than God that framed both them and us? Have we not too often relied upon our own strength, and made a calf of our own wisdom, and said of God, as the Israelites of Moses, "As for this Moses we wot not what is become of him?" (Exodus 32:1) and given oftener the glory of our good success to our drag and our net, to our craft and our industry, than to the wisdom and blessing of God? Are we, then, free from this sort of atheism? [Note: Lawson's Body of Divinity, pp. 153, 154.] It is as impossible to have two Gods at one time in one heart, as to have two kings at one time in full power in one kingdom. Have there not been frequent neglects of God? Have we not been deaf whilst he hath knocked at our doors? slept when he hath sounded in our ears, as if there had been no such being as a God in the world? How many strugglings have been against our approaches to him! Hath not folly often been committed, with vain imaginations starting up in the time of religious service, which we would scarce vouchsafe a look to at another time, and in another business, but would have thrust them away with indignation? Had they stepped in to interrupt our worldly affairs, they would have been troublesome intruders; but while we are with God they are acceptable guests. How unwilling have our hearts been to fortify themselves with strong and influencing considerations of God, before we addressed to him! Is it not too often that our lifelessness in prayer proceeds from this atheism; a neglect of seeing what arguments and pleas may be drawn from the divine perfections, to second our suit in hand, and quicken our hearts in the service? Whence are those indispositions to any spiritual duty, but because we have not due thoughts of the majesty, holiness, goodness, and excellency of God? Is there any duty which leads to a more particular inquiry after him, or a more clear vision of him, but our hearts have been ready to rise up and call it cursed rather than blessed? Are not our minds bemisted with an ignorance of him, our wills drawn by aversion from him, our affections rising in distaste of him? more willing to know anything than his nature, and more industrious to do anything than his will? Do we not all fall under some one or other of these considerations? Is it not fit, then, that we should have a sense of them? It is to be bewailed by us, that so little of God is in our hearts, when so many evidences of the love of God are in the creatures; thikt God should be so little our end, who hath been so much our benefactor; that he should be so little in our thoughts, who sparkles in everything which presents itself to our eyes.

2. Let us be sensible of it in others. We ought to have a just execration of the too open iniquity in the midst of us; and imitate holy David, whose tears plentifully gushed out, "because men kept not

God's law." [Note: Psalms 119:136.] And is it not a time to exercise this pious lamentation? Hath the wicked atheism of any age been greater, or can you find worse in hell, than we may hear of and behold on earth? How is the excellent Majesty of God adored by the angels in heaven, despised and reproached by men on earth, as if his name were published to be matter of their sport! What a gasping thing is a natural sense of God among men in the world! Is not the law of God, accompanied with such dreadful threatenings and curses, made light of, as if men would place their honor in being above or beyond any sense of that glorious Majesty? How many wallow in pleasures, as if they had been made men only to turn brutes, and their souls given them only for salt, to keep their bodies from putrefying? It is as well a part of atheism not to be sensible of the abuses of God's name and laws by others, as to violate them ourselves: what is the language of a stupid senselessness of them, but that there is no God in the world whose glory is worth a vindication, and deserves our regards? That we may be sensible of the unworthiness of neglecting God as our rule and end, consider, 1. The unreasonableness of it as it concerns God.

1st. It is a high contempt of God. It is an inverting the order of things; a making God the highest to become the lowest; and self the lowest to become the highest: to be guided by every base companion, some idle vanity, some carnal interest, is to acknowledge an excellency abounding in them which is wanting in God; an equity in their orders, and none in God's precepts; a goodness in their promises, and a falsity in God's; as if infinite excellency were a mere vanity, and to act for God were the debasement of our reason; to act for self or some pitiful creature, or sordid lust, were the glory and advancement of it. To prefer any one sin before the honor of God, is as if that sin had been our creator and benefactor, as if it were the original cause of our being and support. Do not men pay as great a homage to that as they do to God? Do not their minds eagerly pursue it? Are not the revolvings of it, in their fancies, as delightful to them as the remembrance of God to a holy soul? Do any obey the commands of God with more readiness than they do the orders of their base affections? Did Peter leap more readily into the sea to meet his Master, than many into the jaws of hell to meet their Dalilahs? How cheerfully did the Israelites part with their ornaments for the sake of an idol, who would not have spared a moiety for the honor of their Deliverer! [Note: Exodus 32:3,—“All the people brake off the golden earrings.”] If to make God our end is the principal duty in nature, then to make ourselves, or anything else, our end, is the greatest vice in the rank of evils.

2d. It is a contempt of God as the most amiable object. God is infinitely excellent and desirable (Zechariah 9:17): “How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” There is nothing in him but what may ravish our affections; none that knows him but finds attractiveness to keep them with him; He hath nothing in him which can be a proper object of contempt, no defects or shadow of evil; there is infinite excellency to charm us, and infinite goodness to allure us,—the Author of our being, the Benefactor of our lives. Why then should man, which is his image, be so base as to slight the beautiful Original which stamped it on him? He is the most lovely object; therefore to be studied, therefore to be honored, therefore to be followed. In regard of his perfection he hath the highest right to our thoughts. All other beings were eminently contained in his essence, and were produced by his infinite power. The creature hath nothing but what it hath from God. And is it not unworthy to prefer the copy before the original—to fall in love with a picture, instead of the beauty it represents? The creature which we advance to be our rule and end, can no more report to us the true amiableness of God, than a few colors mixed and suited together upon a piece of cloth, can

the moral and intellectual loveliness of the soul of man. To condemn God one moment is more base than if all creatures were condemned by us forever; because the excellency of creatures is, to God, like that of a drop to the sea, or a spark to the glory of unconceivable millions of suns. As much as the excellency of God is above our conceptions, so much doth the debasing of him admit of unexpressible aggravations.

2. Consider the ingratitude in it. That we should resist that God with our hearts who made us the work of his hands, and count him as nothing, from whom we derive all the good that we are or have. There is no contempt of man but steps in here to aggravate our slighting of God; because there is no relation one man can stand in to another, wherein God doth not more highly appear to man. If we abhor the unworthy carriage of a child to a tender father, a servant to an indulgent master, a man to his obliging friend, why do men daily act that toward God which they cannot speak of without abhorrency, if acted by another against man? Is God a being less to be regarded than man, and more worthy of contempt than a creature?—"It would be strange if a benefactor should live in the same town, in the same house with us, and we never exchange a word with him; yet this is our case, who have the works of God in our eyes, the goodness of God in our being, the mercy of God in our daily food" [Note: Reynolds.] —yet think so little of him, converse so little with him, serve everything before him, and prefer everything above him? Whence have we our mercies but from his hand? Who, besides him, maintains our breath this moment? Would he call for our spirits this moment, they must depart from us to attend his command. There is not a moment wherein our unworthy carriage is not aggravated, because there is not a moment wherein he is not our Guardian, and gives us not tastes of a fresh bounty. And it is no light aggravation of our crime, that we injure him without whose bounty, in giving us our being, we had not been capable of casting contempt upon him: that he that hath the greatest stamp of his image, man, should deserve the character of the worst of his rebels: that he who hath only reason by the gift of God to judge of the equity of the laws of God, should swell against them as grievous, and the government of the Lawgiver as burdensome. Can it lessen the crime to use the principle wherein we excel the beasts to the disadvantage of God, who endowed us with that principle above the beasts?

1. It is a debasing of God beyond what the devil doth at present. He is more excusable in his present state of acting, than man is in his present refusing God for his rule and end. He strives against a God that exerciseth upon him a vindictive justice; we debase a God that loads us with his daily mercies. The despairing devils are excluded from any mercy or divine patience; but we are not only under the long-suffering of his patience, but the large expressions of his bounty. He would not be governed by him when he was only his bountiful Creator: we refuse to be guided by him after he hath given us the blessing of creation from his own hand, and the more obliging blessings of redemption by the hand and blood of his Son. It cannot be imagined that the devils and the damned should ever make God their end, since he hath assured them he will not be their happiness; and shut up all his perfections from their experimental notice, but those of his power to preserve them, and his justice to punish them. They have no grant from God of ever having a heart to comply with his will, or ever having the honor to be actively employed for his glory. They have some plea for their present contempt of God, not in regard of his nature, for he is infinitely amiable, excellent and lovely, but in regard of his administration toward them. But what plea can man have for his practical atheism, who lives by his power, is sustained by his bounty, and solicited by his Spirit? What an ungrateful thing is it to put off the nature of man for that of devils,

and dishonor God under mercy, as the devils do under his wrathful anger!

2. It is an ungrateful contempt of God, who cannot be injurious to us. He cannot do us wrong, because he cannot be unjust (Genesis 18:25): "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" His nature doth as much abhor unrighteousness, as love a communicative goodness: he never commanded anything but what was highly conducive to the happiness of man. Infinite goodness can no more injure man than it can dishonor itself: it lays out itself in additions of kindness, and while we debase him, he continues to benefit us; and is it not an unparalleled ingratitude to turn our backs upon an object so lovely, an object so loving, in the midst of varieties of allurements from him? God did create intellectual creatures, angels and men, that he might communicate more of himself and his own goodness and holiness to man, than creatures of a lower rank were capable of. What do we do, by rejecting him as our rule and end, but cross, as much as in us lies, God's end in our creation, and shut our souls against the communications of those perfections he was so willing to bestow? We use him as if he intended us the greatest wrong, when it is impossible for him to do any to any of his creatures.

3. Consider the misery which will attend such a temper if it continue predominant. Those that thrust God away as their happiness and end, can expect no other but to be thrust away by him, as to any relief and compassion. A distance from God here can look for nothing, but a remoteness from God hereafter. When the devil, a creature of vast endowments, would advance himself above God, and instruct man to commit the same sin, he is "cursed above all creatures." [Note: Genesis 3:14.] When we will not acknowledge him a God of all glory, we shall be separated from him as a God of all comfort: "All they that are afar off shall perish" (Psalms 73:27). This is the spring of all woe. What the Prodigal suffered, was because he would leave his father, and live of himself. Whosoever is ambitious to be his own heaven, will at last find his soul to become its own hell. As it loved all things for itself, so it shall be grieved with all things for itself. As it would be its own god against the right of God, it shall then be its own tormentor by the justice of God.

Secondly, Watch against this atheism, and be daily employed in the mortification of it. In every action we should make the inquiry, What is the rule I observe? Is it God's will or my own? Whether do my intentions tend to set up God or self? As much as we destroy this, we abate the power of sin: these two things are the head of the serpent in us, which we must be bruising by the power of the cross. Sin is nothing else but a turning from God, and centering in self, and most in the inferior part of self: if we bend our force against those two, self-will and self-ends, we shall intercept atheism at the spring head, take away that which doth constitute and animate all sin: the sparks must vanish if the fire be quenched which affords them fuel. They are but two short things to ask in every undertaking: Is God my le in regard of his will? Is God my end in regard of his glory? All sin lies in the neglect of these, all grace lies in the practice of them. Without some degree of the mortification of these; we cannot make profitable and comfortable approaches to God. When we come with idols in our hearts, we shall be answered according to the multitude and the baseness of them too. [Note: Ezekiel 14:4.] What expectation of a good look from him can we have, when we come before him with undeifying thoughts of him, a petition in our mouths, and a sword in our hearts, to stab his honor To this purpose,

1. Be often in the views of the excellencies of God. When we have no intercourse with God by delightful meditations, we begin to be estranged from him, and prepare ourselves to live without

God in the world. Strangeness is the mother and nurse of disaffection: we slight men sometimes because we know them not. The very beasts delight in the company of men; when being tamed and familiar, they become acquainted with their disposition. A daily converse with God would discover so much of loveliness in his nature, so much of sweetness in his ways, that our injurious thoughts of God would wear off, and we should count it our honor to condemn ourselves and magnify him. By this means a slavish fear, which is both a dishonor to God and a torment to the soul, [Note: 1 John 4:18.] and the root of atheism, will be cast out, and an in Tenuous fear of him wrought in the heart. Exercised thoughts on him would issue out in affections to him, which would engage our hearts to make him both our rule and our end. This course would stifle any temptations to gross atheism, wherewith good souls are sometimes haunted, by confirming us more in the belief of a God, and discourage any attempts to a deliberate practical atheism. We are not like to espouse any principle which is confuted by the delightful converse we daily have with him. The more we thus enter into the presence chamber of God, the more we cling about him with our affections, the more vigorous and lively will the true notion of God grow up in us, and be able to prevent anything which may dishonor him and debase our souls. Let us therefore consider him as the only happiness; set up the true God in our understandings; possess our hearts with a deep sense of his desirable excellency above all other things. This is the main thing we are to do in order to our great business: all the directions in the world, with the neglect of this, will be insignificant ciphers. The neglect of this is common, and is the basis of all the mischiefs which happen to the souls of men.

2. Prize and study the Scripture. We can have no delight in meditation on him, unless we know him; and we cannot know him but by the means of his own revelation; when the revelation is despised, the revealer will be of little esteem. Men do not throw off God from being their rule, till they throw off Scripture from being their guide; and God must needs be cast off from being an end, when the Scripture is rejected from being a rule. Those that do not care to know his will, that love to be ignorant of his nature; can never be affected to his honor. Let therefore the subtleties of reason veil to the doctrine of faith, and the humor of the will to the command of the word.

3. Take heed of sensual pleasures, and be very watchful and cautious in the use of those comforts God allows us. Job was afraid, when his “sons feasted, that they should curse God in their hearts.” [Note: Job 4:4.] It was not without cause that the apostle Peter joined sobriety with watchfulness and prayer (1 Peter 4:7): “The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”—A moderate use of worldly comforts.—Prayer is the great acknowledgment of God, and too much sensuality is a hindrance of this, and a step to atheism. Belshazzar’s lifting himself up against the Lord, and not glorifying of God, is charged upon his sensuality (Daniel 5:23). Nothing is more apt to quench the notions of God, and root out the conscience of him, than an addictedness to sensual pleasures. Therefore take heed of that snare.

4. Take heed of sins against knowledge. The more sins against knowledge are committed, the more careless we are, and the more careless we shall be of God and his honor; we shall more fear his judicial power; and the more we fear that, the more we shall disaffect that God in whose hand vengeance is, and to whom it doth belong. Atheism in conversation proceeds to atheism in affection, and that will endeavor to sink into ageism in opinion and judgment. The sum of the whole.—And now consider in the whole what has been spoken.

1. Man would set himself up as his own rule. He disowns the rule of God, is unwilling to have any acquaintance with the rule God sets him, negligent in using the means for the knowledge of his will, and endeavors to shake it off when any notices of it break in upon him; when he cannot expel it, he hath no pleasure in the consideration of it, and the heart swells against it. When the notions of the will of God are entertained, it is on some other consideration, or with wavering and unsettled affections. Many times men design to improve some lust by his truth. This unwillingness respects truth as it is most spiritual and holy; as it most relates and leads to God; as it is most contrary to self. He is guilty of contempt of the will of God, which is seen in every presumptuous breach of his law; in the natural aversions to the declaration of his will and mind, which way soever he turns; in slighting that part of his will which is most for his honor; in the awkwardness of the heart when it is to pay God a service. A constraint in the first engagement, slowness in the service, in regard of the matter, in regard of the frame, without a natural vigor. Many distractions, much weariness, in deserting the rule of God, when our expectations are not answered upon our service, in breaking promises with God. Man naturally owns any other rule rather than that of God's prescribing: the rule of Satan; the will of man; in complying more with the dictates of men than the will of God; in observing that which is materially so, not because it is his will, but the injunctions of men; in obeying the will of man when it is contrary to the will of God. This man doth in order to the setting up himself. This is natural to man as he is corrupted. Men are dissatisfied with their own consciences when they contradict the desires of self. Most actions in the world are done, more because they are agreeable to self, than as they are honorable to God; as they are agreeable to natural and moral self, or sinful self. It is evident in neglects of taking God's directions upon emergent occasions; in counting the actions of others to be good or bad, as they suit with, or spurn against our fancies and humors. Man would make himself the rule of God, and give laws to his Creator, in striving against his law; disapproving of his methods of government in the world; in impatience in our particular concerns; envying the gifts and prosperity of others; corrupt matter or ends of prayer or praise; bold interpretations of the judgments of God in the world; mixing rules in the worship of God with those which have been ordained by him; suiting interpretations of Scripture with our own minds and humors; falling off from God after some fair compliances, when his will grates upon us, and crosseth ours.

2. Man would be his own end. This is natural and universal. This is seen in frequent self-applauses and inward overweening reflections; in ascribing the glory of what we do or have to ourselves; in desire of self-pleasing doctrines; in being highly concerned in injuries done to ourselves, and little or not at all concerned for injuries done to God; in trusting in ourselves; in workings for carnal self against the light of our own consciences: this is a usurping God's prerogative, vilifying God, destroying God. Man would make anything his end or happiness rather than God. This appears in the fewer thoughts we have of him than of anything else; in the greedy pursuit of the world; in the strong addictedness to sensual pleasures; in paying a service, upon any success in the world, to instruments more than to God: this is a debasing God in setting up a creature, but more in setting up a base lust; it is a denying of God. Man would make himself the end of all creatures. In pride; using the creatures contrary to the end God hath appointed: this is to dishonor God, and it is diabolical. Man would make himself the end of God; in loving God, because of some self-pleasing benefits distributed by him; in abstinence from some sins, because they are against the interest of some other beloved corruption; in performing duties merely for a selfish interest, which is evident in unwieldiness in religious duties, where self is not concerned; in calling upon God only in a time

of necessity; in begging his assistance to our own projects after we have by our own craft, laid the plot; in impatience upon a refusal of our desires; in selfish aims we have in our duties: this is a vilifying God, a dethroning him; in unworthy imaginations of God, universal in man by nature. Hence spring idolatry, superstition, presumption, the common disease of the world. This is a vilifying God; worse than idolatry, worse than absolute atheism. Natural desires to be distant from him; no desires for the remembrance of him; no desires of converse with him; no desires of a thorough return to him; no desire of any close imitation of him.

The Chief of Sinners Saved

The Chief of Sinners Saved by Stephen Charnock First in a series of three sermons entitled "The Chief Sinners Objects of the Choicest Mercy."

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"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."—1 Timothy 1:15

Observation. I. The salvation of sinners was the main design of Christ's coming into the world. II. God often makes the chiefest sinners objects of his choicest mercy. To show that God does so, observe,

1 God has formally made invitations to such. See what a black generation they were, Isaiah 1:1-31, by the record of their sins. They were rebels, and rebels against him that had nursed them. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isaiah 1:2. And in this respect worse than the beasts they were masters of; the stupid ox and the dull ass outstripped them in intelligence. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isaiah 1:3. He calls upon heaven and earth to judge between them, Isaiah 1:2. He appeals to men and angels, as a jury, to give their verdict, whether these people had not been the most disingenuous and ungrateful people in the world. Or if by heavens and earth be meant magistrates and people, as in the prophetic style they are usually taken, God then appeals to themselves, to let their own natural consciences and the common intelligence their sins had left them, to judge between them. He comes to charge them, "laden with iniquity," Isaiah 1:4. They had such great weights lying upon them, that they were not able to stir; or laden with it, as some crabtree is with sour fruit. They had sprouted from a wicked stock; they had corrupted one another by their society and example, as rotten apples putrefy the sound ones that be near them.

They had been incorrigible under judgments; God had used the rod again and again; but seeing there was no reformation, he was even weary of whipping them any longer; "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more," Isaiah 1:5. They were also so universally infected, that there was no sound part about them, but running sores all over; both head and heart were infected; corrupt notions in the one, and corrupt affections in the other. Or if you take it prophetically, head signifies the chief magistrate; heart, the judges; feet, the common people. The fire which had burnt their cities had not consumed their lusts, and dried up their sins; "Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire, your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers," Isaiah 1:7. And had it not been for a small remnant, they had been as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaiah 1:9. Their services were polluted, vain, and an abomination to him, Isaiah 1:13. They were a trouble to him, his soul hated them, he was tired with them, Isaiah 1:14, for they came with their bloody murderous hands into God's presence.

Yet though he justly charged them with these horrid crimes, he gives them assurance of being received if they would return to him; "Come now, and let us reason together," Isaiah 1:18. He would condescend to debate the case with them, when one would have thought he should have said, I'll have nothing to do with such a crew as they; God loves to discourse with men about this argument of pardon; and he loves that men should hear him speak concerning it. He would dispute them out of their sins, into good and right apprehensions of his mercy. So, "Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted," Isaiah 31:6. Revolted, there is their sin; deeply, there is the aggravation of it; and being also children of Israel, a people of much mercy and miracles, there is another aggravation; yet turn unto him against whom you have thus sinned. The great objection of a penitent is, I have sinned, and I know not whether God will receive me: consider, God knows your sin better than you do, yet he kindly calls to you, and promises you as good a reception as if you had never sinned.

So, "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord," Jeremiah 3:1. Though you have been a common adulteress, and made all comers, every idol welcome, and been in league with many sins, yet upon your return I'll claim you as my own; and these are God's warrants for encouragement.

2. God has given examples of it in scripture. Adam the ringleader of all rebellions of mankind in the world, had the promise of the seed of the woman to break the serpent's head made to him; and in the genealogy of Christ, is called the Son of God, Luke 3:38; not only in respect of creation, for so the devil is the son of God, but in a nearer relation. Yet all that deluge of wickedness which has overflowed the world since the fall, sprung out of his loins. Nay, Abraham, the father of the faithful, was probably an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees, and a worshipper of the sun and fire, as his fathers were, Joshua 24:2; yet God makes a particular covenant with this man, presents him with a richer act of grace than any in the world besides him had, namely that the Messiah, the great Redeemer of the world, should come from his seed; this man is set up as the pattern of faith to others, and his bosom seems to be a great receptacle of saints in glory, Luke 16:22-23. Israel's sins were as a thick cloud, yet this powerful sun did melt them; "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins," Isaiah 44:22. A sullen gloomy morning often ends in a well complexioned noon. Manasseh is an eminent example of this doctrine. His story, 2 Chronicles 33:1-25, represents him as a black devil, if all the aggravations of his sin be considered.

1. It was against knowledge. He had a pious education under a religious father; an education usually leaves some tinctures and impressions of religion. No doubt but the instructions his father Hezekiah had taught him, and the exemplary holiness he had seen in him, were sometimes awakened in his memory, and recoiled upon his conscience.

2. His place and station, as a king; sins of kings are like their robes, more scarlet and crimson than the sins of a peasant. Their example usually infects their subjects. As they are not without their attendance in their progresses and recreations, so neither in their vices and virtues.

3. Restoration of idolatry. Had he found the worship of the host of heaven derived to him by succession from his father, and the idols set up to his hand, the continuance of them had less of sin, because more of temptation; but he built again those high places and altars to idols after they

had been broken down, 2 Chronicles 33:3, and dashed in pieces that reformation his father had completed.

4. Affronting God to his very face, He sets up his idols, as it were to insult God, and built altars in the house of the Lord, and in the two courts of his temple, whereof God had said he would have his name there for ever, 2 Chronicles 33:4-5. He brought in all the stars of heaven to be sharers in that worship which was only due to the God of heaven. What, could he find no other place for his idols, but in the very temple of God? Must God be cast out of his house, to make room for Baal?

6. Murder. Perhaps of his children, which he caused to pass through the fire, as an offering to his idol, 2 Chronicles 33:6. It may be it was only for purification. But he had the guilt of much innocent blood upon him, the streams whereof ran down in every part of the city. "Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem with blood from one end to the other," 2 Kings 21:16.

6. Covenant with the devil. He used enchantments, and witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, 2 Chronicles 33:6; yea, he had acquaintance with more devils than one, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, in the plural number.

7. His other men's sins. He did not only lead the people by his example, but compelled them by his commands. "So I made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen God had rooted out," 2 Chronicles 33:9, to make room for them. Hereby he contracted the guilt of the whole nation upon himself.

8. Obstinacy against admonitions,. God spoke to him and his people, but they would not hearken, or alter their course, 2 Kings 21:10.

9. Continuance in it. He ascended the throne young, at twelve years old, 2 Chronicles 33:1. It is uncertain how long he continued in this sin. Torniellus thinks fifteen years. Bellarmine twenty-seven. Kimchi fifty years, reckoning but five years of his life after his restoration. What a world of sin, and aggravations of it, were there in this man! And yet God was intreated, 2 Chronicles 33:19.

3. The ancestry whereof Christ came, seems to imply this; God might have kept the stock, whence Christ descended according to the flesh, pure and free from being tainted with any notorious crimes; but we find sins of a crimson dye even among them. There are no women reckoned up in Christ's genealogy, but such as in scripture are noted for looseness, Matthew 1:3. Tamar who played the harlot with Judah her father-in-law, Genesis 38:1-22. Rahab, Matthew 1:5, the harlot Or Jericho. Ruth, Matthew 1:5, a Gentile and Moabitess the root of whose generation was Lot's son, by incest with his own daughter. Bathsheba, Matthew 1:6, David's adulteress. He chose these repenting sinners, out of whose loins Christ was to come, that the greatest sinners might not be afraid to come to him. Was David, whose son our Saviour is called, much better? It is true he was a man after God's own heart, but yet very notorious for that act of murder and adultery, and with more aggravating circumstances than usually are met with in acts of the like nature, 2 Samuel 11:1-27. Uriah was a godly man, and had a sense of the condition of the church and nation whereof he was a member, 2 Samuel 11:11, and such a man's bed David is not only content to defile, but he pollutes his soul with drunkenness, 2 Samuel 11:13, lays snares for his life, not in a manly, but sly and treacherous manner; for while he does caress him, and show him a fair

countenance in his palace, he draws up secret instructions to Joab so to order the business, that Uriah might be thrust into his grave, and makes him the courier to carry the commission for his own death, 2 Samuel 11:15-16. After all this he has no remorse when he hears of the loss of so godly and valiant a man, but wipes his mouth, and sweeps all the dirt to the door of Providence, 2 Samuel 11:25. Now Christ's stock being thus tainted, was methinks an evidence that penitents, though before of the greatest pollutions, might be welcome to him. And that as he picked out such out of whose loins to proceed, so he would pick out such also in whose hearts to reside.

4. It was Christ's employment in the world to court and gain such kind of creatures. The first thing he did, while in the manger, was to snatch some of the devil's prophets out of his service, and take them into his own, Matthew 2:1, some of the Magi, who were astrologers and idolaters. When he fled from Herod's cruelty, he chose Egypt, the most idolatrous country in the world, for his sanctuary; a place where the people worshipped oxen, crocodiles, cats, garlic, putida numina [unclean spirits], all kind of riff-raff; to show that he often comes to sojourn in the blackest souls. The first people he took care to preach to were the seamen, who us usually are the rudest and most debauched sort of men, as gaining the vices as well as the commodities of those nations they traffic with, Matthew 4:13. The inhabitants of those sea coasts are said to sit in darkness, Matthew 4:16; in darkness both of sin and ignorance, just as the Egyptians were not able to stir in that thick darkness which was sent as a plague upon them. And the country, by reason of the vices of the inhabitants, is called the region and shadow of death; a title properly belonging to hell itself. To call sinners to repentance was the errand of his coming. And he usually delighted to choose such that had not the least pretense to merit, Mark 2:17. Matthew, a publican, Zaccheus, an extortioner, examples of the majority of that generation of men and harlots, and very little company besides.

He chose his attendants out of the devil's rabble; and he was more Jesus, more a Saviour, among this sort of trash, than among all other sorts of people, for all his design was to get his people out of hell itself. What was that woman that he must needs go out of his way to convert? A harlot, John 4:18, an idolater, for the Samaritans had a mixed worship, a linsey-woolsey religion, and upon that account were hateful to the Jews. She continued in her adultery up to the very time Christ spoke to her, yet he makes her a monument of his grace; and not only so, but the first preacher of the gospel to her neighbours. "Is not this the Christ?" John 4:29, and an instrument to conduct them to him; "Come, see a man which told me all things," &c. Was any more defiled than Mary Magdalene? Seven devils would make her sooty to purpose, and so many did Christ cast out of her. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene," Mark 16:9, out of whom he cast seven devils. This lustful devil he turns into a weeping saint.

What was that Canaanitish woman who had so powerful a faith infused? One sprung of a cursed stock, hateful to God, rooted out of the pleasant land, a dog, not a child: she comes a dog, but returns a child; Christ made this crab-apple in a wilderness to bring forth fruit, even the best that heaven could afford, viz. the fruit of faith; and larger and better bunches of it than that time sprouted out of any branches of the Jewish vine, so well planted, and so often watered by Christ himself. When he comes to act his last part in the world, he saves a thief who was next to the hell-gates, ready to be pushed in by the devil. Do you find examples among the Pharisees? No. Dunghill-sinners take heaven by violence, while the proud Pharisees lose it by their own

righteousness. Scribes and theologians continue devils in the chair, while harlots come out saints from the brothels, and the thief goes onward a convert from the cross.

Since there was but one that in his own person he converted after he went to heaven, what was he? One that had "breathed out threatenings and slaughters against the church," Acts 9:1. To do so was as common with him, and natural to him, as to inhale air, and breathe it out again: this man, galloping to hell as fast as his mad rage and passion could carry him, Jesus stops in his charge, ordains a preacher of a persecutor; gives him as large a commission as he had given any of his favourites; for he makes him the chiefest apostle of the Gentiles. What bogs and miry places did Christ drain and make fruitful gardens? What barren and thorny wildernesses did he change into pleasant paradises? He made subjects of vengeance objects of mercy: he told the woman of Samaria who lived in fornication, that he was the Messiah; "The woman saith to him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ." "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he," John 4:25, John 4:26; which he never disclosed to the self-righteous Pharisees, nor, indeed, in so many words to his disciples, till Peter's confession of him.

5. The commission Christ gave to his apostles was to this purpose. He bids them proclaim the promise free to all; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" Mark 16:15. All the world, every creature. He put no difference between men in this respect, though you meet with them in the likeness of beasts, and devils never so wicked, never so abominable; as long as they are creatures, reach out the cup of salvation to them, if they will drink; open the treasures of grace to them, if they will receive them; agree with them for nothing but faith for justification, and profession of it for their salvation. This commission is set out by the parable of a king commanding his servants to fetch the maimed, halt, and blind, with their wounds, sores, and infirmities about them, Luke 14:21, Luke 14:23. "Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Yea, and go out into the highways, and hedges, and those loathsome persons, those dregs of mankind, which you shall find swarming with vermin, and cleansing themselves under every hedge, bring them in; if they pretend their rags and nastiness as unsuitable to my rank and quality, compel them, force them against their own natural inclinations and doubts, that my house may be filled. God will have heaven filled with such, when self-righteous persons refuse him. When you come to heaven to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you will find some and a great many, that were once as filthy morally, as these hedge-birds were naturally, who had once as many lusts creeping about them as there were frogs in Egypt. Such a compulsion as this spoken of, there was in the primitive times by the power of the Spirit of grace. Two stage-players, that in their acting scoffed at the Christian religion, were converted, and proved martyrs; one under Dioclesian, the other under Julian.

6. The practice of the Spirit after Christ's ascension, to lay hold of such persons.

1. Some out of the worst families in the world; one out of Herod's, Acts 13:1. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets, and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with. Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul." Either Herod Antipas, who ridiculed Christ before Pilate; or Herod Agrippa, who put James to death; which of these Herods it was, it was not likely that in such a family he should imbibe any principles advantageous to the Christian religion. For being brought up with him, he was either his playfellow when young, or his confidant when grown up; yet out of this

family of this wicked prince he calls out one, to make not only an object of his mercy, but an instrument of it to others, contrary to the force of education, which usually roots bad principles deep in the heart. It is likely to this intent the Holy Ghost takes particular notice of the place of Manaen's education, when the families, where the rest named with him were bred up, are not mentioned.

Some rude and rough stones were taken out of Nero's palace; some that were servants to the most abominable tyrant, and the greatest monster of mankind; one that set Rome on fire, and played on his harp while the flames were crackling about the city; ripped up his mother's belly to see the place where he lay; would any of the civiller sort of mankind be attendants upon such a devil? Yet some of this monster's servants became saints. Php 4:22. "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." To hear of saints in Nero's family, is as great a prodigy as to hear of saints in hell.

God before had promised his grace to Egypt, the most idolatrous country; there God would have an altar erected: "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; in that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt," Isaiah 19:18-20. And indeed the gospel was famous in Egypt, both at the Christian school at Alexandria, and for many famous lights.

2. Some of the worst vices. The Ephesians were as bad as any, such that Paul calls darkness itself; For "ye were sometimes darkness," Ephesians 5:8. There was not only an eclipse, or a dark mask upon them, but they were changed into the very nature of night. Great idolaters; the temple of Diana, adored and resorted to by all Asia, and the whole world, was in that city, Acts 19:27. "That the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." And they cry up this statue they pretended fell down from Jupiter, above Christ, who was preached by Paul. They were given to magic, and other diabolical arts; yet many of these were weaned from their idol and their magic. They who were of darkness were made light in the Lord, which is more than if you saw a black piece of pitch changed into a clear piece of crystal, or a stone ascend into the nature of a glittering star.

Take a view of another assembly at Corinth of as filthy persons as ever you heard of; "Such were some of you," 1 Corinthians 6:11. After he had drawn out a catalogue of their sins against the light of nature, and made the enumeration so perfect, that very little can be added, he adds, such were some of you. Not all, but some. But you are washed, &c. Not *toioutoi*, such sinners; but *tauta*, such sins. Persons not only committing some few acts of them, but so habituated in them, that they seemed metamorphosed into the very nature of these sins themselves; so that they were become the very dirt, mud, and rubbish of hell. Yet you see devils he really turned into angels of light. Well then, how many flinty rocks has God dissolved into a stream of tears? How many hard hearts has he made to bleed and melt? That which is now pure gold, had been earthy and polluted.

I shall only add this to the whole. Great sins are made preparations by God to some men's conversion, not in their own nature, that is impossible: but by the wise disposal of God, which Mr Burges illustrates thus: As a child whose coat is but a little dirty, has it not presently washed, but when he comes to fall over head and ears in the mire, it is taken off, and washed immediately; the child might have gone many a day with a little dirt, had not such an accident happened. Peter might have had his proud and vain-glorious humour still, had he not fallen so foully in the denial of

his Master; but when he fell into the privy, it promoted his conversion: for so Christ calls it. "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke 17:32. It was conversion in a new edition; and you do not find him in the same boasting vanity again.

David's falling into the sin of murder and adultery is the occasion of the ransacking his soul, which you find him not so hot about another time: he digs all about to the very root. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalms 51:5. This sin had stirred and raked up all the mud in his heart, and made him see himself an abominable creature: therefore, he desires God to "hide his face from his sins," ver. 9; he was so loathsome, he would not have any one look upon him (fling all this mud out of my soul), and prays more earnestly for a new heart and a right spirit. So when a wicked man falls into some grievous sin, which his conscience frowns upon him and lashes him for, he looks out for a shelter, which in all his peaceable wickedness he never did.

2. Why God chooses the greatest sinners, and lets his elect run on so far in sin before he turns them.

1. There is a passive disposition in the greatest sinners, more than in moral or superstitious men, to see their need: because they have not any self-righteousness to boast of. Man's blameless outward carriage and freedom from the common sins of the times and places wherein they live, many times proves a snare of death to them, and makes them more cold and faint towards Christ: because they possess themselves with imaginations that Christ cannot but look upon them, though they never so much as set their faces toward him. And because they are not drenched in such villanies as others are, their consciences sit quiet under this moral carriage, and gall them not by any self-reflections. Therefore when the threatenings of the law are denounced against such and such sins, these men wipe their mouths, being untainted from those sins that are thus cursed, and vainly glory in their gay and gaudy plumes, and bless God with the Pharisee, that they are not sinners of such a scarlet dye, and that they do such and such duties, and so go on without seeing a necessity of the new birth. By this means the strength of sin is more compacted and condensed in them.

Superstitious and formal men are hardly seduced to their right wits: partly because of a defect in reason from whence, those extravagances arise, and partly because of these false habits and spirit of error possessing their faculties, they are incapable of more noble impressions. Besides, they are more tenacious of the opinions they have sucked in, which have got the empire and command over their souls; such misguided zeal fortifies men against proposals of grace, and fastens them in a more obstinate inflexibleness to any converting motions. This self-righteous temper is like an external heat got into the body, which produces a persistant fever, and is not easily perceived till it be incurable; and naturally it is a harder matter to part with self-righteousness than to part with gross sins; for that is more deeply rooted upon the stock of self-love, a principle which departs not from us without our very nature. It has more arguments to plead for it; it has a natural conscience, as a patron for it. Whereas a great sinner stands speechless at reproofs, an outward law-keeper has the strong reinforcement of natural conscience within his own breast. It was not the gross sins of the Jews against the light of nature, so much as the establishing the idol of their own righteousness, that was the block to hinder them from submitting to the righteousness of God, Romans 10:8.

Christ came to his own, and his own received him not, John 1:11. Those that seem to have his particular stamp and mark upon them, that had their heads in heaven by some kind of resemblance to God in moral righteousness, being undefiled with the common pollutions of the world: these received him not, when publicans and harlots started ahead of them, and ran before them, to catch hold of the offers of grace. "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." Matthew 21:31. Just as travellers that have loitered away their time in an alehouse, being sensible how the darkness of the night creeps upon them, spur on, and outstrip those that were many miles on their way, and get to their stage before them. So these publicans and harlots which were at a great distance from heaven, arrived there before those who, like the young man, were not far off from it.

Great sinners are most easily convinced of the notorious wickedness of their lives; and reflecting upon themselves because of their horrid crimes against the light of nature, are more inclinable to endeavour an escape from the devil's slavery, and are frightened and shaken by their consciences into a compliance with the doctrine of redemption; whereas those that do by nature the things contained in the law, are so much a law to themselves, that it is difficult to persuade them of the necessity of conforming to another law, and to part with this self-law in regard to justification. As metals of the noblest substance are hardest to be polished; so men of the most noble, natural, and moral endowments are with more difficulty argued into a state of Christianity than those of more drossy modes of living. Cassianus speaks very peremptorily in this case; *frequenter vidimus de frigidis et carnalibus ad spiritualem venisse fervorem, de lepidis et animalibus nunquam*; that is, often have we seen the cold and carnal warmed into a spiritual fervour; the dainty and the brutish never.

2. The insufficiency of nature to such a work as conversion is, shows that men may not fall down and idolize their own wit and power. A change from acts of sin to moral duties may be done by a natural strength and the power of natural conscience: for the very same motives which led to sin, as education, interest, profit, may, upon a change of circumstances, guide men to an outward morality; but a change to the contrary grace is supernatural.

Two things are certain in nature. (1.) Natural inclinations never change, but by some superior virtue. A loadstone will not cease to draw iron, while that attractive quality remains in it. The wolf can never love the lamb, nor the lamb the wolf; nothing but must act suitably to its nature. Water cannot but moisten, fire cannot but burn. So likewise the corrupt nature of man being possessed with an invincible contrariety and enmity to God, will never suffer him to comply with God. And the inclinations of a sinner to sin being more strengthened by the frequency of sinful acts, have as great a power over him, and as natural to him, as any qualities are to natural agents: and being stronger than any sympathies in the world, cannot by a man's own power, or the power of any other nature equal to it, be turned into a contrary channel.

(2.) Nothing can act beyond its own principle and nature. Nothing in the world can raise itself to a higher rank of being than that which nature has placed it in; a spark cannot make itself a star, though it mount a little up to heaven; nor a plant endue itself with sense, nor a beast adorn itself with reason; nor a man make himself an angel. Thorns cannot bring forth grapes, nor thistles produce figs because such fruits are above the nature of those plants. So neither can our corrupt nature bring forth grace, which is a fruit above it. *Effectus non excedit virtutem suae causae* [the

effect cannot exceed the power of its cause]: grace is more excellent than nature, therefore cannot be the fruit of nature. It is Christ's conclusion, "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Matthew 12:33-34. Not so much as the buds and blossoms of words, much less the fruit of actions. They can no more change their natures, than a viper can do away with his poison. Now though this I have said be true, yet there is nothing man does more affect in the world than a self-sufficiency, and an independence from any other power but his own. This attitude is as much riveted in his nature, as any other false principle whatsoever. For man does derive it from his first parents, as the prime legacy bequeathed to his nature: for it was the first thing uncovered in man at his fall; he would be as God, independent from him. Now God, to cross this principle, allows his elect, like Lazarus, to lie in the grave till they stink, that there may be no excuse to ascribe their resurrection to their own power. If a putrefied rotten carcass should be brought to life, it could never be thought that it inspired itself with that active principle. God lets men run on so far in sin, that they do unman themselves, that he may proclaim to all the world, that we are unable to do anything of ourselves towards our recovery, without a superior principle. The evidence of which will appear if we consider,

1. Man's subjection under sin. He is "sold under sin," Romans 7:14, and brought "into captivity to the law of sin," Romans 7:23. "Law of sin:" that sin seems to have a legal authority over him; and man is not only a slave to one sin, but many, Titus 3:3, "serving divers lusts." Now when a man is sold under the power of a thousand lusts, every one of which has an absolute tyranny over him, and rules him as a sovereign by a law; when a man is thus bound by a thousand laws, a thousand cords and fetters, and carried whither his lords please, against the dictates of his own conscience and force of natural light; can any man imagine that his own power can rescue him from the strength of these masters that claim such a right to him, and keep such a force upon him, and have so often baffled his own strength, when he attempted to turn against them?

2. Man's affection to them. He does not only serve them, but he serves them, and every one of them, with delight and pleasure; Titus 3:3. They were all pleasures, as well as lusts; friends as well as lords. Will any man leave his sensual delights and such sins that please and flatter his flesh? Will a man ever endeavour to run away from those lords which he serves with affection? having as much delight in being bound a slave to these lusts, as the devil has in binding him. Therefore when you see a man cast away his pleasures, deprive himself of those comfortable things to which his soul was once knit, and walk in paths contrary to corrupt nature, you may search for the cause anywhere, rather than in nature itself. No piece of dirty, muddy clay can form itself into a neat and handsome vessel; no plain piece of timber can fit itself for the building, much less a crooked one. Nor a man that is born blind, give himself sight.

God deals with men in this case as he did with Abraham. He would not give Isaac while Sarah's womb, in a natural probability, might have borne him; but when her womb was dead, and age had taken away all natural strength of conception, then God gives him; that it might appear that he was not a child of nature, but a child of promise. I have been the larger on these two heads (which I design rather as things premised than reasons) because these two principles of civil righteousness and self-sufficiency are the great impediments to conversion, and natural to most men.

God's Regard for His Own Glory, Seen in the Saving of Sinners by Stephen Charnock Second in a series of three sermons entitled "The Chief Sinners Objects of the Choicest Mercy."

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"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."—1 Timothy 1:15

1. The glory of his patience. We wonder, when we see a notorious sinner, how God can let his thunders still lie by him, and his sword rust in his sheath. And, indeed, when such are converted, they wonder themselves that God did not draw his sword out, and pierce their bowels, or shoot one of his arrows into their hearts all this while. But God, by such a forbearance; shews himself to be God indeed, and something in this act infinitely above such a weak creature as man is: 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man,' Hosea 11:9. When God had reckoned up their sins before, and they might have expected the sentence after the reading the charge, God tells them, he would not destroy them, he would not execute them, because he was God. If he were not a God, he could not keep himself from pouring out a just vengeance upon them. If a man did inherit all the meekness of all the angels and all the men that ever were in the world, he could not be able to bear with patience the extravagances and injuries done in the world the space of one day; for none but a God, i.e. one infinitely longsuffering, can bear with them. Not a sin passed in the world before the coming of Christ in the flesh, but was a commendatory letter of God's forbearance, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,' Romans 3:25. And not a sin passed before the coming of Christ into the soul, but gives the same testimony, and bears the same record. And the greater number of sins, and great sins are passed, the more trophies there are erected to God's longsuffering; the reason why the grace of the gospel appeared so late in the world, was to testify God's patience. Our apostle takes notice of this long-suffering towards himself in bearing with such a persecutor. 'Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him,' 1 Timothy 1:16. This was Christ's end in letting him run so far, that he might shew forth not a few mites, grains, or ounces of patience, but all longsuffering, longsuffering without measure, or weight, by wholesale; and this as a pattern to all ages of the world; up to us in for a type: a type is but a shadow in respect of the substance. To shew, that all the ages of the world should not waste that patience, whereof he had then manifested but a pattern. A pattern, we know, is less than the whole piece of cloth from whence it is cut; and as an essay is but a short taste of a man's skill, and doth not discover all his art, as the first miracle Christ wrought, of turning water into wine, as a sample of what power he had, was less than those miracles which succeeded; and the first miracle God wrought in Egypt, in turning Aaron's rod into a serpent, was but a sample of his power which would produce greater wonders; so this patience to Paul was but a little essay of his meekness, a little patience cut off from the whole piece, which should always be dealing out to some sinners or other, and would never be cut wholly out till the world had left being. This sample or pattern was but of the extent of a few years; for Paul was but young, the Scripture terms him a young man, Acts 7:58, about thirty-six years of age, yet he calls it all longsuffering. Ah, Paul! Some since have experienced more of this patience; in some it has reached not only to thirty, but forty, fifty, or sixty years.

2. Grace. It is partly for the admiration of this grace that God intends the day of judgment. It is a strange place: 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that

believe in that day,' 2 Thessalonians 1:10. What, has not Christ glory enough in heaven with his Father? Will he come on purpose to seek glory from such worthless creatures as his saints are? What is that which glorifies Christ in them? It is the gracious work he has wrought in them. For the word is, *endoxasqhnaì en agioiV*, to be inglorified in his saints, i.e. by something within them; for which they glorify Christ actively and objectively. As the creatures glorify the wisdom and power of God, by affording matter to men to do so, so does the work of God in saints afford matter of praise to angels, and admiration to devils. The apostle useth two words: glorified, that is, the work of angels and saints, who shall sing out his praises for it, as a prince, after a great conquest, receives the congratulations of all his nobility; admired, that the very devil and damned shall do; for, though their malice and condition will not suffer them to praise him, yet, his inexpressible love in making such black insides so beautiful, shall astonish them. In this sense those things under the earth shall bow down to that name of Jesus, a Saviour; a name which God gave him at first: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,' Php 2:9. And upon his exaltation did confirm, Hebrews 5:9, when he was made perfect, i.e. exalted, he became the author of eternal salvation, and had the power of saving, as well as the name conferred upon him. They shall confess that he is Lord, Php 2:11, i.e. that he acted like a Lord, when he prevailed over all the opposition which those great sinners made against him. The whole trial of the saints, and the sentence of their blessedness, shall be finished before that of the damned, Matthew 25:85, Matthew 25:44. That the whole scene of his love, and the wonders of the work of faith being laid open, might strike them with a vast amazement. And that this is the design of Christ, to be thus glorified in his grace and power, appears by the apostle's prayer, Matthew 25:11-12, that the Thessalonians might be in the number of those Christ should be thus glorified in. Therefore he prays, that God would 'fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness,' i.e. that grace he so pleased and delighted to manifest, and carry on the work of faith with power; 'that the name of Christ might be glorified in them,' as well as in the rest of his saints. Ordinary conversion is an act of grace; Barnabas so interprets it, Acts 11:21, Acts 11:23, when a great number believed; what abundance of grace then is expended in converting a company of extraordinary sinners!

It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence, Proverbs 19:11, i.e. it is a manifestation of a property which is an honour to him to be known to have. If it be thus an honour to pass by an offence simply, then the greater the offence is, and the more the offences are which he passeth by, the greater must the glory needs be, because it is a manifestation of such a quality in greater strength and vigour. So it must argue a more exceeding grace in God to remit many and great sins in man, than to forgive only some few and lesser offences.

(1.) Fulness of his grace. He shews hereby that there is more grace in him than there can be sin in us or the whole world. He lets some sinners run mightily upon his score, to manifest that though they are beggared, yet his grace is not; that though they have spent all their stock upon their swinish lusts, yet they have not drained his treasures; no more than the sun is emptied of its strength by exhaling the ill vapours of so many dunghills. This was his design in giving the moral law, *finis operis*; that is, the event of the law was to increase the sin; but *finis operantis*, was thereby to glorify his grace; 'Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' Romans 5:20. When the law of nature was out of print, and so blurred that it could scarce be read, God brings the moral law (the counterpart of the

law of nature) in a new edition into the world; and thereby sin hath new aggravations, as being rebellion against a clearer light, a swelling and breaking over this mighty bank of the law laid in its way. But this was serviceable to the fulness of his grace, which had more abundant matter hereby to work upon, and a larger field to sow its inexhaustible seed in, upereperisseusen, it did superabound. That grace should rise in its tide higher than sin, and bear it down before it, just as the rolling tide of the sea riseth higher than the streams of the river, and beats them back with all their mud and filth. It was mercy in God to create us; it is abundant mercy to make any new creatures, after they had forfeited their happiness, 1 Peter 1:3, which, according to his abundant mercy, kata to polu, according to his much mercy. But it was uperpleonazousa cariV, overflowing, exceeding abundant, more than full grace, to make such deformed creatures new creatures, 1 Peter 1:14.

(2.) Freeness of grace. None can entertain an imagination that Christ should be a debtor to sin, unless in vengeance, much less a debtor to the worst of sinners. But if Christ should only take persons of moral and natural excellencies, men might suspect that Christ were some way or other engaged to them, and that the gift of salvation were limited to the endowments of nature, and the good exercise and use of a man's own will. But when he puts no difference between persons of the least and those of the greatest demerit, but affecting the foulest monsters of sin, as well as the fairest of nature's children, he builds triumphal arches to his grace upon this rubbish, and makes men and angels admiringly gaze upon these infinitely free compassions, when he takes souls full of disease and misery into his arms. For it is manifest hereby that the God and Lord of nature is no more bound to his servant (as touching the gift of salvation), when she carries it the most smoothly with him, than when she rebels against him with the highest hand; and that Christ is at perfect liberty from any conditions but that of his own, viz. faith; and that he can and will embrace the dirt and mud, as well as the beauty and varnish of nature, if they believe with the like precious faith.

Therefore it is frequently God's method in Scripture, just before the offer of pardon, to sum up the sinner's debts, with their aggravations; to convince them of their insolvency to satisfy so large a score, and also to manifest the freeness and vastness of his grace: 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offering, &c., but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities,' Isaiah 43:22-24. When he had told them how dirtily they had dealt with him, and would have made him a very slave to their corrupt humours; at the conclusion, when they, nor no creature else, but would have expected fire-balls of wrath to be flung in their faces; and that God should have dipped his pen in gall, and have writ their mittimus to hell, he dips it in honey, and crosses the debt; 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,' Isaiah 43:25. Could there be anything of merit here, when the criminal, instead of favour, could expect nothing but severity, there being nothing but demerit in him?

It is so free, that the mercy we abuse, the name we have profaned, the name of which we have deserved wrath, opens its mouth with pleas for us; 'But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went,' Ezekiel 36:21. Not for their sakes. It should be wholly free; for he repeats their profaning of his name four times. This name he would sanctify, i.e. glorify. How? In cleansing them from their filthiness, Ezekiel 36:25. His name, while it pleads for them, mentions their demerits, that grace might appear to be grace indeed, and triumph in its own freeness. Our sins against him cannot deserve more than our sufferings for him,

and even they are not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed, Romans 8:18.

(3.) Extent of his grace. The mercy of God is called his riches, and exceeding riches of grace. Now as there is no end of his holiness, which is his honour, neither any limits set to his power, so there is no end of his grace, which is his wealth; no end of his mines; therefore the foulest and greatest sinners are the fittest for Christ to manifest the abundant riches of his graces upon; for it must needs argue a more vast estate to remit great debts, and many thousands of talents, than to forgive some fewer shillings or pence, than to pardon some smaller sins in men of a more unstained conversation. If it were not for turning and pardoning mountainous sinners, we should not know so much of God's estate; we should not know how rich he were, or what he were worth. He pardons iniquities for his name's sake; and who can spell all the letters of his name, and turn over all the leaves in the book of mercy? Who shall say to his grace, as he does to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further? As the heavens are of a vast extension, which, like a great circle, encompass the earth, which lies in the middle like a little atom, in comparison of that vast body of air and ether, so are our sins to the extent of God's mercy; 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,' Isaiah 55:9. Men's sins are innumerable, yet they are but ciphers to the vast sums of grace which are every day expended; because they are finite, but mercy is infinite; so that all sins in the world put together cannot be of so large an extent as mercy; because being every one of them finite, if all laid together, cannot amount to infinite. The gospel is entitled 'good-will to men;' to all sorts of men, with iniquities, transgressions, and sins of all sorts and sizes. God hath stores of mercy lying by him. His exchequer is never empty 'Keeps mercy for thousands,' Exodus 34:7, in a readiness to deal it upon thousand millions of sins as well as millions of persons. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all that were before, have not wasted it; and if God were to proclaim his name again, it is the same still, for his name as well as his essence is unchangeable. His grace is no more tied to one sin than it is to one person; he has mercy on whom he will, and his grace can pardon what sins he will; therefore he tells them, Isaiah 55:7, that he would multiply pardons. He will have mercy to suit every sin of thine, and a salve for every sore. Though thy sin has its heights and depths, yet he will heap mercy upon mercy, till he makes it to overtop thy sin. He will be as good at his merciful arithmetic as thou hast been at thy sinful, if thou dost sincerely repent and reform. Though thou multiply thy sins by thousands, where repentance goes before, remission of sin follows without limitation. When Christ gives the one, he is sure to second it with the other. Though aggravating circumstances be never so many, yet he will multiply his mercies as fast as thou canst the sins thou hast committed.

He hath a cleansing virtue and a pardoning grace for all iniquities and transgressions; 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me,' Jeremiah 33:8. It is three times repeated, to shew that his mercy should be as large as their sin, though there was not a more sinful nation upon the earth than they were. His justifying and sanctifying grace should have as vast an extension, for he would both pardon and cleanse them. Why? Ver. 9, that it might be a name of joy and praise, and an honour to him before all the nations of the earth.

It is so great, that self-righteous persons murmur at it, that such swines should be preferred before them; as the eldest son was angry that his father should lavish out his kindness upon the prodigal

more than upon himself, Luke 15:28.

(4.) Compassion of his grace. The formal nature of mercy is tenderness, and the natural effect of it is relief. The more miserable the object, the more compassionate human mercy is, and the more forward to assist. Now that mercy which in man is a quality, in God is a nature. How would the infinite tenderness of his nature be discovered, if there were no objects to draw it forth? It would not be known to be mercy, unless it were shed abroad; nor to be tender mercy, unless it relieved great and oppressing miseries; for mercy is a quality in man that cannot keep at home, and be stowed under a lock and key in a man's own breast; much less in God, in whom it is a nature. Now the greater the disease, the greater is that compassion discovered to be wherewith God is so fully stored. As his end in letting the devil pour out so many afflictions upon Job was to shew his pity and tender mercy in relieving him. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy, James 5:11; so, in permitting the devil to draw his elect to so many sins, it is the same end he drives at. And he is more pitiful to help men under sin than under affliction, because the guilt of one sin is a greater misery than the burden of a thousand crosses. If forgiveness be a part of tenderness in man, it is also so in God, who is set, Ephesians 4:32, as a pattern of the compassion we are to shew to others: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' The lower a man is brought, the more tender is that mercy that relieves him: 'Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low,' Psalms 79:8. To visit them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to pardon their sins, is called mercy, with this epithet of tender; 'Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,' Luke 1:77-79. And so it is indeed when he visits the most forlorn sinners.

(5.) Sincerity and pleasure of his grace. Ordinary pardon proceeds from his delight in mercy; 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy,' Micah 7:18. Therefore the more of his grace he lays out upon any one, the more excess of delight he hath in it, because it is a larger effect of that grace. If he were not sincere in it, he would never mention men's sins, which would scare them from him rather than allure them to him. If he were not sincere, he would never change the heart of an enemy, and shew kindness to him in the very act of enmity; for the first act of grace upon us is quite against our wills. And man is so far from being active in it, that he is contrary to it. In primo actionis, it is thus with a man, though not in primo actu; for in the first act of conversion man is willing, though not in the first moment of that act. But for God to bestow his grace upon us against our wills, and when he can expect no suitable recompence from us, evidences the purity of his affection; that when he endured so many contradictions of sinners against himself day by day, yet he is resolved to have them, and does seize upon them, though they struggle and fly in his face, and provoke him to fling them off.

It is so much his delight, that it is called by the very name of his glory: 'The glory of the Lord shall follow thee,' Isaiah 58:8; i.e. the mercy of the Lord shall follow them at the very heels. And when they call, it should answer them; and when they cry, he would, like a watchful guardian servant, cry out, Here I am. So that he never lets a great sinner, when changed into a penitent, wait long for mercy, though he sometimes lets them wait long for a sense of it. This mercy is never so delightful to him as when it is most glorious, and it is most glorious when it takes hold of the worst sinners. For such black spots which mercy wears upon its face, makes it appear more beautiful.

Christ does not care for staying where he has not opportunities to do great cures, suitable to the vastness of his power, Mark 6:5. When he was in his own country, he could do no great work there, but only laid his hands upon a few sick people. He had not a suitable employment for that glorious power of working miracles. So when men come to Christ with lighter guilt, he has but an under opportunity given him, and with a kind of disadvantage, to manifest the greatness of his charity. Though he has so much grace and mercy, yet he cannot shew more than the nature and exigence of the opportunity will bear; and so his pleasure doth not swell so high as otherwise it would do, for little sins, and few sins, are not so fit an object for a grace that would ride in triumph. Free grace is God's darling, which he loves to advance; and it is never more advanced, than when it beautifies the most misshapen souls.

3. Power. The Scripture makes conversion a most wonderful work, and resembles it to creation, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead, &c.

(1.) Creation. Conversion, simply considered, is concluded by divines to be a greater work than creation; for God puts forth more power morally in conversion than he did physically in creation. The world was created by a word; but many words, and many acts, concur to conversion. The heavens are called the works of God's fingers, Psalms 8:8; but the gospel, in the effects of it, is called the arm of the Lord, Isaiah 53:1. Men put not their arm to a thing but when the work requires more strength than the fingers possess. It is 'the power of God to salvation;' and the faith it works is begun and fulfilled with power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. God created the world of nothing; nothing could not objectively contribute to his design, as matter does to a workman's intent; yet neither doth it oppose him, because it is nothing. As soon as God spake the word, this nothing brings forth sun, moon, stars, earth, trees, flowers, all the garnish of nature out of its barren womb. But sin is actively disobedient, disputes his commands, slights his power, fortifies itself against his entrance upon the heart, gives not up an inch of ground without a contest. There is not only a passive indisposition, but an active opposition. His creating power drew the world out of nothing, but his converting power frames the new creature out of something worse than nothing.

Naturally there is nothing but darkness and confusion in the soul. We have not the least spark of divine light, no more than the chaos had, when God, who commanded light to shine out of that darkness, 2 Corinthians 4:6, shined in our hearts. To bring a principle of light into the heart, and to set it up in spite of all the opposition that the devil and a man's own corruption makes, is greater than creation. As the power of the sun is more seen in scattering the thickest mists that triumph over the earth, and mask the face of the heavens, than in melting the small clouds compacted of a few vapours, so it must needs argue a greater strength to root out those great sins that were twisted and inlaid with our very nature, and become as dear to us as our right eye and right hand, than a few sins that have taken no deep root. Every man naturally is possessed with a hatred of God, and doth oppose everything which would restore God to his right; and being, since the fall filled with a desire of independency, which is daily strengthened with new recruits, and loath to surrender himself to the power and direction of another, it is a more difficult thing to tame this unruly disposition in man's heart, I say more difficult, than to annihilate him, and new create him again; as it is more easy oftentimes for an artificer to make a new piece of work, than to repair and patch up an old one that is out of frame.

(2.) Resurrection. Conversion simply is so called: 'Quickened us when we were dead,' Ephesians 2:5. And the power that effects it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead; which was a mighty power, that could remove the stone from the grave, when Christ lay with all the sins of the world upon him, Ephesians 1:19-20; so the greater the stone is upon them, the greater is God's power to remove it. For if it be the power of God simply to regenerate nature, and put a new law into the heart, and to qualify the will with a new bias to comply with this law, and to make them that could not endure any thoughts of grace not to endure any thoughts of sin, it is a greater power sure to raise a man from that death wherein he has lain thirty or forty years rotten and putrefied in the grave; for if conversion in its own nature be creation and resurrection, this must needs be creation and resurrection with an emphasis. The more malignant any distemper is, and the more fixed in the vital parts, and complicated with other diseases, the greater is the power in curing it; for a disease is more easily checked at the first invasion, than when it has infected the whole mass of blood, and become chronic; so it is more to pull up a sin, or many sins, that have spread their roots deep, and stood against the shock of many blustering winds of threatenings, than that which is but a twig, and newly planted.

(3.) Traction or drawing. Drawing implies a strength. If conversion be a traction, then more strength is required to draw one that is bound to a post by great cables, than one that is only tied by a few pack-threads; one that has millions of weights upon him, than one that hath but a few pounds.

(4.) It is the only miracle Christ hath left standing in the world, and declares him more to be Christ than anything. When John sent to know what he was, Luke 7:20, he returns no other account but a list of his miracles; and that which brings up the rear as the greatest is, the poor euaggelizontai, are evangelised. It is not to be taken actively, of the preaching of the gospel; but passively, they were wrought upon by the gospel, and became an evangelised people, transformed into the mould of it; for else it would bear no analogy to the other miracles. The deaf heard, and the dead were raised; they had not only exhortations to hear, but the effects were wrought upon them. So these words import not only the preaching of the gospel to them, but the powerful operation of the gospel in them. It is not so great a work to raise many thousands killed in a battle, as to evangelise one dead soul. It is a miracle of power to transform a ravenous wolf into a gentle lamb, a furious lion into a meek dove, a nasty sink into a clear fountain, a stinking weed into a fragrant rose, a toad or viper into a man endued with rational faculties and moral endowments; and so to transform a filthy swine into a king and priest unto God. In conquests of this nature does divine power appear glorious. It is some strength to polish a rough stone taken out of the quarry, and hew it into the statue of a great prince; but more to make this statue a living man. Worse stones than these doth God make children, not only to Abraham, but to himself, even the Gentiles, who were accounted stones by the Jews; and are called stones in Scripture for the worshipping idols.

What power must that be which can stop the tide of the sea, and make it suddenly recoil back! What vast power must that be that can change a black cloud into a glorious sun? This and more doth God do in conversion. He doth not only take smooth pieces of the softest matter, but the ruggedest timber full of knots, to plane and shew both his strength and art upon.

4. Wisdom. The work of grace being a new creation, is not only an act of God's power, but of his wisdom, as the natural creation was. As he did in contriving the platform of grace, and bringing Christ upon the stage, so also in particular distributions of it, he acts according to counsel, and that

infinite too, even the counsel of his own will, Ephesians 1:11. The apostle having discoursed before, Ephesians 1:9, of God's making known the mystery of his will in and through Christ, and, Ephesians 1:11, of the dispensation of this grace, in bestowing an inheritance, 'being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will,' he doth not say God predestinated us according to the counsel of his own will, but refers it to all he had said before, viz., of his making known the mystery of Christ, and their obtaining an inheritance. And Ephesians 1:8, speaking before of the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, according to the riches of God's grace, wherein, saith he, 'he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom.' As there was abundance of grace set apart to be dealt out, so there was abundance of wisdom, even all God's wisdom, employed in the distribution of it. The restoring of God's image requires at least as much wisdom as the first creating of it. And the application of redemption, and bestowing of pardoning and converting grace, is as much an act of God's prudence as the contrivance of it was of his counsel.

Grace, or a gracious man in respect of his grace, is called God's workmanship, Ephesians 2:10, —*poiema*, not *ergon* work of his art as well as strength, and operation of his mind as well as his hand; his poem, not barely a work of omnipotency, but an intellectual spark. A new creature is a curious piece of divine art, fashioned by God's wisdom to set forth the praise of the framer, as a poem is, by a man's reason and fancy, to publish the wit and parts of the composer. It is a great skill of an artificer, with a mixture of a few sands and ashes, by his breath to blow up such a clear and diaphanous body as glass, and frame several vessels of it for several uses. It is not barely his breath that does it, for other men have breath as well as he; but it is breath managed by art. And is it not a marvellous skill in God to make a miry soul so pure and chrySTALLINE on a sudden, to endue an irrational creature with a divine nature, and by a powerful word to frame so beautiful a model as a new creature is! The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is a man's ability in effecting it. The more desperate the wound is, the more honourable is the surgeon's ability in the cure. Christ's healing a soul that is come to the last gasp, and given over by all for lost, shews more of art than setting right an ordinary sinner. Our apostle takes notice of the wisdom of God in his own conversion here; for when he relates the history of it, he breaks out into an Hallelujah, and sends up a volley of praises to God for the grace he hath obtained. And in that doxology he puts an emphasis on the wisdom of God: 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever,' Ephesians 2:17. Only wise God; only, which he does not add to any other attribute he there gives him. This wisdom appears, (1.) In the subjects he chooseth. We will go no further than the example in our text. Our apostle seems to be a man full of heat and zeal. And the church had already felt the smart of his activity, insomuch that they were afraid to come at him after his change, or to admit him into their company, imagining that his fury was not changed, but disguised, and he of an open persecutor turned trepanner, Acts 9:26. None can express better what a lion he was than he doth himself: 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities,' Acts 26:10-11. He seems also to have been a man of high and ambitious spirit. This persecuting probably was acted so vigorously by him to ingratiate himself with the chief priests, and as a means to step into preferment, for which he was endued with parts and learning, and would not want zeal and industry to attain it. He seems to be of a

proud spirit, by the temptation which he had: 'Lest I should be exalted above measure,' 2 Corinthians 12:7. He speaks it twice in that verse, intimating that his natural disposition led him to be lifted up with any excellency he had; and usually God doth direct his battery to beat down that which is the sin of our constitution.

He was a man of a very honest mind, and was forward in following every point his conscience directed him to; for what he did against Christ, he did according to the dictates of his conscience, as then informed: 'I verily thought with myself,' Acts 26:9, i.e. in my conscience, 'that I ought,' not that I might, but that it was his duty. His error commanded with the same power that truth does where it reigns. Now it discovers the wisdom of God to lay hold of this man thus tempered, who had honesty to obey the dictates of a rightly-informed conscience, as well as those of an erroneous one; zeal to execute them, and height of spirit to preserve his activity from being blunted by any opposition, and parts and prudence for the management of all these. I say, to turn these affections and excellencies to run in a heavenly channel, and to guide this natural passion and heat for the service and advancement of that interest which before he endeavoured to destroy, and for the propagation of that gospel which before he persecuted, is an effect of a wonderful wisdom; as it is a rider's skill to order the mettle of a headstrong horse for his own use to carry him on big journey.

(2.) This wisdom appears in the time. As man's wisdom consists as well in timing his actions as contriving the models of them, so doth God's. He lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his wonderful providences upon the stage. He hath his set time to deliver his church from her enemies, Psalms 102:13; and he hath his set time also to deliver every particular soul, that he intends to make a member of his church from the devil. He waits the fittest season to manifest his grace: 'Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you,' Isaiah 30:18. Why? 'For the Lord is a God of judgment,' i.e. a God of wisdom; therefore will time things to the best advantage, both of his glory and the sinner's good. His timing of his grace was excellent in the conversion of Paul.

[a.] In respect of himself. There could not be a fitter time to glorify his grace than when Paul was almost got to the length of his chain; almost to the sin against the Holy Ghost. For if he had had but a little more light, and done that out of malice which he did out of ignorance, he had been lost for ever. He obtained mercy. Why? Because he did it ignorantly, Isaiah 30:13. As I said before, he followed the dictates of his conscience; for if he had had knowledge suitable to his fury, it had been the unpardonable sin. Christ suffered him to run to the brink of hell before he laid hold upon him.

[b.] In respect of others. He is converted at such a time when he went as full of madness as a toad of poison, to spit it out against the poor Christians at Damascus, armed with all the power and credential letters the high priest could give him, who without question promised himself much from his industry; and when he was almost at his journey's end, ready to execute his commission, And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus,' Acts 9:3, about half a mile from the city, as Gulielmus Tyrius thinks, at this very time Christ grapples with him, and overcomes all his mad principles, secures Paul from hell, and his disciples from their fears of him. Behold the nature of this lion changed, just as he was going to fasten upon his prey. Christ might have converted Paul sooner, either when Paul had heard of some of his miracles, for perhaps Paul was resident at Jerusalem at

the time of Christ's preaching in Judea, for he was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts 13:3, who was one of the council, Acts 5:24. He might have converted him when he heard Stephen make that elegant and convincing oration in his own defence, Acts 7:1-60; or when he saw Stephen's constancy, patience, and charity in his suffering, which might somewhat have startled a moral man as Paul was, and made him look about him. But Christ omits the doing of it at all these opportunities, and suffers him to kick against the pricks of miracles, admonitions, and arguments of Stephen and others, yet hath his eye upon him all along in a special manner, Acts 7:58. He is there named when none else are: 'And the witnesses laid their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul.' And 'Saul was consenting to his death,' Acts 8:1. Was there none else that had a hand in it? The Spirit of God takes special notice of Saul here. He runs in God's mind, yet God would not stop his fury: 'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church,' Acts 8:3. Did nobody else shew as much zeal and cruelty as Saul? Sure he must have some instrument with him. Yet we hear none named but Saul: and 'Saul yet breathing,' &c., Acts 9:1; yet, as much as to say, he shall not do so long. I shall have a fit time to meet with him presently. And was it not a fit time, when the devil hoped to rout the Christians by him, when the high priests assured themselves success from this man's passionate zeal, when the church travailed with throws of fear of him? But Christ sent the devil sneaking away for the loss of such an active instrument, frustrates all the expectations of the high priests, and calms all the stormy fears of his disciples; for Christ sets him first a preaching at Damascus in the very synagogues which were to assist him in his cruel design: 'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, and increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ,' Acts 9:20-22. Did not Christ shew himself to be a God of judgment here? He sat watching in heaven for this season to turn Paul with the greatest advantage. His wisdom answers many ends at once, and killed so many birds with one stone. He struck dead at one blow Paul's sin, his people's fears, the high priests' expectations, and the devil's hopes. He triumphs over his enemies, secures his friends, saves Paul's soul, and promotes his interest by him he disappoints the devil of his expectations, and hell of her longing.

(3.) This wisdom appears to keep up the credit of Christ's death. The great excellence of Christ's sacrifice, wherein it transcends the sacrifices under the law, is because it perfectly makes an atonement for all sins; it first satisfies God, and then calms the conscience, which they could not do, Hebrews 10:1-2, for there was a conscience of sin after their sacrifices. The tenor of the covenant of grace which God makes with his people, is upon the account of this sacrifice, 'This is the covenant I will make with them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,' Hebrews 10:16-17. 'Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,' Hebrews 10:18. This covenant extends not only to little sins, for there is no limitation; great sins are included; therefore Christ satisfied for great sins, or else, if ever they be pardoned, there must be another sacrifice, either of himself or some other, which the apostle, upon the account of this covenant, asserts there need not be, because this sacrifice was complete, otherwise there would be a remembrance of sin; as the covenant implied the completeness of Christ's satisfaction, so the continual fulfilling or application of the tenor of the covenant implies the perpetual favour and force of this sacrifice.

And, indeed, when God delivered him up, he intended it for the greatest sins: 'He was delivered for our offences,' Romans 4:25, which signifies not stumbling, but falling. Not a light, but a great

transgression. Now, if Christ's death be not satisfactory for great debts, Christ must be too weak to perform what God intended by him, and so infinite wisdom was frustrate of its intention, which cannot, nor ought not, to be imagined. Now, therefore, God takes the greatest sinners, to shew,

[a.] First, the value of this sacrifice. If God should only entertain men of a lighter guilt, Christ's death would be suspected to be too low a ransom for monstrous enormities; and that his treasure was sufficient for the satisfaction of smaller debts, but a penury of merit to discharge talents; which had not been a design suitable to the grandeur of Christ, or the infiniteness of that mercy God proclaims in his word. But now the conversion of giant-like sinners does credit to the atonement which Christ made, and is a great renewed approbation of the infinite value of it, and its equivalency to God's demands; for it bears some analogy to the resurrection of Christ, which was God's general acquittance to Christ, to evidence the sufficiency of his payment. And the justification of every sinner is a branch of that acquittance given to Christ at his resurrection; 'Raised again for our justification,' Romans 4:25; and a particular acquittance to Christ for that particular soul he had the charge of from his Father.

All that power that works in the first creation of grace, or the progress of regeneration, bears some proportion to the acquitting and approving power manifested in Christ's resurrection: 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,' Ephesians 1:19-20. In Ephesians 1:17-18, the apostle prays for the carrying on the work of grace and regeneration begun in them, that they might more clearly understand that power which wrought in Christ, viz., that approving power of what Christ has done, which he exerts daily in conversion, and in the effects of it. For by raising any soul from a death in sin, God doth evidence the particular value of Christ's blood for that soul, as he did, in raising Christ, evidence the general fulness of that satisfaction. And this he will do even to the end of the world; raised us up together with Christ,' 'kindness through Christ Jesus,' Ephesians 2:6-7. All his grace in all ages, even to the end of the world, shall run through this channel, to put credit and honour upon Christ. Now the greater the sin is that is pardoned, and the greater the sinner is that is converted, the more it shews the sufficiency of the price Christ paid.

[b.] The virtue of this sacrifice. He is a 'priest for ever,' Hebrews 7:17 and therefore the virtue as well as the value of his sacrifice remains for ever he hath 'obtained an eternal redemption,' Hebrews 9:12, i.e. a redemption of an eternal efficacy. As long as men receive any venom from the fiery serpent, they may be healed by the antitype of the brazen one, though it were so many years since he was lifted up. And those who were stung all over, as well as those who are bitten but in one part, may, by a believing looking upon him, draw virtue from him as diffusive as their sin.

Now the new conversion of men of extraordinary guilt proclaims to the world, that the fountain of his blood is inexhaustible; that the virtue of it is not spent and drained, though so much hath been drawn out of it for these five thousand years and upwards, for the cleansing of sins past before his coming, and sins since his death. This evidences that his priesthood now is of as much efficacy as his sufferings on earth were valuable; and that his merit is as much in virtue above our iniquity, as his person is in excellency above our nothingness. He can wash the tawny American, as well as the moral heathen; and make the black Ethiopian as white as the most virtuous philosopher. God fastens upon the worst of men sometimes, to adorn the cross of Christ; and maketh them eminent

testimonies of the power of Christ's death: 'He made his grave with the wicked,' Isaiah 53:9. God shall make man, wallowing in sinful pleasures, tied to the blandishments and profits of the world, to come to Christ, and comply with him, to be standing testimonies in all ages of the virtue of his sufferings.

(4.) For the fruitfulness of this grace in the converts themselves. The most rugged souls prove most eminent in grace upon their conversion, as the most orient diamonds in India, which are naturally more rough, are most bright and sparkling when cut and smoothed. Men usually sprout up in stature after shattering agues.

The Fruits of Converting Grace in the Salvation of Sinners

The Fruits of Converting Grace in the Salvation of Sinners by Stephen Charnock Third in a series of three sermons entitled "The Chief Sinners Objects of the Choicest Mercy."

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." —1 Timothy 1:15

1. A sense of the sovereignty of grace in conversion, will first increase thankfulness. Converts only are fit to shew forth the praises of Christ: 'That you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' 1 Peter 2:9; aretaV, the virtues of Christ. The end why God sets men at liberty from prisons and dungeons, and from fear of death and condemnation for great sins, is, that they may be fitted, and gain a commodious standing, to publish to the world the virtues of him; i.e. the mercy, meekness, patience, bounty, truth, and other royal perfections of Christ.

Men at their first conversion receive the grace of God with astonishment; for it is qaumaston fwV, 1 Peter 2:9, most amazing at the first appearance of it; as the northern nations, that want the sun for some months in the winter, are ready to deify it when it appears in their horizon; for the thickness of the foregoing darkness makes the lustre of the sun more admirable. But suppose a man had been all his lifetime like a mole under ground, and had never seen so much as the light of a candle, and had a view of that weak light at a distance, how would he admire it, when he compares it with his former darkness? But if he should be brought further, to behold the moon with its train of stars, his amazement would increase with the light. But let this person behold the sun, be touched with its warm beams, and enjoy the pleasure of seeing those rarities which the sun discovers, he will bless himself, adore it, and embrace that person that led him to enjoy such a benefit. And the blackness of that darkness he sat in before, will endear the present splendour to him, swell up such a spring-tide of astonishment, as that there shall be no more spirit in him. God lets men sit long in the shadow of death, and run to the utmost of sin, before he stops them, that their danger may enhance their deliverance.

We admire more when we are pulled out of danger, than when we are prevented from running into it. A malefactor will be more thankful for a pardon, when it comes just as he is going to be turned off. If there be degrees of harmony in heaven, without question the convert thief on the cross warbles out louder notes than others, because he had little time to do it on earth; and his engagements are the greater, because Christ took him in his arms when he was hanging over hell. When Paul writ this epistle to Timothy, he was about fifty-five years of age; and yet those twenty years run out since his conversion had not stilled his admiration nor damped his thankfulness for converting grace. Take a prospect of it in this chapter: 'And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,' 1 Timothy 1:12-13. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord. He seems to set his sin and God's mercy in opposition. I was injurious, but I obtained mercy. I was a blasphemer, but I obtained, &c. I—mercy. Who would imagine but that of all persons he should

have passed by me, while he had taken this or that polished pharisee, this or that doctor of morality? But that he should overlook them, and set his eye upon me, so injurious, such a blasphemer, such a persecutor! A great sinner, when he reflects upon his sin, wonders that butt was not made at him. You find that no apostle gives such epithets to the grace of God as our apostle does; none so seraphical in his admiring expressions. Riches of grace, exceeding riches of grace, abundant grace, riches of glory, unsearchable riches of grace. He never speaks of grace without an emphasis. Single grace and single mercy would not serve his turn.

2. Love and affection. Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ had cast seven devils, was most early in her affection to bestow her provision of spices upon the dead body of her Saviour. The fire of grace cannot be stifled, but will break out in glory to God. This is such a grace that man in innocency could not have exercised in such a height; because now the sinner is not only in his own sight unworthy of pardon, but worthy of the greatest hatred and punishment. You scarce find yourselves possessed with greater affection to any, than those who have been instruments to free you from your sinful fetters. How often do you bless them, could pull out your eyes for them, and think all ways too little to manifest the sense of your obligations to them! And does the instrument carry away all? Surely God has the greatest sacrifice of affection when the convert considers that his powerful grace was the principal agent to draw him out of this spiritual mire. As when a present is sent to you, you shew a courtesy to the servant; but the chief part of your kindness is devoted to the master that sent him. What flames of love, raptures of joy, transports of affection and boilings of courage for God in a young convert! The soul is most courageous for God at first conversion; because it is then most stored with comforts, and is so struck into amazement at the marvellous light which darts upon him, that he is ambitious to be a martyr for God presently: 'After that you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions,' Hebrews 10:32. Grace is not only attended with afflictions, but bestows a courage upon a convert to endure them. The soul then thinks it is able to undergo anything for God, who hath bestowed so much grace upon it. A Christian hath the greatest love to Christ at the first turning to him; for since the horror of all his sins, and the natural ugliness and deformity of that which he has served so long, comes with a full sense upon him, and since the admirable excellency of Christ shines upon him, which is a sight he was never acquainted with before, the greatness of the danger he was in, and the incomparable love which beams upon him from his believing a Saviour, fills his affection with full sails. Thus do men who have been tossed in a dangerous tempest, afflicted with the darkness of the night, as well as their danger, rejoice and welcome the rising sun in the morning, which dispels their tumultuous fears, as well as those gloomy shadows.

God permits a man's sin to abound, that his love after pardon may abound too: 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much,' Luke 7:47; *oti*, therefore, it is the consequent, not the cause of remission. And this interpretation agrees best with the following words, 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' It is more consonant to reason, that where there are greater mercies, there should be greater returns of affection. Remission of sins is the greatest evidence of God's love, and therefore should be the greatest incentive of ours. And indeed Christ never appears to a penitent with a more comely air in his countenance than upon the removal of great judgments or the pardon of great sins: 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel,' Isaiah 4:2. In that day! In what day? After great judgments, Isaiah 4:1; and in the foregoing

chapter, in purging away great filth, Isaiah 4:4. The branch Jesus appears most lovely when he comes laden with the fruit of grace, with the sanctifying juice of his blood, as a ripe bunch of grapes looks pleasantly in a thirsty traveller's eye. This convert Paul was more affectionate to Christ than any of the other apostles; for when he could not look upon him, he is enamoured on his very name, and delights to express it no less than five hundred times, as I remember some have numbered it in his epistles; more, proportionably, than Peter, James, and John did in what they writ.

3. Service and obedience. Such will endeavour to redeem the time, because their former days have been so evil, and recover those advantages of service which they lost by a course of sin. They will labour that the largeness of their sin way be answered by an extension of their zeal. Such will be almost as much ashamed to do but common service as they are now ashamed of their scarlet sins. As men, the further they go backward, the greater leap they usually take forward. Grace instructs a man in holiness out of gratitude. The grace of God 'teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' Titus 2:12. Grace teaches us. The greater the grace, the more pressing is the instruction: as it increases gratitude, it increases service. That Peter, who had been so criminal in denying his Master, and adding perjury to his perfidiousness, was as active in service as he had been in apostasy. He laid the first stone of the Christian church among the Jews after Christ's ascension; he preached the first sermon to them, and charged them home with his Master's murder, Acts 2:1-47. He was also the spokesman in all business described in the first six chapters of the Acts. He laid also the first foundation of the Gentile church; for God in a vision revealed to him the calling of the Gentiles, passing by all the other apostles, to whom it was not known but by Peter's relation: 'Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe,' Acts 15:7. A good while ago, which good while ago refers to the time, Matthew 16:18, wherein Christ said, 'Upon this rock will I build my church.' He was chosen by God to this purpose, i.e. separated from the rest of the apostles, and adorned with this prerogative. Great sins did not make Christ change his resolution.

Never an apostle that had been bred up under Christ's wing that was so active an instrument as this Paul, who had been so bitter an enemy. He 'laboured more abundantly than all,' 1 Corinthians 15:10. In matters of obedience he would not ask counsel of flesh and blood: 'Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,' Galatians 1:16. He was quick in his obedience. He had endeavoured to weaken Christ's kingdom; he now endeavours to list men in his service. He had breathed out threatenings; he now breathes out affections. He could even spend and be spent for the interests of his Saviour. And usually we find converted souls most active in the exercise of that grace which is most contrary to that which was their darling sin.

4. Humility and self-emptiness. Christ 'chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty,' 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, that nothing should be attributed to their worth and dignity, but to his grace and mercy. Were the gospel discovered only to the wise, they would look upon it rather as a discovery made by the optics of their own reason. And if God did bestow his grace only upon men of unspotted conversations, they would rather think it a debt God stood obliged to pay them than a free act of grace. As God reveals knowledge to the simplest, Matthew 11:25, so he does manifest grace to

the sinfulness; and as Christ blessed his Father for that, so no doubt but he doth return the same thanks for this. Such great sinners receive all from God, and so have more reason to hang down their heads; others may sometimes cast many a loving look to their own righteousness, and, like Nebuchadnezzar, glory, This is the Babylon which I have built; and boast of their good acts, and freedom from the common pollutions of the world. But such who were fallen over head and ears in the mire, and were dirty all over, have no cause to boast; for God did not find them, but made them worthy. They brought nothing but dirt and rags, that were not worthy the washing only God would pick glory out of their worthlessness to his own grace. Such are sensible that God was not their debtor, but they his, and that there was nothing in them to oblige God to bestow the least mite of mercy on them.

Therefore we find not one of these mountainous sinners in Scripture ascribing their conversion to their own strength or merit. As no apostle was so God-magnifying, so none was so self-vilifying as Paul. Though he was the greatest apostle, yet he accounts himself less than the least of all saints: Ephesians 3:8, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.' Surely he might have put himself equal to the least; it would have been great humility to do so; but he is more humble than so; even less than the least; less even than him who was only fit to be a door-keeper in the house of God. And he esteems himself not only unworthy of the office of an apostle, but of the very name; 'not worthy,' 1 Corinthians 15:9, not only to be, but 'to be called an apostle.' And why? Because of his former sin; 'because I persecuted the church of God.' The remembrance of his great sin before his conversion kept him humble. And in 1 Corinthians 5:10, when he had a little boasted of his abundant labour, he checks himself presently; 'Yet not I, but the grace of God.' He attributes his very being as a Christian, as well as his actions, to the same cause, viz. the grace of God; By grace I am what I am.' So, Galatians 1:16, how doth Paul attribute to grace 'pleased by his grace to reveal;' revelation, not acquisition.

5. Bewailing of sin, and self-abhorrence for it. When men are first translated out of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and begin to know Christ truly, the ways of their former ignorance are very bitter and uncouth things unto them. The very disproportion and unsuitableness of them to the sweetness of that grace which now they taste from the hand of Jesus is an offence to them, and hateful to their thoughts. Therefore the more sin a man hath run into before his return to God, the more he sees the vileness of his own nature, and consequently the more he abhors himself: 'Then shall you remember your iniquities, and shall loathe yourselves,' Ezekiel 36:31. When? Ezekiel 36:29, when God had accomplished the promise of saving them from all their uncleanness. They shall remember with abhorrence what was their own sin, and shall enjoy what is purely God's. The time of pardoning great sins is the time of great self-loathing; such prove the holiest persons, because they have had more experience of the evil of sin.

Such are ashamed of their sins, not only at the instant of their conversion, but afterwards, every time they remember them: 'What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?' Romans 6:21. Now, at that time when Paul writ to them, the very shame of their sins stuck upon them, though they had been converted before. The more they grew in the experimental knowledge of God and his goodness, the more a holy shame for sins committed in their natural condition was stirred in their consciences, and they could not but blush every time they considered how dirty they had been towards God. Now the greater the shame, the greater the hatred of the occasion of that shame, and the more exact the watchfulness against it; as a man that hath fallen

into some slough by some stumble or oversight, when he travels that way again, he cannot but remember what a pickle he was in, and will be watchful lest he meet with the same mishap. Whose heart was more melted by mercy than Mary Magdalene's? All the pharisees that Christ converted never rained such showers of tears. How she used all her instruments of sin to be servants to her repentance! Her eyes, which had inflamed so many hearts, been snares to catch men, she makes the conduits to convey her penitential tears to her Saviour's feet. Her hair, which had engrossed so much time in the curiosity of dresses, she uses as a towel to wipe them. The ointment she had used for the tricking up herself, to gratify the senses of her lovers, she pours out to embalm her Lord. Her lusts should have no more of her choicest things, but her Saviour should have all. She would keep them not so much for her own use, as his.

6. Faith and dependence. (1.) At present, in the instant of the first act of faith. Great sins make us appear in the court of justification, *sub forma impij*, with a naked faith, when we have nothing to merit it, but much to deserve the contrary: 'Believes on him that justifies the ungodly,' Romans 4:5. The more ungodly, the more elevated is that faith which lays hold on God. Thomas's unbelief was very black, for he had refused to give credit to all the testimonies of the disciples concerning Christ's resurrection; but when he was sensible of his crime, and so kindly dealt with by his Saviour, he puts forth a stronger act of faith than any of the rest: 'My Lord, and my God,' John 20:28. His faith was not satisfied with a single *my*; he gives him more honourable titles, and his heart grasps him more closely and affectionately than any of the rest. The man that was born blind, and cured by Christ, owns him, acts some faith before the pharisees: 'If this man were not of God, he could do nothing,' John 9:33; and he said, 'I believe,' John 9:39, and he worshipped him. But when Christ comes to talk with him particularly, John 9:36-38, he believes. When Christ comes to talk with a great sinner, one that hath had diseases naturally incurable, he exerts a stronger faith than others. It is then, Lord, I believe, and it is a faith accompanied with an adoration.

(2.) In following occasions. Pardoning such great sins, and converting such great sinners, is the best credential letter Christ brings with him from heaven. Men naturally would scarce believe for his own sake, but for his work's sake they would, because they are more led by sense than faith. This Christ knew, when he bids his disciples believe him for the work's sake that he was sent by God, and that they are unanimous in this work of grace, as well as in other works: 'Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work's sake,' John 14:11. Therefore those that have been partakers of this converting grace, if they stagger and doubt afterwards, they give the greatest affront to Christ. For their unbelief is not only against his person, but against his work too. That he has far more reason to say to such than he did to his disciples, 'How long shall I be with you,' &c., Matthew 17:17: what should I stay to do such great works as these, and cannot be believed? Such great sins pardoned and escaped, make men take faster hold of Christ afterward. As a man that hath lately got out of a deep lake, wherein there were many serpents, crocodiles, and venomous creatures, which he has escaped, and has no sanctuary to protect him from their fury but by hanging upon a small bough; when he looks down upon them, and sees them gaping for him, and ready to devour him, if he were within their reach, he would summon up all his strength to hold fast that branch. In such a day will the branch of the Lord also be beautiful and glorious.

Certainly when the soul went out to Christ in so desperate a condition, with the load of guilt and discouragement upon it, and resolved to venture upon him, come what would of it, and found

success; as it was the boldest adventure, which the Scripture frequently calls boldness, so it is the greatest encouragement to come to Christ upon any occasion whatsoever hereafter. This first act of faith is of so noble and generous a quality, that it is set as the copy of all following acts of faith. Beginning of your confidence,' Hebrews 3:14, archn, the primary act of faith, which was the principal act of confidence. Though there was a greater strength in the habit of faith after conversion, yet the first exercise of it upon Christ is the boldest and most vigorous, because it was for the saving the life when the soul saw no recovery any way but in Christ, and the most noble when it was under the discouragements of such mountains of guilt.

It also gave Christ the greatest honour, for it was an act of greater confidence in him than any succeeding act could be. Now if thou didst put forth such a high and daring act of faith when all thy sins hung about thee, and thou hadst neither a Hur nor Aaron to hold up thy hands, with much more confidence mayest thou come now, since thou hast tried how successful thy first faith has been. So when temptations assault thee, and the devil with all his black legions besets thee round, thou art not in a worse condition than at the first, when all thy sins did not only besiege thee, but possess thee. Well may such a soul say, If I acted faith when the devil had all the strongholds in me at the worst, now it is but a start out, and exercise the power of that first faith.

(3.) In case of corruptions likewise and unmastered sins. I have great corruptions, but the power which raised Christ raised me, when I had greater stones upon me wherewith I had even wearied God himself; and now when I have fewer, though they are too great still, shall I despair of that power which wrought greater miracles for me, and threw away my gravestones when I was not able to stir myself?

(4.) So in the case of desertion. I will venture to go to God, let him frown and strike; for I am sure I did once go to him when I was his absolute sworn enemy, and he had not a greater hater of him in the world than I was, and he did receive me. I am not worse now than I was at that time, for I love him, and would do all that I can to please him; therefore I will press into his presence now, and try the success of my first faith. Such men's faith is usually a more generous faith, because they have less of the principle of reason to support it. It is like that of Abraham's, a believing in hope against hope, Romans 4:18. A faith, against mighty and mountainous opposition of high and mighty sins, that might scare a man from such acts of faith, and establish a diffidence of the promises of God in the soul. God receives no more glory from the faith of any than from those of the greatest sinners through their repentance.

7. Fear and reverence. Such will never despise the riches of that goodness and patience which has been given out to him, Romans 2:4, because it has led him to repentance; and he will not provoke that goodness, which is conducting him to the enjoyment of all the fruits of repentance, to throw him off: 'There is forgiveness with thee,' saith David, 'that thou mayest be feared,' or worshipped, Psalms 130:4. If God should set a mark of death upon every iniquity, who could stand in his presence, or have any hope to be heard? but because he is a God of forgiveness, therefore he is revered; therefore the more forgiveness he doth expend upon any, the more he is revered. After a man's return to God, his fear of God is increased upon a more ingenuous account, for he fears God and his goodness, Hosea 3:5, whereas before he feared God and his power, God and his justice. And the Jews, of whom he there speaks, shall fear or reverence that goodness the more, because the sin he has pardoned was so great, as the crucifying the Son of

God which, according to their fathers' wish, lay upon the heads of all their posterity.

God's goodness once tasted will make ingenuity afraid to offend him. Self-interest also will make them afraid to provoke that mercy that formally relieved them, to cashier them out of his favour. When the man was in the deep dungeon, where the fetters of sin entered into his very soul, and bound up under the terrors of the law, when mercy stepped in and delivered him, and poured oil into his wounds, he will be afraid to provoke that mercy to leave him in the same condition in which it found him, and from whence it drew him. He will be loath to be numbered amongst the crew of transgressors and bank of galley-slaves from whence he has been redeemed. He that hath tasted the bitterness of sin will fear to commit it; and he that hath felt the sweetness of mercy will fear to offend it.

I might add, for others' sakes, to engage them to come to Christ. Every conversion of a great sinner is a new copy of God's love; it is a repeated proclamation of the transcendency of his grace: 'Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,' Ephesians 2:5-7. God hath quickened those rank sinners that were as black as darkness itself, and hath raised them to a condition of light. Why? Not only for themselves, but that in the ages to come he might shew forth transcendent riches of his grace, Ephesians 2:7. It was a picture God drew of his own heart, and exposed to the view of the world, that they might know, by the gracious reception and high advancement of those sinners, how liberal he is, and would always be, in the distribution of his grace, that penitent sinners of as great stains might be encouraged in all ages to rely upon him. This was his design in Paul's conversion, in this chapter: 'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,' ver 16; a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him. He sets up this apostle as a white flag to invite rebels to treat with him, and return to their loyalty. As every great judgment upon a grand sinner is as the hanging a man in chains, to deter others from the like practice, so every conversion is not only an act of God's mercy to the convert, but an invitation to the spectators. This is the argument David useth to persuade God to pour into him the joy of his salvation: 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways,' &c., Psalms 51:12-13. I will make all Jerusalem ring of it, and sinners, seeing the multitude and long train of thy tender mercies, shall fly into thy arms to be partakers of the same grace. For every great conversion is as a sea-mark to guide others into a safe harbour. And indeed, this he tells God when he had received pardon, that this would be the issue of God's pardon to David, Psalms 52:5-6, which is thought to be penned upon the same occasion. Psalms 51:1-19, when, Psalms 51:5, he had been forgiven, he tells God what the effect upon others would be: 'For this shall every one that is godly,' &c., Psalms 51:6, judging it the fittest time to come when God is dealing out his mercy. Such effects we find when Christ was upon the earth; when Christ called Matthew, Mark 2:14, the next news we bear, Mark 2:15, is, that many publicans and sinners sat down with him, and followed him. Many of the same tribe were encouraged by this kindness to one of their fellows to attend upon him. As when a physician comes into an house where many are sick, and cures one that is desperate, it is an encouragement to the rest to rely upon his skill. When Christ gives an experiment of his art on any sinner near thee, it is a call from heaven as well to excite thy emulation to come to him, as thy astonishment at it; as the conversion of the Gentiles was to provoke the Jews to jealousy: 'Salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke,' &c., Romans 11:11. Indeed, such conversions may more rationally move men, than any miracle can objectively

move the sense, to see such a remarkable change wrought in the soul of a devil, in a diabolical nature. If men believe not in Christ after the sight of such standing miracles, it is an aggravation of their impenitence, as much as any miracle Christ wrought upon the earth was of the Jews' obstinacy, and does put as black a dye upon it: 'Ye, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him,' Matthew 21:32. Not any great sinner that thou hast seen take heaven by violence, but is writ down by God as a mark against all thy unbelief. And how many hundred marks may Christ bring against thee, upon the account of others converted round about thee. The mark set upon Paul may refer to this, Acts 9:1; because in the foregoing chapter Luke had related the successful progress of the gospel in Samaria and Jerusalem, which was an evidence of the power of this new doctrine; yet Paul proceeded in his persecuting fury, against such clear testimonies. Had you been in the times of Christ, and seen those miracles he wrought among the Jews, you would all think you should never have been so stupid as they were, but would presently have believed in him upon a sight of those wonders. Let me tell you, the success of Christ's grace upon the souls of men, whereof you have seen many evidences, is a greater miracle, by Christ's own confession, than usually he wrought; for he tells the apostles they should work greater works, John 14:12, which he means of their success in converting work. And so thy impenitency has as great aggravations as the Jewish perversity. Let every such conversion of a great sinner be a ground of hope to thee, and a spur in thy side.

Further, such conversions evidence that God's commands are practicable, that his yoke is not burdensome. Men naturally think God a hard master, that his commands are impossible to be performed; but when they see men that had lain soaking in sin many years to have a fresh and fair verdure by grace, to run with delight in the ways of God's commands; when they see men that had the greatest prejudices against the ways of God thoroughly turned, they may think with themselves, Why may not I observe those commands? Is it more impossible for me than such a one? It is natural to men not to believe unless they see miracles: 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' John 4:48. Therefore all the standing miracles God hath left in the world are the extraordinary conversions of men, and the worst of men, that men may thereby be convinced of the power of the gospel and the strength of his grace, by seeing the admirable effects of it upon others; for many times conversion begins in admiration. The use of this subject is,

1. First, Instruction. The doctrine manifests the power of the gospel. Nothing shews more the heavenly authority of the Christian religion, and the divine efficacy of the word, than the sudden conversions of notorious sinners; that a man should enter into a church a tiger, and return a lamb. It is this little stone which is instrumental to lay lusts, more giant-like than Goliath, grovelling in the dust. That Paul, mad with rage against the Christians, should, after an arrest in his journey, embrace a religion he hated; a pharisee changed into a preacher; a persecutor commence a martyr; that one of eminent parts, in favour with the Sanhedrin, should fly from a preferment expected, and patronise a doctrine contemned in the world, and attended with poverty, misery, cruel scourgings, and death; whenever you see such effects, take them as credentials from heaven, to maintain the credit of the word, and to assert the authority of that conclusion Paul lays down, that it is 'the power of God unto salvation,' Romans 1:16. God gains a reputation to the gospel and the power of Christianity, that can in a moment change persons from beasts to men, from serpents to saints.

2. The groundlessness of despair. Despair not of others, when thou dost reflect upon thy own crimes, and considerest that God never dealt with a baser heart in the world than thine was. Was not Paul as unlike to prove a convert as any relation of thine that wallows in his blood? Who would have thought that Onesimus should run from his master and be caught in Christ's arms? Neither despair of thyself. Shall any soul in anguish, and covered with penitential blushes, think itself cast out of the riches of God's affectionate grace? Shall any man so much blaspheme the merciful heart of Jesus Christ, as to fly to a knife, a halter, or a deep well for succour? Though thou wert in hell, David tells thee God is with thee, even there in his essential presence, yea, though thou wert hell itself; for where the devil dwells, that is hell; yet if the soul throbs, sighs, groans under it, his infinite grace will break down the door, and come in upon thee. And we know that neither she that had seven devils, nor he that had a legion, were strong enough to keep out Christ.

Secondly, The comfort of this subject. If God has made thee of a great sinner the object of his mercy, thou mayest be assured of continuance of his love. He pardoned thee when thou wert an enemy, will he leave thee now thou art his friend? He loved thee when thou hadst razed out in a great measure his image and picture which he had set in thy soul, will he hate thee now since he has restored that image, and drawn it with fresh colours? He justified thee when thou wert ungodly, and will he cast thee off since he hath been at such pains about thee, and written in thee a counterpart of his own divine nature in the work of grace? Were his compassions first moved when thou hadst no grace, and will they not sound louder since thou hast grace? Would the father embrace his son when his garments smelled of drag and swine, and will he cast him off after he hath put upon him a royal robe? Will Pharaoh's daughter pity Moses when he was in the ark, and will she scorn him when he is dressed?

2. Supplies of his grace. Thou hadst a rich present of his grace sent thee when thou couldst not pray for it, and will he not much more give thee whatsoever is needful when thou callest upon him? He was found of thee when thou didst not seek him, and will he hide himself from thee when thou art inquiring after him? A wise builder does not begin a work when he is not able to finish it. God considered, before he began with thee, what charge thou wouldst stand him in, both of merit in Christ and grace in thee; so that the grace he hath given thee is not only a mercy to thee, but an obligation on himself, since his credit is engaged to complete it. Thou hast more unanswerable arguments to plead before him than thou hadst, viz. his Son, his truth, his promise, his grace, his name, wherein thou hadst not the least interest. To what purpose has God called thee, and marked thee, if he doth not intend to supply thee with as much grace as shall bring thee to glory? To what purpose should a creditor forgive part of a debt, and lay the debtor in prison for the other part? Has God given thee Christ, and will he detain anything else? Supplies of wants, grants of anything thou desirest, are but as a few grains of pepper that the grocer puts in as an overplus to many pounds.

3. Strength against corruptions. Can molehills stand against him who has levelled mountains? Can a few clouds withstand the melting force of the sun, which has dissolved those black mists that overspread the face of the heavens? No more can the remainders of thy corruption bear head against his power, which has thrown down the great hills of the sins of thy natural condition, and has dissolved the thick fogs of thy unregeneracy. Thou canst neither doubt his strength nor his love; amor gaudet in maximis (love rejoices in the greatest things); he has done the greatest, and will he withdraw his hand from doing the least? When Moses slew the Egyptian, it is said that he

'supposed his brethren would have understood, that God intended by his hand to deliver them,' Acts 7:25. Moses was a type of Christ: has Christ overthrown a whole army of Egyptians, that did not only pursue thee, but keep thee in slavery? Has he overturned them all in the Red Sea? And wilt thou not take notice thereby, that he intends to be thy deliverer from the scattered troops of them?

Thirdly, Exhortation. 1. To those that God hath dealt so with.

1. Glorify God for his grace. Admiration is all the glory you can give to God for his grace, seeing you can add nothing to his essential glory. Christ will come at the last day to be admired; I pray send your admirations beforehand to attend him at his coming. Who made thee thus to differ from another? Was it not God? Let him, then, have the glory. If he made thee to differ from others in the enjoyment of his mercy, do thou also differ from others in the sounding of his praise. If thou hast an angel's state, it is fit thou shouldest have an angel's note. If David, when he considered the glorious heavens God had made for man, cried out so affectionately, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him!' Psalms 8:4; surely when thou considerest that work of grace which God hath wrought in thee, thou mayest with astonishment cry out, Oh, what is man that thou art mindful of him! What is such a vile creature, that thou shouldest take him into thy bosom? For there is not a grace in thee but is more glorious than the sun with all its regiments of stars, and is more like to God than the great fountain of light with all its amazing splendour. It is something of that heaven which is more glorious than all the rest of the heavens, and is above the reach of the natural eye. Oh what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, to make him, who is a hell by sin, to become heaven by grace! Pardon of but one act of sin, makes us for ever debtors to God; because one sin renders us obnoxious to eternal torments, and every sin includes a hatred of God. What, then, is it to remit such vast sums, if to pardon one be a miracle? To pardon many committed against a suffering Christ that hath invited us, and repeats his invitations, after they have been rejected, is a miracle of the greatest magnitude, something above a miracle!

How should you think Jacob's expression in temporal mercies, a few sheep, too mean, 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies,' Genesis 32:10. Oh I am less, less, less than the least of all this mercy. A great sinner, when converted, should sing a note somewhat above David's 'What shall I render?' Psalms 116:12; and should say, I can render nothing, nothing; but I will render praise, blessing, amazement, astonishment; that is all I can render, and I cannot render enough of that. Had you chosen God first, it had been some ingenuity in God to answer that affection; but God chose you first, and that when there was nothing lovely in you, when he saw you the most deformed creatures in the world. There was no likeness between God and thee. *Similis simile amat* (like loves like), is a rule in nature; but in this case, *Deus optimus diligit hominem pessimum* (the highest God esteems the worst of men).

It is that which does amaze the disciples; they could not tell the reason why Christ should manifest himself to them, John 14:22. Perhaps thou art only snatched out of a family; the wrath of God may be fallen upon the rest, and thou only escaped. Has he not lopped down many cedars in morality, and chosen thee, a thorn, a shrub, to deck heaven with? Are not many damned that were not guilty of thy sins?

How wonderful is it that such a black firebrand should be made a statue fit for glory! He might have written thy name as easily in his black book as in his white. Is it not admirable mercy for a God

provoked, to take pains with stiff-necked sinners, and to beat down mountains of high imaginations, to rear up a temple to himself? If mercy had knocked once or twice, and no more, thou hadst dropped into hell; but mercy would not leave knocking. Perhaps thy sins were so great, that if thou hadst gone but a little farther, thou hadst been irrecoverable; but God put a stop to the proud waves, saying, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.'

2. Often call to mind thy former sin. It hath been the custom of the saints of God formerly. When Matthew reckons up the twelve apostles, Matthew 10:3, whereof he was one, he remembers his former state, 'Matthew the publican;' but none of the other evangelists call him so in that enumeration.

(1.) It makes us more humble. Thoughts of pride cannot lodge in us, when the remembrance of our rags, bolts, and fetters is frequently renewed. What was there in thy former life, but misery, to move God to shew mercy to thee? Though Paul had a greater manifestation than any we read of, nay, than Christ himself had (for we do not read that Christ was rapt up into the third heavens), yet how frequently does he remember his sin of persecuting, to keep humiliation in exercise, and stop the growth of pride.

(2.) It will make us thankful. Sense of misery heightens our obligation to mercy. Men at sea are most thankful for deliverance when they consider the danger of the foregoing storm. A long night makes a clear morning more welcome.

(3.) It will make thee more active in the exercise of that grace which is contrary to thy former sin. Christ asked Peter thrice whether he loved him, John 21:1-25, to put him tacitly in mind of his late sin, and to have a threefold exercise of his love, proportionable to his threefold denial.

(4.) It will be a preservative against falling into the same sin again. Perhaps Christ might press that threefold demand of Peter's love, to renew his repentance for his apostasy, as the best antidote against the falling into the same sin; and therefore Peter was grieved when he asked him the third time; not so much, it may be, for the suspicion his Master had of his fidelity, as for the just cause of jealousy his fall had given him. And at this third question, calling to mind his denial, he renewed his grief for his late unworthy carriage. Look back, then, upon thy former sin, but let it be with anger and shame, to strengthen thy detestation, to strangle thy former delight in it, and to magnify the mercy of God, who has delivered thee from it. When the Corinthians were proud of their spiritual gifts, the apostle beats down their swelling plumes, by giving them a review of their accursed state 'Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols,' 1 Corinthians 12:2. When a convert frequently considers what he was once in his unregenerate state, he would not for all the honours, profits, and pleasures of the world, return to that state again, so great a delight he takes in the work of the new creature. The second branch of exhortation is to those that are in a doubting condition. The main objection such make is the greatness of sin. Oh, there was never such a great sinner in the world as I am! If you rake all hell over, you will not find such another. Sure God will never pardon me; my sins are too great to be forgiven. Such language as this does sometimes drop from men, which they are partly urged to by the devil, to disparage that royal prince Jesus, that came to destroy his works, and to keep up an enmity between God and man, in making the creature have jealous thoughts of the Creator; and partly from a man's own conscience, which, acting by those legal principles written in the heart by nature, which are directive, and upon non-observance condemning, but discover nothing of pardoning grace. This was the first act of in

natural conscience in Adam after he had sinned; he had the least thoughts of forgiveness, for he studied nothing but how he might fly from the presence of God. Such speeches as these discredit thy Creator if they be persisted in; argue thee to be one of Cain's posterity, who indeed told God to his very face that his 'sin was greater than could be forgiven,' Genesis 4:18. I will a little argue with such.

(1.) But art thou indeed the greatest sinner? I can hardly believe it. Didst thou ever sin after the rate that Paul did? Or wert thou ever possessed with such a fury? Sure there have been some as great sinners as thou art, be thou as bad as bad can be. If thou were to look over the names of all those now in heaven, and ask them all what sins they were guilty of before God shewed mercy to them, I cannot think but thou wouldest find many that would mate thee, yea, and exceed thee too; and thou canst not charge thyself with any black circumstances, but thou wouldest meet with some or other that would cry out presently, Oh, I was in the like condition, and rather worse! What dost thou think of Christ's murderers, who resisted the eloquence of his sermons and the power of his miracles? And when his death had darkened the sun, shook the earth, clave the rocks, rent the veil of the temple in twain, not one heart among that murderous crew had any saving relentings that we read of. And yet were not some of these converted by Peter's sermon, and the pardon of them left upon record by the Spirit of God? Have not some of God's greatest favourites been the greatest sinners? Did not Adam draw upon him the guilt of all his posterity, and may in some sense be charged with the sins of all those that came out of his loins, even all mankind? Yet to this very person was the first promise of the gospel made, and that before he pronounced any sentence against him for his sin, Genesis 3:15.

(2.) Suppose thou art the greatest, is thy staying from Christ the way to make all thy sins less? Art thou so rich as to pay this great debt out of thy own revenue? Or hast thou any hopes of another surety? Did any man or angel tell thee they could satisfy for thee? Can complaints of a great load, without endeavouring its removal, ease that back that bears it?

(3.) Are thy sins the greatest? Is not the staying from Christ a making them greater? Does not God command thee to come to Christ? And is not thy delay a greater act of disobedience than the complaint of thy sinfulness can be of humility? Hast thou not load enough already? but wilt thou add unbelief, which is as black as all thy other sins put together? Is not a refusal of his mercy provocative? Thou art mad if thou thinkest thy sin can decrease by trampling upon Christ's heart, and spurning at his compassion. Thou hast sinned against justice, against wisdom, against common providence. Is not this enough, but wilt thou rob him of an opportunity to shew the riches of his grace, by refusing the blood of his Son, which his wisdom contrived and his love offers? Who is it persuades thee thus to keep off from Christ? Does God? Shew me where is his hand for it? Shew me thy authority in God's warrant. But since thou canst not, I am sure it is thy own corrupt heart and the devil in league together. And mayest thou not say of him far better than Ahab did of Micaiah, 'Thou didst never prophesy good to me'? No, he never did, nor ever will. What, wilt thou more black thyself by following the devil's counsel than obeying God's command? If thy sin be great, let it multiply thy tears, but by no means stop thy progress to Christ.

(4.) Were thy sins less than they are, thou mightest not so easily believe in Christ, as now thou mayest. If thou wilt not believe while thy sins are great, and thy heart naughty, I dare assure thee, if thy heart were not naughty, and thy sins little, thou wouldest not believe; for thou wouldest be apt to

believe in thy own heart, and trust in thy own righteousness, rather than believe in Christ. Great sins and a bad heart felt and bewailed, is rather an advantage; as hunger is an incentive to a man to seek for meat. If men had clean hearts, it is like they would dispose of them otherwise, and rather think Christ should come to them. Men's poverty should rather make them more importunate than more modest. To say, I will not come to Christ, because I have great sins, is as if one should say, I will never have anything to do with happiness if offered, because I have great misery; I will go to no chirurgeon, because my wound is so great; I will eat no bread, because I am so exceeding hungry and like to starve. This is ill logic; and so it is with thee to argue, Because I am unclean, therefore I will not go to the fountain to be washed; or to think to be sanctified before believing. Now since thou hast, as thou confessest, no righteousness to trust in, methinks thou shouldst be the more easily persuaded to cast thyself upon Christ, since there is no other way but that.

If, therefore, thou art afraid of drowning under these mighty floods which roll upon thee, methinks thou shouldst do as men ready to perish in the waters, catch hold of that which is next them, though it be the dearest friend they have; and there is none nearer to thee than Christ, nor any such a friend; catch hold therefore of him.

(5.) The greatness of thy sin is a ground for a plea. Turn thy sins into arguments, as David doth, 'for it is great,' Psalms 25:11; some translate it, 'though it be great;' and the Hebrew word hhhbbbee will bear both. The psalmist useth two arguments, God's name, and the greatness of his sin. And both are as good arguments as they were then. Thou mayest go to God with this language in thy mouth; Lord, my impurity is great, there is more need therefore of thy washing me; my wound is deep, the greater is the necessity of some plaster for a cure. What charitable man in the world would not hasten a medicine, rather than refuse to grant it! What earthly physician would object, The disease is great, therefore there is no necessity of a cure; therefore there is no room left for my skill! And shall God be less charitable than man? Dogs may lay claim to crumbs that fall from the master's table. Thou mayest use also the argument of God's name. Sinners may plead for grace upon the account of God's glory, viz., the glory God will have by it. His wisdom is eminent in serving his own ends by his greatest enemy. His power in conquering sin, his grace in pardoning. Show him his own name, Exodus 34:1-35, and see if he will deny any letter of it.

If thy disease were not so great, Christ's glory would not be so illustrious. Pardon of such sins enhanceth the mercy and skill of thy Saviour. The multitude of devils which were in Mary Magdalene, are recorded to shew the power of that Saviour that expelled them, and wrought so remarkable a change. Are thy sins the greatest? God that loves to advance his free grace in the highest manner, will be glad of the opportunity to have so great a sinner follow the chariot of it, and to manifest thereby its uncontrollable power. Use David's argument, Psalms 37:12, when, ver. 8, he prayed that God would deliver him from his transgressions; ver. 12, he useth this argument, that he was a stranger. I know no reason but it may be thine, for if thy sins be great, thou art more alienated from God than the ordinary rank of men. Lord, thou dost command us to shew kindness to strangers, to love our enemies; and wilt thou not use the same mercy to a stranger that thou commandest others to use, and shew the same love to so great an enemy as I am? The greater my enmity, the more glorious will be thy love.

(1.) Plead therefore the infiniteness of God's mercy. It is strange if thy debts should be so great, that the exchequer of the King of kings cannot discharge them. Why should the apostle say God was 'rich in merey,' Ephesians 4:1-32, and call it 'great love,' if it were spent only upon little sins, and if any debts could exhaust it; for surely an infinite God cannot be finitely rich. If God be rich in mercy, he is surely infinitely rich; thou canst not think that any that have got to heaven before thee have drained his treasures, for then it had been finite, not infinite. They were not unsearchable riches, if the sins of all the world could find the bottom of them.

God looks upon his grace as the greatest part of his estate. He calls it his riches, which title he gives not any other attribute. Now riches are not to lie by and rust, but to be laid out and traded with; and the more they are traded with, the more wealth they bring in. God hath not delight to keep these riches by him, and to hoard them up for no use; for *omne bonum est sui diffusivum* (good diffuses itself through all things); therefore the more goodness anything hath, the more diffusive it is of itself. God loves to distribute his wealth upon his own terms, and to venture out riches of grace, that he may have returns of riches of glory; so that if you come to God, you have all his estate at your service. Till thou canst be as sinful as God is merciful, as evil as God is good, do not think thy iniquities can check an almighty goodness. Mercy bears the greatest sway in God's name, Exodus 34:6, Exodus 34:7. There is but one letter of his power, two of his justice, and nine or ten expressions of his mercy. His power attends his mercy as well as his justice, so that on mercy's side against justice there is five to one, which is great odds.

Plead then with God, Lord, it is said in thy word, 'Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it,' Proverbs 3:28. Should a man not refuse to give to his neighbour when he has it by him? And shall the merciful God deny me that mercy which I beg of him upon my knees, when he has it all in store by him? Must I forgive my brother, if he offends seventy-seven times, a double perfect number? And must I be more charitable to man than infinite mercy will be to me? Shall thy justice only speak, and thy mercy be silent, and plead nothing on my behalf? Hast thou not said that thou art he 'that blots out transgressions for thy own sake?' Isaiah 43:25; that thou dost 'blot out iniquities like a thick cloud?' Isaiah 44:22. Is there any cloud so thick as to master the melting power of the sun; and shall ever a cloud of sin be so thick as to master the power of thy mercy? Has not thy mercy as much strength and eloquence to plead for me, as thy justice has to declaim against me? Is thy justice better armed with reason than thy kindness with compassions? Have thy compassions no eloquence? Oh, who can resist their pleasing rhetoric!

(2.) Christ's, and God's intent in his coming, was to discharge great sins. He was called Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins. And do you think some of his people's sins were not as great as any men's sins in the world? To save only from little iniquities, had not been a work suitable to the glorious name of Jesus. Neither can we conceive how Christ should enter into such strict bonds to his Father to be a surety only for some smaller debts. If this had not been his intent, he would have put some limitation in that prayer he taught his disciples, and not have commanded them to pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' but forgive us our little sins, or sins of such a size. He never asked what sins, and how many sins, men were guilty of when they came to him; but upon faith, saith he, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Plead therefore with Christ, and say, Thou didst come to do thy Father's will, which was, that none should be cast off that come unto thee; and thou hast said the same; it is not sufficient for thee to say it merely, and not to do it. Wilt

thou draw me with the cords of a man (for I could not thus come to thee unless thou didst draw me), and shall I be beaten back with a frown?

(3.) Christ's death was a satisfaction for the greatest sins, both ex parte facientis, Christ, and ex parte acceptantis, God; for God could not accept any satisfaction but what was infinite. 'One sacrifice for sins for ever,' &c., Hebrews 10:12; not one sin, but sins; not little sins, but sins without exception. Yea, and it is all sin, 1 John 1:7; and all includes great as well as little. Satan once came to a sick man, and shews him a great catalogue of his sins, concluding from thence his eternal damnation. The sick man, strengthening himself by the word of God, bid the devil write over the catalogue in great letters those words, 1 John 1:7, whereupon the devil presently leaves. Are thy sins be greater than Christ's merit? Or thine offences than his sacrifice? It is strange if the malignity of thy sin should be as infinite as the virtue of his death. He hath satisfied for all the saints that ever came to heaven; and put thy sins in the balance with theirs, and surely they cannot weigh so much. He was 'a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;' and are thy sins as great as the sins of the whole world? If part of his merits be enough to save ten thousand damned souls in hell, if they had applied it, is it not enough to satisfy God for thy sins, which are far less? Was not Christ charged with as great sins as thine can be when he was upon the cross? Or are thy single sins bigger or than all those the prophet means when he saith, 'And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?' Isaiah 53:6.

Well, then, plead thy Saviour's death, since it was for his honour to satisfy for sins of so deep a dye. It is said in thy word, it is a joy to a righteous man to perform judgment, and shall it not be much more a joy to the righteous God? Behold, here I offer thee the atonement thy Son and my Saviour has made, and if it be not enough, I am content to perish; but if it be, I desire thee to do me justice with that joy that a righteous man would do it with, and discharge my transgressions. And if thou dost object, that I have flung away this satisfaction, and would not have it, I answer, my Saviour's satisfaction was for such sins as those, otherwise none would be saved; for was there any but refused the proffer of it at first, made demurs before they entertained it? Let thy objections be what they will, Christ shall be my advocate to answer for me.

(4.) Christ is able to take away great sins. Did he ever let any one that came to him with a great infirmity, go back without a cure, and dishonour himself so much, as that it should be said, it was a distemper too great for the power of Jesus to remedy? And why should there be any sin that he cannot pardon? It is as easy for him to heal the one as the other; for he did with as much ease and delight say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee;' as say, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.' Hast thou seven devils? Suppose a legion, i.e. six thousand six hundred and sixty-six; he did dispossess a body of as many: can he not as easily dispossess a soul? If thou hadst ten thousand legions, I dare say Christ would not lose an opportunity of such a conquest; for it would please him more to do great works than little, and to shew how far his power could reach. Were it not for such objects, we could not know whether he could 'save to the utmost,' or no, Hebrews 7:25. What has he this ability for? To lie idle? No, surely to be exercised about the most difficult tasks. Suppose the scroll of thy sins were as long as to reach from earth to the highest heavens, would this reach to the utmost of Christ's ability? If thou hadst sinned as far as any man in the world can sin, yet still thou art not got without the verge of Christ's saying power. That word utmost I dare set against all thy objections. If you had the sins of all the damned in hell upon you, you could not put either his free grace or vast power to a nonplus. His blood is of that virtue, that were it poured out upon a devil, it would make

him presently commence a glorious angel. What is either a great or a light disease to omnipotence, when with the same word he can cure the greatest as well as the least distempers? But may the soul say, I do not question his power, but his will. Therefore,

(5.) Christ's nature leads him to shew mercy to the greatest sinners. Some question whether Christ will pardon them, for they look upon him as a hard master, that will not easily forgive. But Christ gives another character of himself, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 11:29, when he exhorts men to come to him; he tells them they must not judge him to be of a ragged and implacable nature, but as meek as they are sinful. Meekness is seen in pardoning of injuries, not keeping them in memory, to beget and cherish revenge. Now, the greater the provocation, the more transcendent is that meekness to pass it by. Did he ever upbraid any with their offences, and hit them in the teeth with their former extravagances? Luke 7:44. Christ makes a narrative of Mary's acts of kindness to him, but not a syllable of her foul transgressions. Are thy sins so great? Surely Christ, who delights in his compassions, will not lose such an opportunity of evidencing both his power and his pity upon such a subject; for if there cannot be so great a sinner as thou art, he is never like to have such a season for it, if he miss of thee.

(6.) Christ was exalted by God upon this very account: 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,' Hebrews 7:25. How comes Christ to be so able to save to the uttermost? It is 'because he ever lives to make intercession for them.' For whom? For those that come to God by him. What has Christ his life in heaven for, but to intercede? And would his Father's love to him, and the greatness of his interest in God be discovered by granting some small requests, the pardon of a few and little sins? Christ is consecrated priest by the oath of God, Hebrews 7:28; would God put himself to his oath for a light business, a thing of little moment? 'What is the end of this oath? Compare it with: 'For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,' Hebrews 6:16-18; and all is that you 'might have a strong consolation.' What strong comfort could there be, if only little debts were remitted? What is the end of an oath? Hebrews 6:16, to take away strife. Men do not strive with God, or doubt of his mercy to forgive little sins, for they think that will be done of course. But the great contest men have with God is about his willingness to remit great debts, scarlet sins: upon this account the strife is between God and doubting sinners; therefore, to bring this contest to a period, God hath put himself to his oath, and sworn that Christ should be a priest for ever, to take away all strife between him and believing sinners. For whom is this strong consolation founded upon God's oath? For those that 'fly for refuge,' Hebrews 6:18. Now the cities of refuge were not appointed for ordinary crimes, but for blood, to secure the malefactor from the avenger. Shall I add further, God is best pleased with Christ when he makes intercession for the greatest transgressors. Suppose thou hadst been one of Christ's murderers, and hadst given thy vote against him; perhaps thou wouldst have thought this a more crimson sin than any thou art guilty of. You know Christ prayed for their pardon while he was upon the cross; and, God gives this as one reason why he would exalt him: 'He shall divide him, &c., Isaiah 53:12. Why? 'Because he poured out his soul to death.' What should he bear sin for, if God had no mind to pardon it? And because 'he was numbered among the transgressors,' which the evangelist understands of his being crucified with thieves, Mark 15:28. And therefore his making intercession for transgressors, must be understood of his prayer upon the cross. And if God did exalt him for this, would God be

pleased with him, or would Christ answer the end of his exaltation, if he did cease to make intercession for sinners of the like stamp? Go and tell God, that he sent Christ to bless you, Acts 3:26, in converting you; and desire Christ to do his office.

(7.) Christ is entrusted by God to give out his grace to great sinners. Christ is God's Lord-almoner, for the dispensing redemption, and the riches of his grace. To whom? Not to the righteous, they have no need of it but to sinners, and those that have the greatest necessity. He would be an ill steward, who, when entrusted by his lord to bestow his alms upon the poor, should overlook the most miserable, indigent, and necessitous persons, when they crave it of him, and relieve those that had not so great and crying wants. Christ is a priest for intents of the same nature as the legal typical priests were. They were to have compassion, Hebrews 5:2, *metriopaqein*, to measure out their compassion, to order the sacrifice according to the nature of the sin of the person that presented it. So is Christ, by virtue of his office, to measure out his grace according to the greatness of a man's necessity, as manna was to be gathered according to every one's wants.

Fourthly, The caution which this subject suggests. 1. Think not thy sins are pardoned because they are not so great as those God has pardoned in others. This is *ad suam consolationem aliena numerare vitia*. (Comforting yourself by counting this sins of others.) Consider God cast off Saul for less sins than David committed. Evil angels were cast off for one sin. A few small sands may sink a ship as well as a great rock. Thy sins may be pardoned though as great as others, but then you must have equal qualifications with them. They had great sins, so hast thou; but have you as great a hatred and loathing of sin as they had?

2. Let not this doctrine encourage any person to go on in sin. If thou dost now suck such poison out of this doctrine, and boast of that name God proclaims, Exodus 34:6-7, take this caution along with thee, and remember it is one part of his name 'by no means to clear the guilty.' He never intended those mercies for sinners as sinners, but as penitent. Penitents, as such, are not guilty, because repentance is a moral revocation of a sin, and always supposes faith in Christ. There is 'forgiveness with God,' Psalms 130:4; but it is 'that he may be feared,' not despised. God never intended mercy as a sanctuary to protect sin.

(1.) It is disingenuous to do so. Great love requires great duties, not great sins. Freeness of grace should make us increase holiness in a more cheerful manner. What high ingratitude is it to be inclined to sin because God is inclined to pardon, to have a frozen heart to him because he hath a melting heart to thee! What, to rebel against him because he hath a compassionate heart, and to be wicked because God is good! to turn grace itself into wantonness! Is this to fear his goodness? No, it is to trample on it; to make that which should excite thee to holiness a bawd to thy lust, and God himself a pander to the devil. If thou dost thus slight the design of this mercy, which thou canst never prize at too high a rate, it is certain thou never hadst the least taste of it. If thou hadst, thou couldst not sin so freely; for when grace enters, it makes the soul dead to sin, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:2. The apostle answers such a consequence with a God forbid!

(2.) It is foolish so to do. Would any man be so simple as to set his house on fire because he has a great river running by his door, from whence he may have water to quench it; or wound himself, because there is an excellent plaster which has cured several?

(3.) It is dangerous to do so. If thou lovest the present time, thou art in danger to lose eternity. There are many in hell never sinned at such a presumptuous rate. He is merciful to the penitent, but he will not be unfaithful to his threatenings. If thou art willing to receive grace, thou mayest have it, but upon God's conditions. He will not pin it upon thy sleeve whether thou wilt or no. This is to make that which is the savour of life to become the savour of death unto thee. See what an answer Paul gives to such an imagination, Let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just,' Romans 3:8. He takes a handful of hell-fire and flings it in their faces. Let but Deuteronomy 29:18-19, stare thee in the face, and promise thyself peace in this course if thou canst 'Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood and it cometh to pass, when he beareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.' As his goodness is great, which thou dost despise; so the wrath will be the hotter thou dost treasure up. Though great sins are occasions of great grace, yet sin doth not necessitate grace. Who can tell whether ever God would have shewn mercy to Paul, had he done that against knowledge which he did ignorantly? Repentance must first be; see the order, 'Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,' Acts 3:19. First, repentance and conversion, then justification. This grace is only given to penitent sinners. You know not whether you shall repent, but you may know, that if you do not repent you shall be damned. As there is infinite grace to pardon you, if you repent; so there is infinite justice to punish you, if you do not repent. The gospel binds us to our good behaviour as much as the law.

Well, then, to conclude this exhortation. Embolden thyself to draw near to Christ. It is the apostle's use he makes of all his foregoing doctrine, Hebrews 10:19, &c. God requires not a heart without sin, but a heart without guile. Who needs more boldness than great sinners? And the apostle sets no limits to it. Let us, who have been as great sinners as any, resolve to do as they in Jeremiah did, Jeremiah 3:22. They had both a command and a promise. 'Return,' there is the command. 'I will heal,' &c., there is the promise. Presently they reply, 'We will come to thee,' &c. They seem to snatch the promise out of God's mouth. How will these quick and ready converts rise up in judgment against thy slowness and dulness! Shall they do this upon one promise; and when thou hast all the promises in the book of God repeated to thee, shall God hear no other answer but this, We will not return, or We dare not come, We dare not believe thee? Did God give but one promise to Adam, and did he embrace it, and live upon it all his life (for we read of no more he had than that of the seed of the woman breaking the serpent's head); and wilt thou not return, when thou hast so many promises, filling every page in the Scripture?

Hast thou not a world of precedents? Did not God take up all his saints from the dunghill with all their rags, and clothe them? Were any of them born princes and sons of heaven? Alas, every man at first sued for a Saviour in the right of a sinner; and all pleaded in the court of heaven in forma pauperis (as a bankrupt). Were they not debtors, and could they do that which might make God cross out one of those sums they owed him? Oh, think not then thou canst dam up that torrent of love that has flowed so freely to the world for so many ages. Though thy disease be grievous, Yet it is not irrecoverable, provided thou goest to the physician. He can with a breath burn up thy corruption, as soon as dissolve the creation. Christ can turn the muddiest water into such wine that can please the heart both of God and man. As you have been vessels of sin, if you will be vessels of repentance God will make you brimful of mercy. Plead not, therefore, thy own unworthiness. Man's unworthiness never yet hindered the flowing of God's kindness. It is too weak a bank to stop

the current of God's favour. The greater thy unworthiness, the greater advantage has free grace to manifest its uncontrollable excellency. That man dishonours God that sets his sin above God's goodness, or his unworthiness above God's condescension. You cannot do God a greater pleasure than to come to him to be made clean. When he reckons up thy sin, it is not with an upbraiding, but a compassionate sigh, Jeremiah 13:27. He longs for the time of thy returning, and minds thee of thy sin, that thou mayest the sooner seek a remedy, and wonders thou wilt continue in such a filthy condition so long.

The Necessity of Christ's Death

The Necessity of Christ's Death

Stephen Charnock Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?—Luke 24:26.

1. Let us here see the evil of sin. Nothing more fit to shew the baseness of sin, and the greatness of the misery by it, than the satisfaction due for it; as the greatness of a distemper is seen by the force of the medicine, and the value of the commodity by the greatness of the price it cost. The sufferings of Christ express the evil of sin, far above the severest judgments upon any creature, both in regard of the greatness of the person, and the bitterness of the suffering. The dying groans of Christ shew the horrible nature of sin in the eye of God; as he was greater than the world, so his sufferings declare sin to be the greatest evil in the world. How evil is that sin that must make God bleed to cure it! To see the Son of God haled to death for sin, is the greatest piece of justice that ever God executed. The earth trembled under the weight of God's wrath when he punished Christ, and the heavens were dark as though they were shut to him, and he cries and groans, and no relief appears; nothing but sin was the procuring meritorious cause of this. The Son of God was slain by the sin of the lapsed creature; had there been any other way to expiate so great an evil, had it stood with the honour of God, who is inclined to pardon, to remit sin without a compensation by death, we cannot think he would have consented that his Son should undergo so great a suffering. Not all the powers in heaven and earth could bring us into favour again, without the death of some great sacrifice to preserve the honour of God's veracity and justice; not the gracious interposition of Christ, without becoming mortal, and drinking in the vials of wrath, could allay divine justice; not his intercessions, without enduring the strokes due to us, could remove the misery of the fallen creature. All the holiness of Christ's life, his innocence and good works, did not redeem us without death. It was by this he made an atonement for our sins, satisfied the revenging justice of his Father, and recovered us from a spiritual and inevitable death. How great were our crimes, that could not be wiped off by the works of a pure creature, or the holiness of Christ's life, but required the effusion of the blood of the Son of God for the discharge of them! Christ in his dying was dealt with by God as a sinner, as one standing in our stead, otherwise he could not have been subject to death. For he had no sin of his own, and "death is the wages of sin," Romans 6:23. It had not consisted with the goodness and righteousness of God as Creator, to afflict any creature without a cause, nor with his infinite love to his Son to bruise him for nothing. Some moral evil must therefore be the cause; for no physical evil is inflicted without some moral evil preceding. Death, being a punishment, supposeth a fault. Christ, having no crime of his own, must then be a sufferer for ours: "Our sins were laid upon him," Isaiah 53:6, or transferred upon him. We see then how hateful sin is to God, and therefore it should be abominable to us. We should view sin in the sufferings of the Redeemer, and then think it amiable if we can. Shall we then nourish sin in our hearts? This is to make much of the nails that pierced his hands, and the thorns that pricked his head, and make his dying groans the matter of our pleasure. It is to pull down a Christ that hath suffered, to suffer again; a Christ that is raised, and ascended, sitting at the right hand of God,

again to the earth; to lift him upon another cross, and overwhelm him in a second grave. Our hearts should break at the consideration of the necessity of his death. We should open the heart of our sins by repentance, as the heart of Christ was opened by the spear. This does an Ought not Christ to die? teach us.

2. Let us not set up our rest in anything in ourselves, not in anything below a dying Christ; not in repentance or reformation. Repentance is a condition of pardon, not a satisfaction of justice; it sometimes moves the divine goodness to turn away judgment, but it is no compensation to divine justice. There is not that good in repentance as there is wrong in the sin repented of, and satisfaction must have something of equality, both to the injury and the person injured; the satisfaction that is enough for a private person wronged is not enough for a justly offended prince; for the greatness of the wrong mounts by the dignity of the person. None can be greater than God, and therefore no offense can be so full of evil as offenses against God; and shall a few tears be sufficient in any one's thoughts to wipe them off? The wrong done to God by sin is of a higher degree than to be compensated by all the good works of creatures, though of the highest elevation. Is the repentance of any soul so perfect as to be able to answer the punishment the justice of God requires in the law? And what if the grace of God help us in our repentance? It cannot be concluded from thence that our pardon is formally procured by repentance, but that we are disposed by it to receive and value a pardon. It is not congruous to the wisdom and righteousness of God to bestow pardons upon obstinate rebels. Repentance is nowhere said to expiate sin; a "broken heart is called a sacrifice," Psalms 51:17, but not a propitiatory one. David's sin was expiated before he penned that psalm, 2 Samuel 12:13. Though a man could weep as many tears as there are drops of water contained in the ocean, send up as many volleys of prayers as there have been groans issuing from any creature since the foundation of the world; though he could bleed as many drops from his heart as have been poured out from the veins of sacrificed beasts, both in Judea and all other parts of the world; though he were able, and did actually bestow in charity all the metals in the mines of Peru: yet could not this absolve him from the least guilt, nor cleanse him from the least filth, nor procure the pardon of the least crime by any intrinsic value in the acts themselves; the very acts, as well as the persons, might fall under the censure of consuming justice. The death of Christ only procures us life. The blood of Christ only doth quench that just fire sin had kindled in the breast of God against us. To aim at any other way for the appeasing of God, than the death of Christ, is to make the cross of Christ of no effect. This we are to learn from an Ought not Christ to die?

3. Therefore, let us be sensible of the necessity of an interest in the Redeemer's death. Let us not think to drink the waters of salvation out of our own cisterns, but out of Christ's wounds. Not to draw life out of our own dead duties, but Christ's dying groans. We have guilt, can we expiate it ourselves? We are under justice. Can we appease it by any thing we can do? There is an enmity between God and us. Can we offer him anything worthy to gain his friendship? Our natures are corrupted, can we heal them? Our services are polluted, can we cleanse them? There is as great a necessity for us to apply the death of Christ for all those, as there was for him to undergo it. The leper was not cleansed and cured by the shedding the blood of the sacrifice for him, but the sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice upon him, Leviticus 14:7. As the death of Christ was foretold as the meritorious cause, so the sprinkling of his blood was foretold as the formal cause of our happiness, Isaiah 52:15. By his own blood he entered into heaven and glory, and by nothing but

his blood can we have the boldness to expect it, or the confidence to attain it, Hebrews 10:19. The whole doctrine of the gospel is Christ crucified, 1 Corinthians 1:23, and the whole confidence of a Christian should be Christ crucified. God would not have mercy exercised with a neglect of justice by man, though to a miserable client: Leviticus 19:15, "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor in judgment." Shall God, who is infinitely just, neglect the rule himself? No man is an object of mercy till he presents a satisfaction to justice. As there is a perfection in God, which we call mercy, which exacts faith and repentance of his creature before he will bestow a pardon, so there is another perfection of vindictive justice that requires a satisfaction. If the creature thinks its own misery a motive to the displaying the perfection of mercy, it must consider that the honour of God requires also the content of his justice. The fallen angels, therefore, have no mercy granted to them, because none ever satisfied the justice of God for them. Let us not, therefore, coin new ways of procuring pardon, and false modes of appeasing the justice of God. What can we find besides this, able to contend against everlasting burnings? What refuge can there be besides this to shelter us from the fierceness of divine wrath? Can our tears and prayers be more prevalent than the cries and tears of Christ, who could not, by all the strength of them, divert death from himself, without our eternal loss? No way but faith in his blood. God in the gospel sends us to Christ, and Christ by the gospel brings us to God.

4. Let us value this Redeemer, and redemption by his death. Since God was resolved to see his Son plunged into an estate of disgraceful emptiness, clothed with the form of a servant, and exposed to the sufferings of a painful cross, rather than leave sin unpunished, we should never think of it without thankful returns, both to the judge and the sacrifice. What was he afflicted for, but to procure our peace? bruised for, but to heal our wounds? brought before an earthly judge to be condemned, but that we might be brought before a heavenly judge to be absolved? fell under the pains of death, but to knock off from us the shackles of hell? and became accursed in death, but that we might be blessed with eternal life? Without this our misery had been irreparable, our distance from God perpetual. What commerce could we have had with God, while we were separated from him by crimes on our part, and justice on his? The wall must be broken down, death must be suffered, that justice might be silenced, and the goodness of God be again communicative to us. This was the wonder of divine love, to be pleased with the sufferings of his only Son, that he might be pleased with us upon the account of those sufferings. Our redemption in such a way, as by the death and blood of Christ, was not a bare grace. It had been so, had it been only redemption; but being a redemption by the blood of God, it deserves from the apostle no less a title than riches of grace, Ephesians 1:7. And it deserves and expects no less from us than such high acknowledgments. This we may learn from Ought not Christ to die?

Taken From: Christ our Passover

[Additional Emphasis Added to the Blood]

The Necessity of Regeneration

The Necessity of Regeneration by Stephen Charnock

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—John 3:3, John 3:5

These words contain the foundation of all practical religion here, and happiness hereafter. It is the principal doctrine Christ, as a prophet, came to teach, and as a king to work in the heart. It is an answer to Nicodemus his compliment, who came to him with some veneration of him. His description is in John 3:1 : 'There was a man of the pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' 1. By his profession or sect, a pharisee. 2. His name, Nicodemus. 3. His quality, a ruler of the Jews; "Argoon", a prince, one of the great Sanhedrin, who had the supreme power in all affairs which concerned religion, even under the Roman government. His coming to Christ is described, John 3:2 'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' Where we have (1.) the time of his coming, by night; (2.) the manner of coming and speaking to him with reverence, Rabbi, a title of honour. He comes to Christ; therefore is to be commended. He comes by night; has some failure in his respect to Christ, afraid publicly to own him. Nicodemus was one of the member which believed Christ for his miracles, John 2:28. He comes hereupon to discourse with him about divine things. He acknowledges him a prophet sent by God. The reason of his acknowledgement is the consideration of his miracles, which manifested a divine power, both in the greatness and multitude of them. For he knew that God would not set the seal of his power, to one that had not his commission. Miracles are the credential letters, to signify the divine authority of any person sent upon any new dispensation by God.

Observe,

1. God doth not force any man's belief, but gives such undeniable evidences of his will and mind, that not to believe is flat contradiction to him. When he sent Moses to deliver and give a new law to the Israelites, he attended him with a miraculous power, to testify it to be his will, that what Moses delivered should be entertained. So it was with our Saviour, and in the primitive times, at the first promulgation of the gospel in several places. But when a doctrine is settled and a church established, God forbears those extraordinary works, as he did the raining down manna after the Israelites' entrance into Canaan, where they might have provision in an ordinary way of providence; and they had miracles afterward in a more scanty measure, now and then. We have now rational ways to introduce us to a belief of the Christian doctrine; and though there are no sensible miracles as before, yet there has been in all ages, and is still, a miracle kept up in the world, greater than wrought by Christ upon the bodies of men. And that is the conversion of many obstinate sinners, and subduing them on a sudden, which in Christ's account, was the chiefest miracle he wrought when he was upon the earth: Luke 7:22, 'Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,

the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.' Christ had cured many in their sight; but he added in the end of the enumeration, 'To the poor the gospel is preached,' "Ptochoi euangelidzontai". The poor are evangelised, brought into a gospel frame, a renewed state for the kingdom of heaven, which is greater than the raising a man from a natural death to a natural life.

Nicodemus comes by night. He is fond of his own honour, loath to impair it by a free and open confession. He was a master in Israel. Had he come by day, his reputation had suffered in the vulgar opinion, who might well wonder that he, a pharisee, of a profound knowledge, should come to receive instruction from the son of a carpenter, a man despised by his fellows of the Sanhedrin. Yet he comes, though by night.

Observe,

1. It is a hard matter for us to perform a duty we are convinced of, without a flaw in it. Nicodemus is convinced by the miracles of Christ's divine authority; but he forbears an open acknowledgement of him. He creeps to him in the night, unwilling to be seen with him in the day. If Christ were not a prophet, why should he be acknowledged at all? If a prophet, why not in the day as well as in the night? Strange not to consult him in the day, whom he confesses to have his commission from God! How weak is the faith of the best at first! How staggering between Christ and self.
2. Our own reputation will be apt to mix itself in our religious services. It is his fear of the loss of this makes him choose the darkness. This greatest piece of old Adam in us will be rising in various forms, when we are in the most spiritual exercises. What a contest is there between religion and reputation! He was willing to gratify the one, but not displease the other.
3. Ambition is the great hindrance of a thorough conversion. Nicodemus had a mind to speak to Christ, but his reputation bears too much sway in him against a thorough giving up himself to him. He was ashamed to be taken notice of in this little address he made: John 5:44, 'How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which comes from God only?'
4. Men may have a high esteem of Christ, yet not such an esteem as amounts to a saving faith. Nicodemus acknowledges him a teacher, and that sent from God; but not the teacher, the great prophet Moses had spoken of, Deuteronomy 18:15. He confesses him a prophet, but not the Messiah. Look to your estimations of Christ; see whether they be supreme, superlative, the Saviour, the mediator, the Lord and King.
5. Convictions may be a long time before any appearance of conversion. If we consider Nicodemus here, only as one convinced of the divine authority of Christ, and not a thorough convert at this time; for he seems by his questions, verse 4 and 9, to be rather a malcontent, than a convert; yet the seed then sown by our Saviour's discourse sprung up at last in fruit. He does upon a signal occasion plead Christ's cause before a council of pharisees, probably the great Sanhedrin, yet but faintly: John 7:50-51, 'Doth our law judge any man before it hears him, and knows what he does?' Before, he would have no witness of his coming to Christ. Here he takes his part, as he might have done any man's upon a common principle of justice and equity, that he should not be condemned before he was heard. But there is more generous fruit afterwards, where he joins with Joseph of Arimathea in doing honour openly to our Saviours crucified body:

John 19:39, 'And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night), and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.' What grace he had seems to be in a long sleep, but is very vigorous upon its awaking.

6. True grace does one time or other discover itself most contrary to that which was the natural crime before. In both these places, fear had been his sin. It is now overmatched by confidence. The Holy Ghost takes notice of it, 'which at the first came to Jesus by night.' He came by night before, now he comes by day. He and another never named before, Joseph of Arimathea, who being possessed with the same passion of fear, was a disciple in secret,—John 19:38, 'Being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,'—own him publicly at his death, when those that had been familiar with him in his life forsook him. Christ will make timorous hares to own his cause, when those that think themselves courageous lions turn their backs upon him.

Paul had the most transcendent affection to the church, who before was guilty of the smartest persecution. And Peter, after the coming of the Spirit, was as courageous as before he was cowardly in his Master's cause.

We have seen the pharisee. Let us consider our Saviour's answer: ver. 3, 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Some think that Nicodemus asked a question which is not expressed, but may be gathered out of Christ's answer, and seems to be this, What was requisite to a man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven? Whereupon Christ tells him, that there was a necessity of being born again. Others think that Nicodemus asked no question, and that these words are a very proper reply to Nicodemus.

1. Christ answers not his compliment, but uses his authority, acknowledged by Nicodemus, of a teacher to inform him. Since you acknowledge my commission from God to be a teacher, I will teach you what I have to declare. The great design of my coming is to bring men to the kingdom of God; and the great means to this is a new birth, which can only fit you for evangelical truths here, and eternal happiness hereafter. He acknowledges Christ to be a teacher, and Christ in his reply would teach him how to become a Christian.

2. Christ frames his answer according to the pharisee's corruption. Nicodemus came by night, out of love to his credit, that might be impaired by his coming in the daytime. What would the people think? Surely this man, and the rest of his tribe, are not so knowing as they pretend to be, since he comes to Jesus to be taught, and out of fear of the pharisees, who thereby might be offended.

Christ's answer therefore very well suits him. You must become a new man, if you would have acquaintance with evangelical mysteries. Sway with your old notions, and pharisaic pride. Deny your honour, credit, and whatsoever partakes of the name of self. A legal frame, and a pharisaic righteousness, will not advance you to the kingdom of God. The Jews were proud of being Abraham's children, and thought the gates of heaven could not be shut against any of that relation.

John had touched them before for this: Matthew 3:9, 'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' Christ does tacitly here do the same, and puts him in mind of another birth, and the falseness and deceitfulness of his bottom of legal righteousness.

3. Christ frames his answer according to his weakness and ignorance. Nicodemus acknowledged him a teacher, not the Messiah. Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah. Christ therefore by his answer would lift up his thoughts higher, and puts him in mind of the kingdom of God, which the Jews in their common discourse signified the kingdom of the Messiah by, and have entitled it in ages since, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. So that Christ would bring him to the knowledge of himself as the Messiah, not only as an extraordinary prophet.

These three things evidence what relation this speech of Christ has to that of Nicodemus.

Observe from the relation of this to Nicodemus his speech:

1. We shall gain nothing by our applaudings and praises of Christ, without a renewed nature. Nicodemus comes with much reverence, gives Christ the title of rabbi, confesses him to be sent of God, owns the divinity of his miracles. Christ does not compliment him again, takes no notice of his civility, but falls roundly to his work, acquaints him with the necessity of regeneration, without which he could not see the kingdom of God, for all his fine praises of him. A glavering reverential religion is insignificant with Christ. A new birth, a likeness to Christ in nature, a conformity to him, is accounted by Christ an higher estimation of him, than all external applauses given to him.

2. No natural privilege under heaven can entitle us to the kingdom of grace or glory. It is not our carnal traduction from the best man. It is no natural birth, with the choicest privileges, gives us a right to either of them. Not the honour of having the law from God's own mouth, the glory of an outward covenant, the treasure of the oracles of God, the seal of circumcision borne in the body, that can instate this Nicodemus into this felicity. It is a birth of a higher strain, from an higher principle, a change of nature, and a removal from the old stock.

See how strangely Nicodemus replied upon this discourse of our Saviour. How strangely astonished is this great ruler in Israel at the doctrine which is absolutely necessary to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven! ver. 4, 'Nicodemus says unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' What a childish conception has he of this most heavenly doctrine! Can such an ancient man as I return to my first principles, dig a way into my mother's womb? It is strange that Nicodemus, being a pharisee, and so well versed in Scripture, should be so ignorant, or at least guilty of so much inadvertence, as not to think of that place, Ezekiel 36:1-38, and other places, which speak of 'a new heart,' and 'an heart of flesh.' He might have considered the design of the legal purifications, which were to represent the inward holiness which ought to be in the persons so purified. Yet he hears him discourse, but does not comprehend him. His carnal notion bears sway against spiritual truths.

Observe,

1. A man may have great knowledge in the letter of the Scripture, and yet not understand the necessary and saving doctrines in it. The doctrine of regeneration was laid down in the whole Old Testament, though not in that term. Let us take heed how we read the Scriptures; not to trouble our heads with needless and curious questions, but with the main mysteries of religion. What could all Nicodemus his knowledge profit him, if it had been ten thousand times more, without the knowledge of this doctrine, and the experience of it!

2. Nothing is more an enemy to the saving knowledge of gospel mysteries than a priding ourselves in head knowledge. Nicodemus his coming by night was not only from fear, but pride, that he might not be thought ignorant by the people. Humble men have the soundest knowledge: 'The meek will he teach his way,' Psalms 25:9.

3. How low was the interest of God in the world at that time! How had ignorance and error thrust the knowledge of God out of other parts of the world, when it languished so much in the church! How simple must the poor people be when the students in Scripture were no wiser! It is a thing to be bewailed amongst us, that wrangling knowledge has almost thrust out spiritual. And when Christians meet, their discourses are more about unnecessary disputes than these saving mysteries of Christianity, which might produce elevations of heart to heaven. To this exception of Nicodemus Christ makes his reply; where observe,

1. A fresh assertion of it, with an explanation: John 3:5, 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' In the third verse, Christ lays down the necessity of the new birth; in John 3:6, the necessity of the cause, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit.' In the first speech, he lays down the doctrine; in this, he explains the principle and manner of it, to remove his false apprehensions, wherein he might mean the transmigration of souls, which seems to be an opinion amongst the Jews.

2. A reason to back it: John 3:6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and can be no more by that principle, for the effect cannot be better than the cause; but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, i.e. has a spiritual nature.

Flesh is taken for man corrupted: Genesis 6:3, 'For he also is flesh,' degenerate into flesh, grown a mere sensual creature by the loss of original righteousness. For upon the parting of original righteousness, the soul of man was as a body without life; a spiritual carcass, as the body is without a soul.

Flesh signifies the whole nature, as in that place, Matthew 16:17, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee,' &c. The incarnation of the Son of God, which is the foundation of all evangelical administrations, is above the sphere of nature to discover. Man in his natural generation is but mere nature, and cannot apprehend, cannot enjoy that which is only apprehensible and enjoyable by a spiritual nature; but man regenerated by the Spirit is spiritual, and is advanced above mere flesh, for he is made partaker of the divine nature. So that Christ's argument runs thus: No flesh can enter into the kingdom of God; but every man naturally is flesh, unless born again of the Spirit; therefore no man, unless born again of the Spirit, can enter into the kingdom of God. If you could enter into your mother's womb, and be born again, the matter would not be mended with you; you would still be but flesh, and rather worse than better; therefore that is not the birth that I mean, for the impediment would be as strong in you as before.

These two verses are an answer to Nicodemus his objection. Nicodemus understands it of a carnal birth. No, no, says Christ, it is a spiritual birth I intend; one that is wholly divine and heavenly. That which you mean brings a man into the light of the world; that which I mean, brings a man out of the world, into the light of grace. That forms the flesh to an earthly life; this forms the

soul to an heavenly. That makes you the son of man; this the son of God.

All the difficulty lies in John 3:6, in that expression of water, &c. Some, as the papists, understand it of the elementary water of baptism, and from this place exclude all children dying without baptism from salvation. Others understand it of a metaphorical water, whereof Christ speaks, John 4:14, 'The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'

Let us first see why by water cannot be meant the baptismal water.

Regeneration is the mystery and sense of that sacred ceremony. It is indeed signified, represented, and sealed in baptism; how, and in what sense, is not my present work.

1. It is strange, that when all agree that the birth here spoken of is spiritual and metaphorical, that the water here should be natural.

2. None could be saved, unless baptised, if this were meant of baptism. As if these words, John 6:53, 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,' were meant of the supper, none could be saved unless they did partake of it. Whereas Christ lays not the stress upon baptism, but upon faith: Mark 16:16, 'He that believes, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be damned.' He does not say, He that is not baptised shall be damned, but he lays damnation wholly upon the want of faith. Many have been saved without baptism, none without faith. It is true to say, He that does not believe shall be damned; but it is not true to say, He that is not baptised shall be damned. Christ says the first, but not the second, though his discourse had obliged him to say so, had it been true, or had he meant this speech to Nicodemus of baptismal water. The Spirit is not tied to baptism, but he may act out of the sacraments as well as in them. Understand this of the bare want of baptism, not of the contempt or wilful neglect of it. If it were meant of baptism, it was true then, that none could be saved without it. How did the thief upon the cross enter into paradise, which Christ promised him? So that one may enter into heaven without baptism by water, though not without the baptism of the Spirit.

3. Baptism was not then instituted as a standing sacrament in the Christian church. The institution of it we find not till after Christ's resurrection: Matthew 28:19, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them.' And it is not likely Christ would discourse to Nicodemus of the necessity of an institution that was not yet expressly appointed by him, and which he did not appoint till after his resurrection; for he discourses of that which was of present necessity. And if this were meant of baptism, and of that absolute necessity the papists would lay upon it from these words, then all that died before the institution of baptism by our Saviour, unbaptised, could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, though believing. Can anything be necessary before the precept for it be given? It could not be necessary before, as a means, because it is not a natural, but an instituted means. It must be therefore necessary by virtue of a command; therefore not absolutely necessary before the command, and at the time Christ spoke these words. Some say that Christ meant it, not of an absolute necessity at that time, but that it should be so after his death. That is to give our Saviour the lie, for he spoke it of the present time, some years before his death. Besides, it wrongs the goodness of our Saviour (if he had meant it of baptism), to defer the institution of it so long after, when it was at present necessary for Nicodemus his salvation. It wrongs his wisdom, too, to speak of that to be at present necessary, which was not in being, nor could be till after his death.

4. It is strange that our Saviour should speak to Nicodemus of the necessity of baptism before he had informed him of the mysteries of the gospel, whereof it is a seal. To speak of the seal before he speaks of that which is to be sealed by it, is not congruous. For the sacraments being founded upon the doctrine on which they depend, to begin by a sacrament the instruction of a man, is to begin a building by the tiles and rafters, before you lay a foundation; and against the order expressed by our Saviour to the apostles, which puts teaching before baptising, and was always practised in the primitive times, and is to this day in all Christian churches, to the adult and grown up. As circumcision was, amongst the Jews, not administered to any proselyte before his turning proselyte, and instruction in those laws he was to observe, and then, and not till then, his children had a right to circumcision.

5. Those that understand it of the baptismal water, and so make that of absolute necessity, do by another assertion accuse their own exposition of a falsity; for they say that the baptism of blood supplies the want of that of water, and that if either infants or adult persons be hurried away to a stake or gibbet, or killed for the Christian cause, they are certainly saved; which cannot be, if the baptism of water were to be understood in this place, and so absolutely necessary. It is water that is expressed and blood is not water. One of these assertions must be false. A martyr dying unbaptised must be damned, and cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, if this place be meant of the water of baptism.

6. It may also be observed that Christ, in the progress of his discourse, makes no more mention of water, but of the Spirit: 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' not born of water and the Spirit, which had been very necessary, if water had been of an equal necessity with the Spirit to the new birth. And since Christ mentions it positively, that he that is born of the Spirit is spirit, will it be said, that if any be born of the Spirit, without water, he is still but flesh?

Water then here is to be taken mystically. Some by water understand the whole doctrine of the gospel; as the waters mentioned through the whole 47th of Ezekiel signify the doctrine of the gospel. To drop, in Scripture, signifies to teach, Amos 7:16; Ezekiel 20:46, 'Drop thy word toward the south.' Others, by water, understand the grace of regeneration as the principle, the Spirit as the cause, as Titus 3:5-6, 'He has saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' What washing he means is expressed in the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that is, that renewing which is wholly spiritual, as proceeding from the Spirit of God, whence this grace does flow. By water and the Spirit are signified one and the same thing, the similitude of water showing the cleansing and generating virtue of the Spirit, as fire and the Spirit are put together, Matthew 3:11, to signify the refining quality the Spirit has (as fire has to separate the dross from the good metal). Fire and the Spirit, i. e. a spirit of fire, of the force and efficacy of fire. This water is the same which God had promised: Isaiah 44:3, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty;' and Ezekiel 36:25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you;' and Ezekiel 36:27, 'I will put my Spirit within you.' He there explains water to be the Spirit: 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.' And in Ezekiel he joins water and the Spirit; i. e. the water of my Spirit, or my spiritual water, my gospel grace. And Isa. 12:18, 19, God speaks of the admirable fruitfulness of this water. This shall renew you, and make you fructify in the kingdom of my Son, where none shall be received who is not born of this divine principle.

Now our Saviour having to do with a pharisee, who was acquainted with those oracles, to make him understand this truth, uses those words which the prophets had used, and ranks them in the same order; first water, then the Spirit, that the latter might clear the sense and nature of the former, to hinder Nicodemus from imagining that to be a natural water which was spiritual and mystical. Water and the Spirit signifies the water of the Spirit, or a spiritual water, as 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost;' that is, in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is compared to water in respect of its generative virtue. No fruitful plant but is produced by moisture. Water contains in it the seeds of all things. It was from water and the earth that all things in the lower world were in the first creation produced. Water is put here as exegetical of the effect of the Spirit; water being the cause of generation by its moisture, uniting the parts together. Our Saviour in both places uses an asseveration, Verily, verily, which is spoken, 1. To show the infallible necessity of it, the certainty of the proposition.

2. To urge a special attention. Men press those things in discourse which they would have retained.

It is to be believed because of its necessity; it is to be considered because of its excellency.

Born again. "Another" signifies properly from above; but sometimes it is taken for again. Nicodemus understands it so by his reply, of entering again into his mother's womb, and not of a heavenly birth.

Man was born in nature, he must be born in grace. He was born of the first Adam; he must be born of the second Adam. It is expressed in Scripture by various terms: a resurrection to life, a quickening, a new creation, the new man, the inward man, a dying to the world. It is indeed a putting off the old man, the principles and passions, the corrupt notions and affections which we derive from Adam, to devote ourselves to God, to live to Christ, to walk in newness of life. The kingdom of God, which is sometimes taken, (1) for the kingdom of glory, (2) it is sometimes taken for the gospel state. And the same thing is signified by the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. What is called by Matthew 'the kingdom of heaven,' Matthew 4:17, is called by Mark, relating the same story, 'the kingdom of God,' Mark 1:16. And the gospel is called 'the gospel of the kingdom of God,' Mark 1:14. It is called the kingdom of God;—

1. Because it sets up the rule and government of God in the world above the devil's. The devil had been so long the God of the world, that the interest of God seemed to be overmatched by a multitude of unclean spirits, and abominable idols; and the true God was not known to be the governor of it. The gospel discovers the true governor of the world, and sets up his rule and authority.

2. It sets up the righteousness of God, above a legal and fleshly righteousness, much in vogue among Jews and Gentiles; but they were wholly ignorant of the righteousness of God, Romans 10:3.

3. This kingdom is framed and set up by the Son of God; the other kingdom, under the law, was settled by God, but by the hand of Moses, a man. This is administered by him through his Spirit, his vicegerent. His royalty did not so eminently appear as in the times of the gospel. The Father appoints the gospel state in his wisdom, the Son lays the foundation of it in his blood, the Spirit

carries it on in the world by his power.

4. In respect of the service, it is high and heavenly; a serving God in spirit. The service under the legal administration was carnal; the service under the gospel administration is more spiritual, and so more suitable to the perfections of God.

5. In the end and issue of it. It is a translating us into the kingdom of Christ, Colossians 1:13. The legal ceremonies could not fit men of themselves for glory; they could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But this kingdom of grace prepares us for the kingdom of glory.

Cannot see the kingdom of God. In John 3:5. he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. He cannot,

1. By reason of God's appointment.

2. In the nature of the thing itself; he has no fitness for heaven or heavenly mysteries.

See. Seeing is taken sometimes for enjoying; not a bare sight, but fruition: John 3:36, 'He that believes not the Son shall not see life;' that is, shall not enjoy life. And Hebrews 12:14, 'Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;' they may see him in his pronouncing the sentence, but shall not see him in a way of glorious enjoyment of him. To have a communion with Christ in a gospel state, to have an enjoyment of Christ in eternal glory, it is necessary we be stripped of the corruption of our first nature, and be clothed with another by the Spirit of God.

Observe in the verse, 1. The infallibility of the proposition: Verily, verily.

2. The necessity of regeneration: except.

3. The extension of it in regard of the subject.

- (1.) Subjectum quod recipit: man, i. e. every man.

- (2.) Subjectum in quo recipitur: man, i. e. the whole man, every faculty.

4. The excellency of it implied: they cannot see the kingdom of God. If he be born again, he shall enjoy the kingdom of God.

Doct. Regeneration of the soul is of absolute necessity to a gospel and glorious state. By regeneration, I mean not a relative, but a real change of the subject, wrought in the complexion and inclinations of the soul, as in the restoring of health there is a change made in the temper and humours of the body. As mankind was changed in Adam from what they were by a state of creation, so men must be changed in Christ from what they were in a state of corruption. As that change was not only relative but real, and the relative first introduced by the real, so must this. The relation of a child of wrath was founded upon the sin committed Without a real change there can be no relative. Being in Christ, as freed from condemnation, is always attended with a walking in the Spirit; and walking is not before living. For the better understanding this point, I shall lay down,

- I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

- II. I shall show that it is necessary, 1. To a gospel state.

- (1.) To the performance of gospel duties.

- (2.) To the enjoyment of gospel privileges.

2. To a state of glory.

I. Propositions concerning the necessity of it.

Prop. 1. There are but two states, one saving, the other damning; a state of sin and a state of righteousness; and all men are included in one of them. All men are divided into two ranks. In regard of their principle, some are in the fiery, some in the Spirit, Romans 8:8-9; in regard of their obedience, some walk after the flesh, some after the Spirit, Romans 8:1; some are slaves to the flesh, others are led by the Spirit; some live only to self, some live to God. In regard of the exercise of their minds, their nobler faculty, some mind the things of the flesh, others the things of the Spirit, Romans 8:5; some swinishly wallow in sin, others place the delights of their spirits upon better and higher objects. The Scripture mentions no other. A state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God; a state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk before God unto all well-pleasing, and would not willingly have an inward motion swerve from his will. One is called light, the other darkness: Ephesians 5:8, 'You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light;' one the children of wrath, the other the children of God. There is no medium between them, every man is in one of these states. All believers, from the bruised reed to the tallest cedar, from the smoking flax on earth to the flaming lamp in heaven, from Thomas, that would not believe without seeing, to Abraham, who would believe without staggering, all are in a state of life; and all, from the most beautiful moralist to the most venomous toad in nature's field, from the young man in the gospel, who was not far from the kingdom of heaven, to Judas, who was in the very bottom of hell, all are in a state of death. Mere nature, though never so curiously garnished, can place a man no higher; faith, though with many infirmities, puts us in a state of amity; unbelief, though with many moralities, continues us in a state of enmity. All men are either the object of God's delight or of his abomination. The highest endowments of men remaining in corrupted nature cannot please him. The delight of God then supposes some real change in the object which is the ground of that delight, for God is wise in his delight, and could not be pleased with anything which were not fit for his complacency. Since original nature in a man cannot displease God unless it be changed by some fault, because it was his own work, so our present nature cannot please God unless it be changed by some grace, though it be otherwise never so highly dignified. Whatsoever grows up from the old Adam is the fruit of the flesh, whatsoever grows up by the new Adam in us is the offspring of the Spirit; and upon one of these two stocks all men in the world are set. Since, therefore, one is utterly destructive, and cannot please God (Romans 8:8, So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God), though never so well garnished (for being utterly contrary to him it cannot be approved by him), the other is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Prop. 2. It is necessary upon the account of the fall of man and the consequents of it. In Adam we died: 1 Corinthians 15:22, 'As in Adam all died,' therefore in Adam he sinned: Romans 5:19, 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Man cannot be supposed to sin in Adam unless some covenant had intervened between God and Adam, whence there did arise in the whole human nature a debt of having righteousness transfused from the first parent to all his posterity. The want of this grace wherein his posterity are conceived is a privation, and a crime which was voluntary in the root and head. This privation of righteousness must be removed. The institution of God stands firm, that Adam and his posterity should have a pure righteousness. It is not for the honour of God to enjoin it so strictly at first, and to have no regard to it afterwards. Now this privation of righteousness, and the unrighteousness which has taken place in the sons of

Adam, cannot be removed without the infusion of grace; for without this grace he would always want righteousness, and yet he always under an obligation to have it; he would be under desires of happiness, but without it under an impossibility of attaining it. Were there an indifference in the soul of man, were it an *abrasa tabula*, the writing of moral precepts upon it by good education would sway it to walk in the paths of virtue, as an ill education does cast it into the ways of [vice]. This is not so; for take two, let them have the same ways of education, the same precepts instilled into them, as Esau and Jacob had by their father, who were equally taught, yet how different were their lives! Esau's bad, Jacob's not without flaws. Education had not the power to root corruption out of both, no, nor out of any man in the world without a higher principle. There is some powerful principle in the soul, which leads it into by-paths contrary to those wholesome rules instilled into it. Hence arises a necessity of some other principle to be put into the heart to over-sway this corrupt bias. Man goes astray from the womb, as it is in Psalms 58:3, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born.' There must be something to rectify him, and expel this wandering humour. By the fall of man there was contracted,

(1.) An unfitness to any thing that is good. Man is so immersed in wrong notions of things, that he cannot judge fully of what is good: Titus 1:16, 'To every good work reprobate.' The state of nature, or the old man, is described, Ephesians 4:22, to be 'corrupt, according to deceitful lusts;' deceitful, seducing us from God, drawing us into perdition, by representing evil under the notion of good, which evidences our understandings to be unfit to judge without a new illumination; inward and spiritual lusts, which are most deceitful, being accounted brave and generous motions; lusts or desires, which show the corruption of the will by ill habits. Lust and sin is the mere composition of corrupted nature; the whole man is stuffed with polluting principles and filthy appetites.

What was preternatural to man in a state of innocence became natural to him after his depraved state. He is 'carnal, sold under sin,' Romans 7:14. The spring being already out of order, cannot make the motion otherwise than depraved, as when a clock is out of order, it is natural to that present condition of it to give false intelligence of the hour of the day, and it cannot do otherwise till the wheels and weights be rectified. Our end was actively to glorify God in the service of him and obedience to him; but since man is fallen into this universal decay of his faculties, and made unfit to answer this end, there is a necessity he should be made over again, and created upon a better foundation, that some principle should be in him to oppose this universal depravation, enlighten his understanding, mollify his heart, and reduce his affections to their due order and object.

(2.) Not only an unfitness, but unwillingness to that which is good. We have not those affections to virtue as we have to vice. Are not our lives for the most part voluntarily ridiculous? Had we a full use of reason, we should judge them so. We think little of God; and when we do think of him, it is with reluctance. This cannot be our original state, for surely, God being infinitely good, never let man come out of his hands with this actual unwillingness to acknowledge and serve him; as the apostle says, in the case of the Galatians' errors, Galatians 5:8, 'This persuasion comes not of him which calls you,' this unwillingness comes not from him that created you. How much, therefore, do we need a restoring principle in us! We naturally fulfil the desires, or "*thelemata*" 'of the flesh,' Ephesians 2:3. There is then a necessity of some other principle in us to make us fulfil the will of God, since we were created for God, not for the flesh. We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God while that serpentine nature and devilish habit remains in us, than we can suppose the devil can be willing to glorify God, while the nature he contracted by his fall abides powerful in him.

It is as much as to say that a man can be willing against his will. Nature and will must be changed, or we for ever remain in this state.

Man is born a wild ass' colt, Job 11:12. No beast more wild and brutish than man in his natural birth, and like to remain in his wild and wilful nature without grace, a new birth can only put off the wildness of the first.

(3.) Not only unfitness and unwillingness, but inability to good. A strange force there is in a natural man, which hurries him, even against some touches of his will, to evil.

How early do men discover an affection to vice! How greedily do they embrace it, notwithstanding rebukes from superiors, good exhortations from friends, with the concurrence of the vote of conscience, giving its amen to those dissuasions! and yet carried against those arguments, deceived by sin, slain by sin, sold under it, Romans 7:11, Romans 7:14. This is the miserable state of every son of nature. Do we not find that men sometime wrapped up in retirement, in consideration of the excellency of virtue, are so wrought upon by their solitary meditations, that they think themselves able to withstand the strongest invasion of any temptation! Yet we see oftentimes that when a pleasing temptation offers itself, though there be a conflict between reason and appetite, at length all the considerations and dictates of reason are laid aside, the former ideas laid asleep, and that committed which their own reason told them was base and sordid; so that there is something necessary, beside consideration and resolution, to the full cure of man. No privation can be removed but by the introduction of another form; as when a man is blind, that blindness, which is a privation of sight, cannot be removed without bringing in a power of seeing again. Original sin is a privation of original righteousness, and an introduction of corrupt principles, which cannot be removed but by some powerful principle contrary to it. Since the inability upon the earth, by reason of the curse, to bring forth its fruits in such a manner as it did when man was in a state of innocence, the nature of it must be changed to reduce it to its original fruitfulness; so must man, since a general defilement from Adam has seized upon him, be altered before he can 'bring forth fruit to God,' Romans 7:4. We must be united to Christ, engrafted upon another stock, and partake of the power of his resurrection; without this we may bring forth fruit, but not fruit to God. There is as utter an impossibility in a man to answer the end of his creation, without righteousness, as for a man to act without life, or act strongly without health and strength. It is a contradiction to think a man can act righteously without righteousness, for without it he has not the being of a man; that is, man in such a capacity, for those ends for which his creation intended him.

Well, then, since there is an unfitness, unwillingness, inability in a man to answer his end, there is a necessity of a new life, a new nature, a new righteousness. There is a necessity for his happiness that he should be brought back to God, live to God, be a son of God, and this cannot be without regeneration; for how can he be brought back to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God that has no spiritual life? How can he be fit to be a son of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

Prop. 3. Hence it follows, that it is universally necessary. Necessary for all men. Our Saviour knows none without this mark. There must be a change in the soul: 2 Corinthians 5:17, 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' There must be the habitation of the Spirit: Romans 8:9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' There must be a crucifixion, not only of the corrupt affections of the flesh, but of the flesh itself: Galatians 5:24, 'They that are Christ's

have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The old nature must be killed, with all its attendants. There is no sonship to God without likeness, no relation of a child of God without a childlike nature. Let a man be of whatsoever quality in the world, never so high, never so low, of whatsoever age, of whatsoever moral endowments, 'except a man,' every man, &c. And simply necessary. Our Saviour does not say he is in danger not to see the kingdom of God, or he may come short of it; but he shall not, he cannot. There is no possible way but this for any man, no other door to creep in at but by that of a new birth; salvation cannot be attained without it, and damnation will certainly be the issue of the want of it. As there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved but by the name of Jesus Christ, so there is no other way under heaven wherein we can be saved but by the birth of the Spirit.

It is necessary, therefore, in all places, in all professions. It is not necessary only in Europe, and not in Africa. Let a man be what he will, in any place under heaven, he must have a Jesus to save him, and an Holy Ghost to change him; it is one and the same Spirit acts in all, and produces the same qualities in all. Let men's religion and professions be what they will (men are apt to please themselves with this and that profession and opinion, but), there is no salvation in any profession, or any kind of opinion, but by regeneration. It is not necessary our understandings should be all of one size, that our opinions should all meet in uniformity, but it is necessary we should all have one spiritual nature. It is as necessary to the being of a good man that he should be spiritual as to the being of a man that he should be rational, though there is a great latitude and variety in the degrees of men in grace, as well as their reasons. Some are of little faith, some of great faith; some babes in Christ, some strong men. It is not necessary all should be as strong as Abraham, but it is simply necessary all should be new born, as Abraham; no age, no time excludes it.

(1.) Righteousness was necessary before the fall. The new birth is but the beginning of our restoration to that state we had before the fall. Adam could not have been happy without being innocent. The holiness of God could not create an impure creature. Without it God could take no pleasure in his work.

(2.) After the fall it was necessary, continually necessary from the first moment of the fall. This work of regeneration is included in the first promise: Genesis 3:15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.' Naturally we have a mighty friendship to Satan, a friendship to his works, though not to his person. But if any man had interest in that promise, he must exchange that friendship for an enmity.

If Jesus Christ, who is principally meant by the seed of the woman, had an enmity to Satan, then all Christ's seed must be possessed with the same spirit. For when the seed of the woman was to break the serpent's head it was necessary that those that would enjoy the fruit of that conquest should be enemies to the nature of the devil, and the works of the devil, otherwise they could not join with that interest which overthrows him. It is unreasonable to think the head should have an enmity, and the members an amity; and we cannot have an enmity to that which is the same with our nature, without a change of disposition. It is not a verbal enmity that is here meant. While we pretend to hate him we may do his pleasure, and Satan is never troubled to be pretendedly hated and really obeyed. As wicked men do the will of God's purpose, while they oppose the will of his precept, so they do the devil's will many times while they think they cross it; there must be a contrary nature to Satan before there can be an enmity. That foolish appetite, affected sensuality,

indulgence to the flesh, the cause of our first friendship with Satan, must be changed into divine desires, affection to heavenly things, a mortification of the flesh, before a man can part with this friendship. There must be a change in the conformity of the soul to the nature of the devil before an enmity against him can be raised. We are never enemies to those that encourage us in what we affect. His nature can never be altered, by reason of the curse of God upon him; therefore ours must, if ever the league be broken. In Isaiah 65:25 it is said, 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox: and dust shall be the serpent's meat.' The nature of men may be changed by the gospel, but dust shall always be the serpent's meat. The saving some by water in the deluge was a figure of this inward baptism, which is the 'answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter 3:20-21. As the old world was so corrupt that all must be washed away before it could be restored, so is the little world of man. The cloud and sea through which the Israelites passed signified this, as the apostle informs us: 1 Corinthians 10:2, 'And were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea.' Whereupon some think there were some sprinklings of the water upon them, as they stood like two walls, to favour their passage.

(3.) Necessary in the time of the law. By the moral law this renewing was implied in the first command, of not having any other gods before him, Exodus 20:3. We cannot suppose that command only limited to a not serving an outward image. Is not the setting up self, our own reasons, our own wills, and bowing down to them, and serving them, as much a wrong to God as the bowing down to a senseless image? nay, worse than the adoring of an image, since that is senseless; but our wills corrupt, and are no more fit to be our God than an image is fit to be a representation of him. So that in the spiritual part of the command this must be included, to acknowledge nothing as the rule of perfection, but God; to set ourselves no other patterns of conformity but God, which the apostle phrases a being new created after God, Ephesians 4:24.

If all idolatry were forbidden, then that which is inward as well as that which is outward. If we were to have no other gods before him, then we were to prefer nothing inwardly before him; we were to make him our pattern, and be conformed to him; which we cannot, without another nature than that we had by corruption.

Upon this are those scriptures founded which speak of covetousness to be idolatry, Colossians 3:5, that 'if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John 2:15; he does not love God.

Now the preferring self before God is the essential part of the corrupt nature. Therefore all men, by the law of nature (which is the same with the moral law), and the Jews, to whom this law was given, were bound to have another nature than that which was derived from Adam, which essentially consisted in the making ourselves our god. Self-esteem, self-dependence, self-willedness, is denying affection and subjection to God. By the ceremonial law more plainly. Their duty was not terminated in an external observance of the types and shadows under the law, but a heart-work God intended to signify to them in all those legal ceremonies. As sacrifices signified a necessity of expiation of sin, so their legal washings represented to them a necessity of regeneration.

Therefore God is said not to require the sacrifices of beasts: Psalms 40:6, 'Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire' (that is, sacrifices of beasts), 'burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required;' viz. as the ultimate object of his pleasure, but as representations of Christ, the great

sacrifice. So neither did he command circumcision, and other legal purifications, for anything in themselves, or anything they could work, further than upon the body, but to signify unto them an inward work upon the heart. Hence they are said not to be commanded by God: Jeremiah 7:22-23, 'For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice.' That is, God did not principally require these as the things which did terminate his will and pleasure, but an obedience to him, and walking with him, which cannot be without an agreement of nature: 'For how can two walk together, unless they be agreed?' Amos 3:3. Hence God speaks so often to them of the circumcision of the heart, Deuteronomy 10:16, and promises this circumcision of the heart: Deut. 36:6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed,' &c. And Paul expressly says, Romans 2:28-29, that 'he was not a Jew;' that is, a spiritual Jew, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who had the 'circumcision that was outward in the flesh,' but he that had 'that of the heart.' So among us many confide in baptism, which signifies nothing to men grown up, without an inward renewal and baptism of the heart, no more than outward circumcision did to them.

(4.) The obligation upon us is still the same. The covenant made with Adam was made perpetually with him for all his posterity, therefore all his posterity, by that covenant, were perpetually obliged to a perfect righteousness. If God had made this covenant with Adam, that he should transfuse this original righteousness to his posterity only for such a time, then indeed, after the expiration of the term, the obligation had ceased, and none had been bound to have it as a debt required by God. The fault of wanting it had been removed without any infusion of grace, because the time being expired, and so the obligation ceasing, it had not been a fault to want it; neither could Adam's posterity have been charged with sin, because the want of righteousness, after the expiration of the time fixed, had not been a sin. But because there was no time fixed, but that it was perpetually of force as to righteousness, which was the main intent of it, we still remain under the obligation of having a righteous nature.

Now God, seeing the impossibility of answering this obligation in our own persons, by our own strength, appoints a way whereby we may answer it in a second head, not pulling the former covenant as to the essential part of it, which was a righteous nature, but mitigating it, as the Chancery nulls not the common law, but sweetens the severity of it. This latter covenant is called 'an everlasting covenant.' Not that the obligation of the other to righteousness is ceased, but transmitted to another head; which head cannot possibly fail, as our former did, who has both a perfect righteousness in himself, and has undertook for a perfect righteousness in his people, which he is able to accomplish, and to that purpose begins it here, and perfects it hereafter. To this purpose the Scripture speaks of the everlastingness of the covenant: Psalms 89:28, 'My covenant shall stand fast with him;' that is, with Christ. And if his people sin, as he expresses it afterwards, yet 'my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.' In this respect Christ is called the covenant of the people: Isaiah 13:6, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people.' And the end of placing David his servant over his people, is not to give way to licentiousness and unrighteousness, and maintain men in an hostile nature against God, but that they might 'walk in his judgments, and observe his statutes,' Jer. 27:24; and that everlasting covenant of peace he would make with them is in order to sanctify them, Jer. 37:26, 28, compared together. When God would make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant, it was to set his sanctuary among them, and to let

the heathen know that the Lord did sanctify Israel. And the end of the covenant is to 'put his law into the inward parts,' Jeremiah 31:33.

Christ undertook to keep up the honour of God, which was violated by the breach of that covenant, to 'make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,' Daniel 9:24. This obligation our second head entered into for us, and in him we are complete, even as our head, and as the 'head of all principality and power,' Colossians 2:10, who has undertaken for our perfect righteousness; of our persons, by his own righteousness; of our nature, by inherent righteousness, as it follows, Colossians 2:11, &c., 'in whom you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,' &c. This obligation still remains upon our head, and upon us in him, and to him we are to have recourse for a full answering of it. And this cannot be answered without a new birth here, which ends in a perfection hereafter. And Christ, by a plain precept, has made it absolutely necessary now to all under the gospel administration. So that no age, no time, no administration excludes it. It was as necessary to Adam, the first man, as to the last that shall be born. For being by nature spiritually dead, there must be a restoration to a spiritual life, if ever any be happy. 'God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.' What was always necessary is absolutely necessary, and admits of no exception; and therefore the removal of the diabolical nature is indispensable to him and to us, since we are all the posterity of Adam, and the inheritors of his corruption. How can any, in any age, enjoy an infinite holy God, without being changed from their impurity?

Prop. 4. Hence it follows, that it is so necessary, that it is not conceivable by any man in his right wits how God can make any man happy without it. It is not for us, poor shallow creatures, to dispute what God can, and what God cannot do; what God may do by his absolute power. But yet it seems a contradiction, and it is not intelligible by us how God can make a man happy without regeneration.

What semblance of reason can be given that any one who is a slave of Satan, a child of wrath by nature, can be made the son and friend of God, without an expulsion of that nature which rendered him criminal, and restoring that in some degree which renders him innocent?

Without habitual grace, sin is not taken away; and as long as a man remains under sin, how he can be capable of and communion with God I understand not; for he cannot be at one and the same time under God's greatest wrath and his highest love. How is it possible that one can have an enjoyment of eternal life, who has nothing in him but a relation to eternal death?

God made man's nature fit for his communion; man made himself unfit by guilt and filth. This unfitness must be removed by regeneration before this privilege man had by creation can be restored. Not that this restored righteousness is the cause of our communion with God in happiness, but a necessary requisite to it. No doubt but God might have restored this righteousness without admitting man to a converse with him, if there had been no covenant made to that purpose. That God may give grace without glory, is intelligible; but to admit a man to communion with him in glory, without grace, is not intelligible.

(1.) It is not agreeable to God's holiness to make any an inhabitant of heaven, and converse freely with him in a way of intimate love, without such a qualification of grace: Psalms 11:7, 'The righteous Lord loves righteousness; his countenance does behold the upright.' He must, therefore,

hate iniquity, and cannot love an unrighteous nature because of his love to righteousness; 'his countenance beholds the upright,' he looks upon him with a smiling eye, and therefore he cannot favourably look upon an unrighteous person, so that this necessity is not founded only in the command of God that we should be renewed, but in the very nature of the thing, because God, in regard of his holiness, cannot converse with an impure creature. God must change his nature, or the sinner's nature must be changed. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Wolves and sheep, darkness and light, can never agree. God cannot love a sinner as a sinner, because he hates impurity by a necessity of nature as well as a choice of will. It is as impossible for him to love it as to cease to be holy. This change cannot be then on God's part; it must therefore be on man's part. It must therefore be by grace, whereby the sinner may be made fit for converse with God, since God cannot embrace a sinner in his dearest affections without a quality in the sinner suitable to himself. All converse is founded upon a likeness in nature and disposition; it is by grace only that the sinner is made capable of converse with God.

(2.) It is not agreeable to God's wisdom. Is it congruous to the wisdom of God to let a man be his child and the child of the devil at the same time? Is it fit to admit him to the relation of a son of God, who retains the enmity of his nature against God, to make any man happy with the dishonour of his laws, since he is not subject to the law of God, neither will be: one that cannot bear him, but abhors his honour and the apprehensions of his holiness?

Man naturally has risings of heart against God, looks upon him under some dreadful notion, has an utter aversion from him; alienation and enmity are inseparable: Colossians 1:21, 'You who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds.' It does not consist with the wisdom of God to make any man happy against his will; God therefore first changes the temper of the will by his powerful grace, thereby making him willing, and by degrees fitting him for happiness with him.

It is not fit corruption should inherit incorruption, or impurity be admitted to an undefiled inheritance, and therefore God brings none thither which are not first begotten by him to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: 1 Peter 1:3-4, 'Which according to his mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' It cannot be honourable for the wisdom of God to give a right to eternal life to one that continues a child of the devil, and bestow his love upon one that resolves to give his own heart to sin and Satan. This which I have now discoursed is founded upon men's natural notions in their right reason. But if we look into the Scripture it is certain there is no other way but this: a man without a new birth can have no right to happiness by any covenant of God, by any truth of God, by any purchase of Christ. God never promised happiness without it. Christ never purchased it for any one without a new nature. No example is there extant of any person God has made happy without this alteration, nor in the strictest inquiries can we conceive any other way possible; therefore if there be any one present that has hopes to enjoy everlasting happiness without regeneration, he expects that which God never yet bestowed upon any, and which, according to our understanding, God cannot, without wrong to his holiness and wisdom, confer upon any person. I beseech you, therefore, let none of you build your hopes upon such vain foundations; you must be holy, or you shall never see God to your comfort.

Prop. 5. It is so necessary, that the coming and sufferings of our Lord and Saviour would seem insignificant without it. That this regeneration was a main end of his coming, is evident by his making this one of the main doctrines he was, as a prophet and teacher, sent from God to make known to the world, it being the first he taught Nicodemus. Jesus Christ came to glorify God, and to glorify himself in redeeming a people. And what glory can we conceive God has, what glory can Christ have, if there be no characteristic difference between his people and the world? And what difference can there be but in a change of nature and temper, as the foundation whence all other differences do result? Sheep and goats differ in nature. The righteousness which is given through our Mediator is the same, in the essentials and respects it bears to God, as we had at first. And his threefold office of king, priest, and prophet, is in order to it: his priestly, to reconcile and bring us to God; his prophetic, to teach us the way; and his kingly, to work in us those qualifications, and bestow that comely garb upon us that was necessary to fit us for our former converse. Our second Adam would not be like the first, if he failed in this great work of conveying his righteous nature to us, as Adam was to convey his original righteousness to his posterity. As that was to be conveyed by carnal generation, so the righteous nature of the second Adam in to be transmitted to us by spiritual regeneration. In this respect renewed men are called his seed, and counted to him for a generation, as Psalms 22:30, 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord ("la'adonai") for a generation,' to Christ, it shall be accounted as much the generation of Christ as the rest are the generation of Adam, as if they had proceeded out of his loins, as mankind did out of Adam's. As God looks upon believers as righteous through the righteousness of Christ as if it were their own, so he accounts them as if they were the generation of Jesus Christ himself.

(1.) Christ came to save from sin. Salvation from sin was more his work than barely salvation from hell: Matthew 1:21, 'He shall save his people from their sins.' From sin as the cause, from hell as the consequent. If from sin, was it only from the guilt of sin, and to leave the sinful nature unchanged? Was it only to take off punishment, and not to prepare for glory? It would have been then but the moiety of redemption, and not honourable for so great a Saviour. Can you imagine that the death of Jesus Christ, being necessary for the recovery of a sinner, was appointed for an incomplete work, to remit man's sin and continue the insolence of his nature against God? It was not his end only to save us from wrath to come, but to save us from the procuring cause of that wrath; not forcibly and violently to save us, but in methods congruous to the honour of God's wisdom and holiness, and therefore to purify us: Titus 2:14, 'To redeem us from all iniquity,' all parts of it, 'by purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' that we might have a holy nature, whereby we might perform holy actions, and be as zealous of good works and the honour of God, as we had been of bad works and to bring dishonour to him.

It was also the end of his resurrection to 'quicken us to a newness of life,' Colossians 2:12, Colossians 2:18, Ephesians 2:5-6. If any man without a new nature could set foot into heaven, a great intendment of the death and resurrection of Christ would be insignificant.

Christ came to take away sin, the guilt by his death, the filth by his Spirit, given us as the purchase of that death. In taking away sin he takes away also the sinful nature.

(2.) Christ came to destroy the works of the devil: 1 John 3:8, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' These works are two, sin, and the misery consequent upon it. Upon the destruction of sin necessarily follows the dissolution of the

other which was knit with it. If the sinful nature were not taken away, the devil's works would not wholly be destroyed; or if the sinful nature were taken away, and a righteous nature not planted in the stead of it, he would still have his ends against God in depriving God of the glory he ought to have from the creature. And the creature could not give God the glory he was designed by his creation to return, unless some nature were implanted in him whereby he might be enabled to do it. Would it, then, be for the honour of this great Redeemer to come short of his end against Satan, to let all the trophies of Satan remain, in the errors of the understanding, perversity of the will, disorder of the affections, and confusion of the whole soul? Or if our Saviour had only removed these, how had the works of the devil been destroyed if we had lain open to his assaults, and been liable the next moment to be brought into the same condition, which surely would have been, were not a righteous and divine nature bestowed upon the creature.

(3.) Christ came to bring us to God: 1 Peter 3:18, 'For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Was it to bring us to God with all our pollutions, which were the cause God cast us off? No; but to bring us in such a garb as that we might be fit to converse with him. Can we be so without a new nature and a spiritual likeness to God? Would that man who would bring another to a prince to introduce him into favour, bring him into his presence in a slovenly and sordid habit, such a garb which he knew was hateful to the prince? Neither will our Saviour, nor can he bring sinners in such a plight to God, because it is more contrary to the nature of God's holiness to have communion with such, than it is contrary to the nature of light to have communion with darkness, 1 John 1:5-7. Can it be thought that Christ should come to set human nature right with God, without a change of that principle which caused the first revolt from God? Besides, since the coming of Christ was to please God, and to glorify him in all his attributes, as well as to save us, how can God be pleased with the effects of Christ's death, if he brought the creature to him without any change of nature, but with its former enmity and pollution? Will you say his mercy would be glorified? How can that be without a wrong to his purity, and a provocation to his justice? Suppose such a dispute were in God, would not holiness, wisdom, justice, joined together, over-vote mercy? But since there can be no such dispute, how can we conceive that mercy, an infinite perfection in God, can desire anything to the prejudice of the honour of his holiness, justice, and wisdom?

Well, then, if we expect happiness without a renewed nature, we would make Christ a minister of sin as well as of righteousness, Galatians 2:17, &c. As there is a justification by him, so his intent was to plant a living principle in us, whereby we might be enabled to live to him. It is in vain, then, to think to find any benefit by the death of Christ without a new nature, any more than from God without it.

Prop. 6. The end of the Spirit's coming manifests it to be necessary. We are said therefore to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' Titus 3:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. As God by his Spirit, moving upon the face of the waters, created the world, so God by his Spirit, moving upon the face of the soul, new creates all the faculties of it. Can the coming of Christ, and the coming of the Spirit, the most signal favours of God to mankind, be intended for no other end than to convey to us the mercy of God, with the dishonour of his holiness, to change our misery without changing our nature, and putting us in a capacity both to glorify God and enjoy him? To what purpose does the Spirit come, if not to renew? Whatsoever was the office of the Spirit, cannot be supposed to be exercised without this foundation. Can there

be any seal of the Spirit without some impression made upon the soul like to the Spirit, which is the seal whereby we are sealed? Can he witness to us that we are the children of God, if there be no principle in us suitable to God as a father, no childlike frame? Is the Spirit only to bring things to remembrance for a bare speculation, without any operative effect? Is he to help us in prayer? How can that be, without giving us first a sense of what we need, and a praying heart? And how can we have a praying heart till our natures, so averse from God and his worship, be changed? He is a 'quickening Spirit,' 2 Corinthians 3:6, 'the Spirit gives life.' How can that be while we lie rotting in our former death? It is a 'Spirit of holiness.' Can he dwell in a soul that has an unholy nature? Though he find men so at his first coming, would he not quickly be weary of his house if it continued so? He comes to change our old nature, not to encourage it. What fruits of the Spirit could appear without the change of the nature of the soil?

Prop. 7. From all this it follows that this new birth is necessary in every part of the soul. There is not a faculty but is corrupted, and therefore not a faculty but must be restored. Not a wheel, not a pin in all this clock of the heart but is out of frame, not one part wherein sin and Satan have not left the marks of their feet: Titus 1:15, 'Their mind and conscience is defiled.' It is clearer to a regenerate soul that it is so, since by the light of grace he discerns a filth in every faculty. The more knowledge of God he has, the more he discovers his ignorance; the more love to God, the more he finds and is ashamed of his enmity. And though in our imperfect regeneration here, grace and sin are in every part of the soul, as wine and water mingled together are in every part of the vessel, yet every faculty is in part renewed; and grace and sin lie not so huddled together but that the soul can distinguish them, and be able to say, this is grace, this is part of the new Adam, and this is sin, and part of the old Adam in me.

Because there was an universal depravation by the fall, regeneration must answer it in its extensiveness in every faculty. Otherwise it is not the birth of the man, but of one part only. It is but a new piece, not a new creature. This or that faculty may be said to be new, not the soul, not the man. We are all over bemired by the puddle of sin, and we must be all over washed by the water of grace. A whole sanctification is the proper fruit of reconciliation: 2 Thess. 5:23, 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly.' Reconciliation was of the whole man, so must regeneration. Sin has rooted itself in every part; ignorance and error in our understandings; pride, and self-love, and enmity in our wills; all must be uprooted by a new grace, and the triumphs of sin spoiled by a new birth.

Prop. 8. It is so necessary, that even the dim eye of natural reason has been apprehensive of some need of it. And, therefore, it is a wonder that there should be a need of pressing it upon men under the light of the gospel. Those doctrines that are purely intellectual and supernatural, are not so easily apprehended by men, as having no footing in reason, whereby reason is rendered unpliant to consent to them. But those doctrines that tend to the reformation of man carry a greater conviction, as having some notion of a depravation, which gives them some countenance in the minds of men, though not in their affection. Men cannot conceive any notion of God's greatness, majesty, and holiness, but they must also conceive something necessary to an enjoyment of him (wherein their felicity consists), besides those natural principles which they find in themselves. Natural reason must needs assent to this, that there must be some other complexion of the soul to fit us for a converse with so pure a majesty. The wiser sort of heathens did see themselves out of frame; the tumult and disorder in their faculties could not but be sensible

to them. They found the flights of their souls too weak for their vast desires. They acknowledged the wings of it to be clipped, and that they never came so out of the hands of God. That therefore there was a necessity of some restorative above the art of man to complete the work. And I think I have read of one of them that should say, That there could not be a reformation unless God would take flesh. They had 'the work of the law written in their hearts,' Romans 2:15. They knew such works were to be done; they found themselves unable to do them. Whence would follow that there must be some other principle to enable them than what they had by nature. To this purpose they invented their purgative virtues; and by those and other means hoped to arrive to an "homoiosis toi theoi", which they much talked of as necessary to a converse with God. As they were sensible of their guilt, and therefore had sacrifices for the expiation of that, so they were sensible of their filth, and had their purifications and washings for the cleansing of that. Hence it was that they admired those men that acted in a higher sphere of moral virtue and moderation than others. Some of them have acknowledged the malady, but despaired of a remedy, judging it above the power of nature to cure. Certainly that which the wisest heathens, in the darkness of nature, without knowledge either of law or gospel, have counted necessary; and since it is seconded by so plain a declaration of our Saviour, must be indisputably necessary. Plato in several places says, That there was a certain divine principle in our minds at first, but that it was abolished, and God would again renew and form the soul with a kind of divinity.

How vain then are men, how inexcusably foolish, to neglect both the light of the gospel and that of reason too; that spend not one hour, one minute, in a serious consideration of it and enquiry after it; in slighting their own reason as well as the express declaration of Jesus Christ. Oh that men were sensible of this, which is of so great concernment to them.

II. I come to show that regeneration is necessary.

1. It is necessary to a gospel state.

(1.) Nothing can exist in any state of being without a proper form. That which has not the form of a thing is not a thing of the same species. He cannot be a man that wants a rational form of a man, a soul. And how can any man be a Christian without that which does essentially constitute a Christian? We can no more be Christians without a Christian nature, than a man can be a man without human nature. Grace only gives being to a Christian, and constitutes him so: 1 Corinthians 15:10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all.' Grace there is meant of habitual grace, because he speaks of his labour as the fruit of it. In bodily life brutes go beyond us, in the vigour of senses, greatness of strength, temperance, natural affection. In reason and moral virtues many heathens have excelled us. There is something else, then, necessary for the constitution of a Christian, and that is, Christ's living in him by a new forming of his soul by his Spirit. As the body lives by the soul, which distributes natural, vital, and animal spirits to every part of the body, for the performance of its several functions; so the soul lives by grace, which diffuses its vigour to every part, the understanding, will, and affections.

(2.) There is no suitableness to a gospel state and government without it. In all changes of government in the world there is a change in the whole state of affairs, in those that are the instruments of government, in the principles of those that submit to the government. After the fall of man God set up a new mode of government. All judgment was committed to the Son: John

5:22, 'For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.' John 5:27, 'And has given him authority to execute judgment.' The whole administration of affairs is put into his hand; not excluding the Father, who still gave out his orders in the government, wherefore he says, John 5:30, 'I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge.' There must be, therefore, some agreement between the frame of this government and the subjects of it. As there is a new Adam, a new covenant, a new priesthood, a new spirit; so there must be a new heart, new compacts, new offerings, new resolutions. New administrations and old services can no more be pieced together than new does and old garments. The gospel state of the church is called a new heaven and a new earth. Man is by the inclinations of his corrupt nature obedient to the law of sin. There must be a cure and change of those inclinations, to make them tend to an observance of the orders of this new government, and an hearty observation of it, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God' (so they were before), but now in a new manner and frame; and this is the reason rendered why every man in Christ must be a new creature.

(3.) All the subjects of this government have been brought in this way, not one excepted. Though God has chosen some that he would bless for ever under this evangelical government, yet notwithstanding the purpose of God they are in as great unfitness for this state as the worst of men, till God exerting his power fashions them to be vessels of honour to himself. It is not God's choice of any man which puts any man into a gospel state, without the operation of the Spirit, renewing the mind and fitting him for it. All that were designed by God's eternal purpose were to be brought in by this way of the new birth, as 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 'God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' And by this they were fortified against all those workings of the mystery of iniquity, against the government of Christ and the state of the gospel, which would be damnable and destructive to many; for he had spoken of that before, upon which occasion he brings this in. 'A chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people,' are joined together, 1 Peter 2:9. Peculiar they could not be, unless they had something of an intrinsic value in them above others, and a peculiar fitness for special service, and to offer spiritual sacrifices, therefore called also a royal priesthood.

(4.) The end of the particular institutions, of initiation or admission, under the two different administrations of this government, was to signify this—of circumcision under the law, and baptism under the gospel. Both signified the corruption and filthiness of nature, and the necessity of the circumcision of the heart and the purification of nature. Hence baptism is called 'the laver of regeneration,' Titus 3:5, many understanding it of baptism. Not that these did confer this new nature in a physical way, or that it was always conferred in the administration of them, but the necessity of having this was always signified by them. Therefore one of the Jews, against the opinion of his countrymen, says absolutely, it is a madness to think that those ceremonies, under their administration, were appointed only for the purification of the body without that of the soul. And Romans 2:29, says the apostle, 'He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit.' So that partaking of baptism, and being entrusted with the oracles of God, make a man no more a Christian than circumcision, &c., did make a man a Jew. He is only a Christian that has a Christian nature. The necessity of this nature was evidenced and signified both by the one and by the other. In every state there are duties to be performed and privileges to be enjoyed. So likewise in the gospel state. Without a new birth we cannot perform the one or be

capable of the other.

2. It is necessary to the performance of gospel duties.

(1.) There can be no preparation to any service without it. Man's soul at first could make a spiritual music to God, till the flesh disordered the strings, and no music can be made till the Spirit puts the instrument in tune again. In Jesus Christ we are 'created to good works,' Ephesians 2:10. Therefore no preparation can be before the new creation, no more than there was a preparation in the matter without form and void to become a world. What evangelical duties can be performed without an evangelical impression, without the forming of Christ and the doctrine of Christ in the heart, not only in the notion, but the operative and penetrating power of it? The heart must be first moulded, and cast into the frame of the doctrine of the gospel, before it can obey it, as Romans 6:17, 'But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you,' or, 'unto which you were delivered.' The mould wherein a thing is cast makes it fit for the operation for which it is intended. The ship that wants any material thing in its make cannot sail well, will not obey the directions of the pilot; and he that wants grace will be carried away with the breath of every sin and temptation. All the motions and railings naturally in ways of duty by other principles, cannot make an aptitude to divine services, no more than a thousand times flinging up a stone into the air can produce any natural fitness in it for such an elevation any more than it had at first, which was none at all. Where should we have any preparation? It cannot be from Adam; he died a spiritual death by his sin, and had no natural fitness for any spiritual service, and therefore cannot convey by nature more to his posterity than what he had by nature; what grace he had afterwards was bestowed upon his person, not upon the nature which was to be transmitted to his posterity.

(2.) Therefore we cannot act any evangelical service without a new nature. If we have no natural preparation, we can have no natural action. The law must be written in our hearts before it be formed into the life, Jeremiah 31:33-34, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is then, and then only, that we have a practical and affectionate knowledge of God, 'And they shall know me from the least unto the greatest.' Restoration to a supernatural life must be before there can be supernatural actions, a just nature before a just walk, as Hosea 14:9, 'The just shall walk in them,' that is, in the ways of God. The motion of the creature is not the cause but the effect of life. The evangelical service is not the cause of righteousness but the effect. We cannot walk in one commandment of God till the law be written in our inward parts, Ezekiel 36:14. Those that have not a new heart cannot walk in God's statutes. We can never answer the terms of the covenant without a new nature. For,

[1.] No act can transcend the principle of it. There is a certainty in this rule; that the elevation of an inferior nature to the acts of a superior nature cannot be without some inward participation of that superior nature. The operation of everything follows the nature of the thing. A beast cannot act like a man without partaking of the nature of a man, nor a man act like an angel without partaking of the angelical nature. How then can a man act divinely without a participation of the divine nature? Duties of a supernatural strain, as evangelic duties are, require a supernatural frame of spirit. Nothing can exceed the bounds of its nature, for then it should exceed itself in acting. Whatsoever service, therefore, does proceed from mere nature, cannot amount to a gospel-service, because it comes not from a gospel-principle. We cannot believe without a habit of faith, nor love without a habit of love; for this only renders us able to perform such acts. Justification is necessary to our

state as well as regeneration; but regeneration seems to be more necessary to our duties than the former; this principally to the performance of them, the other to the acceptance of them.

[2.] The nature does always tincture the fruit of it. Our Saviour, by his interrogation, implies an impossibility that those that are evil should speak good things: Mat. 12:34, 'O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.' The very hissings of a viper proceed from the malice of its nature. As the root is, so is all the fruit. From one seed many grains arise, yet all partake of the nature of that seed. Streams partake of the quality of the fountain. If the seed, root, and fountain be good, so is what-soever springs from them. There is not one righteous man by nature, neither Jew nor Gentile, all are concluded under sin: Romans 3:10, 'There is none righteous, no, not one;' none that 'understands and seeks God,' &c. He adds not one twice; he exempts none, not one righteous by nature, not one righteous action by nature: 'none that does good, no, not one.' He applies it to all mankind. A poisonous nature can produce nothing but poisonous fruit. Our actions smell as rank as nature itself. Whatsoever rises from thence, though never so spacious and well-coloured, is evil and unprofitable. If, therefore, we would produce good fruit, we must have a new root, seed, and spring. Our sour nature must be changed into a sweetness and purity. If the vine be empty, the fruit will be so too: Hosea 10:1, 'Ephraim is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit to himself,' or, 'equal to himself,' "yeshaweh". Unless the tree be good, the fruit can never be generous: Matthew 7:17-18, 'Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' We must have the Spirit before we can bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. All good services are related to this, as effects to their cause; so that what a man does by an act of reason, and natural conscience, and good education, if his understanding and conscience remain wholly under their natural pollution, the service is not good, because the soul is corrupt; much less are those services good which are the fruit only of humour. How the soul can be habitually sinful, and yet the acts flowing from it be good, is not easily conceivable; it is against the stream of natural observation. It is true, indeed, that a man that is habituated to one kind of sin may do an action that receives no tincture from that particular habit, because it does not proceed from it; as a drunkard gives an alms, his giving alms has no infection inherent from that particular habit of drunkenness, but from the nature, which is wholly corrupt, it has. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,' Job 14:4. Who can bring a clean service out of a miry heart? Not one man in the world. We cannot, therefore, perform any evangelical service if those foundations be considered. Not spiritually, because we are flesh. God must be 'worshipped in spirit,' John 4:24; in a spiritual manner, with spiritual frames. The apostle speaks of 'walking in the spirit,' Php 3:3, and 'praying in the Holy Ghost,' Jude 1:20. None can act spiritually but those that are 'born of the Spirit;' and no action is spiritual but what proceeds from a renewed principle. The most glittering and refined flesh is but flesh in a higher sphere of flesh, therefore whatsoever springs up from that principle is fleshly, upon the former foundation, that nothing can rise higher than its nature. You may as well expect to gather grapes of thorns as spiritual duties from carnal hearts: Matthew 7:16, 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' If a natural man 'cannot receive,' and 'cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Corinthians 2:14, how should he perform the duties belonging to God, since they are spiritually to be performed? We are naturally more averse to motions upon our wills than to the illuminations of our minds. An appetite for knowledge, and a flight from God being both the fruits of Adam's fall, who was both curious to know, as God, and fearing to approach to God after his fall. There may be some services in natural men which may look like spiritual, but in the

principle they are not so. Many acts are done by irrational creatures which look like rational acts. As the order among bees, like the acts of statesmen regulating a commonwealth; their carrying gravel in their fangs to poise them in a storm, and hinder them from being carried away by the violence of the wind; yet these are not rational acts, because they proceed not from reason, but from a natural instinct put into them by Gods the supreme governor. So that as no action of an ape, though like the action of a man, can be said to be a human act, so no action of an unregenerate man, though like a spiritual action, can be called spiritual, because it proceeds not from a spiritual principle, but from a contrary one paramount in him. And all actions have their true denomination from the principle whence they flow. They may be fruits of morality, and fruits of conscience, but not spiritual fruits, which God requires.

Well, then, we must be first built up 'a spiritual house,' we must be a 'priesthood' before we can 'offer spiritual sacrifice,' 1 Peter 2:5. We must have the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost in us before we can have a tincture of the Holy Ghost upon our services. In all human acts, we should act as rational creatures; in all religious acts, as spiritual creatures. Now, as a man cannot act rationally without reason, so neither can we act spiritually without a divine spirit in us. We are indeed to serve God, and worship him as men: therefore rational acts are due to God in worship, and we are constituted in the rank of rational beings to that purpose. But since our minds are defiled, they must be purified; since our understandings are darkened, they must be enlightened. There must be a grace infused, a lamp set up, a spiritual awakening, and invigorating our reasons and wills, before we can worship God as God in a spiritual manner.

We cannot perform any evangelical service, vitally, because we are dead. Our services must be living services, if in any wise they be suitable to a living God. The apostle wishes us, Romans 12:1, to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice.' He does not mean only our bodies, consisting of flesh and bones, or a natural life; but he names the body as being the instrument of motion and service, or it may be synecdoche partis pro toto, a part for the whole. Present yourselves as a sacrifice consecrated to God, and living to him, and as living by him.

Upon the loss of original righteousness, another form or principle was introduced, called in Scripture flesh, and a body of death. Hence by nature we are said to be dead, Ephesians 2:1, and all our works before repentance are dead works, Hebrews 6:1. And these works have no true beauty in them, with whatsoever gloss they may appear to a natural eye. A dead body may have something of the features and beauty of a living, but it is but the beauty of a carcass, not of a man. A statue, by the stonecutter's art, and the painter's skill, may be made very comely, yet it is but a statue still; where is the life? Such services are but the works of art, as flowers painted on the wall with curious colours, but where is the vegetative principle? Since man, therefore, is spiritually dead, he cannot perform a living service. As a natural death does incapacitate for natural actions, so a spiritual death must incapacitate for spiritual actions. Otherwise, in what sense can it be called a death, if a man in a state of nature were as capable of performing spiritual actions as one in a state of grace? No vital act can be exercised without a vital principle. As Adam could not stir to perform any action, though his body was framed and perfected, till God breathed into him a living soul, so neither can we stir spiritually till God breathe into us a living grace. Spiritual motions can no more be without a spiritual life than bodily motions can be without an enlivening soul. 'The living, the living, they shall praise thee,' and Psalms 80:18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' There can be no living praise, nor no living prayer, without a renewed heart. If it be one

effect of the blood of Christ to 'purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God,' as Hebrews 9:14, then it is clear that till our consciences are purged from dead works we cannot serve the living God, for what suitableness can there be between a living God and dead services? Is a putrefied rank carcass a fit present for a king? or a man full of running sores and boils over his whole body fit to serve in a prince's chamber? Our best services, without a new nature, though they may appear varnished and glittering to man, yet in the sight of God they have no life, no substance, but stinking rotten dust, because coming from a dead and rotten heart.

Well, then, we must be born again; it is not a dead nature, nor a dead faith, can produce living fruit for God. We may as well read without eyes, walk without legs, act without life, as perform any service to God without a new nature; no, we cannot perform the least: a dead man can no more move his finger than his whole body. Not graciously, because we are corrupt. By the same reason that we are to speak with grace, Colossians 4:6, and to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, Colossians 3:16, we are to do every other duty with an exercise of grace to God: and without grace, our praises are but hollowings, our prayers but howlings, as the Scripture terms them: Hosea 7:14, 'They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' How can there be an exercise of that which is not? The skill of the musician cannot discover itself till the instrument be made tuneable. The heart must be strung with grace by the Spirit, before that Spirit can touch the strings to make harmony to God in a gospel service. Our tempers must be changed, our hearts fitted, before he can make melody to God. The principal beauty and glory of a duty lies in the internal workings of the heart; and how can that heart work graciously, that has nothing of God and his grace in it? It is said, 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,' Proverbs 22:15. So is corruption in the heart of a man, like poison in a bundle of stuff; it is entered into the very composition of us. A law of sin is predominant in a natural man, Rom. 7:93, which does influence all his actions. Strong habits will interest themselves in all we go about, and all a man's services are regulated by it, for he has no other law in his mind to check the motions of it, and to scent his duties, whereby they may carry a pleasing savour to God. The gift of prophecy, the understanding of mysteries, the depth of knowledge, the removing mountains, bestowing alms, dying for religion, are brave and noble acts, but without charity, love to God, without which, no other grace can work, all these profit nothing, 1 Corinthians 13:2-3. There is a moral goodness in feeding the poor, but no gracious goodness without charity. A little of this would make those, as a diamond does gold wherein it is set, more valuable. If all those profit nothing without this grace of charity, they would profit much with it. How does grace alter the very nature of services? Those acts which are sensitive in a brute, were he transformed into a man, and endued with reason, would become rational. Those actions which are but moral in a mere man, when changed into Christian, become evangelical; they would be of another nature and another value.

Well, then, look after the new birth, since it is so necessary. There cannot be gracious practices without gracious principles. Can anything fly to heaven without wings? We are to walk as Christ walked; how can we do it without a principle of kin to that which Christ had? We are bound to act from a principle of righteousness; Adam was, and his posterity are; and should we not look after that which is so necessary a perfection, requisite for our services? No doubt but the devil could find matter enough for prayer, and from the excellency of his knowledge, frame some rare strains, as some word it; but would it be a service which came from such a nature? As long as we are allied to him in our nature, our services will be of as little value. He transforms himself into an angel

of light, but is still a devil; and many men do so in their religious acts, yet still remain unregenerate. Not freely and voluntarily, because we are at enmity. A natural man's services are forced, not free. The aversion of our natures from God is as strong as their inclination to evil. We have no fervent desires to love God, and therefore no desires to do anything out of affection to him. When sensual habits are planted in the soul, there is an enmity to God in the mind: it will not be 'subject to the law of God,' Rom. viii., and whilst that habit sways, it cannot. This inclination to sin, and consequently aversion to good, is incorporated in nature, like blackness in a black person, or spots in a leopard; they are accustomed to sin, and cannot do good, Jeremiah 13:23. There is no agreeableness between God and man's soul, whilst there is a friendship between the heart and sin; he affects the one, and is disgusted with the other: one is his pleasure, the other his trouble; he has no will, no heart to come to God in any service, and when he does, he is rather dragged, than sweetly drawn. The things of God are against the bent of a natural heart; there is nothing so irksome as the most spiritual service; when men engage in them, they row against the stream of nature itself. There must, therefore, be something of a contrary efficacy to overpower this violent tide, a law of grace to renew the mind and turn the motions of the will, to another channel. Restraining grace may for a while stop the current, but not turn and change the natural course. A carnal mind conceits the things of God and his spiritual service to be foolishness, and therefore contemns them, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24. The eye of the mind must be opened to discern the wisdom of God in them, before he can affect them. The heart should be lifted up in the evangelical ways of God. Can mere flesh be thus? Force can never change nature. You may hurl lead up into the air, but it will never ascend of itself while it is lead, unless it be ratified into air or fire. Keep up iron many years in the air by the force of a loadstone, it will retain its tendency to fall to the earth if the obstacle be removed; the natural gravity is suspended, not altered. Till the nature of the will be altered, it can never move freely to any duty; there must be a power to will, before there is a will to do, as Php 2:13, 'It is God which works in you both to will and to do.' A supernatural renewing grace must expel corrupt habits from the will, and reduce it to its true object. When faith is planted, it brings love to work by; when the soul is renewed, there is an harmony between God and the heart, between the mind and the word, between the will and the duty; when the appetite and true taste of the soul is restored in regeneration, then spring up strong desires to apply itself to every holy service: 1 Peter 2:2-3, 'The sincere milk of the word' is fervently desired, after it is spiritually tasted.

Well, then, there must be a change in us, or in the law. The law is spiritual, man is carnal, Romans 7:14. The law can have no friendship for man, nor man no friendship for the law in this state, since their natures are so contrary. What the law commands is disgusting to the flesh, what the flesh desires is displeasing to the law. There must then be a change; the law must become carnal, or man become spiritual, before any agreement can be between them. Where do you think this change must light? It can never be in the law, therefore it must be in man. The wound, in our wills must be cured; the tide of nature, that never carries us to God, must be turned, and altered by a stream of grace, to move us to him and his service. Man has been a slave to his lust by the loss of grace, and is never like to be restored to his liberty in the service of God, till he be repossessed of that grace, the loss of which brought him into slavery. The gospel is a 'law of liberty,' James 1:25; a servile spirit does not suit a free law, neither is it a fit frame for an evangelical service. Nor delightfully. We can never perform spiritual services with delight, because we are alienated. This we are to do. Paul 'delighted in the law of God,' Romans 7:22; and the law was the 'delights' of

David, Psalms 119:92; his whole pleasure run in this channel. Now, because of that aversion to God, there is no will and freedom in his service, much less can there be a delight. A corrupt nature can have no divine strains; a diseased man has no delight in his own acts, his distemper makes his very motion unpleasant to him. Things that are not natural can never be delightful. There is a mighty distance between spiritual duties and a carnal heart. Things out of their place can never be at rest. Sin is as much a natural man's element as water to a fish or air to a bird; if he be stopped in the ways of the flesh, he is restless till he return. He may indeed have some delight sometimes in a service—not as it respects God as the object, or God as the end, there is no such friendship in a natural man's heart to him—but there is an agreement between a service and some carnal end he performs it for. His delight is not terminated in the service, but in self-love, self-interest, or some external reward, anchored in it by some hopes of carnal advantage, not springing from a living love or a gracious affection to God. He has no knowledge of God, and therefore can have no delight in God or in his service. It is impossible we can come before him without pleasure and delight, if we know how amiable he is in his person, and how gracious in his nature; but we naturally think God a hard master, and man having no delight in God, he can have none in those means which lead him to God, and as they are appointed to bring God and his soul together. He has wrong notions of duties, looks upon them as drudgeries, not as advantages: Malachi 1:13, 'Ye said, Behold, what a weariness it is,' &c. Without a change of nature, we cannot desire communion with God, and therefore cannot delight in the means of it. We can no more do any service cheerfully than the saints without it could 'receive joyfully the spoiling of their goods,' Hebrews 10:34. We can never be in a holy ecstasy without this inward principle, to make the gospel services connatural to us. This only makes high impressions upon the soul. It is the law within our hearts, which only makes us delight to do his will: Psalms 40:8, 'Thy law is within my heart,' in my bowels. He had a natural affection to it, and then a high delight in it. It made our Saviour delight to do his work; and it was the inward man of the heart, wherein the apostle's delight in the law was placed. Unless we have a divine impression of God upon us, we cannot hear his word with any joy in it; as our Saviour says, John 8:47, 'Ye therefore hear them not,' that is, the words of God, 'because you are not of God.' Unless we have God's light and his truth sent forth into us, we can never make God our exceeding joy, or go to his altar with such a frame, Psalms 43:3-4.

Well, then, there is a necessity of the new nature, to have a warm frame of heart in evangelical duties. What is connatural to us is only delightful. So much of weariness and bondage we have in any holy service, so much of a legal frame; so much of love and delight, so much we have of a new covenant grace. A spirit of adoption and regeneration only can make us delight to come to our father, and to cry Abba to him.

Without regeneration we cannot perform evangelical duties sincerely, because we are a lie, and in our best estate vanity. We must worship God 'in truth' as well as 'spirit,' John 4:24. God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit. God is truth, and therefore must be worshipped in truth. Without a new nature we cannot worship God in truth. The old nature is in itself a lie, a mere falsity, something contrary to that nature God created. It was first introduced by a lie of the devil ('ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,' Genesis 3:5), and thereupon a fancy that God lied in his command. How can we serve God with this nature, which had nothing but a lie for its foundation,—a lie of the devil, a lie in our fancy? Therefore our old nature is no better than a lie. How can we serve God with that nature which is quite another thing to that of his framing? Man in

his fall is a liar: Romans 3:4, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar,' a covenant-breaker, that kept not his faith with God. God, in respect of truth, and man, in respect of lying, are set in opposition by the apostle there. No man but would slight and scorn that service from another, which he knew to be a lying service in the very frame of it. There is no truth can be in any service which is founded only upon an old nature, and performed by one that is acted by the father of lies; and so is every unregenerate man, every 'child of disobedience,' Ephesians 2:2.

Now, sincerity cannot be without a new nature,

(1.) Because there are no divine motives which should sway the soul. Most services of natural men have such dirty springs, so unsuitable to that raised temper men should have in dealing with God, that they produce sacrifices not fit to be offered to an earthly governor: Malachi 1:8, 'If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?' &c., 'offer it now unto thy governor will he be pleased with thee?' Had they had divine motives, they had never brought such sickly services. What was not fit for themselves, they thought fit for God. Did but princes know what motives many had in their services they would with as much scorn reject them as they do ignorantly receive them with affection. But it is otherwise with God, who knows all the springs and wards in that lock of the heart of his own framing. Do not most services take their rise from custom, or from an outward religious education barely, or at best from natural conscience, which though it be all in a man, which takes God's part, yet it is flesh, and defiled? And what pure vapours can be expected from a lake of Sodom? Titus 1:15, 'To them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' The mind, which is the repository of natural light, and the conscience, which is the advocate of natural light, and applies it upon particular occasion, are defiled, and that in every unbelieving person. Can the motives which conscience takes from a dark and defiled principle, as the mind is, be divine? It is fear of death, wrath, and judgment which it mostly applies. These are the motives of defilement. Fear is the natural consequence of pollution; without sin and corruption we never had had any fear of hell. That cannot be gracious which springs naturally from the commission of sin, and can this be divine? Were there no punishment feared, there should be no duty performed. Conscience has naturally no basis to stand upon but this. What is the principle of his fear? Self. It is not therefore obedience to God, but self-preservation, says a man. Fear is but a servile disposition, and therefore cannot make a service good. All such extrinsic motives which arise not from a new life, are no more divine than the weights of a clock may be said to have life because they set the wheels on running. The same action may be done by several persons upon different principles and motives, for which one may be rewarded, the other not, as Matthew 10:41-42, 'He that receives a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' One may receive a member of Christ out of respect to Christ and the relation the person has to him, another man receive the same person out of a common principle of humanity, the action is the same, the good redounding to the object is the same; nay, it may be greater in him that acts from a commiseration of him, as a man, than a cup of cold water from the other, because his ability is greater; but the inward respect to the object is different. One respects him as a man of the same nature with himself in misery, the other respects him as a member of Christ in misery; one respects him as a man, the other as a righteous man. The principle is different: one relieves him out of a natural compassion, common to a heathen with him, the other out of a Christian affection to his Head. The actions are therefore

different, because of their motives: one is rewardable, and promised to be rewarded, the other not; one may be from grace— I do not say it always is, unless there be a constant tenor of such motives in our actions, for a natural man, under the preaching of the gospel, may do such a thing out of a present and transient respect to Christ, whom he hears so often of, and has some presumption to be saved by, but it is not his constant frame—I say, one may be from grace, the other from nature.

Therefore from hence results a necessity of the alteration of the frame of our souls, to furnish us with divine and heavenly motives for our actions. A man may do a thing by nature from a good principle, a principle of common honesty, good in its kind (brass is good in its kind, but not so good as silver), but not evangelically good, without a renewed affection to God: John 14:15, 'If you love me, keep my commandments;' keep what I command you, out of affection to me. Where 'the imagination of the heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually,' Genesis 6:5, all the service a man in that state performs rises from this spring, and has some infectious imagination in it, highly abominable to God; either wrong notions of God in it, or wrong notions of the duty, or corrupt motives, something or other of the evil imagination of the heart, mixes itself with it.

(2.) Without a renewed nature, as there are no divine motives, so there can be no divine ends. We are bound to refer our natural actions, much more our religious services, to the glory of God. The end is the moral principle of every action. It is that which confers a goodness or badness upon the service: Luke 11:34, 'If the eye be evil, the whole body is full of darkness' (this is commonly understood of a man's aim). If the intention be evil, there is nothing but darkness in the whole service. The perfection of everything consists in answering the end for which it was framed. That which Jonas the first end of our framing, ought to be the end of our acting, viz. the glory of God. But man has taken himself off from this end, and has been fond of making himself his chief good and ultimate end. Men naturally have corrupt ends in good duties. Pride is the cause of some men's virtue. And they are spiritually vicious in avoiding crimes, because they intrench too much upon their reputation. The pharisees made their devotion contribute to their ambition: Matthew 6:5, 'They pray to be seen of men,' and Matthew 23:5, 'But all their works they do to be seen of men.' Not one work wherein they had not respect to this. Their works might well be called the works of the devil, whose main business it was to set up pride and self. All their pretences of devotion to God, were but the adoration of some golden image. Have not many in their more splendid actions, the same end with brutes: the satisfaction of the sensitive part, covetousness, pride, emulation, sense of honour, qualities perceivable in the very brutes, as the end of some of their actions? The acting for a sensitive end is not suitable to a rational, much less can it be the end of a gracious creature. Have not men sinful ends in their religious services? in their prayers to God, , in their acknowledgements of God? The devil could entreat our Saviour's leave to go into the herd of swine. Was this a prayer, though directed to Christ, when his end was to destroy and satisfy his malice in it? At best, a man without grace is like a picture in a room which eyes all, and has no more respect to a prince than his attendants. A natural man's respect to God is but equal to a respect to all his other worldly concerns. Indeed it were well if it were so. He parcels out one part for God, one part for himself, and one part for the world, but God has the least share, or at best, no more than the rest. And truly, as a picture cannot give a greater respect, to fix its eyes more upon a prince than a peasant, because it has no life; so neither can a natural man pay a supreme respect to God in his service, without a spiritual life. There is a necessity then of removing those

depraved ends, that man may answer the true end of his creation. The principles then upon which such ends do grow, contrary to the will of God, must be rooted out, that the soul may move purely to God in every service. We are come short of the glory of God: Romans 3:23, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' short of aiming at it, short of his approbation of our acts. Being thus come short, our ends cannot rise higher than the frame of our soul. Grace, grace only can advance our wills to those supernatural ends for which they were first framed. We can never aim at the glory of God till we have an affection to him. We can never honour him supremely, whom we do not supremely love. An affection to God can never be had, till the nature, wherein the aversion is placed, be changed into another frame. We are to glorify God, as God. How can we do this without the knowledge of him? How can we know him but by the gospel, wherein he discovers himself? How can we have right conceptions of the gospel, till gospel impressions be made upon us? How can we act for the glory of God, to whom naturally we are enemies? There is none of us born with a spiritual love to God. There must be an alteration of the end and aim in us; our actions cannot else be good, though ordered by God himself. God employs Satan in some things, as in afflicting Job; but is his performance good? No, because his end is not the same with God's. He acts out of malice what God commands out of sovereignty, and for gracious designs. Our end without it, is not the same with the end of the action; for moral acts tend to God's glory, though the agent has no such intention. So the action may be good in itself, but not good in the actor, because he wants a due end.

Well then, those actions only can be said to be evangelical, when the great end of God's glory, which was his end both in creation and redemption, has a moral influence upon every service; when we have the same end in our redeemed services, as God had in his redeeming love. Not humbly. We cannot without regeneration perform gospel duties humbly, because of natural stoutness and hardness. Evangelical duties must be performed with humility. Self-denial is the chief gospel lesson, and is to run through the veins of every service. Therefore God speaks of giving 'a heart of flesh,' in gospel times: Ezekiel 11:19, 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them.' Gospel duties require a pliability and tenderness of heart. Adam's overvaluing himself, and swelling with designs of being like God, brought an incapacity upon himself of serving his creator. And man ever since, is too much aspiring and too well opinioned of himself, to perform duties in an evangelical strain, with that meltingness, that nothingness in himself, which the gospel requires. Our swelling and admiring thoughts of our own natural righteousness, hinders Christ from saving us, and ourselves from serving him. There must then be an humble, and melting, and self denying frame. The angels are said to cover their faces before God, Isaiah 6:2, as having nothing to glory in of their own. And the chief design of the gospel is to beat down all glorying in ourselves: 1 Corinthians 1:29, 1 Corinthians 1:31, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence; let him that glories, glory in the Lord.' And indeed it humbles us no more than what, upon due consideration, will appear very necessary. Nature then must be changed before this pride be rooted out. Old things must pass away, that God may be all in all in the creature. We cannot without a new nature make a true estimate of ourselves, and lie as vile and base in the presence of God. A stone, with all the hammering, cannot be made soft. Beat it into several pieces, you may sever the continuity of its parts, but not master its hardness; every little piece of it will retain the hardness of its nature. So it is with a heart of stone. The nature must be changed before it be fit for those services which require melting, humble, and admiring frames. There is a necessity of a

residing grace, like fire, to keep the soul in a melting temper. Not constantly. Without a new nature, we cannot perform gospel services constantly, because of our natural levity. Where the nature is flesh, the heart 'minds the things of the flesh,' Romans 8:5. The mind thus habituated, will not be long employed about the things of the Spirit. There is a natural levity in man's nature. Do not many seem to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh? seem to arise to heaven, and quickly fall down to earth? Do not our very promises vanish with the next wind of temptation, and like sparks, expire as soon as they be born, unless grace be in the heart to keep them alive. The Israelites are accused of not having a heart steadfast with God: Psalms 78:37, 'Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' Are our natures better than theirs? Do we not all lie under the same charge; so uncertain naturally, about divine things, as if there were nothing but wind in our composition? Nothing can be kept up in motion against its nature, but by force. A top has no inward principle of motion, but is moved by some outward force. When that is removed, the motion languishes. Any motion that depends only upon outward wires, expires upon the breaking of them. When external motives, which spurred men on to this or that service, cease, the service dies of course, because the spring of the motion falls. If fear of hell, terrors of death, some pressing calamity, be the spring of any duty; when these are removed, there will be no more regard to the duty they engendered. But what is natural, is constant, because the spring always remains. Interest changes, conscience is various; and therefore the operations arising from thence, will partake of the uncertainty of thorn. Stony ground may bring forth blades; but for want of root, they will quickly wither: Matthew 13:5, Matthew 13:20. A man may mount high in religion, by the mixture of some religious passion, as meteors in the air; but by reason of the gross and earthy parts in them, will not continue their station. There is no being without, stable, but God; and no principle stable within, but grace: Hebrews 13:9, 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.' Whatsoever service is undertaken upon changeable motives, is as changeable as the bottom upon which it stands. If credit, slavish fear of God, worldly interest, inspire us with some seeming holy resolutions, they will all fly away upon the first removal of those props. There is therefore a necessity of a change of nature and disposition. Where there is no approbation of things that are excellent, there can be no constant operation about them. All action about an object, continues according to the affection to it, and delight in it. We shall then be filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God, when we have a sincere approbation of the excellency of them: Php 1:10-11, first, 'approve things that are excellent;' and then follows, 'without offence, till the day of Christ.' A stately profession can no more hold out against the floods of temptation, than a beautiful building can stand against the winds without a good foundation under ground. It is the Spirit of the Lord within, as well as without, can only maintain the standard against temptation, Isaiah 59:19.

Well then, upon the whole, there is a necessity of regeneration for the performance of gospel duties. We cannot else perform them spiritually, because we are flesh; nor vitally, because we are dead; nor graciously, because we are corrupt; nor voluntarily, because we are enmity; nor delightfully, because we are alienated; nor sincerely, because we are falsity; nor humbly, because of our stoutness; nor constantly, because of our levity. Our natures must be changed in all these respects, before we can be fit for any gospel service.

(2) Regeneration is necessary for the enjoyment of gospel privileges.

[1.] For the favour of God, and his complacency with us. We are not fit for God's delight, without it. That person who has his love, must have his image. If ever God could love an old nature, which he once hated, and delight in that which he once loathed, he must divest himself of his immutability. He never hated the person of any of his creatures, but for unrighteousness. And upon the removal of this cloud of separation between him and them, the beams of his love break out in their former vigour. God's love is not straitened, nor his kindness exhausted, no more than his hand is shortened, or his ear grown heavy, that he cannot hear: Isaiah 59:1-2, 'But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.'

For, first, what did make the first separation, was it not sin? God told Adam before, what the issue would be, upon his eating the forbidden fruit: Genesis 2:17, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' It is not a temporal death there only meant; for he should then have died that day wherein he fell, the word surely importing so much. And the punishment of a temporal death was pronounced afterwards: Genesis 3:19, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' Thou shalt surely die; thy integrity and righteousness will expire that very moment, and thou shalt die in my just displeasure. It is a spiritual death that is most properly meant. The punishment of sin is death; the chief part of this death is an 'alienation from the life of God,' Ephesians 4:18; that is, not to have God, and the righteousness of God's image living in him; but to be impure, corrupt, a hater of God, and servant of sin. Now from this punishment no man can be freed, but by a contrary regeneration, the proper effect whereof is to love God, to know his name, to partake of his holiness, to imitate his virtues. Man forfeited all God's favour upon his fall, and can challenge nothing of it.

Secondly, What then can restore man to God's favour? Can that which first deprived us of it? The cause of our destruction can never be the means of our restoration. Did the loss of Adam's integrity make him unfit for paradise, the garden of God, from whence he was expelled, as a token of God's disfavour? And can the continuance of that loss be a means to regain that love which cashiered us? It was a spiritual death; and is the carcass of a soul fit for God's complacency? There must be not only a satisfaction to his justice for the reinstating man into his favour (this is done by Jesus Christ); but a restoring of his image, this is done by the Holy Ghost. It is as impossible the soul can be beautiful without life, and without holiness, as for a body to be beautiful without a good colour and proportion of parts. Take away this, beauty must cease, and deformity succeed in the place. It is impossible, therefore, that where sin remains in its full vigour, where there is nothing of an original integrity residing, but that the soul must be monstrous, vile, and deformed in the eyes of God. To make it therefore a fit object for God's favour, it is necessary it be beautified with a holy nature, and adorned with its due proportions and vigour. The righteousness of Israel must go forth as brightness; he must be called by a new name, that is, a new nature, for what is a name without a nature? And then it should be Hephzibah, 'the Lord delights in thee.' Isa. 62:14, 'The righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns.' Righteousness is the glory of a soul, as well as of a church: 'Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: thou shalt be called by a new name,' a new nature wrought by the word of God; 'which the mouth of the Lord shall name.' Then she should be in favour with God, 'a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a total diadem in the hand of her God.' Righteousness is the glory of a soul, and God's delight and complacency is the consequent of a

righteous nature.

Thirdly, The elect themselves have no interest in God's favour of delight without it. This follows upon the former, God cannot love the very top of mankind, his own choice, with a love of complacency, without regeneration, without a righteous nature. There is a favour of intention and purpose before it; there is also an executive love in the very infusing the habits of grace, which is a supernatural favour, because there is both a purpose and then an actual conferring a supernatural good. God is free, and may will to give his gifts how, and to whom he pleases. But an elect person, whilst he continues in a state of nature, is not simply beloved, though there be a purpose of love, because there is no gracious quality in him, which is the object of God's special favour. It is regeneration only which is the object of God's delight in us.

Fourthly, Hence will follow, that no privilege under heaven, without it, can bring us into God's favour; no, not if any man were related to Christ according to the flesh. The apostle Paul would not think the better of himself for a fleshly relation to Christ, for being of the same country, descended of the Jewish nation: 2 Corinthians 5:16, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Though it be an honour to be of the same descent with Christ, according to the flesh, to be of the same nation and country, yet this does not make a man any more beloved of God. Nothing avails in Christ, but a new creature; and our Saviour himself pronounces it so. It was the highest privilege to be the mother of our Saviour, according to the flesh; yet this had been nothing, without her being born again of the Spirit: 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Behold my mother and my brethren,' pointing to his disciples, Matthew 12:48-49. 'My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it,' Luke 8:21. Those that hear the word, that have the gracious effect of the word wrought in them by the Spirit, are equal to my mother, and my brethren, and superior to any of my fleshly relations, if they be without it. There is a necessity of regeneration upon this account.

[2.] As there is no favour, so there is no union with God and Christ without it. Man has some kind of natural union with all things in the world; he has being with all creatures, rational faculties with angels, sense with animals, vegetation with plants; he wants only that with God which could beautify all the rest. And this can only be by partaking of the image of God's holiness by a new birth. There must be a capability for this union on man's part. A superior and inferior nature man be united together, but never contrary natures. There must be some proportion between the subjects to be united, which proportion consists in a commensuration of one thing to another. What proportion is there between God and our souls? There can be none without a supernatural grace infusing a pure nature. As we come out of the quarry of nature, rough and unpolished, we are not fit to be cemented with the cornerstone in the heavenly building; we must be first smoothed and altered by grace.

First, How can things be united to one another which are already united to their contraries? Separation from one body must make way for union to another. Naturally we are united to the devil as the head of the wicked world. We are by nature his members. Our understandings and wills were united with his in Adam, when Adam gave up his understanding and will to him; and ever since he 'works in the children of disobedience', Ephesians 2:2, 'Who now works in the children of disobedience,' "enegountos en huiois". Working and working in, as a united nature to him, and

principle in him. It is necessary this union should be broken before we can partake of the influence of another head. The diabolical nature and principle, therefore, which we have got by sin must be removed, and another nature, which is divine, put in the place first (in order of nature), before we can be united to Christ, and enjoy the benefits of union with him.

Secondly, How can things of a contrary nature be united together? Can fire and water be united, a good angel, and an impure devil? can heaven and hell ever meet friendly and compose one body? We are united to the first Adam by a likeness of nature; how can we be united to the second, without a likeness to him from a new principle? We were united to the first by a living soul; we must be united to the other by a quickening Spirit. We have nothing to do with the heavenly Adam, without bearing an heavenly image, 1 Corinthians 15:48-49. We are earthly as in the first Adam; we must be heavenly to be in the second, because his nature is so. If we are his members, we must have the same nature which was communicated to him by the Spirit of God, which is holiness. This nature must flow from the same principle, otherwise it is not the same nature; an old nature cannot be joined to a new Adam. There must be one spirit in both; as 1 Corinthians 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' and if it were an union barely of affections, as some would only make it, it is not conceivable how it can be without a change of disposition. But since it is an union by indwelling of the same Spirit in both (Romans 8:9, 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his'), it is less intelligible, how it can be without an assimilation of our nature to the nature of Christ. It can never be supposed the Spirit should unite a pure head, and impure members. Such an union would make our blessed Saviour like Nebuchadnezzar's image; an head of gold, arms of silver, and feet of clay. Shall we loathe to have nasty things about us, and will the holy Jesus endure a loathsome putrefying soul to be joined to him?

Thirdly, How can anything be vitally united to another without life? It is a vital union, by virtue of which believers are called Christ (1 Corinthians 11:12, 'As all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ'); and it is compared to the union of the members of a natural body, Romans 12:4-5. Members have not only life in their head, but in themselves, because the soul, which is the life of the body, is not only in the head, but in all the parts of the body, and exercises in every part its vital operations. The Spirit therefore, which is the band of this union, communicates life to every member wherein he resides, as well as in the head. What man would endure a dead body to be joined to him, though it were the carcass of one he never so dearly loved? If a man were united to Christ, without regeneration, Christ's body would be partly alive, partly dead, if any one member of it had not a spiritual life. A dead body and a living head, a member of Christ with a nature contrary to him, is an inconceivable paradox. Did God ever design such a monstrous union for his Son?

Upon these accounts does result the necessity of regeneration; without it, no union with Christ.

(3.) There can be no justification without it. We are not justified by an inherent righteousness; yet we are not justified without it. We cannot be justified by it, because it is not commensurate to the law by reason of its imperfection; we cannot be justified without it, for it is not congruous to the wisdom and holiness of God, to count a person righteous, who has nothing of righteousness in him, and whose nature is as corrupt as the worst of men. With what respect to God's honour, can it be expected that God should pardon that man's sins, whose will is not changed who still has the same habitualness in his will to commit sin, though he does not at present act it. It is very

congruous in a moral way, that the person offending should retract his sin, and return to his former affection. There is a distinction between justification and regeneration, though they never are asunder. Justification is relative; regeneration internally real. Union with Christ is the ground of both; Christ is the meritorious cause of both. The Father pronounces the one, the Spirit works the other; it is the Father's sentence, and the Spirit's work. The relative and the real change are both at the same time: 1 Corinthians 6:7, 'But you are sanctified, but you are justified;' both go together. We are not justified before faith, because we are justified by it, Romans 5:1; and faith is the vital principle whereby we live: Galatians 2:20, 'The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' It is the root-grace, and contains the seeds of all other graces in it; it is habitually and seminally all other grace; so that unless we be new born, no justification can be expected; no justification can be evidenced. God never pardons sin, but he subdues iniquity: Micah 7:18-19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity?' He will subdue our iniquities. The conquest cannot be made, while the nature, the root of the rebellion, remains. When he turns his compassion to us, he will turn away our hearts from iniquity. If a man were justified before he were regenerate, then he was righteous before he was alive; being 'in Christ,' as free from condemnation, is always attended with a 'walking after the Spirit;' and walking is not before living, Romans 8:1. Pardon would be unprofitable, unless he that were pardoned were made righteous inchoately here, and had a right to, and hope of, a perfect righteousness hereafter. If righteousness hereafter were not imparted in this manner, it would be an argument a man were still under the law, which says, 'he that does them shall live in them' (which is impossible in a man that has once sinned, though his sins are remitted). But it is clear that righteousness is imparted, since there is no man in the world whose sins are pardoned, but finds some principle in him whereby he is enabled to contest with sin more than before he was. Therefore do not deceive yourselves; there is no pardon without a righteous nature, though pardon be not given for it.

(4.) There is no adoption without regeneration. We can no more be God's sons, without spiritual regeneration, than we can be the sons and daughters of men, without natural generation. Adoption is not a mere relation without an inward form. The privilege, and the image of the sons of God, go both together. A state of adoption is never without a separation from defilement: 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, 'Come you out from among them, be you separate, and I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.' The new name in adoption is never given till the new creature be framed. 'As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God,' Romans 8:14, "houtoi", those very persons; that is the signal mark, that they are led by the Spirit; therefore first enlivened by the Spirit. A childlike relation is never without a childlike nature. The same method God observes in declaring the members his sons, as he did in declaring the head his Son, which was 'according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,' Romans 1:4. So he declares believers to be his sons, by giving them a spirit of holiness, and by a resurrection from sin, and spiritual death. The devils may as well be adopted sons of God, as we, without a change of nature. To be the sons of the living God, was the great promise of the gospel prophesied of: Hosea 1:1-11 to, 'Ye are the sons of the living God.' How well will it suit, a living God and a dead son? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Our Saviour's argument from the immortality of the soul will evidence not only a resurrection, but a necessity of spiritual life. What advantage is there in being sons of the living God, if we had no more life in us than his greatest enemies? Regeneration, as a physical act, gives us a likeness to God in our nature. Adoption, as a legal act, gives us a right to an inheritance; both the great intendments of the gospel, both accompanying

one another. No sonship without a new nature.

(5). There is no acceptation of our services without it. We are not fit to perform any duty without it, and God will never accept any duty from us without it. In the first of Ephesians 1:1-23. election, 2. regeneration, expressed by being holy, 3. adoption, 4. acceptation, are linked together: Ephesians 1:4-6, 'He has chosen us that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children;' after follows grace 'wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.' Our acceptation is only upon the account of Christ; but the acceptability is upon the account of grace. Faith makes our persons and our duties acceptable, and Christ makes them both accepted. Acceptability arises from grace, as damnability arises from sin. God damns none, unless they be damnable; neither does God accept any in Christ, unless they be acceptable. The papists that plead for merit, acknowledge nothing of it before grace, but after grace, because then the services have a greater proportion to God, from the dignity of the person, they being acts of God's children, and wrought by his Spirit. God can love nothing but himself, and what he finds of himself in the creature. All services, without something of God's image and Spirit in them, are nothing. As the product of a million of ciphers, though you still add to them, signifies nothing; but add one figure, an unit, the Spirit, grace, it will make the product to be many millions, of high account with God. All the significance depends upon the figure, which, if absent, the rest would be nothing. All moral perfections, without a new nature, are but ciphers in God's account: Hebrews 11:6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Grace is only a good work: Php 1:6, 'He which has begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Christ;' intimating that their morality and their natural wisdom, before their regeneration, were not good works in the sight of God. They were good in their kind; as a crab may be said to be a good crab, but not a good pippin. It is not good, unless it be fruit brought forth in Christ; neither is it ordained as good to the day of Christ, to appear glorious at the time of his triumph. God looks into our services, whether he Spirit frames them, and Christ presents them; all that we do must go through their hands before they can reach God's heart. Acceptation can never be without a renewed nature. The services of the flesh cannot please God: Romans 8:8. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Their persons cannot, therefore their actions cannot, because they are the products of a nature at variance with him, a nature that is not, nor cannot be subject to his law; so that God must be displeased with his own spiritual law; yea with his own holy nature, and change his judgment, and change his nature, before he can be pleased with fleshly services, for at the best, they are but refined brutishness. The image of the devil can never be grateful to God. Services flowing from nature, may seem in the outward form of them, to be as acceptable as the duties of a good man; but considering what a dunghill of filthiness the heart is, from whence they proceed, they cannot be so. Good water is sweetest, and bad water most corrupt, nearest the spring or fountain, the streams may lose some of their corruption in their passage. A gracious man's duties are most pleasant to God nearest the heart, a natural man's services are most distasteful nearest the spring. When the heart is a good treasure, what comes from it is regarded as a rich gift, because it comes from a valuable treasure, Luke 6:40; hence it is that a less work, coming from a pure and holy principle in a renewed man, is more acceptable to God, than a greater work (in respect of the external glorification of him in the good of mankind), coming from an impure principle in a natural man, as a cup of cold water given to a disciple is more valuable than the gift of a prince from another principle. In the one, God sees a conformity of affection with his holiness; in the other, only a conformity with his providence. One intends God's glory, and the other only acts it, proposing some other end to himself; and we use to

value gifts, rather by the affection of the friend, than the quantity of the gift. Well then, consider it; without a new nature, all our services, though they should amount to many millions in number, have no intrinsic value in them with God. For where the nature is displeasing, the actions flowing from that nature can never please him: 'He that turns away his ear from hearing the law,' that is, from a spiritual obedience to the law, 'even his prayer is an abomination,' Proverbs 28:9; it is formed by a noisome soul.

(6.) There is no communion with God without a renewed soul. God is incapable on his part, with the honour of his law and holiness, to have communion with such a creature. Man is incapable on his part, because of the aversion rooted in his nature. What way can there be to bring God and man together without this change of nature? what communion can there be between a rising God and a dead heart? God loathes sin, man loves it; God loves holiness, man loathes it. How can these contrary affections meet together in an amicable friendship? what communion with so much disagreement in affections? In all friendship there must be similitude of disposition. Justification cannot bring us into communion with God without regeneration; it may free us from punishment, discharge our sins, but not prepare us for a converse, wherein our chief happiness lies. There must be some agreement before there can be a communion. Beasts and men agree not in a life of reason, and therefore cannot converse together. God and man agree not in a life of holiness, and therefore can have no communion together. We are by sin alienated from the life of God, and therefore from his fellowship, Ephesians 4:18; we must have his life restored to us before we can be instated in communion with him.

[1.] God can have no pleasure in it. God took a delight in the creation, and did rejoice in his work. Sin despoiled God of his rest. It can give God no content, no satisfaction; for to be in the flesh, is to be in that nature which was derived from Adam, which brought the displeasure of God upon all mankind. Regeneration by the Spirit restores the creature to such a state wherein God may take pleasure in him, and strips him by decrees of that sin which spoiled his delight in the work of his hands; as it grows, communion is enlarged. God made man at first after his own image, that he might have communion with him. Since the loss of that, what fitness can there be for communion, till the restoration of that which God thought fit for his delight? Suppose that some one work of a natural man may be good and pleasing to God, it will not argue a communion of God with the person: he may be pleased with the work, but not with the man, for all the goodness he has being in the act, and the act being transient, when that is past his goodness is as the morning dew, vanished. He cannot be the object of God's delight, because he has no habitual goodness in him. If a man be abominable and filthy naturally, he cannot have a converse with God without a nature suitable to God, and a nature so animated, as that God may put some trust in it, and not be at uncertainty: Job 15:14-16, 'What is man, that he should be clean, he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he puts no trust in his saints,' &c. No man is clean, but those that delight in sin are much more abominable, that 'drink up iniquity like water.' Now God being infinitely holy, can have no communion with that which he does abominate, and he cannot have a fixed and a delightful communion with that which he cannot confide in. It must be therefore such a nature as is produced and preserved by his own Spirit. If the heavens are not clean in his sight, we must have a nature purer and cleaner than the heavens, before God can delightfully behold us, and pleasingly converse with us.

[2.] As God can have no pleasure in it, so man is contrary to it. Man, as he is by corruption, is at variance with God, and cannot but be at variance with him. An uncircumcised heart will not love God, or at least, will not pay him such a proportion of love, and love of such a quality, as is due to him; for if the end of the circumcision of the heart be to love the Lord with all our hearts, as Deuteronomy 30:6, 'And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' then it will necessarily infer, that he whose heart is not circumcised, does not love God with all his heart. Holiness and iniquity are so contrary, that no agreement can be made between them. God must deny his nature before he can deny his hatred of sin, and man must be stripped of his nature before he can leave his affection to sin. It is equally impossible for wickedness to love holiness, and for purity to love pollution. There can be no fellowship with God, whilst we walk in darkness, and he is light, 1 John 1:6-7.

[3.] Nay, thirdly, man naturally resists all means for it. It is the Spirit only which is the bond of union, and consequently the cause of communion. The Spirit can only bring God and us together. Walking in the Spirit hinders us from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, which make us incapable of communion: Galatians 5:16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' But every man by nature (as well as the Jews) 'resists the Holy Ghost,' Acts 7:61. And while this resistance of the great medium of it remains, this communion can never be. This resistance, therefore, must be removed, and there must be a divine stamp and impression upon our very nature, to make it pliable. You see more and more the necessity of regeneration.

(7.) As there is no communion with God without it, so no communications of Christ to our souls can be relished and improved without it. All the communications of Christ relish of that fullness of grace which was in his person, and therefore cannot be relished by any principle but that of the same nature. Whenever Jesus Christ comes to bless us with the great blessings of his purchase, he turns away our hearts from iniquity, Acts 3:26.

[1.] Ordinances cannot be improved. The word has no place in them, John 8:37. There is no footing naturally for any divine and spiritual truth. The nature of the soil must be changed before this heavenly plant will thrive. Plants grow not upon stones, nor this heavenly plant in a stony heart. The vine and the weed draw the same moisture of the earth, which in the vine is transmuted, by the nature of the plant, into a nobler substance than that in the weed. The new nature of a good man turns the juice of the word into a nobler spirit in him; and according as the nature of a good man is enriched with grace, the more does he concoct the word, and improve it, to the bringing forth fruit, and fruit of a diviner nature than another. The juice it affords to all is the same, but the nature of the creature turns it in the concoction. Nature must be changed then, to make any profitable improvement of the word and other institutions. A stone receives the water upon it, not into it; it falls off, or dries up as soon as ever it falls: but a new heart, a heart of flesh, sucks in the dew of the word, and grows thereby. The new birth and nature makes us suck in the milk, and grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:2.

[2.] There can be no communication of comfort. The Spirit comforts by exciting grace, and by discovering grace, not by dashes and enthusiasms. What comfort can there be when grace, the foundation, is wanting? Can the Holy Ghost ever speak a lie, and give any man comfort, and tell him he is a child of God, when he has the nature of the devil, so contrary to him? This were to witness not with our spirits, but against the frame and habit of them, which is not the Spirit's work,

Romans 8:16. Jesus Christ will not trifle away his comforts upon such as have no conformity to him. This were to put a jewel in a swine's snout, a crown upon a beast's head. Those that are not heirs by a new nature to heaven, cannot claim any title to the first fruits and clusters of it, the comforts of the gospel. As there is a necessity of a likeness to Christ, to make us capable of communications from him in a state of glory, so it is as certainly necessary to the lower degrees of it in this world. Vessels of wrath must be changed into vessels of honour before they are capable of being filled with spiritual comforts. Our blessed Saviour keeps his choicest flowers and richest beams for his dressed garden, not for the wild desert.

(8.) We cannot be in covenant without it. This should have been first, as the foundation of all. Had not Adam had an habitual righteousness in his nature, he had not been a fit person for God to have entered into covenant with. There must therefore be a restored righteousness, that we may come into the bond of the new covenant for eternal life. The very terms of it are, a new heart, a heart of flesh, a new spirit, the law written in the heart. Without this new nature, we cannot depend on him by faith, which is the condition of the covenant. For we cannot confide in him to whom we have an enmity, and of whom we have a jealousy. We cannot have God to be our God unless we be his people, have the nature and disposition of his people, turn to him, act towards him as our God; whereas in our first defection we made the devil our God. God requires righteousness still to our being in covenant, but dispenses with the strictness of the first covenant, and gives our Saviour a power to that end, in committing all judgment to the Son. As the covenant is spiritual, so there must be a spiritual life to answer the terms of it. Without it, we cannot walk in the way wherein we engage by covenant to walk, neither can we have any right to the promises and benefits of the covenant. Does God promise to be our God? It is upon the condition we be his people. Does he promise never to leave us nor forsake us? It is upon condition we continue not in our original apostasy. Does he promise to be present with us? It is more than his holiness will endure, while we continue in our filthy nature.

2. The second general. As regeneration is necessary to a gospel state, so it is necessary to a state of glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot in the promised land: none of those that came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness; only the two spies, who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage, but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy: Acts 26:18, 'That they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith that is in me.' So our Saviour himself phrases it in his discourse to Paul upon his conversion by faith, the great renewing principle. Upon Adam's expulsion from paradise, a flaming sword was set to stop his re-entry into that place of happiness. As Adam, in his forlorn state, could not possess it, we also, by what we have received from Adam, cannot expect a greater privilege than our root. Had Adam retained the righteousness of his nature, he had been fit for that place, and that place for him; but poor decrepit Adam could have no leave to enter. The priest under the law could not enter into the sanctuary till he were purified, nor the people into the congregation; neither can any man have access into the holy of holies till that be consecrated for him by the blood of Jesus, and he sprinkled by the same blood for it, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:22. It is by the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon our hearts that we

enter into the holiest by a way which he has consecrated; 'for there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination or a lie,' Revelation 21:17, as every unclean thing was prohibited entrance into the temple. Whosoever shall enter into the rest of God, must cease from his own works of darkness and corruption, as God did from his works of creation, Hebrews 4:10. If man fell the sixth day, the day of his creation, the rest of God in his lower works was disturbed by the entrance of sin upon them, as well as it had been disturbed by the sin of the angels in heaven. God rested from his works of creation, but not in them, but in Christ, the covenant of redemption, and restoration by him. We must therefore cease from our own works, to enter into his rest. This entrance we cannot have in an unbelieving, unregenerate state, because by unbelief we approve not of that for our rest, wherein God settled his own repose; and by unregeneracy we oppose the great intendment of it, the restoration of the creature to be a fit object for God's rest and complacency. It is necessary to a state of glory.

(1.) Not that there is a natural connection between a regenerate state and glory, that in its own nature gives a right to heaven, but a gracious connection by the will of God. Though it be morally impossible in nature that a man can have communion with God without a renewed state, yet when he has a new nature, it is not absolutely necessary that God should love him so intensely as to give him an eternal reward, but conditionally necessary, upon the account of the covenant wherein God has so promised. Though it be absolutely unavoidable to God to love goodness (for, because he is perfectly good, he cannot hate it), yet it is not absolutely necessary he should instate it in so inconceivable a glory. A new nature, indeed, makes a man capable of eternal glory, without which it is not possible for him to have it; but it gives him not a right to it, nor instates him in it in its own nature, but by the gracious indulgence of God. For, as I have said before, in the general foundation of this doctrine, that God may give grace without glory, is intelligible; but how he can admit a man to glory without grace is inconceivable. The very having of grace is a reward in itself. It is an ennobling of our nature, a setting us in our right station (the purity of the body is a pleasure, though a man has no hopes upon it to be preferred to a better condition), which may appear to us upon the banishment of Adam from paradise. Had there been any natural connection, he had not been dispossessed, supposing him to have faith infused into him at the time of the promulgation of the promise; or if afterwards, he would have had a re-entry, had there been a natural connection between a new nature and a state of glory.

(2.) Nor is there any meritorious connection between a regenerate state and glory, because there is no exact proportion between a new nature and eternal glory. The papists say, that before habitual grace a man cannot merit, but after it is infused by the Spirit of God into the soul, a merit does result from the dignity of the person brought into a state of grace. No such thing. Glory indeed is merited, but the merit results, not from the new nature, but from the new head, our Lord Jesus Christ. That righteousness whereby God is engaged to give us a crown of glory for a garland of grace, is not a commutative justice; as if grace were of equal value to glory, and heaven no more than a due compensation: 2 Timothy 4:8, 'There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' But it is the veracity and faithfulness of God which is meant by righteousness there, and other-where in Scripture. It is a justice due to the promise, not to the nature of the grace, and due to the covenant made with Christ, which was, that he should have a seed to serve him upon which compact our Saviour so peremptorily demands his people's being with him in glory: John 17:24, 'Father, I will that they also

whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.' As much as to say, Father, I will not remit a tittle of that article, which is part of the covenant between thee and me; I will have that performed to the full. And it is observable, though he mentions their faith, and their keeping his word, in other parts of the chapter, as arguments for God to take notice of them, and preserve them, yet his desire of the state of glory he founds upon his will, which must be grounded upon some antecedent agreement, whereby he had a right to plead for it. So that it is from the faithfulness of God to his promise, and the full merit of Christ, and thereupon his fixed resolution to have it performed, not from any meritorious dignity in the new nature itself. Grace only fits for glory, but does not merit it.

(3.) It is necessary by a fixed determination of God. Supposing that God could in his own nature, congruously admit of an unregenerate dead creature to a fruition of him in heaven, yet since he has decreed otherwise, and appointed other methods, God is now by his own free resolution under an immutable necessity not to admit him. As God having by a determinate counsel ordained the death of Christ as the medium to redemption, could not in our apprehensions afterwards appoint another way, because his counsel had pitched, not only upon the redemption of man, as the end, but the death of Christ as the means; and had there been a change, it must either be in the end or in the means. If in the end, and he would not have man redeemed, there had been an alteration in his love and kindness; if in the means, it must be either a worse or a better means; if a worse, and not so fit to effect redemption, it had still implied a change in his kindness; if a better means, it would argue a defect of wisdom in his first choice, that he did not foresee the best. By the like counsel and wisdom he has settled this of regeneration as the way to glory: 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Hebrews 12:14. Without a fixed and permanent holiness, which must be an holiness of nature, not only of action. Supposing any holiness in an action, without a new nature, it is yet but a transient holiness, and though it may make the action acceptable to God, yet it can never make the person that did it acceptable to him.

(4.) Regeneration is necessary in a way of aptitude and fitness for this state. A fitness in both subjects is necessary to the enjoyment of one another. Since therefore our happiness consists in an eternal fruition of God, and that naturally we are a mass and dunghill of putrefied corruption, there must be such a change as to make an agreement with that God whom to enjoy is our happiness; for all aptitude is a certain connection of the two terms whereby they may touch and receive each other. We cannot enjoy God in his ordinances without an holy nature, much less in heaven. As we are under the condemnation of the law by reason of our guilt, so we are under an unfitness for heaven by reason of our filth. We have a remote natural capacity for it, as we are creatures endued with rational faculties. But we have a moral unfitness, while we want a divine impression to make us suitable to it. Justification and adoption give us a right to the inheritance, but regeneration gives us a 'meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' Colossians 1:12. We are not meet for it while we are unholy, and while we are darkness, because it is an inheritance of saints, and an inheritance in light. As the body cannot be made glorious without a resurrection from a natural death, so neither can the soul, which is immortal, be made glorious without a resurrection from a spiritual death. Our corruptible bodies? 1 Corinthians 15:50, cannot possess an incorruptible kingdom unless made like to the glorious body of Christ, much less our souls, which are the chief subjects of communion with him in heaven. A depraved soul is as much unfit for a purified heaven as a corruptible body is for an incorruptible glory. Our Saviour

ascended not into heaven to take possession of his glory till after his resurrection from death, neither can we enter into heaven till a resurrection from sin. As Jesus Christ became like unto us, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us, Hebrews 2:17, 'It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;' so it behoves us to be made like unto him, that we may be fit offerings in the hand of our high priest, to present to God, for him to take pleasure in. The father of the prodigal forgave him at the first meeting after his return, but before he admitted him into the pleasure of his house he took away his garments that smelt of draff, and put other robes upon him. God is said therefore 'to work us to this thing,' "katechradzesthai", polish, that we may be fit to be clothed upon with our heavenly house, 2 Corinthians 5:5. If God be happy in his nature, man cannot be happy in a nature contrary to him; for we can never expect to enjoy a felicity in such a nature, which if God himself had, he could never be happy in himself. It is holiness in God which fits him to fill heaven and earth with the beams of his glory, and it is an holy nature in us, which makes us fit to receive him. As without holiness God could not be glorious in himself: Isaiah 6:8, 'Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;' so without holiness in our natures we could not be glorious with God. We are no more fit for heaven in a state of nature than a piece of putrefied flesh is fit to become a star. In heaven there are duties to be done, and privileges to be enjoyed. The work cannot be done, the reward cannot be received, without a new nature. The glorifying God, and enjoying him, is the glory of heaven. How can we do the one or receive the other without the change of our affections? Can God have a voluntary glory from his enemy, or can his enemy delight in the enjoyment of him?

[1.] Regeneration and the new nature is necessary to the duty of heaven. Eternity cannot free us from duty. Some duties are essential to the relation of a creature, some result only from this or that state of the creature. The alteration in the state changes the duty proper to that state; but no place, no state, can exempt a creature from those duties which are essential to him as a creature. It is impossible to conceive any relation, without some new debt or service. From every change in relations in the world there does arise some new duty which was not incumbent upon a man before. The relation which a regenerate man has to God here is the same which it is in heaven, but it is manifest there in an higher degree, and a choicer fruition. Thence therefore will arise, though not any new duty that we can conceive, yet fresher obligations to those services which are proper for that place. Without a change of nature it is not possible for any man (were he admitted thither) to perform the duties of heaven. Holy work is troublesome to a natural man here, and the more heavenly it was in itself, the more disgustful to corrupt nature. What was in a little measure holy was a drudgery upon earth; and what is in a greater measure holy cannot be a satisfaction in heaven to an old frame. There are some natural motives to some duties here, and our indigence takes part with them (as in that of prayer); but those of a more elevated strain, as love, and praise, and admirations of God, our natures are more averse to. What duty can be performed without a will? It is concluded by most, that the happiness of heaven consists as much, if not more, in the frame of the will, than in that of the understanding. If the will be not new framed, what capacity is there to perform the service requisite to that happy state? We must first be made just here before we can be made perfect above: Hebrews 12:23, 'Spirits of just men made perfect.' Just by an imputed righteousness, holy by an inherent righteousness, before they were transplanted to a state of perfection. Without a perfect frame none can perform the choice duties of heaven, and without righteousness here, we cannot be made perfect there.

Quest. What are the duties of heaven, that cannot be performed without a new nature?

Ans. First. Attendance on God. Some kind of service which we cannot understand in the state here below. The angels stand before God, and wait his commands; there is a pleasure of God which they do: Psalms 103:21, 'Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.' There is a will of God done in heaven, as well as upon earth. There are acts of adoration performed by them; they cover their faces, Isa. vi.; they are commanded to worship the Lord Christ, Hebrews 1:6. Their holiness fits them for their attendance, therefore called 'the holy angels.' It is against the nature of devils to perform such acts as those which the holiness of angels fits them for. Glorified souls shall be as the angels of God in heaven: Matthew 22:30, 'But are as the angels of God in heaven.' Equal to angels in their state, as they are angels in heaven; equal to angels in their work, as they are angels of God, attending on God, and ministering unto him, Daniel 7:10; though what that ministry shall be is not easily known in the extent of it. Is it usual in this world to take up a person from under an hedge, and bring him to an immediate attendance on a prince, without cleansing him, and begetting other dispositions and behaviour in him by some choice education? God picks some out for an immediate attendance on him in heaven; but he sends his Spirit to be their tutor, to breed them up, and grace their deformed souls with beautiful features, and their ulcerous and cancerous spirits, with a sound complexion, that they may be meet to stand before him. When God calls any to do him service in a particular station in the word, he gives them another heart; so he did to Saul for the kingdom, 1 Samuel 10:9. Is there not much more necessity of it for an immediate service of God in heaven? A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince, and serve him at his table; but he is not in a fitness till his noisome garments, full of his prison vermin, be taken off. Can one that is neither pardoned nor purified, one with the guilt of rebellion upon him, and a nature of rebellion in him, be fit to stand before God?

Secondly, Contemplation of God is a work in heaven. There shall be a perfect knowledge; therefore a delightful speculation. The angels behold his face, Matthew 18:10, and that always. The saints shall see him as he is, 1 John 3:2. It is not a stupid sight, but a gazing upon the face of this sun, with a refined and ravishing delight. For this work there must be,

First, A change of judgment. The eye must be restored. It is as possible for a blind eye to behold the sun, or a blear eye to stare in the face of it, without watering, as for a blind understanding to behold God; for it is not a being in the place of heaven, but having a faculty disposed, which does elevate us to the knowledge of him. Things that are corporal cannot know things that are spiritual. We cannot in this sensitive body view the face of an angel, and understand his nature; much less with a body of a total death, see the face of God, which is above all created beings, more than any spiritual creature is above sense. 'In heaven the saints shall know him, as they are known of him,' 1 Corinthians 13:12, perfectly, as far as the capacity of a creature can extend. Has God any scales upon his eyes? Does he not know perfectly what he knows? So shall the glorified saints. But if a natural man were admitted into heaven, what prospect could he have with a blind understanding? As men under the gospel administrations cannot see the kingdom of God, even in the midst of it, without a new birth, so neither could they see the kingdom of God in the midst of heaven itself without a new frame, if not see it, much less enjoy it.

Secondly, There must be a change of will. Men like not to retain God in their knowledge, when he is represented to them in the dark, yet pleasant glass of nature, Romans 1:28. The apostle there

speaks it of the heathens, and the wisest of them, their philosophers, who, though pleased with the contemplation of nature, yet were not pleased with the contemplation of God in nature; much less will they like him, when he discovers himself clothed with the light of holiness as a garment. That vicious eye, which is too weak to behold with any delight the image of the sun in a glass, or a pail of water, will be much more too weak to gaze upon it in its brightness in the firmament. If there be no delight to know God here, what pleasure, what fitness can there be in the same frame to contemplate him above? Let me ask you, Have you any pleasure in the study of God? What is the reason, then, that in your retirements, when you have nothing to do, your thoughts are no more upon him? What is the reason that if any motion does offer to advise you to fix your thoughts upon him, you so soon shift it off as a troublesome companion, and some slight jolly thought is admitted with gladness into those embraces which the other courted? Can such a temper be fit for heaven, where nothing but thoughts of God run through the veins of glorified souls? If the discovery of God's glory in the gospel is accounted no better than folly by natural men, and therefore not received, 1 Corinthians 2:14, the manifestation of it above would meet with no better valuation of it, unless the temper both of judgment and will were changed. They are spiritually to be discerned here, and no less spiritually to be discerned above. The weak and waterish eye must be cured by some powerful medicine before it can stare upon the light of the sun, or delight itself in its glory.

Thirdly, Love is a duty in heaven. Love is a grace that shoots the gulf with us, and attends us not only to the suburbs, but into the very heart of heaven, when other graces conduct us only to the gates, and then take their leave of us, as having no business there. 'Charity never fails,' 1 Corinthians 13:8. And, indeed, it is so essentially our duty in every place, that it is concluded that God cannot free us from the obligation of it, whilst we remain his creatures; because God being infinitely good, and therefore infinitely amiable and infinitely gracious to them, it would seem unrighteous, and inconsistent with supreme goodness, to forbid the creature an affection to that which is infinitely excellent, and a gratitude to its benefactor which can be paid only in love. Now, though we are bound to love God in the highest degree, yet every new mercy adds a fresh obligation to return our affection to him. So when we shall have the clearest beams of God's love darting upon us from heaven, we shall also have higher obligations to love him, both for his excellency, which shall be more visible, and his love, which shall be more sensible. Now, can the heart of a natural man cling about God? Can it forget its father's house, and be wholly taken up with the Creator's excellency? Can he that loved pleasures more than God in the world, 2 Timothy 3:4, love God more than pleasures in heaven, without an alteration of his soul? No. The heart must be first circumcised by God, before we can love God with all our heart, Deuteronomy 30:6. If we will not be subject to the law of God here, how can we be subject to the love of God, which is the law of heaven? How can we cleave to God without love, or relish him without delight? No man in a natural estate could stay in heaven, because he does not love the person whose presence only makes it heaven. How can there be a conformity to God in affection, without a conformity to his holiness? A choiceness of love, with a perverseness of will; a supremacy of delight, without a rectitude of heart; a love of God, without a loathing of sin; a fervency of love, with a violence of lust: all these are contradictions. He that has a hatred of God, cannot perform the main duty of heaven; and therefore what should he do there?

Fourthly, Praise is a service in heaven. If a pure angel be not sufficient for so elevated a duty, how unfit then is a drossy soul? What is the angels' note, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God,' Isaiah 6:3, can

never be a natural man's; for how can he possibly praise that which he hates? What is the note of glorified saints? It is Hallelujah, Revelation 19:1, 'Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God.' And again they said, Hallelujah, Revelation 1:3. 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns,' Revelation 1:6. Nothing but hallelujah four times, Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:3-4, Revelation 1:6. How can that heart frame an hallelujah, that is stuffed with jealousies of him? How can he exalt the honour of God, who was always pleased with the violations of it? How can he rejoice at the Lord's reigning, that would not have one lust subdued by his power? How can a natural man, as natural, ever be wound up to a height fit for such strains, since 'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks'? The tongue can never be framed to praise while the heart is evil. Our blessed Saviour must be glorified in us, before he can be glorified by us, 2 Thessalonians 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 1:12. If a man in a mere natural state be unfit for this heavenly work, how unfit are then their tongues to sound his praise, which are always filled with reproaches of God? And how can their ears endure to hear it from others, which were never offended with the blasphemies of him? They could never rejoice in this heavenly concert were they admitted. Nay, their enmity to the work would not permit their stay. The smoke of pure incense is fitter rather to drive a swine out of the room than to invite his continuance.

[2.] The new birth is necessary, as to the duty, so to the reward of heaven. As the reward is exceeding glorious, the preparation thereto must be exceeding gracious. The rewards of heaven are something incorporated with us, inlaid in the very frame of our souls, and cannot be conceived enjoyable without a change in the nature of the subject. Man was first formed before he was brought into the garden of Eden, or pleasure: Genesis 2:8, There he 'put the man whom he had formed.' Man must be new-formed before he be brought into that place, which is the anti-type of Eden, the place of eternal and spiritual pleasure. A natural man can no more relish the rewards of heaven, than a dead carcass can esteem a crown and a purple robe, or be delighted with the true pleasure of heaven, than a swine, that loves to wallow in the mire, can be delighted with a bed of roses. A disorder in nature is a prohibition to all happiness belonging to that nature; a distempered body, under the fury of a disease, can find no delight in the pleasures of the healthful; a wicked man, with a troubled and foaming sea of sin and lust in his mind, Isaiah 57:20, would find no more rest in heaven than a man with his disjointed members upon a rack can in the beauty of a picture. We must be spiritually minded before we can have either life or peace, Romans 8:6. Righteousness in the soul is the necessary qualification for the peace and joy in the kingdom of God: Romans 14:17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' While malice remains in the devil's nature, were he admitted into heaven he would receive a torment instead of a content. A wicked man would meet with hell in the midst of heaven as long as he carries his own rack within him, boiling and raging lusts in his heart, which can receive no contentment without objects suitable to them, let the place be what it will. Heaven, indeed, is not only a place, but a nature; and it is a contradiction to think that any can be happy with a nature contrary to the very essence of happiness. The pleasure and reward of heaven is,

First, A perfect likeness to God and Christ. This is the great privilege of heaven, which the apostle, in the midst of his ignorance of other particulars, resolves upon as certain as that which results from regeneration, and being the sons of God, and is the full preparation for the beatific vision: 1 John 3:2, 'Now we are the sons of God; and it does not yet appear, what we shall be: but we know

that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' He seems to intimate this, that we can never be like him when he does appear, unless we be now, while we are here, the sons of God, nor ever be admitted to a sight of him. As Christ presented himself without spot to God, when he laid the foundation of our redemption, so he presents his people 'without blemish to God' when he lays the top-stone of it in our glorification, Ephesians 5:27. Now as we cannot be like to Christ in our walk here without a new birth, neither can we without it be like to Christ in glory hereafter. It is not the place makes us like to God, but there must be a likeness to God to make the place pleasant to us. When once the angels had corrupted their nature, the short stay they made in heaven did neither please them nor reform them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the angels, Job 1:6, neither God's presence nor his speaking to him did anywise better him; he came a devil, and he went away so, without any pleasure in the place or presence, but by the permission of God, to wreak his malice on holy Job. An unlikeness to God is the misery of the creature. It is therefore impossible, whilst the soul remains in that state, that it can arrive at blessedness, because it is a contradiction to think a felicity can be enjoyed in a contrariety to and separation from the fountain of it: Psalms 73:27, 'Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.' It is by faith, beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel here, that we must be 'transformed into his image,' before we can be 'changed into his glory,' 2 Corinthians 4:18. And we cannot be like God by holy actions only, though we had performed as many of them as all the holy men in the world ever did as to the matter of them, abstracted from the principle and end; and the reason is, because God is not only holy in his actions, but holy in his nature; and, therefore, we must not only have actions materially good, but a holy nature suitable to the holiness of God, otherwise we neither are, nor never can, be like him.

Secondly, The fruition of God is a privilege of heaven, which necessarily follows this likeness. God is the eternal portion of glorified souls, upon which they live. He is the strength of their hearts, Psalms 73:25-26. There is none but God in heaven is the chief object of their love and delight. The presence of God makes 'the fullness of joy,' Psalms 16:11. His favour and the light of his glorious countenance constitutes heaven and happiness; not the place, but the countenance. God's frown kindles hell, and his smile renders any place an heaven. Now an old nature cannot have a good look from God; for since he is infinitely holy, he must hate unholiness; infinitely true, he must hate falsity. As it is impossible a man can love truth and falsity, righteousness and unrighteousness, as such, at one and the same time, in an intense degree, therefore an impure nature cannot be happy unless God be mutable. God cannot smile on the old Adam unless he hate himself. What satisfaction can such an one possibly have in God's presence? How can he savour the society of God that never loved it? Do we naturally love any warm mention of God? Have we not a stony deadness to any heavenly motion that falls upon us? A mighty quickness to receive sinful motions in that which we love? Do not our countenances fall, and our delight take wings to itself and fly away at any lively appearance of God? If we have such an enmity to his law, which is but a transcript of his holiness, much greater must our enmity be to the original copy. Hence in Scripture men are said to 'refuse his law,' Psalms 78:10; to 'forsake his law,' Psalms 119:53; to be 'far from his law,' Psalms 119:150. Darkness does not more naturally vanish at the appearance of the sun, than an old nature will fly away from the glory and brightness of God. A mass of black darkness and an immense sphere of light may as soon be espoused together, as a friendly amity be struck up between God and an unrenewed man. God is light without darkness, 1 John 1:5; man is darkness itself, as if nothing else entered into the composition of his corrupt nature, Ephesians 5:8.

If there be therefore a disagreement, contrariety, and unwillingness on both sides, how can any pleasing correspondence be effected? If God should bring a man with his corrupt nature into local heaven, God could not please himself in it, nor such an one delight himself in God, no more than a swine can be pleased with the presence of an angel, or a mole sport itself with the beauty of flowers, or a vitiated eye rejoice at the brightness of light. We must really make God such an one as we shape him in our natural fancy, and like to us, before we can take any pleasure in converse with him. Our nature, therefore, must be changed before we can please him, or be satisfied in him. His presence else will cause fear, while our sinful state remains, an affection inconsistent with happiness.

Thirdly, The company of the saints is an adjunct of that happiness in heaven. A sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 8:11, in a festival converse, is a part of that felicity. The coming to be with an 'innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly, and church of the firstborn,' is not the least thing in the composition of this happiness, Hebrews 12:22-23. What joy is that man capable of which should be surrounded with company he has the greatest disaffection to, where he could not meet with any one person without the holy quality he has an antipathy against? A natural man never loved holiness, as holiness, here. The more beautiful the image of God was in any, the more burdensome was their company; the more degrees any good man wanted of perfection in righteousness, the more tolerable was a familiarity with him. If holiness in others, in a lower degree, were disaffected by you, how can you bear the perfection of it? If the mixed and dark goodness in renewed men, which was but a weak flash of the glory of heaven, were unwelcome, how will you be able to endure the lustre of it? Again, glorified saints could not have the least converse with such an one? If carnal nature were a trouble to them here, when they had many relics of corruption, much more must it be above, if they were admitted into that place of glory, because the more holy any creature is, the more it hates that which is contrary to that holiness; the more settled we are in anything, the more we loathe that which is opposite to it; all the folly in their hearts here done away, and the disagreeing principle perfected in the blessed. There must, therefore, be a change in them, to take pleasure in you, or a change in you, to take pleasure in them. They must return to the frame of old Adam, and put off the renewed image of God, before they can delight in you; or you must come up to the frame of the new Adam, and be new created after the same image, before you can delight in them. The truth is, supposing a man admitted into the heavenly place with an old nature, he could not continue there; for the saints must either leave heaven, or he must. Light and darkness cannot agree; what makes the one happy, cannot beatify the other. Saints shall not leave it, because it is their inheritance, it was prepared for them, and they for it; a natural man must, because it was never prepared for him, nor he fitted for it.

Fourthly, Spiritual delights inconceivable are in that state, which, without a new and heavenly nature, it is impossible to relish. 'In the light of God they see light,' and they 'drink of the rivers of God's pleasures,' and are 'satisfied with the fatness of his house,' Psalms 36:8-9. Now, is it a fleshly fatness? Are the pleasures of God carnal or spiritual? What is God's pleasure shall be the pleasure of glorified souls. How can the sordid old temper be fit for spiritual delights? Flesh can never savour but the things of the flesh; another palate is necessary to relish the things of the spirit: Romans 8:5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit;' "fronousin" signifies to savour or relish. There must be a

transformation by the renewing of the mind, Romans 12:2, which is the palate of the soul, before we can know what the will of God is, or taste what the pleasures of God are; without it we can no more relish the pleasures of God than we can know his will. All satisfaction does not result from the intrinsic excellency of the object, or the beauty of a place, or a power in anything to affect us, but from a faculty rightly disposed to the object, and a congruity and agreement between that and the understanding, and between that and the will. Brutes cannot be delighted with intellectual pleasures, because they want a faculty, nor fools, because they want a right disposition of that faculty. Purity of heart only gives us a relish of the purity of pleasure: Titus 1:15, 'To the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure.' An ill humour on the palate tinctures the meat, and embitters that which was sweet in itself. It must be freed from that vicious juice before it can relish the sweetness of food. Natural men, because of the impurity of their natures, savour not those spiritual delights which the word, and prayer, and other holy duties afford in themselves. What fitness, then, is there in this state for the delights of heaven, which are as much superior to those delights in duties as the sun does surmount a star in brightness? The best unregenerate man is sunk in sense, swallowed up in sense; and what suitableness can there be between a spiritual delight and a sensual frame? True pleasures and contrary desires can never abide together. A carnal man has no apprehensions of spiritual delights but by the measures of animal pleasures. And if there be no conception of them in the understanding, what motion to them can there be in the will, or what fitness for them in the affection? Without a new nature, a new frame, we are no more able to understand or enjoy the pleasures of heaven, than a bat is to take pleasure in a mathematician's lines or a philosopher's books. It is not conceivable how God can make any man happy against his will, because all pleasure consists in the agreeableness of the will to the object. The whole scheme of heaven must be changed to make such men happy that have not tempers suited to its present state. The bright hangings of heaven must be taken down and others put in their place to please a vicious nature.

Use. If regeneration be absolutely necessary to a gospel state, and the enjoyment of eternal glory in heaven, then it informs us,

1. How much the nature of man is depraved; for otherwise there were no need of his being born again, and no reason could be imagined why our blessed Saviour should so pressingly urge the necessity of it. If man's nature were according to his original frame, it would please God, because it was of his own creation. But we are flesh by our natural birth, and therefore to be happy we must be spiritual by a second birth. It is not a new mending, a new repairing and patching, but a new birth. We are by sin as distant from God and grace, as death from life, as nothing from being. It is not a death in appearance, but a certain death. God foretold it to Adam: Genesis 2:17, 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' "mot tamut". I suppose there is nothing here of a corporal death meant (as I have said before), but a death of his integrity and righteous nature, upon this act of disobedience; and the reason is because a temporal death did not ensue presently. And God uses to be punctual when he fixed a time to any threatening, as here he did, in the day, at that very time thou shalt die. Had it been meant of a temporal death, he had died at that instant. When God threatened Pharaoh, tomorrow such and such a plague shall come, it was certainly so. The destruction of Nineveh in forty days had been too, had they not repented. When he promised and mercy or deliverance at such a time, it was certainly performed: the very day, at the end of the time

appointed, the Israelites came out of Egypt, Exodus 12:41. And though God threatened Hezekiah with death, and bids him set his house in order, yet he fixed no time, Isaiah 38:1. Besides, a temporal death was not necessary to his punishment; God might have flung both body and soul away together into hell. Besides, a temporal death, or death of the body, was fixed after the promise of the seed, Genesis 3:12, as a punishment superadded upon his sin, as well as the rest, of his eating his bread in the sweat of his brows, and the pain of women's conception and travail, which were to put him in mind of his sin in his redeemed state; therefore I question whether a temporal death, or an obnoxiousness to it, were at all meant there, but a spiritual death, the death of his righteous nature. It is a certain death, a mighty deprivation, a loss of a noble frame, a beautiful rectitude. How may we cry, as the prophet in another case: Isaiah 14:12, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground!' How is our beauty not only defaced, but changed into deformity? How dreadfully are we fallen, not only to lame ourselves, but dead ourselves, that we cannot rise again, as a man fallen may! We are so inconceivably changed from what we were, that we cannot be recovered without a new make, without a new birth. Oh that we had a true and sensible prospect of this! Give me leave to say that though the fell be the cause of all our misery, yet the true consideration and sense of it is the first step to all our happiness. And we cannot take so full a view of it in the extent of the nature of it, as in the consideration of this doctrine, viz. The necessity of regeneration.

2. If regeneration be so necessary, then how much to be lamented is the ignorance of this doctrine in the world? And strange and sad it is that it should be so little considered. The common talk is observing God and reforming the life, but who of a thousand speaks of the necessity of a new nature? It is a sad case that, when a doctrine is so clear, men should be so stupid and deludingly damn themselves; that they should be so sottishly ignorant of this who have Bibles in their hands and houses, yet not understand this, which is the great purpose for which God even sent the Scripture among the sons of men. It is a shame not to have the knowledge of this great and necessary truth. As the apostle in another case: 1 Corinthians 15:24, 'Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame.' How strange and uncouth does this doctrine sound in the ears of the carnal world, which wonder at it, as Nicodemus did at our Saviour's proposal, and think all our discourses of it an heap of enthusiastic nonsense! It is as if we should speak parables, as if you should talk of astronomy to the natural fool, or read divinity in Arabic to a man who understands only his native language. How little sensible is the world of the necessity of this work! They expect Christ should change their misery into glory, without changing their hearts and fitting their spirits for it, which will never be. They think it enough for them that Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin, without being formed again in their souls, as the poor Jews at this day expect a Messiah, not to alter the frame of their souls, but the frame of the world; not to subdue their spirits, but to conquer the nations to be their vassals. How should this stupidity of men be a matter of lamentation to us!

3. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary, how should Christian parents endeavour all they can to have their children regenerate? There is no necessity they should have great estates, and live bravely in the world; but there is a necessity, a great necessity, they should be new creatures, and live spiritually. In leaving the one to your children, you leave them but earth; in leaving the other, you convey heaven to them. There is an obligation upon you, their old polluted nature was derived from you by carnal generation; make them amends by endeavouring to derive grace to

them by spiritual instruction; you made them children of wrath, why will you not endeavour to make them children of God and heirs of heaven? Education of itself will not produce this noble work, nor the bare hearing of the word, or any outward means whatsoever, by their own strength; yet the Spirit does often bless them, and very much, and I doubt not but a great number that are regenerate had the first seeds sown in them by a religious education. And I have made this observation in many. Timothy had a religious education both by his mother and grandmother, though this did not renew him, for Paul, by the preaching of the gospel, was the instrument of that he calls him 'his own son in the faith,' 1 Timothy 1:2, yet no question his religious instructions from his parents did much facilitate this work. Use all endeavour therefore, to convince them of the necessity of a new birth, be earnest with them till you see it produced, that they may not curse you for being the instruments of their beings, but bless you for being the instruments of their spiritual life.

4. This doctrine acquaints us with the insufficiency of everything else without this to enable us to enter into the kingdom of God.

(1.) Great knowledge is not sufficient. Natural knowledge is not. All the wisdom of Solomon in a man, though it may enable him to take an exact measure of nature from the highest star to the meanest insect, does no more fit him for heaven than the stone in the head of a toad expels his venomous nature. We have more relics of Adam's nature in knowledge than we have in righteousness. To be a philosopher, physician, or statesman, is not essential to happiness in this world, much less can it prepare a man for the happiness of another. But grace is as essential to it as natural heat and radical moisture are to the life of a man. Jesus Christ came not to make us scholars in naturals, but to endue us with such a knowledge as is in order to eternal happiness, and with such a renewing principle as might make us capable of heaven. Knowledge and wisdom are some of the choicest flowers in nature's garden; but it will be a small advantage to descend to hell with our brains full of wit and sophistry. One saving cry, from a new born infant soul is of more value than the knowledge of all philosophers. Spiritual knowledge is not, that is, the knowledge of spiritual doctrines, the knowledge of Scripture itself. Nicodemus had a good stock of this; he understood the letter of the Scripture, was well read in all the parts of the law; he was thought fit to be one of the great Sanhedrin. Something else was requisite besides this; a new birth was still wanting. What if we understood the mind of the Spirit of God in every verse in the Bible; were able to discourse profoundly of the great mysteries of the gospel; had the gift of prophecy, and knowledge of things to come, had the interpretation of the whole book of the Revelation writ in our minds; what will all this avail us? An evangelical head will be but drier fuel for eternal burning, without an evangelical impression upon the heart and the badge of a new nature. Men may prophesy in Christ's name, in his name cast devils out of bodies, and devils of errors out of men's brains, yet not be regarded by Christ; but he says to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity,' Matthew 7:22-23. If they had had this mark and gospel impression, our Lord would have known them. Christ in heaven would have owned himself formed in the heart; he could not have been ignorant of his own nature and offspring.

Well then, a man may have all the learning of Christians and heathens stored up in his head, and not the least stamp of it in his heart; he may be wise in knowledge, and a fool in improvement. A heap and pack of knowledge is not wisdom among men, without an application of that knowledge to particular exigencies and usefulness.

(2.) Outward reformation is not sufficient. Regeneration is never without reformation of life; but this may be without that. We may be outward Christians without an inward principle, though we can never be inward Christians without an outward holiness. The new birth is properly an internal work, and shows itself externally; as the heat of the heart and vital parts will evidence itself in outward motions. 'The king's daughter is all glorious within' as well as without, Psalms 45:13. What a vanity would it be to boast of freedom from other diseases, if you have the plague upon thee? What a poor comfort is it to brag of thy being without gross immoralities, whilst the plague of thy nature remains uncured? Outward reformation only (though of excellent use) is but a new appearance, not a new creature, a change of life, not of the heart; whereas this work we discourse of is a new birth in the understanding and will; it begins at the spirit and descends from thence to the body, 1 Thessalonians 5:23; it is a sanctification in spirit, soul, and then body. Can that which can be no evidence to us in self-examination, be of itself sufficient to waft us to heaven? If you retire to take a view of yourselves whether you belong to God, will you judge by your outward actions or inward frame? There is no characteristic difference in any external action between a true Christian and an hypocrite. That, therefore, which is not a sufficient evidence to us of a right to happiness, cannot be a sufficient preparation of ourselves for it. This reformation may proceed either,

[1.] From force and fear. Such a reformation is from impediments, not from inclination. The cutting a bird's wings takes not away its propensity to fly, but its ability; the cutting the claws of a lion, or pulling out his teeth, changes not his lionish nature. Fear restrained Herod from putting John to death, when his will was inclined to the act, Matthew 14:5. Fear may pare the nails of sin, grace only can hinder the growth and take away its life. This does but only stop the streams, not choke the fountain.

Or, [2.] from sense of outward interest. It may be a rational abstinence from those sordid pleasures which debase a man's esteem and prey upon his reputation; and in the mean time his inward lusts may triumph, while outward appearances are stopped. Such a splendid life may consist with those inward vermin, more contrary to the pure nature of God, and as inconsistent with a man's happiness. The river which ran in open view, may sink and run as fiercely through subterranean caverns. Men may cast out one gross devil to make way for seven more spiritual ones. The interest which restrains outward acts will not restrain inward lusts.

Well then, an outward reformation without an inward grace, can no more rectify nature, than an abstinence from luxury can cure a disease a man has contracted through intemperance, without some other physic to pluck up the root of the distemper. Outward applications of salves and ointments will do little good in a fever, unless the spring of the disease be altered, and a new crisis wrought in the blood. All outward acts are but 'bodily exercise, which profit little,' 1 Timothy 2:3. Outward reformation does but sweeten the conversation, but does not purge the man. He only is a vessel unto honour who has purged himself from these things: 2 Timothy 2:21, 'If a man therefore purge himself from those, he shall be a vessel unto honour.' Outward reformation only, it is a cleansing of our life, but not ourselves. Self-nature must be purged.

(3.) Morality is not sufficient. By morality, I mean not only an outward reformation, but some love to moral virtue, as the heathens had, raised upon the thoughts of the excellency of it. Nicodemus was a moral man; he had some affection to Christ upon the consideration of his miracles; he had never else ventured to come to him so much as by night. He had no blot upon his conversation, he had

desires to be instructed. This was more than a bare abstinence from sin, yet notwithstanding, besides those moral qualifications, he must have a new birth before he can see the kingdom of God. Men may do much good, be very useful to others in their generation, yet be in the very bottom of unregeneracy. A healing witch, as well as a hurting one, is the devil's client, and in covenant with him. There is not so great a difference between the highest degree of glory in heaven and the lowest degree of grace on earth, as there is between the lowest degree of saving grace and the highest degree of natural excellency, because the difference between these is specific, as between a rational and irrational creature; the difference between the other is only in degree, as between an infant and a man. It is one thing to have a love to moral virtue, another thing to have a love to God in it, one thing to move for self, and another thing to move for the glory of the Creator; one thing to be animated by reason, and another thing to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. What can a moral honesty profit that man who values the world's dung above the Creator's glory? What though he be honest and useful to his neighbours, must his affection to God be measured by his honesty among men? The great business is from what principle it flows. What if he does good to others whilst he does his Creator wrong by fostering any one thing in his heart above him? Can his goodness to others make a compensation for his disesteem of God? The bravest man in the whole world, who has no other descent than from Adam, must have a new quality put into his heart before he can be happy; for if a new birth be necessary, all endowments below it are to no purpose for the attainment of that state for which it is intended. Whatsoever is of the old Adam in us, though it be a beautiful flower, must wither and die: 1 Peter 1:28, 1 Peter 1:24, 'For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flower thereof fades away.' The apostle sets in opposition the incorruptible seed whereby they were born, and the fairer flowers in nature's garden. The best thing which a man glories in is a flower, but withering; it is a glory, but the glory of the flesh; it has no lustre in the sight of God; it is not a flower to be set in heaven. It is only the word of God, and the impressions made on us by that word, which endure for ever. As herbs can not grow without partaking of the natural influence and beams of the sun, so nothing stands and flourishes but what partakes of the nature and spirit of Christ. Nay, it is so far from being sufficient, that it is a great hindrance of regeneration, without the overpowering grace of God, because it is the glory of a man; that is, that wherein a man glories. Men are apt to rest upon their morals without reflecting upon their naturals. They see no spots in their lives, and therefore will not believe there are any in their hearts. They are so taken up, with the pharisee, their proud thoughts of their being above others, that they never think how much they have inwardly of the publican in coming short of the glory of God. Unregenerate morality, therefore, is not sufficient. The heart must be changed before moral virtues can commence graces. When this is once done, what were moral before become divine, as having a new principle to quicken them, and a new end to direct them.

(4.) Religious professions are not sufficient. Can you, upon a serious consideration, conclude that this only is the import of all those scriptures which speak of being born of God, raised from a death in sin, quickened and led by the Spirit, created in righteousness and true holiness? Are not these things, in the very manner of speaking them, elevated above any mere profession, which may be declared to the world without any such work, which is the evident intendment of those scriptures? It is not the naming the name of Christ, but the departing from iniquity; a departing from it in our nature as well as in our actions, that is the badge whereby the Lord knows who are his: 2 Timothy 2:19, 'The Lord knows who are his: and let every one that names the name of Christ depart from

iniquity.' Religious profession only is but a form, a figure, a shape of godliness: a picture made by art, without life and power, and an enlivened faculty, and a divine principle whence it should proceed; it is but a name of life at best under a state of death: Revelation 3:1, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Professions without a new nature, are no more the things God requires of us, than sacrifices under the law without a broken heart. It is not a following our Saviour in profession, but in regeneration, which gives the apostles a title to that promise of sitting upon his throne in glory: Matthew 19:28, 'Ye that have followed me in regeneration, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Judas had followed Christ till that time, and after, in a profession, but not in the regeneration, not from a regenerated principle.

(5.) Multitudes of external religious duties and privileges are not sufficient. Men are very apt to place their security here. It was the great labour of the prophet Isaiah to bring the Jews, in his time, off from them. God does not require attendance on ordinances as the ultimate end, but as means to the beginning and promoting a new birth: Isaiah 11:16, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Wash ye, make ye clean.' The resting in these is the manifest destruction of men's souls, when thousands of sacrifices to God cannot be acceptable without a new nature. We naturally affect an easy religion; and outward acts of worship, especially under the gospel, have no great difficulty in them. Men would rather be at great expense of sacrificing, than crucify one beloved sin, and cringe a thousand times before the cross of Christ, than nail one corruption to it. How easy a work were it to get to heaven, if nothing else were required but to be a member of the Christian visible church? Circumcision was a privilege, but it availed nothing without a new creature, Galatians 5:6. There was another circumcision made without hands, the work of God, that was required, Colossians 2:11; a new creature, without which outward circumcision signified nothing. The practice of some duties may stand with an inward hatred of them, as the abstinence from some sins may stand with an inward love to them. Outward worship is but a carcass, when the soul is not conformed to God, the object of worship, and does not attain an union to, and communion with God, which is the end of worship. What are all acts of worship without a nature suitable to the God we approach unto in them? Judge not, therefore, of your state by any external actions; no outward act, but unregenerated persons may do, yea, they may express much zeal in them. They may have their bodies as martyrs consumed by flames, without having their corruption consumed by grace; a stinking breath may make as good music to the ear in a pipe as a sound one. There is something more necessary than a bare performance of duties.

(6.) Nay, more, convictions are not sufficient. Nicodemus was startled by our Saviour's miracles, believes him to be a prophet sent by God, acknowledges that God was with him, John 3:2, yet still the necessary qualification of a new birth was wanting. Your spirits may be torn in pieces by terror, the heart of stone may be rent asunder, and yet no heart of flesh appear; the ground may be ploughed, yet not sown. Sensuality and lust may be kept under by a spirit of bondage, when it is not cast out by a spirit of adoption; the sun may scorch you, and not enliven you; the knowledge of the foulness of sin, and the fierceness of wrath, is the work of the Spirit in the law; the new birth is the work of the Spirit in the gospel, the stone may be cut and hewed by the law, and yet never polished by the gospel, never brought into covenant: Hosea 6:5, Hosea 6:7, 'I have hewed them by my prophets, but they like men have transgressed the covenant.' It is not then great knowledge, fair-coloured fruit, oil in the lamp of life, loud professions, glittering services, or tearing convictions, which are this badge whereby Christ knows his own from all the world besides: all these will be

answered, 'I know you not.' Is it not, then, a worthy stork, and high time to get that new nature, whereby God will know thee to belong to him? Professions may be false, outward reformation may be but as a painted sepulchre: knowledge only elevates the understanding, but as our communion lies in the acts of the will, there must be some work upon that to fit us for our great happiness. If these things are not sufficient, then profane men cannot expect heaven by the way of hell.

Use 2. If regeneration be so absolutely necessary to salvation, how miserable is the condition of every unregenerate man! What a miserable case is it, that sinners should dream on in their delusions till everlasting burnings confute their fancies, and turn their hopes into dreadful despair. Oh, how do most men live as if this doctrine were a mere falsity, and act as if they would take heaven by the violence of their lusts, not by the industry of grace? Know you not that an unrighteous nature shall not inherit the kingdom of God? 1 Corinthians 6:9, 'Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived,' &c. Is it possible you should be ignorant of that which stares you in the face in every page in the Bible? If you know not this you know nothing. Be not deceived. Nothing is so natural as heart-deceit and presumptuous confidence. The apostle else would not have spoken of it with such an emphasis, but that he knew how apt men are to delude themselves with hopes of mercy in a state of sin. Self-flattery is one of the strongest branches which grows upon the pride of nature. How vain is it to fancy to yourselves a fitness for heaven, while there are only preparations for hell? Whence should such imaginations arise? Not from God; it is contrary to all his professed declarations. Is it from yourselves? What reason have you to believe your fancies in spiritual things, who are so often mistaken in temporal? Is it from the devil? What reason have you to believe your greatest enemy? If this work be brought, he has for ever lost you. It is he that cherishes such notions, for he has no pleasure to undo his kingdom, and lose his subjects. Never did any man use so much diligence to get a new nature as the devil does to hinder him. Will you seriously consider,

1. It is highly irrational to expect security and glory in an unregenerate state. Is it for us to separate those things which God has joined, flesh and destruction, a new birth and a kingdom? That which does naturally tend to hell can never conduct us to heaven. Can the old nature, which frames a fit subject for eternal vengeance, ever fashion it to be a vessel of eternal glory? There is as great a tendency in the old nature to hell as there is of a stone or lead to the earth. If men may be saved in their unregeneracy,

(1.) God must be false to himself. False he must be to his truth, false to holiness, false to his Son, false to the whole tenor of the gospel. God must change the covenant of grace, blot out all his threatenings in Scripture, give the lie to all his declarations in the word, proclaim himself unwise in all his administrations, if ever such a man be happy; and is it not a damnable conceit, and a provoking wish, to desire that God should belie himself to befriend us? There must be a new gospel before any can be saved without a new nature. This cannot be. Must God change his law, or we our lusts? God has settled and declared a decree, that none that are not born again shall enter into the kingdom of God. His decree stands irreversible, the change must necessarily therefore be on our side.

(2.) As far as I can understand, God must put himself out of heaven before that such a man can come thither. There can be no pleasure on either side with unsuitableness. If God be absent from heaven, as to his glorious presence, how can there be happiness? He loves his own

righteousness better than to endure such men's presence, and they love their unrighteousness so much as not to bear his. No man cares for coming into a place which is possessed by one that he hates; they can have no pleasure to be in a heaven with God, who were delighted to be in a world without him, Ephesians 2:12.

(3.) Jesus Christ must be a liar, and the gospel false, if ever there be a heaven enjoyed by an old nature. He has asserted it, that is truth itself; and is it not a madness to imagine a possibility of coming thither in spite of him? You may upon better grounds hope to be crowned monarch of the whole world tomorrow, than to enter into heaven without being born again. Christ values his truth, though he did not his life, above our souls, and his word will stand firm against all presumptuous confidence whatsoever.

(4.) Suppose God should reverse his gospel (which cannot be), and declare another, I cannot see how the ease would be mended, for what gospel can God frame, with a salvo to his own honour, without the creatures being righteous to enjoy the benefit of it? Must God conform himself to the will of our lusts? Must he cast his holiness into the depths of the sea? Must he paint himself black to agree with our hue? as the Negroes picture him of their own colour. In a word, must God cease to be God that you may cease to be miserable? To desire happiness without a new nature shows a contempt of God, since it is to desire it on terms on which it is dishonourable for God to give it.

Well then, this doctrine is so certainly true, that if an angel from heaven should declare the contrary he ought not to be believed: Galatians 1:8, 'Let him be accursed;' that is, he would be more a devil than an angel, and it could be an accursed doctrine. He must found his doctrine upon another gospel, and a gospel printed in hell, but impossible to have an imprimatur from heaven. Is it possible, then, for any man, after such an assertion of our Saviour, to live under the hearing of the Christian doctrine, and fancy a heavenly glory belonging to him without a heavenly nature?

2. As it is highly irrational, so it is highly sinful to lie in an unrenewed state. To continue in it after the declaration of God's holiness, in so eminent a manner, in the death of his Son, is a high approbation of unrighteousness, and a contempt of his infinite purity; for since he has shown himself a hater of sin, and the old nature of Adam in the death of the Redeemer, more than be could any other; the fostering the old nature in us is a valuing that which God has manifested his hatred of, and a slighting all the expressions of his love. It draws a greater guilt upon our persons than Adam did by his fall upon our natures: John 15:22, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, then had not had sin.' If I had not told them those things, and preach heavenly doctrine to them, their sin had been as it were a petty larceny, in comparison of what it is now, a treason against my Father's crown and dignity; 'but now they have hated me and my Father'.

3. Hence it follows that such a man's condition must be exceeding miserable. Those that 'have a part in the first resurrection,' on them it is said 'the second death shall have no power,' Revelation 20:6; whether he means the resurrection of Christ, or the spiritual resurrection of the soul. The second death then shall have power over them that have no part in the first resurrection.

(1.) Such are peculiarly miserable. Such a man had better have been any other creature,—a toad, a serpent, a beetle, liable to be trod to death by the next comer,—than have been a man, and live and die with a serpentine nature, and without renewing grace, would be glad one day to chance states with them; and it had been better to have been born in the darkest part of America than in

England, and better to have lived in the blindest corner in England than in London, where he has heard so much and so often of the necessity of the new birth, and yet cherished an old nature. It is an astonishing madness this. Better never to have been born a man than not be a real Christian, which he cannot be without this new birth, this necessary regeneration; better never to have entered by the door of baptism into the Christian society, than not have a nature answerable to the baptismal intendment. There is not the meanest beggar that creeps in the street, the most ulcerous Lazarus that lies at the door, but if renewed is infinitely happier than any one unrenewed can be with all worldly felicity.

(2.) Such are unavoidably miserable. The mercy of God can never make you happy against his truth, the righteousness of God can never do it without the necessary qualification. Is it just with God to give his worst enemies the same reward of glory with his choicest friends; to those that never endeavoured to reform their lives according to the methods of the gospel, as to those who have had the holy image of his Son drawn and wrought in their hearts? In 2 Timothy 4:8 he is said to be a 'righteous judge,' which could not be if he gave the same rewards to both the contrary qualifications. The devil may as soon be eased, as any man without a new birth. Though there be enough written against the salvation of devils, yet there is more written in the book of God against the salvation of men living and dying in an unregenerate state than against the salvation of devils. Do any expect to see the kingdom of God without it? Why, that form on which you sit, that dust under your feet, far cleaner than ourselves by nature, are fitter to be brought into that place of glory. The holiness of God can better endure them than an unrenewed man. He pronounced their kind good at the creation, but never was an unrenewed nature pronounced good by God. You can no more shun an eternal misery without it, than you can a temporal death with it, you can no more fly from hell than from yourselves. Our blessed Saviour, the redeemer of the world, will know none for admission into happiness without his badge upon them: Matthew 7:23, 'I never knew you:' you had nothing in you worthy my knowledge and affection. Where is the evangelical impression upon your soul? will be the only question then asked.

Well, then, I wish every unregenerate man would put the question to his soul, Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Can I, with a cheerful security, meet the wrath of God in its march against me? Is eternal darkness a delightful state? Is an eternal separation from the blessed God to be desired? Is a present sensual life to be preferred before a joyful eternity? Is there any one Scripture in the whole book of God can give me comfort in this state? What, then, dost thou, O my soul, spend thy thoughts about, since there is nothing to procure thy felicity, but this new birth?

Use 8. Is of comfort. Is it so, that without regeneration there is no salvation? Then how great is the comfort of that person, who has attained this necessary thing! What a foundation is here for the composition of never songs for spiritual exultings! What a diffusion may there be of pleasure through the whole soul! That little regenerating principle within you is more necessary than the wisdom of Solomon, the power of Nebuchadnezzar, the glory of Ahasuerus, the reaching heads of the most knowing men in the world, and shall make you happy, when others in their unrenewed wisdom and unsanctified wealth shall descend to destruction.

1. The least true grace has comfort from hence. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' therefore if he be born again, he shall see it. Our Saviour does not say, except a man has been born so long, arrived to such a stature, but simply born again; it lies upon the

essence, not upon the degree. A child that cries the first minute it is born, is in a state of life, as well as the man in the prime of his strength. A child has the nature of a man, though attended with some strong disease and great infirmities; though every true Christian has not the same growth yet he has the same birth, the same renewing Spirit. 'If a man be in Christ he is a new creature;' the apostle does not say, he is a strong creature, or a tall creature. St John reckons three different states of Christians, 1 John 2:13-14, children, young men, and fathers, and all in a state of the knowledge of God.

2. Here is comfort in the ignorance of the time of the new birth. 'Except a man be born again,' not except he know the time of his being born again; the want of the knowledge of the time has troubled some, but it is no matter for the time, if we find the essential properties; our happiness is secured by the essence, not by the circumstance. It is the glory of those that were born in Sion, that they 'were born there,' Psalms 87:5, though the time of their birth were not exactly known by them. Many may tell the first preparations to it, the first strong conviction, the first time they found their hearts affected; this is more easy than to tell the very time when spiritual life was infused, any more than to tell the punctual time when the child was quickened in the womb; this is no more known, than that particular minute when this or that addition was made to our stature and growth, though the growth itself be discernible.

3. Such are new born to the enjoyment of God in glory. If none shall see God without it, then those shall certainly see God who have it; it is for the undefiled inheritance that God did first beget you: 1 Peter 1:3, 'He has begotten us to a lively hope, to an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.' Had not God intended you for an everlasting converse with himself, he would not have taken such pains, but have let you lie in your blood, and run down the stream of nature into the ocean of a miserable eternity with the common mass of the world. What comfort will this be, when you see the old house of your bodies full of gaps, ready to fall, that your reborn souls are ready to take possession of their eternal inheritance! Paul was one of the highest rank in Christianity, both in grace and office, yet the 'crown of righteousness' was not only laid up for him, and to be given to him, but to 'all that love the appearing of Christ, 2 Timothy 4:8, that is, to all those that, from the principles of the new nature, aspire to that perfection, which shall be at the appearance of Christ. There is as certain a tendency, by the ordination of God, of a renewed soul to heaven, as of flame into the air. Grace and glory are in nature the same thing as a seed and a plant.

4. It is comfort upon this account, If new-born to heaven, then to all things which may further your passage thither and assist you in it. To God, as your God and king to protect you, as your Father to cherish you; to the promises as your promises, as assurances and deeds for heaven; to a sanctification of all states for a furtherance of you in your travel to and fitness for this kingdom; to a sight of God in his ordinances, and in his providences; he will not deny a beam here in his institutions to those for whom he reserves his full face hereafter; to a fellowship with God in duties of worship, as a foretaste of a perpetual communion with him; to an improvement of all graces, to the most perfect dress at last of all beautiful grace, which may completely fit you for an everlasting sight of God in heaven.

Use. 4. If without the new birth there is no entering into heaven, then it stands upon you to clear up your evidences for the new birth. If the existence of it be necessary for our felicity, the knowledge

of it is necessary for our comfort. This is the great distinguishing evangelical sign; without an inward principle of life, we have not reached the intendment of the gospel: John 6:63, 'The words of Christ are spirit and life.' John 10:10, 'I am come that you might have life.' He has no interest in the gospel that has not this in his heart. Every man in Christ must be a new creature. To encourage you in this work, consider,

1. It is by this you must know your justification. Justification is our blessedness: Romans 4:8, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' And this is the way to know our blessedness: forgiveness of sin precedes the inheritance, and both this and that are received only by the sanctified through faith in Christ: Acts 26:18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me.' The alteration of our frame is motifs, more discernible to us, than that of our relative states; the new dispositions discover what relation we stand in to God. This is a certain truth, he that does not find the draught of God's image in him, has no reason to conclude he has any saving interest in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer. As the blood and water were not separated in the effusion upon the cross, neither are they in their application to the soul; water to renew us, and blood to justify us. The 'washing of regeneration' evidences our being justified by grace, Titus 3:5-7; the apostle infers the one from the other.

2. Therefore, by the knowledge of this only you can gain comfort. The great desire is, Oh that I were assured! Let it be your great business to clear up the new birth. It is the office of the Spirit not only to comfort but renew, and to comfort by renewing. The hope of eternal life is founded upon the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as well as on justification by grace, Titus 1:5-7; the Spirit as a comforter is to guide into all truth, John 16:13, into that truth which is sanctifying, John 17:17. The property of the Spirit is to guide us into sanctifying truth, and sanctify us by that truth; the Spirit does witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; its witness is by something within us, not without us. There must be something in our hearts as a foundation of this testimony; what witness can there be in an old nature? Look after, therefore, those essential properties of the new nature. Christ preached duty and comfort together; his first sermon, Mat. v., is made up of both. The clear evidence of a new life seated in the centre of the soul, will be a surer testimony of our right to, and fitness for glory, than if an angel from heaven should assure us in the name of God, that we are some of his heirs, the testimony of an angel is but that of a creature, lower then the verbal testimony of the Son of God. The evidences of the beginnings of glory, by the operations of grace and a Godlike nature, are more uncontrollable than the highest assurances all the angels in heaven can give us. Clear up this, therefore. There are many counterfeits; men may take morality, outward reformation, heaps of religious duties, to be this work, but these are all insufficient, and men without good examination may cheat themselves, and take copper for gold, and tin for silver. There is a natural or moral integrity, and an evangelical integrity; the natural integrity God owns in Abimelech: Genesis 20:6, 'Yea, I know that thou did this in the integrity of thy heart.' He was king of the place where Abraham thought there was no fear of God, Genesis 20:12. And it is likely there was not. God puts none of them upon prayer for themselves, but Abraham upon praying for them.

Then ask yourselves these two or three questions.

1. How stand your hearts to God and sin? Is there a bias in the will, which does naturally carry it to God? What light is there in your minds? what flexibleness and tenderness in the will and

conscience? what sprightliness in your affections to the things of God? what readiness to meet him in his motions to you? what closing with Christ? Are there strong cries, struggling, wrestling, Jacob-like prayers? A new-born babe not to cry; a child not to call to his father, and follow him, and press to him: it is inconsistent with such a nature, since it is the first fruit of the 'spirit of adoption' received by us, to cause us to cry, Abba, Father, Romans 8:15. How stand your hearts to sin? Are there deep humiliations for it, utter detestation of it? Are your affections dead to the flesh and the world, and alive and quick to the things of God? Romans 8:10, 'The body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness.' What humbling of inward pride, what striving against inward sins, what loathing of inward corruptions?

2. What delight have you in spiritual duties? Do your souls spring up in a service? Are your hearts in heaven before the words are out of your mouth? What is agreeable to nature is not burdensome. Spiritual services are as pleasant to a new nature, as sin is to an old, as sweet wines and delicious food is to a gluttonous disposition: Psalms 119:103, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' Honey, one of the staple excellencies of Canaan, which is described to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Does your delight in the law of God spring up from the inner man? There is a delight in doing some things of the law (the Gentiles did by nature the things contained in the law, Romans 2:14), by a moral nature, not a new nature; if by nature, they had then a delight in them, and it was as all delight is, inward in the soul and heart, no doubt but many of them had pleasure in their morality. That is not the meaning of the apostle; but he does distinguish his delights from theirs by the object of it, and by the subject or spring of it. It was the law of God, as it was the law of God, that he did delight in; and it was not only an inward delight, but a delight arising from an inner nature, a man distinct from that man composed of soul and body; it did arise from a spirit possessed with nobler principles and higher ends.

Well, then, is it your meat and drink to do his will? Has the glory of God been dearer to you than the dearest worldly concerns you have? Are your converses with him very delightful to you? Do the thoughts of God, and delights in him, frequently return upon you? What bears the most grateful relish in your souls? holy thoughts and duties, or sinful and foolish vanities?

3. How do you live? Have you another life 'by the faith of the Son of God?' Galatians 2:20; another faith beside the common faith, not resting in assent, but 'working by love,' Galatians 5:6. Do you live to yourselves? That is proper to a state of nature. Or do you live to God? 2 Corinthians 5:18. That is proper to a state of grace: Galatians 2:19, 'I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' Is there a closing with Christ, not only as your Saviour, but as the principle and end of your lives? Is there a living the life of God, the life of Christ? Can Christ be formed in the heart, and there be nothing of the qualities of Christ, nothing of the spirit of Christ? Is Christ formed in the heart, a hard, low, dead, cold, dark, lifeless Christ? This frame is a quite contrary thing to Christ. If we are born of the will of God, we are born to answer the will of God. Is it the will of God that we should be loose in our hearts, and vain in our lives? That is the will of the flesh, not the will of God. According as our hearts are, so is our birth; sin or grace must have dominion in the soul; they cannot live amicably together; a man cannot be a sinner and a saint with the same will, cannot equally love holiness and iniquity. We may as well say that a man may be in heaven and hell at the same time; not but that a renewed man may in a sudden fit do a thing against his nature, as Moses, one of a mild disposition, was transported with a strain of passion against his nature. If sin reigns in the heart, though it does not in outward acts; if we yield ourselves servants, to obey it in the lusts

thereof, though not in the outward fruit of those lusts, this new-creature principle was never settled in the heart: Romans 6:12, 'Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.' He makes a manifest difference between the inward lust obeyed, and the outward commission of it in the members, and places the reign of sin in one as well as the other; and, ver. 16, concludes them in a state of nature or a state of grace, according as they yield themselves servants to this or that. A regenerate practical atheist is just as true as to say a regenerate devil.

(1.) Be diligent observers, therefore, of what solid alterations you find in your spirits; what motions, starts, principles, ends you can perceive there; and if you find you have this excellent and necessary new birth, admire God's grace in you, that he should pass by so many thousands in the world and renew you; that he should leave many soaking in their sins, and swimming to destruction in their old nature, and bestow this heavenly plant upon your souls. And prize it too. Aquinas has an excellent saying, The good of one grace is greater than the good of all nature; which words Cajetan commends as fit to be writ upon our minds, and constantly reviewed by us, to raise our admirations of God and his grace.

I speak now but little of these things, because the next discourse will lead me to speak more of them.

(2.) Seek it. If it be necessary to be had, it is necessary to be sought. We are all at this present before God in an old or new nature; and if we die in the nature we have received from old Adam, without another from the new, it is as certain that every one of us shall be excluded out of the kingdom of God, as it is certain we live and breathe in the places where we stand or sit. We are born of the earth, we must be born from heaven; we must have a spiritual as well as an animal life. Oh that every man and woman had the same thoughts of the necessity of it as they have who are past hope in hell of ever attaining it! Riches are not necessary, honours are not necessary; this is of absolute necessity. Were you like Solomon in all his glory, you could not have the privilege of entering into God's kingdom without a new nature; but a new nature without the glory of Solomon, nay, without a rag to your backs, will admit you. If those that are already renewed must be every day putting off the old and putting on the new man, Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:24, how much more need have you who have not dropped one scale, or sweat out one spirit of the old man, nor have a grain of the new man in you? As original corruption stood up in the place of original righteousness, so a gracious regenerate frame must rise up in the place of original corruption, for God will never befriend corrupt nature so much as to give a happiness to that which he hates. Men do not choose weeds but flowers to plant in their delightful gardens. God indeed does choose weeds, but they are turned into the nature of flowers before he transplants them to glory. We must have a wedding garment to fit us for his feast, and oil in our vessels to prepare us for his nuptials.

Seek it, for,

(1.) It is an indispensable duty. God has resolved that only 'the pure in heart shall see God,' Matthew 5:8. It is a duty incumbent on us to love God. Since we are bound to love God, we are bound to love whatsoever has any relation to him. Therefore we must love ourselves, not with a sordid, carnal love, but as we are the image of God. Hence we are bound to do what we can to brighten and clear this image, and restore it to its primitive perfection in our souls. We are answerable to God for the presenting this image of God in the same state wherein it was when he

conferred it upon Adam, and upon us in his loins. Since the Redeemer has undertaken to restore it, it is our duty to seek to this Redeemer for the restoration of it, for he came 'that we might have life,' John 10:16; a vital principle in us to fit us for eternal life, and to 'have it more abundantly,' in a more glorious and fixed manner than Adam had.

(2.) Seek it, for something of this nature, or equivalent to it, seems necessary to all rational and intellectual creatures. The first nature of man was sown in mutability, and there was a necessity of something equivalent to this regeneration to fix and establish his nature; as the confirmation of angels under the head Christ is in some sort a regeneration of them, for it is an alteration of their state, from mutable to immutable, not by nature, for so God only is immutable, but by grace: Ephesians 1:10, 'He has gathered together in one all things in Christ.' There is need now of it to change our nature, and afterwards to fix us in it. Most think that Adam, had he stood some time, had been confirmed in the state of innocence, and advanced to a more excellent state than that of paradise, which would have been an alteration of his state. If, then, an alteration of state was necessary for the fixing his happiness, an alteration of state is much more necessary for us for regaining the happiness we fell from.

(3.) Seek it, because in not seeking it you act against your own reason and natural experience. You have by the light of nature, improved by the light of the gospel, so much knowledge as to perceive that you are not as God first made you. You cannot but acknowledge it impossible that so filthy and disorderly a piece can come out of his hands; that there is something wanting to you. And are those relics of nature left only to show us our indigence, and not also to spur us on to seek a remedy? Melanchthon says, I have seen many epicures who, being in some grief for their sins, have argued, How can I expect to be received by God, when I find not a new light and new virtues infused into me? When you are stilled after the rage of carnal affections or glut of pleasures, and you do in silence turn in upon yourselves, and make inquiry after your future state, if your conscience do not lie and flatter, will they not tell you to your faces that you are men of death, prepared against the day of slaughter? Besides, will not every man confess in his most raised retirements that he cannot find any real satisfaction in things below? And are there not sometimes some natural aspirings to something above these? Do not all men one time or other inquire, Psalms 4:6, 'Who will show us any good?' Have you ever a more delightful pleasure than when you find yourselves inflamed with some desires for it? But, alas! do you not feel yourselves in a depraved state, and that these motions are but weak flutterings, and that the soul is quickly wearied in them? Is not this an evidence that there must be a more vigorous nature infused both to attain and enjoy them? Is it not then an acting against your own sentiments not to seek it? Do you not offer violence to that little reason in you to cut the wings of such motions? Let me add this too, you act in a way contrary to the nature of every thing, not to seek that state which was designed for the perfection of human nature. Is it not natural for everything to endeavour its recovery to its primitive purity, and struggle under that which is preternatural to it? A fountain will not rest till it has wrought out the filth which has been cast into it; so neither should man be quiet till he recover himself from the dominion of sin in his nature, and his pollution by it. Are you contented with a nasty, impure, and diseased body? are you not restless till it be cleansed and cured? and is it no trouble to you to have your souls in a dirty and foul condition? Do you not hereby act against your own nature in other things?

(4.) Not to seek it is to despise the general mercy of God, and the general kindness of the Mediator to human nature. There are in man desires for and inclinations to happiness, and some knowledge that this happiness lies in God. These desires were left in man by the mercy of God upon the interposition of the Mediator; therefore some call them not relics of nature, but restored principles, as a foundation to work upon; for upon the fall man did forfeit all, and sin despoiled himself of all *de jure*, but by the mediation of Christ, those were left (Colossians 1:17, 'By him all things consist'), otherwise there had been no stock to work upon. These are left as foundations upon which God grafts this grace of regeneration, as they that spin do not spin out the whole thread, but leave some end) that they may add to it another thread; so God, having a purpose to do good on man in renewing him, did not suffer the stock of nature to be wholly rooted out, but left that as a root to graft upon, to make him the better capable of happiness. Had not man had a natural desire to happiness, there were no ground to work upon him to induce him to such a thing; therefore in not seeking it you reproach God for leaving this stump in you, and seem to be so well pleased with corrupt nature as if you would not have any remainder of the former. It is a striving against the relic of original nature left in us.

(5.) Seek it, for it is as necessary as justification. You should therefore seek it with as high an esteem of it as you have of pardon, none but would desire pardon of sin. You must be as desirous of the regeneration of your nature; they are equally necessary. Those who will not have an inherent righteousness can never expect an imputed righteousness from Christ; he never came to that end. Two things happened to us by the fall: another state and another nature; the regaining of the former must be equally sought with the latter, a being in another covenant by justification (for naturally we are in the covenant with Adam), and a being beautified with another image, because naturally we are deformed by the image of Adam. As long as we are only in a state of descent from, and union with, the first Adam, we are under the strictness of his covenant and the deformity of his image; when we are united to the second Adam, and spiritually descend from him, we are in his covenant of grace, and are adorned with his image. Both, therefore, must be looked after as equally necessary: Romans 5:21, 'That as sin has reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' Let us, then, look after this reign of grace; let not that be the last which should be first in our thoughts. Since our natural descent from Adam, we are born God's enemies: we must be spiritually new-born before our enmity can expire.

(6.) The advantages that accrue by regeneration are high. When we are received, we part with impurity for purity, with dross for gold, with corruption for holiness, with flesh for spirit, with nature for grace, with sin for God, and the enjoyment of him for ever. Our present nature is a nature of death and bondage; a new nature is like the new law, a law of life and liberty, James 1:25. It will put our souls in order, and set the Israelite free from the Egyptian taskmaster; it will quell the rage of sin, and diffuse a serenity in our souls. Grace and peace are not unfitly joined together by the apostle, in respect of peace in ourselves, which cannot be without habitual grace, as well as peace with God, which cannot be without his favour. It will enable us to perform spiritual services. As all natural actions flow from a natural form in the creature, so all spiritual actions flow from a spiritual nature in the soul, and without it a carnal heart can no more do any spiritual work than a rock can perform the work of a balsam-tree. It is but highly reasonable and just we should endeavour to regain that state wherein we were created, as the best for us, since the estate wherein God

created us was certainly the best. It is inconceivably better to be a righteous man than to be a man.

(7.) Seek it; you will never repent your labour, because it is necessary. Necessity makes us contend with the greatest difficulties; men will do more at a pinch than they can do at other times, when no necessity is upon them. Never did any repent of it, never any will; it has been a comfort upon a deathbed to all that had it: it never was any man's sorrow. The universal consent of all who have found it wrought should quicken our desires and endeavours for it. Ask a renewed man whether ever it troubled him that he was regenerate? whether he would be without that state rather than undergo the same pains again? Would not his answer be, No, not for all the world? When the blessed apostle Paul considered his late regeneration, he expresses it with some regret, 1 Corinthians 15:8, 'as one born out of due time.' It implies a sorrow that he was not born sooner; and Austin cries out, *Sero te amavi, Domine*, I have loved thee too late, Lord. So does every renewed man repent that he was not regenerate sooner. A regenerate man come under the yoke of Christ finds such a pleasure in it, such a suitableness, such an advantage to his interest, that he would not be free from those delightful engagements, and the sweetness of that yoke, for all the delights and commodities of the world.

Exhortation. 3. Seek it presently; let not a minute pass without some ejaculation to God for the new birth; and when you come home, fall upon your knees, and rise not till you find a change of resolutions and dispositions. If you did well understand the necessity of it, you would not be one hour without begging it. You have heard the necessity of it now, are you sure you shall ever hear the doctrine preached on again? Are you sure you may not be past the hope as well as the happiness of the new birth before man's days be run, if the present opportunity be neglected? When God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and his family, it is said he did it that very day wherein God commanded him, Genesis 17:23. Why should you not imitate Abraham in the ready and speedy circumcision of the heart? Though God does wait long, it cannot be thought he should always be courting dead souls. It must be now; there is no hope of such a change after death: 'The redemption of their soul ceases for ever,' Psalms 49:8; no more under the offers of a redeeming Saviour, no more under the motions of a renewing Spirit. Christ breaks the nations like a potter's vessel, Psalms 2:9. A vessel before it be burned may be macerated in water, and formed anew; but when it has been burned in the furnace, it cannot be changed. Well, if thou wilt be new born this day, God will bless the memory of this day, for he will gain a son; Jesus Christ will by his blood put this day in red letters in his calendar, for he will gain a brother; the Spirit will rejoice, for he will gain a temple; angels will rejoice, for they will gain a fellow-servant; you will gain a fitness for an everlasting inheritance. Let me, therefore, press young men and women to this necessary and important concern; I know not when I may have so fit an opportunity or subject for it. It is not said, except an old man be born again, but except a man; therefore be not careless, as if you were not concerned in it, nor put it off to a longer day from the probability of the length of your life in a course of nature. Consider, 1. An early regeneration makes for God's honour.

(1.) In preventing much sin. How ripe are young ones, yea, even children when they are scarce green in age, as though iniquity had been their tutor in the womb! Youthful blood is the devil's tinder. Job knew it; therefore when his sons feasted he sacrificed, Job 1:5. He was jealous of their inbred corruption, from the sense of the sins of his own youth, which we find him complaining of, Job 13:26; therefore he feared his children, having the same temptations, might fall into the same

transgressions. Sow, by an early regeneration, many diseases of the soul are prevented, as well as the great crack of nature cured, as the distempers of the body are prevented by altering the habit of it in the spring. Though by a late regeneration, that of an old man, the soul is fitted for heaven, yet it will be grievous to him to think that his former dishonouring of God in his natural state was not prevented. It is otherwise with the early regenerate; they cannot complain, as Paul did, Oh, how have I persecuted the church of God! how have I breathed out threatenings against Christ and his people! how have I wallowed in all kind of sin! They have indeed as much reason to complain of the stock of the old nature within them, but not of so many bitter fruits of the flesh as others. How does the devil hang the wing when he is deprived of an active servant! As nothing makes heaven so glad, so nothing makes hell so sad, as to be frustrated of the full crop of sin it expected from such an instrument.

(2.) In doing much service for God. Young men are usually of active spirits and vigorous affections, whereas age does freeze all youthful warmth. Such, like Peter, can 'gird themselves, and go whither they please,' John 21:18, and travel about for God; but age damps the spirits. We are not so fit for service when the vigour of our youth is spent. And would you be saved, and God have no more glory from you? Now what parts, or strength, or mettle, a young man have, grace will bias, put into a right channel, and direct to an useful end. The early regenerate will be eminent in piety; for in a course of nature, they have a longer time to grow in. Their faith and love, by a larger exercise, will be the stronger; and the stronger the grace the more glory will be brought to God, Romans 4:20. Abraham, it is said, was 'strong in faith, giving glory to God.' He that rises betimes in the morning, will do more work than he that lies in bed till noon, or loiters till the sun declines.

(3.) In manifesting the power of the grace of God. An early regeneration is the great ornament of the gospel. It evidences the dignity and strength of habitual grace, in quenching youthful heats and powerful temptations, in making such to deny themselves, and prefer God's precepts before their own pleasures. It magnifies grace, when the devil is beat upon his own dunghill, where he had so great an interest, by reason of the corruptions such are subject to. What an eulogy is it to the beauty and power of grace, to see a young flourishing plant in God's garden! It shows the power of his grace upon such to salvation, that they are strong in the power of the might of God, to wrestle against principalities and powers, as well as against flesh and blood. It manifests the power of God's grace in the work of faith, and that there is a spirit of power residing in them.

2. As an early regeneration makes for God's honour, so it makes for your own interest.

(1.) Your new birth will be the gentler. The work of conscience will be more kindly, without the horrors they have, who have lain many years soaking in the old nature. More of hell must be flashed in an old sinner's face, to awaken him from his dead sleep. Paul, who had sinned some years with an high hand, was struck to the earth. Christ, as it were, took him by the throat, and shook him: Acts 9:6, 'He trembling, and astonished, said,' &c. There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to rack the conscience, and consequently more anguish. Putrefied wounds require more lancing; and therefore are more painful in the cure than those which are but newly made. The more we are alienated from the life of God, the harder it will be to return to live that life again. The further a man is gone out of his road, the longer he must travel to come in again, and the more pains he must take in running or riding, than he that wandered but a little from it.

(2.) Your new birth will be the more grateful to God. God loves the first fruits. He would not have the gleanings, but the first crop of everything under the law, which was laid upon the altar as God's portion. The kindness of the youth is most respected by God. He cherished Israel because they were 'the first fruits of his increase,' Jeremiah 2:2-3. 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou went after me in the wilderness,' under many discouragements. God writes down the time of the new birth, and it runs in his mind a long time after. 'Epenetus, the first fruits of Achaia,' is saluted by Paul, just after the salutation of the whole church, with the title of well-beloved: Romans 16:5, 'Greet the church that is in their house, salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the [first] fruits of Achaia unto Christ.' And surely more beloved by the Lord than by the servant. God has most affection for such as come in at the first sound of the gospel. Daniel was a young man, yet the holiest man of his age; and God has so great an affection to him that he joins him with Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, and Job, that mirror of patience,—Ezekiel 14:14, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness,'—as those that had the greatest power with him, to keep off judgments from the place where they were.

(3.) Comfort will be the greater by an early new birth. What a long time will such an one have to enjoy the comforts of the Spirit! whereas those that are renewed later, have fewer comforts, because their grieving the Spirit has been the longer. You will be always ready, and fit for the kingdom of God, let God call when he will. Your foretastes of heaven greater, and much acquaintance with the life of it, before you arrive at the place of full enjoyment. John, the youngest disciple, lay in Christ's bosom; he had afterwards the most spiritual illuminations, and the discoveries of the state of the church in after days revealed to him. When our sluggishness makes God wait for our return, his justice will make us wait long for his comforts. The earlier your new birth, the sweeter will be your death, as being more stored with experiences of God's grace, and goodness, and truth, wherewith to answer all the devil's affrighting charges in your departing hence. No doubt can arise, but there will be a treasure of experience whence to draw an answer. The longer acquaintance you have with God, and the longer likeness to him in your natures, the more joyful will be your passage to him, and the more confidence against the fear of death.

(4.) The earlier your new birth, the sincerer and stronger will be your grace. To row against the strong stream and tide of nature, temptations of a youthful age, the inconstancy and lightness of your humour, and the inconsiderateness of your temper, are arguments of sincerity. To seek God, when a man has fair and frequent invitations to sin, is not so liable to suspicion, as when a man can live no longer. The latter proceeds rather from a fear of wrath than love to their Creator, or affection to his glory. Grace will be the stronger, the more full of juice. He that is new-born betimes, when he is young, will grow to a greater stature and a mighty strength in his age; for it is not with grace as it is with our bodies, the older the weaker; but as the outward man decays, the inward man grows, and is renewed day by day, 2 Corinthians 4:16. A young plant in the house of God will be fat and flourishing, and full of fruit in old age, Ps. x102:18, 14. The weakness of the body in such is the youthfulness of grace.

(5.) The earlier the new birth, the weightier will be your glory in the kingdom of God. God rewards according to our works: Revelation 2:23, 'I will give to every one of you according to your works.' Not only to the wicked, the children of the woman Jezebel, according to their works, but to them whose charity, service, faith, patience, he knew, Revelation 2:19. The longer you are without a

new life, a vital principle, the fewer will your works be, and the shorter your wages. Though God in regeneration works as a sovereign, and has mercy on whom he will have mercy, yet, in rewarding, he acts as a righteous judge, according to the rules of justice: 2 Timothy 4:8, 'The crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me;' and so does proportion the glory to every man's service. Young ones regenerate, that bear head against the temptations of their violent nature, shall have crowns get with more jewels. They shall not only have an entrance, but 'an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter 1:11. They shall enter into the port with a full gale. The more violent storms they bear up against, the brighter will be their glory. For if he that endures temptation, but one temptation, shall have a crown, by proportion, he that endures many shall have a greater: James 1:12, 'Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall have a crown of life.' How comfortable will it be to feel the weight of your crown and the richness of your robes, according to your years of service. If there be any sorrow in heaven, it is because they were not sooner new-born, that they might more have glorified God on earth, who bestows so much honour upon them in heaven. If any of you were sure to be regenerate after you had spent so many years after the course of the world and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, yet how great would your loss be, both of the comforts of the Spirit in this life, and of degrees of glory in the other!

3. Deferring the seeking after this new birth till more years grow upon you is a mighty folly. It is a matter of the highest concern, the greatest necessity, in comparison of which all other things are but toys and superfluities. Is it not folly to prefer superfluous things before necessary? Is it not a madness for a man to be mending the mud-wall about his garden, and neglect to quench the fire which has got hold of his house? You are poisoned in your nature, you have plague-spots upon your hearts. Would it not be ridiculous for a man that has drunk poison, and spilt some upon his clothes, to be more careful to have the stains fetched out of his garments than the poison out of his stomach? You are careful about the concerns of the body and flesh, oh be not such fools as to let the poison within get the greater head, and the plague continue in the heart.

Folly it is,

(1.) Because of the uncertainty of life. You are not lords and keepers of your own times, they are in God's hands: Psalms 31:15 'My times are in thy hands.' What if he should fling that time out of his hand tomorrow, what would your condition be? Those that are in a dead state now, as they are here, if judgment find them so, are irrecoverable. Because thou art a child of wrath, if he take thee thus away with his stroke, as Job speaks, Job 36:18, then a 'great ransom cannot deliver thee.' Hell followed death close at the back, Revelation 6:8. Shall sin reign in a body? That is base. But in a mortal body, a body that may drop into the grave every hour? That is folly in the highest degree. It is the apostle's exhortation: Romans 6:12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.' Many a candle has been put out before half burnt, how often has a clear sun in the morning been overcast before noon! Were none of you the last week at the funeral of some strong and vigorous person? Perhaps there is no more time left you than just what will serve for to seek this new birth. God seizes upon some suddenly, that they have not time so much as to cry out what ails them: Job 36:13-14, 'They cry not when he binds them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.' It is better to be new-born many years too soon (if it can be supposed to be too soon), than to defer it one minute too late. He that defers the new birth today, may not have a morrow to be new born in. And to be surprised by death before you are new born, better for you,

you had never been born at all.

(2.) It is folly, because if you neglect the present time, though you may live, yet your return to God by a new birth may be very uncertain. There is such a thing as a day of grace, shorter than the days of a man's life: Luke 19:42, 'The things of their peace' were then 'hid from their eyes,' though their destruction was deferred forty years. There is such a resolve in heaven sometimes, that 'the Spirit shall strive no longer' with this or that man: Genesis 6:3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' or 'in man,' with this or that man; 'for that he also is flesh.' It is a threatening to those in the church, in opposition to the profane world, Genesis 6:2. The church began then to be corrupted. My Spirit shall not strive with them; though they make a profession of me, and attend upon me in worship, yet they are flesh, degenerated into mere flesh, and flesh they shall be. And sometimes it is confirmed by a solemn oath. Revelation 10:5-6, The angel swears in a most solemn manner, 'by him that lives for ever, who created heaven and earth' &c., 'that there should be time no longer;' that is, no time of repentance, as appears if you refer it to Revelation 9:20-21. It is not therefore without great reason that the apostle does double both the notes of attention, behold, and the time too, now, now, when he exhorts them not to receive the grace of God in vain; that is, sit under the gospel administration to no purpose, without having a gospel impression and signature upon their hearts: 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,' 2 Corinthians 6:2.

4. As it is a folly to neglect it; so if it be not presently sought, and endeavoured for, the more difficult it will be every day to attain it.

(1.) In regard of the increase of moral indisposition and unfitness. It is true indeed there is in every man a moral indisposition to a spiritual renovation, but the indisposition is greater when the habits of sin are more than ordinarily strengthened. The more the soul is frozen, the harder it will be to melt. A body dead some few hours is a subject more capable of having life breathed into it than when it is putrefied and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up and transplanted than a strong old oak, which has spread its roots deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit of sin, the harder the alteration of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and bond—Acts 8:23, 'bond of iniquity'—and the more new chains are put upon thee, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. The habits of sin will become more connatural to the soul, and fortify themselves with new recruits.

(2.) In regard of the industry of the devil. If you remain in a state of nature till you are old, that devil which blinds you now will have increased your blindness by that time; he will bestir himself in your age, that he may not lose that which he has possessed so long. It is a shame for Satan, as well as for a man, *deficere in ultimo actu*. He that struck the first fatal blow to us, and occasioned this degenerate nature, will not want watchfulness and care to strengthen it in you. He will be diligent to keep up his own work; the longer his possession, the more difficult his departure. Judas was a devil in our Saviour's judgment all his time—John 6:70, 'One of you is a devil,'—but when he had withstood the force of our Saviour's discourses, and nourished his covetousness against his Master's frequent conviction, the devil 'entered into his heart,' John 13:27. Perhaps there had been before some strugglings of natural conscience in Judas, as there may be in some of you; but when he had, against the sight of our Saviour's miracles, the hearing of his sermons, the checks of

his own conscience, continued in a natural state, Satan enters into him in a more peculiar manner, in a way of more special efficacy; and, by an uncontrollable power, breaks the bridle of conscience, which had held him in so long, and runs furiously with him to what wickedness he pleased. Satan reigned in him before; but as the regenerate, being by degrees filled with spiritual gifts, and having additions of grace, are said to be 'filled with the Spirit,' so natural men, as they increase in sin by degrees, are said to have a new entrance of Satan into them, because there is an increase of his efficacy in them, and power over them, binding them in stronger chains and fetters of iron.

(3.) In regard of spiritual judgments, which will make it impossible. Such judgments upon men that sit under the gospel, and admit not the influence of it, are more frequent than is usually imagined, though they are not so visible. Open sins God punishes many times by visible judgments, but wilful unregeneracy by spiritual. Though a man may sit under the same means of grace which God does bless to regenerate others, they may be an accidental means to harden him: 'The miry places shall not be healed, but be given to salt,' as it is Ezek. x57:47, when others shall grow like trees on both sides the river, and bear a never-fading leaf. If once your neglects and provocations put God to his oath, and make him swear, as he once did, that you shall not enter into his rest, Hebrews 3:11, his oath will be irreversible, he will blow up heaven and earth before he will break it. And that it may not be evaded that this was an oath against the Israelites, it is intimated by the apostle that even in the times of the gospel this oath is of force, ver. 12. He from thence exhorts them at that time to take heed of 'an evil heart of unbelief.' What need of this exhortation to them, if this oath did only concern the Israelites murmuring in the wilderness, and were not valid against unbelievers and unregenerate men in the time of the gospel? It is a terrible place that in Isaiah 6:9, 'Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed;' which dreadful place is no less than six times quoted in the New Testament, as though it belonged only to them that sit under evangelical light with a wilful unregeneracy. Certainly as the mercies of the gospel are most spiritual, so the judgments inflicted upon the neglecters of it are the most spiritual judgments. Then a man is made the centre of divine fury, and his heart sealed up from any seizure by sanctifying grace: Ezekiel 24:13, 'Because I have purged thee,' that is, offered thee purging grace, 'and thou was not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.' When God passes such a secret sentence, if all the men in the world, and all the angels in heaven, should, with their most affectionate strains of reason, attempt the persuading of you, they were not able to open an heart which God has judicially locked up and sealed. It is observed by some, that the work of the gospel, for conversion, is usually done in those places where it comes, in the space of seven years, as to those who have sat under it so long; and they ground it upon Daniel 9:27, 'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,' that is, one week of years. And that our Saviour preached three years and an half among the Jews, and the apostles three years and an half or thereabouts before the Jews were discovenanted. I will not affirm it positively, but offer it as worthy consideration to those that have sat under the gospel more than seven years without any renewing work on their souls.

Well then, let me beseech you, resolve upon this work presently. We are not to bid a poor man 'go away, and come again tomorrow,' Proverbs 3:27-28; and shall we bid the Spirit, knocking at our hearts in the gospel, go away, and come again another time? Our blessed Saviour did not defer

his death for us till he was old, and shall not we live to him till we are old? As his death is an argument used by the apostle, to move us to live to him, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, so the time of his death should be an argument to us to live to him betimes. How many has this foolish tomorrow deceived! and many have perished today before the dawning of tomorrow. Defer it not therefore a night longer; reflect upon yourselves, and say, Have I lived so long, pleased with my old nature? O Lord, what had become of me without thy wonderful patience? Let your motion be as the lightning, as the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the motion of four beasts, Ezekiel 1:14. God may make up the match between himself and you before midnight: there was less time in God's working upon the jailer.

Quest. What shall we do to get this new birth?

Answer 1. Begin with prayer; seek it from that Saviour that first made so plain a declaration of it. 'A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven,' John 3:27. Then from heaven beg it; let God hear of you as soon as ever you come home. God usually lets in renewing grace at the same gate at which honest prayer goes out. Prayer is a compliance with God's grace; he never refuses it to them that heartily desire it. Go therefore to God, give him no rest; if you do so, it may not be long before you will hear that joyful word drop from his gracious lips: 'My grace will be sufficient for you,' sufficient to renew you, sufficient to cure you. Let the fervency of your prayers be proportioned according to the necessity of the thing, and the greatness of your misery without it. Plead, therefore, with God for it; Lord, is it not better to make me thy friend than to let me continue thy enemy? Is it not more thy glory to raise a soul from sin than a Lazarus from the grave? Thy power and mercy are more illustrious in turning a dry stock into a fruitful and flourishing tree. Overcome, therefore, my base nature by thy merciful power; change me from a venomous to a dove-like nature. Oh how fain would I glorify thee, by answering the end of my creation! Glorify thyself by new creating my heart, that I may glorify thee in a newness of life. I cannot get a new heart by my own strength; but it is a work not too hard for thy power, and suitable to thy promise. Plead the promise: Ezekiel 11:19, 'I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh;' and Ezekiel 36:26, 'a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;' but he 'will be inquired of, to do it for them,' Ezekiel 36:27. Breathe and aspire after it; beg for it as earnestly as you would in extreme hunger for food for the satisfaction of your natural appetite; God will not deny it for such as breathe after it, Matthew 5:6, Hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled; beg the operation of the Spirit. Our Saviour provided the plaster, but left the Spirit to apply it; he provided the colours, his blood, to draw his image, but none but the Spirit can lay them on. Ask therefore the Spirit of the Father in the name of Christ; the Father sends him into the world, and sends him into the heart, but in the name of Christ. It is called a holy Spirit, because without it there can be no holy nature.

2. Be deeply sensible of the corruption of nature. The more we are sensible of our inherent depravation, the more we shall breathe after a real change. Can he ever imagine the necessity of a cure, who understands not the greatness of his disease? Be fully convinced, as Paul was, that in you, that is, 'in your flesh, dwells no good thing,' Romans 7:18. I know; I am experimentally sensible of it. Did we but truly see the defilement of our nature, and the monstrous alteration of it from that of our creation, as we can the deformity of some monster in the world, we should loathe ourselves, we should fly, if we could, from our own nature, and send forth nothing but groans for a deliverance from the body of death, and have no rest till we were stripped of so abominable a

frame. Let us, therefore, turn in upon ourselves, take a view of our condition, see if there be any suitableness between our depraved natures, and the glory of another world. There is not, unless we conceit heaven a place filled only with carnal pleasures. But reason will tell us the contrary, and a carnal soul can never, in that state, be fit for a spiritual glory.

3. View often the perfection of the law of God. This will make us sensible of the contrariety of our nature to God's holiness, and consequently make us look about for a remedy. See whether your nature answers the exactness of the law; for although you were alive without the law, yet, when the commandment and your hearts come to look upon one another, you will see sin in its life and power, and all the conceits of your own excellency will die: Romans 7:9, 'For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' Paul thought himself a righteous person, till he came to measure himself by the exact and spiritual image of the law. He had been instructed in the literal knowledge of the law, for he was brought up a Pharisee; his head and the law were acquainted, and then he thought himself a living person; but when his heart and the law came to be acquainted, then he found himself dead, and his high opinion of himself fell to the ground. Consider, then, how the law requires a perfect righteousness, an inward principle. All duties it commands are not only to be done materially, but formally; for they are so commanded in such a manner, from such a principle, to such an end. Then reflect, have I such a righteousness? can I answer the law? do I come up to the measures of it in any one action? Surely I do not. Then consider further, Does not this law stand? will God lay it in the dust? has he thrown it out of doors? Surely it is holy, just, and good, and therefore a standing rule. I must have a principle suitable to that which Jesus Christ came not to destroy, but establish. How shall I do it with this corrupt nature, wherein I do not one action that does sincerely respect it, as the law of God, that is, accompanied with a delight in it? Certainly this temper, so contrary to the law, must be changed. I must have an inner man to delight in this law, a principle that must in some measure, though imperfectly, suit it. This orderly consideration would put you upon the seeking out for such a righteousness as may in part answer it.

4. Observe the motions of the Spirit. There is an assisting work of the Spirit, and an informing work. There is not a man but has, or once had, the strivings of this Spirit with him. There are the knockings of Christ by his Spirit at the door; there are calls, 'Zacchaeus, come down; this day is salvation come to thy house.' Did you never hear a voice from heaven, saying, 'Come to me that you may have life'? Did you never hear a groan from heaven, 'When shall it once be?' Did you never see a tear trickling down the cheek of Christ, as when he wept over Jerusalem? Did you never hear a sigh of a grieved Spirit waiting upon you? Can you see, and hear, and hear again, yet no compliance, when that is of absolute necessity you are exhorted to? Smother not these motions; answer them with suitable affections. If Christ looks upon you, as he did upon Peter, think of what you are, and weep, Mark 14:72. If the Spirit calls, answer presently, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' The neglect of the time of the Spirit's breathing is the cause of a continuance in unregeneracy. Repel not those sweet motions that strike upon your hearts.

5. Attend diligently upon all means of grace. They are the pipes through which the Spirit breathes, the lungs of the Spirit, the instruments whereby our natures are altered: 'Faith comes by hearing.' It is by the hearing of faith that the Spirit is ministered: Galatians 3:5, 'He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, does he it by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith?' None can expect it who will not use the means to have it, no more than men can expect to live without eating and drinking.

Would we be warm? we must approach to the fire. Would we be clean? we must wash in the water. Would we be renewed? we must attend upon the breathings of the Spirit in the institutions of God. This we may do, though we cannot renew ourselves; we may read the word as well as a piece of news; we may hear the word, and attend to it, as well as to any worldly concern; we may meditate upon it, and consider it, as well as a story. This we have power to do, and it is by the word that this great work is done. By a powerful word Christ called Lazarus out of the grave, and by his word spoken by his Spirit, his great deputy he sent after him, he calls us out of our state of death. Beg of the Spirit to breathe upon you before you come to attend upon his institutions. We profit little by the Word, and our old nature attends us, because we take no notice of the Spirit of God, who is appointed the principal officer in this business. It is he that is to guide us into truth, John 16:13. Though men may speak truth to us, yet the Spirit can only guide the truth into our hearts, and guide us into the heart, and bowels, and inwards of truth, to taste the marrow of it.

6. I might add, Study the gospel. Look upon Jesus Christ in that glass; this transforms us into his image; as the beholding the light of the sun in a glass, paints an image of that light in our faces; so does the beholding Christ in the gospel: 2 Corinthians 3:18, 'But ye all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' The gospel is the cause of our first change, and of our growth in it, 'from glory to glory,' but by the Spirit of God in the gospel, 'as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Study the promises of the gospel, and the end of the blood of Christ, which was to purge our conscience from dead works. It is by believing the promises of pardon in the blood of Christ that 'the conscience is purged from dead works,' Hebrews 9:14.

End of The Necessity of Regeneration by Stephen Charnock.

Why Salvation Must Be Supernatural

Why Salvation Must Be Supernatural by Stephen Charnock An extract from The Chief of Sinners Saved The insufficiency of nature to such a work as conversion is, shows that men may not fall down and idolize their own wit and power. A change from acts of sin to moral duties may be done by a natural strength and the power of natural conscience: for the very same motives which led to sin, as education, interest, profit, may, upon a change of circumstances, guide men to an outward morality; but a change to the contrary grace is supernatural.

Two things are certain in nature. (1.) Natural inclinations never change, but by some superior virtue. A loadstone will not cease to draw iron, while that attractive quality remains in it. The wolf can never love the lamb, nor the lamb the wolf; nothing but must act suitably to its nature. Water cannot but moisten, fire cannot but burn. So likewise the corrupt nature of man being possessed with an invincible contrariety and enmity to God, will never suffer him to comply with God. And the inclinations of a sinner to sin being more strengthened by the frequency of sinful acts, have as great a power over him, and as natural to him, as any qualities are to natural agents: and being stronger than any sympathies in the world, cannot by a man's own power, or the power of any other nature equal to it, be turned into a contrary channel.

(2.) Nothing can act beyond its own principle and nature. Nothing in the world can raise itself to a higher rank of being than that which nature has placed it in; a spark cannot make itself a star, though it mount a little up to heaven; nor a plant endue itself with sense, nor a beast adorn itself with reason; nor a man make himself an angel. Thorns cannot bring forth grapes, nor thistles produce figs because such fruits are above the nature of those plants. So neither can our corrupt nature bring forth grace, which is a fruit above it. *Effectus non excedit virtutem suae causae* [the effect cannot exceed the power of its cause]: grace is more excellent than nature, therefore cannot be the fruit of nature. It is Christ's conclusion, "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Matthew 12:33-34. Not so much as the buds and blossoms of words, much less the fruit of actions. They can no more change their natures, than a viper can do away with his poison. Now though this I have said be true, yet there is nothing man does more affect in the world than a self-sufficiency, and an independence from any other power but his own. This attitude is as much riveted in his nature, as any other false principle whatsoever. For man does derive it from his first parents, as the prime legacy bequeathed to his nature: for it was the first thing uncovered in man at his fall; he would be as God, independent from him. Now God, to cross this principle, allows his elect, like Lazarus, to lie in the grave till they stink, that there may be no excuse to ascribe their resurrection to their own power. If a putrefied rotten carcass should be brought to life, it could never be thought that it inspired itself with that active principle. God lets men run on so far in sin, that they do unman themselves, that he may proclaim to all the world, that we are unable to do anything of ourselves towards our recovery, without a superior principle. The evidence of which will appear if we consider,

1. Man's subjection under sin. He is "sold under sin," Romans 7:14, and brought "into captivity to the law of sin," Romans 7:23. "Law of sin:" that sin seems to have a legal authority over him; and man is not only a slave to one sin, but many, Titus 3:3, "serving divers lusts." Now when a man is sold under the power of a thousand lusts, every one of which has an absolute tyranny over him, and rules him as a sovereign by a law; when a man is thus bound by a thousand laws, a thousand cords and fetters, and carried whither his lords please, against the dictates of his own conscience and force of natural light; can any man imagine that his own power can rescue him from the strength of these masters that claim such a right to him, and keep such a force upon him, and have so often baffled his own strength, when he attempted to turn against them?

2. Man's affection to them. He does not only serve them, but he serves them, and every one of them, with delight and pleasure; Titus 3:3. They were all pleasures, as well as lusts; friends as well as lords. Will any man leave his sensual delights and such sins that please and flatter his flesh? Will a man ever endeavour to run away from those lords which he serves with affection? having as much delight in being bound a slave to these lusts, as the devil has in binding him. Therefore when you see a man cast away his pleasures, deprive himself of those comfortable things to which his soul was once knit, and walk in paths contrary to corrupt nature, you may search for the cause anywhere, rather than in nature itself. No piece of dirty, muddy clay can form itself into a neat and handsome vessel; no plain piece of timber can fit itself for the building, much less a crooked one. Nor a man that is born blind, give himself sight.

God deals with men in this case as he did with Abraham. He would not give Isaac while Sarah's womb, in a natural probability, might have borne him; but when her womb was dead, and age had taken away all natural strength of conception, then God gives him; that it might appear that he was not a child of nature, but a child of promise.

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